

Summary

The present research aims to investigate the relationship between present and future generations, with regard to the uncertain effects of climate change in the distant future. More specifically, this research attempts to answer the following question: how can individuals be motivated to adopt pro-environmental behaviours in order to protect the interests and needs of future people? The interest for this investigation stems notably from two factors. On the one hand, through the exploration of the relevant literature, we have recognized that small or little attention has been given to the question of individual moral motivation regarding the actions to be taken against global warming. Thus, this research aims to contribute to this discussion and to fill a significant gap in the literature. On the other hand, we believe in the individual's role in being at the same time a contributor to climate change and a fundamental trigger for possible effective solutions. The individuals' motivation to act in their interpersonal and political lives to benefit future people can be a powerful change-setter at the social, national and, eventually, international level as a spill over effect. In particular, we hold that attempting to solve the question of individuals' moral motivation would be a valuable alternative to the option of imposing a green authoritarianism. Indeed, the threat posed by climate change would require a major government intervention and demanding present sacrifices, which cannot be implemented merely through coercion, but they need to find legitimacy and justification among people. This very disposition would be possible through well-informed citizens and morally enhanced individuals, personally motivated to take actions for the benefit of future people.

Owing to this, throughout our research, we wished to test the following two hypothesis. The first holds that future generations as object of our concerns and beneficial actions set several problems, both on the conceptual and motivational level resulting in a major limit for individuals' actions against climate change. Consequently, according to the second hypothesis, due to the necessity of a long-term perspective and the adoption of pro-environmental behaviours, a possible way to motivate individuals to act could be the instilling of intergenerational virtues, which are more likely to subsist with respect to the concept of humanity than with the one of future generations. Put differently, through the verification of these two hypothesis, we wished to demonstrate that in the context of intergenerational relations and with respect to the distant future, a discourse centred on duties and moral obligations toward future generations fail to motivate individuals. Indeed, we hold that the very object of these obligations reveals conceptual and motivational flaws, which make the fulfilment of these moral demands much harder to be met. For this reason, a valuable alternative can be the development of intergenerational virtues, which are particular kind of dispositions mainly based on positive moral emotions that are considered to trigger both individuals' self-improvement and pro-social actions. However, due to the shortcomings of future generations, we

deem necessary to make reference to a new concept toward which intergenerational virtues can actually subsist. In this respect, humanity as an imagined transgenerational community can better address the conceptual and motivational flaws of future generations.

In order to answer our research question and verify our hypothesis, the present research has conducted a qualitative analysis, adopting a multidisciplinary approach, which ranges from political theory to social psychology and moral philosophy. The investigation is developed at the individual level and the dependent variable is, indeed, the question of moral motivation, which concerns individuals when dealing with global warming's effects in the distant future. The question of moral motivation is defined as the individuals' difficulty to fill the psychological and moral gap between the acceptance of a rule and the actual action in accordance with it. This kind of motivation problem affects the majority of our decisions making processes and actions, as the acceptance and implementation of a rule is hardly always straightforward and it needs to overcome several psychological constraints. In the particular case of climate change, the motivation problem is enhanced, especially when individuals are asked to adopt pro-environmental behaviours for the benefit of future generations. Indeed, most of the people do not have a direct perception of their responsibility in causing global warming and, consequently, they do not feel any obligation to act against it. At the same time, when they do want to act, they often find themselves unsure about which are the most effective practices to adopt and they need to cope with the high level of uncertainty that characterizes the distant future.

