

# Testing the “Motherhood Mentality Model”: The Link Between Nurturance and Concern for the Environment in Women

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## Abstract

A mindset prime was used to stimulate feelings of nurturance for others and assessed for its impact on concern for the environment. No-treatment and nurturance priming groups did not differ on selection of a sustainable choice. Those with high levels of nurturance were more likely to select the sustainable option. Women and men selected the sustainable option equally, though women rated environmental sustainability as an important factor in their decision making more often.

## Introduction

-Women are more likely than men to be concerned about the environment

(Blocker & Eckberg, 1997; Kellert & Berry 1987; Mohai, 1992)

-Women more likely to engage in sustainable behaviors

(Blocker & Eckberg, 1997; Engle-Friedman, Lee, Furman, Maculaitis, & Cho, 2010; Zelezny, Chua, & Aldrich, 2000)

-Gender gap in pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors may result from gender-specific socialization

-“Motherhood Mentality Model” suggests women are socialized to be caregivers, and their sense of responsibility for others extends to guardianship for the environment (Zelezny, et al., 2000; McCright, 2010)

-Little empirical research to support relationship between nurturance and sustainable behavior

-Primary questions:

- Are women more sustainable than men?
- Can feelings of nurturance be evoked in both genders through mindset priming?
- Does greater nurturance result in choice of the sustainable option?

## Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Women will score higher than men on trait nurturance

Hypothesis 2: A nurturance mindset prime will have a greater effect on women

Hypothesis 3: Women will be more likely than men to choose the sustainable option

## Methods

-Pre-test- Nurturing Type Scale (NTS-I) - Measure of state nurturance. Based on Profile of Mood States-BV (Shacham, 1983) nurturing feelings added (e.g., compassionate and caring)

-Control Condition- 5 scenarios - designed to elicit no emotional change. Participants read, imagined themselves in, and wrote about the scenarios

OR

-Experimental Condition - Nurturing Prime- 5 scenarios - 3 designed to elicit feelings of nurturance and 2 to elicit no emotional change. Participants read, imagined themselves in, and wrote about the scenarios

-Post-test - Nurturing Type Scale (NTS-II)- Measure of state nurturance

**Behavioral and Attitudinal Measures**

-Measure of Sustainable Behavior- Two plans for a plaza the college were presented:

- Urban Plaza
- Green Plaza
- Participants voted on option they preferred
- Ranked the factors in their decision-making according to importance

-Loyola Generativity Scale (LGS) - Measures concern for future generations (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992)

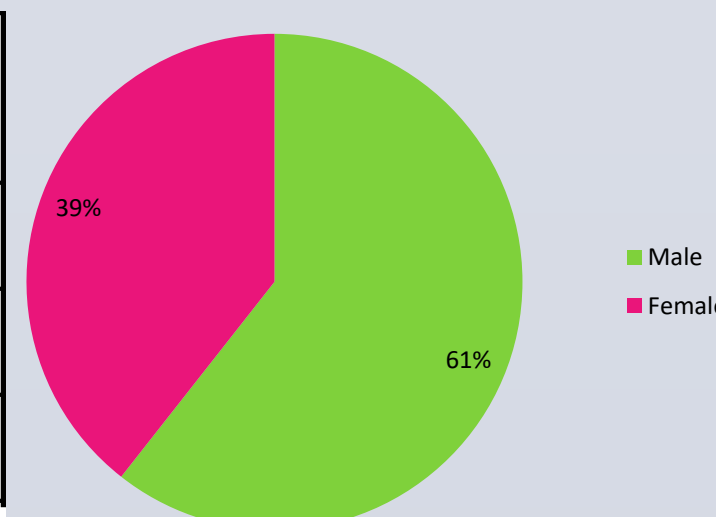
-Nurturance Scale of the Personality Report Form-E (PRF-E) - Measures trait nurturance (Jackson, 1967).

-Demographics - Age, gender, ethnicity, class standing, country of origin, and comfort with English.

## Demographic Characteristics

	N	Mean	Standard Dev.	Median	Minimum	Maximum
Male	n=40	22.7 yrs	3.976 yrs	22 yrs	18 yrs	39 yrs
Female	n=26	22.46 yrs	4.140 yrs	20.5 yrs	18 yrs	36 yrs
Total	n=66	21.61 yrs	4.01 yrs	22 yrs	18 yrs	39 yrs

