Abstract

This study focuses on the impact of a college education on recycling rates. Higher education often allows people to see the impact of their individual behaviors on the environment and introduces them to methods of reducing environmental harm. While the educational aspect of attending college may increase recycling rates, the institutional barriers of an actual college environment (e.g., information about proper recycling on/around campus or recycling bins provided around campus) may inhibit an individual's recycling ability, despite their existing knowledge.

There are many factors to take into consideration when examining recycling rates among individuals. What one believes the impact of their actions (e.g., recycling) may significantly change their behaviors towards the environment, as well as their knowledge of conservation strategies. Knowledge of climate change and biospheric concerns also significantly impacts one’s willingness to donate to or volunteer for environmental causes (Katz-Gerro, 2015). On this front, (college) educated people tend to be in favor of efforts towards sustainability, such as recycling and hybrid car ownership. In fact, a college degree is seen as the most associated predictor of pro-environmental behaviors (Laidley, 2013).

While a link between college education and environmentally friendly behaviors in general (Laidley, 2013), it is important to see if the institutions responsible for education are doing their part to contribute to practical knowledge of and ability to recycle on their campuses, and whether these physical or institutional boundaries created by the school are inhibiting people's frequency of recycling.

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