

# THE LIFE RELATIONAL PARADIGM (LRP) IN THE FACE OF HUMAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL EMERGENCIES: REMODELLING HUMAN RELATIONS IN THE WORLD

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**Abstract:** This article sets forth the - Life Relational Paradigm (LRP) as a multiplier of the production of values originated from the promotion and maintenance of life. The concept of LRP is based on the convergence of the human and environmental dimensions, considering values, attitudes, and behaviours as consequences of experienced relations. LRP aims at promoting and spreading thoughts and actions rooted in values which favour life by producing environmental principles and meanings and therefore fostering more responsible and engaged interactions, which are beyond the notion of preservation and as a new way to live in this world.

**Keywords:** Life Relational Paradigm; Human Emergencies; Environmental Emergencies.

**Resumo:** Este artigo apresenta o Paradigma Relacional da Vida (PRV), como disseminador da produção de valores a partir da promoção e manutenção da vida. O PRV está baseado na concepção de uma convergência entre as dimensões humana e ambiental, reconhecendo os valores, as atitudes e os comportamentos como consequências das relações vividas. O objetivo do PRV é promover a disseminação de pensamentos e ações com base em valores para a vida, com a produção dos sentidos e significados ambientais e, conseqüentemente, a promoção de relações mais responsáveis e comprometidas, para além da noção de preservação e como uma nova forma de viver no mundo.

**Palavras-chave:** Paradigma Relacional da Vida; Emergências Humanas; Emergências Ambientais.

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## Introduction

Currently, and once again in this historical period, humanity has been affected by a crisis generated by a virus, the new coronavirus. Therefore, this moment points out the need for change in the conduction and management of human and environmental issues and problems. In these emergencies concerning life, everyone is aware and debating the threats to human health. Somehow this situation is leading humanity to a convergence point, where individuals are mutually affected despite their skills and vulnerabilities. In the knowledge production processes related to environmental education, such as those based in the studies developed by Dunlap and Van Liere (1978) on environmental paradigms, and those by Schwartz (2005) on human values; the problems caused by human behaviours and their impact in the environment are also debated.

Several educational institutions develop environmental education projects with the participation of teachers and students, but an internalization of environmental values must take place so that these actions are effective and permanent. It is essential for environmental education to raise student and teacher's awareness, even though this goal is not always true for the latest.

Even though several researches and studies on environmental education have been produced due to the present pressing moment, it is possible to perceive an increase in the number of activities among groups and communities aiming at a more effective role for social, political and economic agents, consequently involving a wide range of institutions in the promotion and diffusion of environmental interactions and experiences in areas surrounding households, institutions and businesses. LRP is devised with the purpose of encouraging a more active role for these agents. In regard to educational and family institutions, LRP instructs schools, families and children to collaborate in the making of projects, and for other social, economic and political institutions to establish partnerships with communities, local representatives and NGOs so as to design projects and environmental activities that take place in a regular basis.

## The nature within us

Regarding environmental issues, mankind has currently exploited natural resources, based in many pretexts, to such a degree that those are depleted, generating global warming among other problems that result in an exponential impact to the economic, political and social lives in the world. According to Schultz (2011), it is crucial to pay attention to human behaviour and its causes when considering how to deal with the context of environmental threats and the strategies to change it.

Among other branches of knowledge that study human behavior in the environment, conservation psychology is defined as "*the scientific study of the relationship between human beings and other natural elements*" (SAUNDERS, 2003, p. 138).

Revbea, São Paulo, V. 15, Nº 5: 299-303, 2020.

In the present coronavirus pandemics context, the return to outdoor life might lead to a reorganization of interactions, generating new patterns of social, economic, and political understandings so as to maintain life in our planet. Every kind of life on planet Earth has been affected by the civilizing processes and the return to “normal life”, after this crisis, may represent the apprehension of alternative principles and meanings by mankind.

A more locally contextualized awareness may be directed to individuals, groups and societies, which are part of these institutions and organizations in a systemic reconfiguration. These institutional mechanisms are considered as places where more mindful human activities take place, considering their power to act and make decisions about themselves and the environment.