Gender of Participants



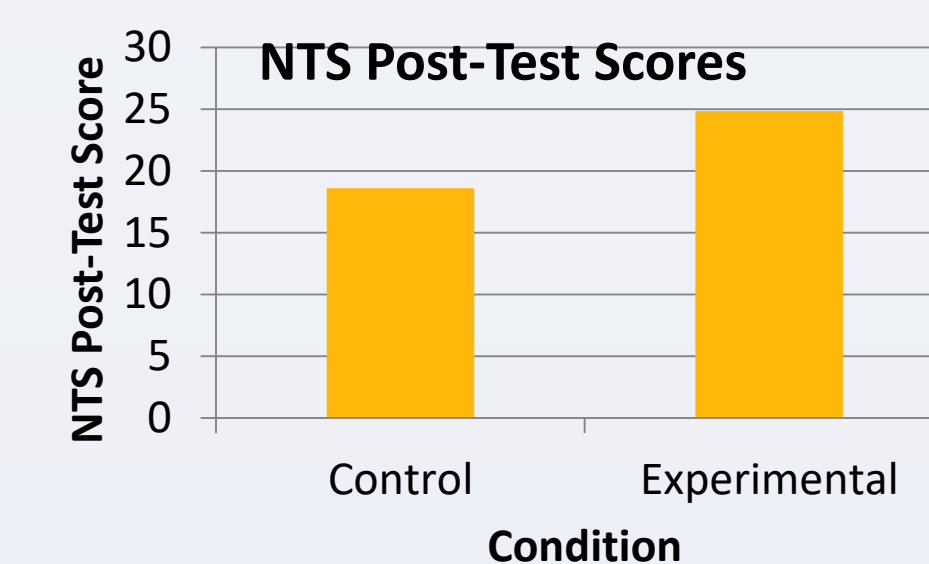
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## Results

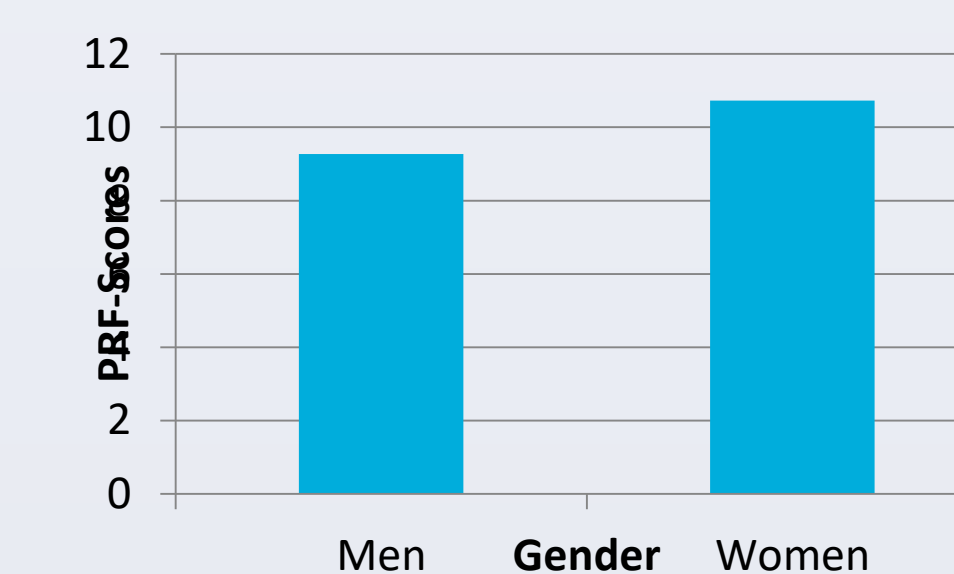
**Efficacy of prime for nurturance:**

Nurturance Prime Condition - significantly higher on NTS post-test compared with control group (Nurturance Group:  $M = 24.84$ ,  $SD = 6.29$ ; Control Group:  $M = 18.61$ ,  $SD = 9.52$ ,  $t(62) = -3.07$ ,  $p = .003$ ,  $d = .77$ )



**Hypothesis 1:**

Nurturance - Women scored significantly higher than men on the nurturance subscale of the PRF-E (Women:  $M = 10.73$ ,  $SD = 5.63$ ; Men:  $M = 9.27$ ,  $SD = 5.63$ ;  $t(64) = -2.07$ ,  $p = .042$ )



**Hypothesis 2:**

-Women and men post-test nurturance scores (NTS-II) did not differ significantly (Women:  $M = 22.56$ ,  $SD = 8.92$ ; Men:  $M = 20.55$ ,  $SD = 8.1$ ,  $ns.$ )

