

Young people and climate change: Implications for developmental psychology and youth research

How is it to be young today and grow up with global problems like climate change? How do young people think, feel, cope, and act regarding this serious and complex sustainability challenge? In this presentation I will give an overview of my research with young people in late childhood to early adulthood about how they feel about, and cope with, climate change and associations to subjective well-being and civic engagement. I will also describe how coping strategies relate to perceived communication patterns with friends, parents, and teachers. In addition, I will present results from studies about how young people cope with dilemmas and ambivalence in relation to trying to live in a sustainable way in everyday life. I will end the presentation by focusing on implications for well-known topics in developmental psychology, like moral development and political socialization. I will also discuss avenues for future research, for instance, longitudinal studies focusing on climate change engagement among young people and intervention studies.

Maria Ojala is Associate Professor (docent) in psychology at Örebro University, Sweden. She is one of the research directors for the Center for Environmental and Sustainability Social Science (CESSS) and is affiliated with the Center for Lifespan Developmental Research (LEADER). Maria is a CSSN Scholar in the Climate Social Science Network coordinated by Brown University, USA. Maria's main research interest concerns how young people, from late childhood to early adulthood, think, feel, act, learn, cope, and communicate about global environmental problem, with a specific focus on climate change. She has performed research with young people about these topics for over fifteen years.