To address our research problem, we have considered as independent variables the role of emotions and the one of social representations, making reference respectively to the *social intuitionist model* of Jonathan Haidt (2011) and the *social representation theory* of Serge Moscovi (1961). Indeed, emotions can play a determinant role in people's decision making processes and they can be powerful motivation triggers. Whilst, we also believe that words matter a lot, especially in the context of global warming where individuals' action passes through information and effective environmental education. With respect to an issue as the one of global warming's future effects in the distant future and the related development of just intergenerational relations, we deem that concepts or social representations can help individuals to relate with the issue in a more effective way. This happens particularly when the normative, cognitive and affective dimension of concepts positively reinforce each other. In addition to this, the research considered several empirical evidence, which served as a basis for conducting its analysis and drawing the consequent implications. For instance, it has made reference to a survey conducted by the American Psychology Association (APA)'s research group for the interface between psychology and global climate change, and also to several researches made by Professor Kimberly A. Wade-Benzoni, who has dedicated much of her work on the study of intergenerational behaviour and decision-making.

The thesis is composed of four chapters, each of them dealing with different aspects of our investigations. Namely, chapter one provides a general and critical overview of the literature regarding intergenerational relations, attempting to stress the main debates and challenges on three levels of analysis: the institutional, theoretical and individual level. The aim of this literature review, which by no means pretends to be exhaustive, was to illustrate gaps and opportunities of investigation, in order to show the reader our background knowledge regarding intergenerational relations and to justify on what grounds is based the focus of our study. Following this line, the second chapter is dedicated to the illustration of the theoretical foundations and assumptions of the present research. This chapter is divided in two parts: in the first one, we lingered on the clarification of the main components of our research question, attempting to illustrate the main assumptions underlying this investigation. Namely, we based our research on three simple assumptions: we assume that individuals are responsible for causing climate change and we deem that what matters morally is individuals' well-being. Moreover, we shared Bernard Williams' view that all reasons to action are internal to the individuals and that people cannot have any motivation to act, which at the same time has no link with what individuals deeply care about (Chappell, 2015). The second part, instead, is dedicated to the exploration of the relevant theories utilized and applied in the analysis' part. We decided to explore these theories following a crescent path: we started from a theory that analyses how people's mind works individually and then through social interactions. Indeed, reference is made to the *two system theory* of professor Daniel Kahneman (2012), which shows how the emotional and intuitive part of our brain often prevails over the rational part, characterized by control and conscious deliberation. Consequently, moving to the social level, we made reference to the social representation theory of Serge Moscovi (1961), realizing how people form socially constructed representations in order to make unfamiliar objects and concepts part of their common sense understanding. With respect to complicated quandaries such as the one of climate change, this theory helped us to recognize how concepts and frames actually matter for people's understanding and actions. Moreover, both the two theories highlighted the role of emotions, as influencing factors that help rationality to make sense of the world, directing people's attention and providing motivation for their actions. In this respect, reference is made to the social intuitionist model of Jonathan Haidt, according to which individuals formulate moral judgements through the experience of "gut feelings" that lead them to conclude if something is right or wrong, while the moral reasoning happens in a second moment.

Moving forward, the third and fourth chapter are devoted to the part of analysis, where we attempted to apply the theories previously illustrated and to verify respectively the first and second hypothesis. More specifically, part one of the analysis showed how emotions can influence decision-making and individuals' motivation with regard to climate change and the distant future.

In this chapter, we discovered how global warming actually concerns people, but even though individuals are aware of the fact that they should act, at the same time, they fail to do so. In the attempt to find an explanation to this behaviour, through the analysis, we realized that global warming and its effects in the distant future often fail to trigger powerful moral emotions, such as guilt and shame, and that, most importantly, the very object of concern, future generations, lacks important emotional triggering features. Indeed, the concept of future generations presents several problems, on the institutional, theoretical and individual level, and these very conceptual and psychological shortcomings result in a major limit for individuals' motivation to act.