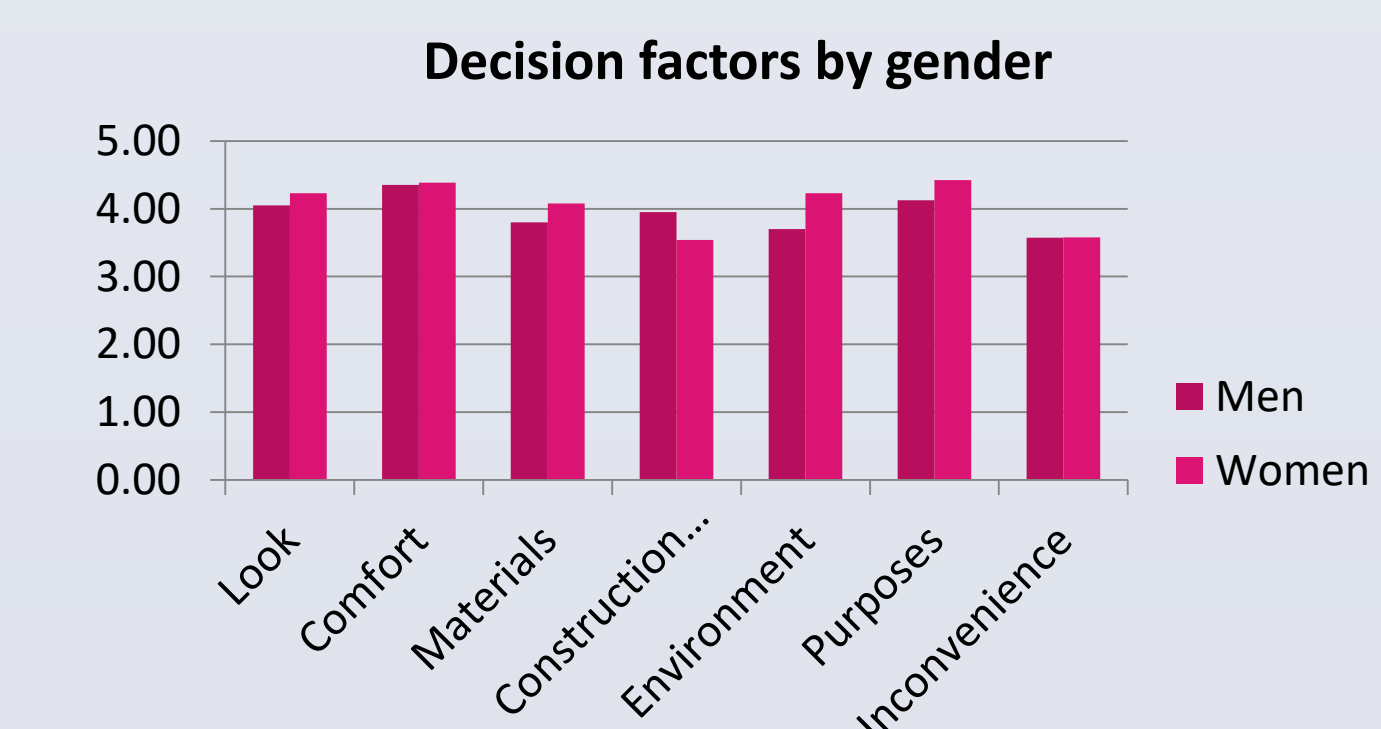
- A 2 (condition) x 2 (gender) ANOVA on NTS change scores showed no differences between groups.

**Hypothesis 3:**

-Women and men did not differ on choice of plaza type

-Condition had no unique influence on plaza choices of women and men

-Women were significantly more likely to rate “environmental sustainability” as important in decision (Women:  $M = 4.23$ ,  $SD = .86$ ; Men:  $M = 3.70$ ,  $SD = 1.16$ ;  $t(64) = -2.00$ ,  $p = .050$ ,  $d = .52.$ )



**Nurturance and Plaza Selection**

-Those who chose Green Plaza had higher NTS post-scores than who chose Urban Plaza

(Selected Green Plaza:  $M = 23.82$ ,  $SD = 8.72$ ; Selected Urban Plaza:  $M = 17.40$ ,  $SD = 5.63$ ,  $t(58) = 2.50$ ,  $p = .01$ ,  $d = .87.$ )

-Significant correlation between the nurturing scores on the NTS-II and scores on the PRF-E ( $r = .36$ ,  $p = .003$ ).

## Implications

- Those most affected by nurturance prime were most likely to choose the sustainable option
- Women and men did not differ on responsiveness to the nurturing prime
- Gender was not a factor in responsiveness to nurturing or sustainable choice
- Nurturance may be linked to sustainable behavior, but it is not necessarily a gender-based phenomenon
- Nurturance does not seem to explain the gender gap in pro-environmental attitudes and behavior
- Women had significantly higher scores on the nurturance scale of the PRF-E than men
- Women may have recognized that the PRF-E was measuring nurturance, a trait socially desirable in women
- Women may not behave in more eco-friendly ways than men, but may just be attributing their behaviors to an eco-friendly mindset more often

## Limitations

- Controls showed a decline in their NTS-II scores. Neutral prime may have stimulated a negative affect
- Nurturance words on the NTS were positively-valenced (e.g., kind and loving). The positive mood created by the nurturance condition may have affected the results
- Most participants voted for the Green Plaza regardless of condition or gender. A ceiling effect may have occurred such that priming was unable to make a substantial change in an already highly selected option

## Future Directions

- This study should be replicated using alternative measures to:
  - reduce the potential ceiling effect
  - test other types of sustainable behaviors
- Women engage more often in private sustainable behaviors (e.g. recycling, saving electricity), but not necessarily public sustainable behaviors (e.g. signing petitions, activism) (Blocker & Eckberg, 1997). The dependent measure should include both private and public sustainable options.