Oral Defense Announcement
University of Missouri – St. Louis Graduate School

An oral examination in defense of the dissertation for the degree
Doctor of Education in Educational Practice

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Environmental Science and Culture:
Exploring the Factors Contributing to the Pro-Environmental Behavior of Rural Youth

Date: June 11, 2019
Time: 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.
Place: Conference Room 1, The Learning Center

Abstract
This mixed methods study contributes to the pro-environmental behavior literature by introducing the concept of environmental science capital to explore the factors influencing pro-environmental behavior in rural youth. This study's proposed theory of change attempts to build upon the Kollmus and Agyeman model of pro-environmental behavior by theorizing that environmental science capital is the “missing middle” needed to overcome or address the barriers to pro-environmental behavior. We hypothesize that the variables meaningful nature experiences, role models, connectedness to nature, STEM interest and environmental identity will help rural youth increase their environmental science capital in order to “bridge the gap” and overcome barriers to pro-environmental behavior. Quantitative findings suggest that environmental identity, STEM interest, environmental science capital, and political party affiliation are significant contributors to pro-environmental behavior. Qualitative findings help to explain the quantitative findings by highlighting emerging themes and patterns which were grouped into the following 18 codes: media; learning; clubs and groups; science relevancy; outdoor recreation; working outdoors; wonder; social experiences, solitude; science identity; environmental identity; working with animals; individual actions; awareness and motivation; science language; outdoor language; nature language; and environmental language.

Defense of Dissertation Committee
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