



Flora Jiaxuan Xu

Ph.D. Student in Environment and Resources, admitted Autumn 2023

Bio

BIO

Flora Jiaxuan Xu is a PhD candidate in the Emmett Interdisciplinary Program in Environment and Resources (E-IPER) at Stanford University, working at the intersection of environmental psychology, civil and environmental engineering, urban design, and behavioral science. Her research investigates how people define, experience, and internalize “nature” as part of the self, and how psychological, cultural, and built-environment factors shape human–nature relationships in contemporary cities.

Drawing on theories of identity, perception, cultural psychology, and ecological systems, Flora proposes Nature Identity as a new interdisciplinary framework for understanding how nature becomes woven into self-concept and everyday meaning-making. She employs a broad mixed-methods approach—including qualitative interviews, quantitative modeling, ecological momentary assessment, photovoice, and human-centered design—to examine how urban nature influences wellbeing, identity formation, and environmental behavior. In parallel, she develops creative, design-driven solutions such as immersive installations, biophilic illusions, narrative and sensory interventions, and technology-enabled building features that aim to strengthen nature connection and promote climate engagement in urban settings.

Flora works with the Social Ecology Lab and the Billington Lab, as well as external partners in urban design, behavioral science, and immersive storytelling. Her work seeks to bridge scientific research with real-world application, advancing strategies that integrate psychology, culture, and design to foster healthier and more nature-responsive cities.

Prior to Stanford, Flora completed an M.S. in Environmental Health at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and holds B.A. degrees in Sustainable Environmental Design and Cognitive Science from the University of California, Berkeley.

EDUCATION AND CERTIFICATIONS

- M.S., Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health , Environmental Health (2023)
- B.A., University of California, Berkeley , Cognitive Science (2020)
- B.A., University of California, Berkeley , Sustainable Environmental Design (2020)