The pandemics reactivated several social, economic, and environmental issues which promote new discussions about the future and generate new routines during the confinement period, since family members had the chance to interact with each other for a longer period in domestic activities such as playing, studying, cooking and others.

The proposed Life Relational Paradigm (LRP) (AMC MEDINA, personal communication, 2020) is open, interdisciplinary, contextual and dynamic. It aims at the promotion of family, social and institutional relations to continuously produce human and environmental directions based on outdoor human experiences. It proposes society to move outside and carry out activities in urban, natural, and rural areas surrounding people’s homes, communities, and institutions. Besides considering other elements, this paradigm intends to encourage the internalization of some specific human principles, such as ethics and values for living as a consequence of this process. It also considers environmental preservation as a result of these internalized environmental values and, at the same time, identifies and acknowledges these principles as producers of behaviours.

Also considered as a result, both the solicitude and awareness dimensions may be promoted by means of interaction. In order to achieve this goal, musings on the issue may benefit from Spinoza’s (2008) studies on affection. Regarding the processes of the affection of human bodies, Spinoza (2013) shares some interesting considerations, stating that the way which each body organizes itself is dependent on how it relates to other ones through experiences, situations and contexts in a relational dynamic by affecting and being affected at the same time.

The Life Relational Paradigm (LRP) proposes that the environmental experiences should be accomplished by children, families, individuals, and groups through the cooperation in common planned projects. FAMAM, which is the abbreviation for “Famílias e Ambientes” (families and environments), is a project to be specifically developed in Brasilia, Brazil, once the pandemics crisis is over. Its motto is “together at home today, together outside tomorrow”. Based on the principles of LRP, the project recommends future family experiences in natural, urban, and rural environments.

A recently published study on children's engagement, focusing on the influence of experience in knowledge and learning during elementary school by Špur, Škornik and Šorgo (2020), indicates how predispositions developed during childhood, will determine how adults act. Therefore, indicating that positive attitudes are encouraged by environmental activities.

A hypothetical situation is now presented in order to clarify what is meant by the internalization of environmental principles: a jogger runs on a path amid a small forest. He is alone and there are no cameras or passers-by that may identify him. During his exercise, he holds a small disposable plastic bottle with water so he can drink. Once the liquid is over, he continues holding it, so he can throw it away in a waste bin during his route, but as he leaps over a fallen branch, he drops it. He has two options: to carry on jogging or to fetch the bottle.

In the suggested situation, although there are no elements or devices which oblige him to pick up the bottle, he does it and carries on jogging. From this context, we might consider which mechanisms promote the internalization of the environmental principles. We might ask why he fetches the bottle since there are no external coercive elements or devices which make him do so. If he leaves the bottle on the ground, the jogger will feel affected somehow, once he is troubled by the situation. Coercive actions do not stimulate significant behavioural changes because people just act according to the established rules, so it is important to encourage environmental ethics which is authentic in the interior of forests.

Although humans have collected samples of natural life and taken them to their laboratories, businesses, industries and homes to attend people's different needs during the progression of history, it is necessary to realize that life can only reach its pinnacle if it is integrated to its birthplace. That is why mankind has to move in the opposite direction. This means humans have to leave the interior of their epistemological, social, political and economic caves to head towards the outdoors, so as to urgently integrate to nature as a place of shared origin and destination.

Environmental preservation is also the consequence of interactions and the internalized environmental values, at the same time they produce behaviours that encourage the maintenance and creation of life.

Life is always the result of the values produced in an open system; therefore, the environmental discourses are not enough to produce change since life is linked to the meaning and principles that everyone lends to it.

The paradigm indicates values beyond human and environmental ones. These life values are produced by the creation and internalization in the context of the interaction between humans and nature. So, it is not only necessary to found organizations and institutions but also to focus on the people who constitute them and operate based on the production of meanings, since this is the place of production, in humans, where life may happen.

"Life in the jungle — when once one is adjusted to it — runs along about as smoothly as it does at home, and oftentimes more so" Schultes (1991, p. 5).

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