



**THE EFFECTS OF AIR POLLUTION SALIENCE AND PLACE ATTACHMENT ON
SUPPORTING AN ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATION**

**Hannah Jean Samowitz (Monisha Pasupathi)
Department of Psychology**

Previous research has shown that people living in areas affected by environmental problems are more likely to engage in pro-environmental behaviors; this effect is augmented for individuals with greater attachment to the affected area. Salt Lake City (SLC), Utah, experiences frequent periods of diminished air quality due to its mountainous geography that traps air pollution from cars and factories. To observe the effect of these bad-air days, we conducted 2 studies with different methodologies. In Study 1, participants ($n=76$) completing an online survey were divided randomly into an experimental and control group. The experimental group was initially asked to respond to a photo of SLC on a bad-air day, while the control group was asked to respond to a photo of SLC on a good-air day. The rest of the survey was the same for both groups: we assessed participants' degrees of attachment to natural areas in and around SLC, and as a measure of pro-environmental behavior, participants were asked to allocate \$5 between three local charities, one of which was HEAL Utah, an environmental activism organization. Results showed that participants who saw a photo of SLC with smog and had higher attachment to natural areas in and around SLC donated more money to HEAL Utah compared to those who saw a photo on a clear day and/or had lower attachment. Study 2 was conducted in the University of Utah's Student Union building, where researchers acted as tablers for HEAL Utah and recorded interest in the table for 18 days in the winter of 2018. Results showed a significant negative correlation between local air quality during the time of tabling and interest in the table, though further analyses of the robustness of the results are underway. Findings from both studies have implications for motivating pro-environmental behavior, especially in the context of supporting environmental organizations that work to bring together diverse stakeholders to address climate change and its consequences.