At the institutional level, future generations create a problem in so far as they are not easily identifiable and they cannot represent their interests and themselves when long-term decisions are made in the present. There are also controversies regarding whether it is possible to appoint effective rights to future generations, because they are not yet existing. Furthermore, problems of similar nature are observed also on the theoretical level, where the first concern regards the very determination and definition of generations. Indeed, individuals do not come into existence at a determinate time of entry and they do not cease to exist all together at a certain time. On the contrary, there is an ongoing flux of entry and exit. Thus, in order to define a generations, it is essential to define a precise starting point, but the very determination of this point of beginning is not easy and slight changes can have deep repercussions on policy decisions and theoretical designs (Gardiner, 2011). Moreover, the difficulty to assess the duration of a generation is also increased by the possibility that two or more generations can overlap with each other. In that case, the borders are blurred and it becomes difficult to define which generations is responsible for the following one and, consequently, which generation should bear sacrifices and costs. Generally speaking, individuating a generation is not straightforward and according to how we define it, we have different time spans and different theoretical and policy implications (Gardiner, 2003).

However, more problems can be observed at the individual level. In this regard, we believe that the very concept of future generations plays an important role in setting several difficulties for our moral motivation. Indeed, having future generations as the object of our moral concerns is not something that comes straightforward, in so far as it is really hard to have emotional connections for people that are undetermined and faceless to us. Because of their anonymity, future generations do not trigger any direct and intuitive feeling or emotion in people's mind and they remain obscurely indefinite. Owing to this, individuals need *to think* about the well-being of future generations and when they are asked to make difficult trade-offs between urgent and present needs compared to the ones located in the distant future, it is easy that present demands will take precedence. This idea can be clearer if we make reference to the two-system theory of Professor

Kahneman, indeed we can imagine how the concept of future generations activates the slower part of our brain which requires cognitive efforts and reflection, having no leverage on the emotional and faster part, which has resulted to be the prevailing one.

In addition to this, the spatial and temporal distance that separates present generations from the future ones makes the future victims of global warming less similar to ourselves in comparison to contemporary people (Markowitz and Shariff, 2012). Indeed, present people do not have any direct interactions or relations with future generations and, for this reason, they know little and almost nothing about their future identities, their interests, their worldviews and their values. Thus, what is missing is a real sense of affinity and similarity between distant generations. We can describe affinity as a combination of empathy and perceived closeness and the lack of it between present and future people has two important consequences. Firstly, people very dissimilar from ourselves and, at the extreme, perceived as out-group members can be considered as less deserving of moral standard (Harris, 2006). On the other hand, various research experiments conducted in psychology have demonstrate how an increase of intergenerational affinity may help to perceive future people as belonging to a more immediate and personal sphere. Besides, the sense of affinity and of shared group identity are important factors for the development of moral emotions such as empathy, care and compassion (Wade-Benzoni and Tost, 2009:171). Secondly, the more the future victims of climate are dissimilar and temporarily and spatially distant, the more present generations feel less obliged to act in order to protect and promote their well-being (Markowitz and Shariff, 2012).

Finally, the perceived considerable gap between the present and the distant future sets a tempting situation for social discounting characterized by egocentric biases or, in other words, for what Gardiner calls the intergenerational buck-passing behaviour. In this regard, each generational will be tempted to secure benefits for itself, while leaving costs and eventual negative drawbacks for the future. The worrisome aspect of the buck- passing behaviour is that it can be easily iterated, in so far as each generation will have a personal and selfish incentive to accumulate benefits and to avoid costs. This behaviour is very similar to a form of what we may call intergenerational free ride behaviour or, as Gardiner describes it, as a form of tyranny of the contemporary. A similar and more familiar example to us can be the one of a student who procrastinates believing that her future self will deal with eventual problems later on. For this reason, it is possible to argue that the conceptualization of time divided in generations contributes to the making and iteration of the buck-passing problem, as present generations know that they can always shift costs and burdens on future and distant people.

Owing to this, because of the emotional and conceptual limitations of future generations, before addressing precisely our research question, through this chapter we illustrated the necessity to find a new object of people's care, concern and actions, which may be more reliable on an emotional basis and, thus, able to trigger an inner motivation to act. In fact, if we wish to study how to motivate individuals to protect and promote the well-being of future generations, this would be a quite hard challenge if we continue to use the very concept, which has revealed to be a major constraint for action. Owing to this, making reference to the social representation theory, we explained how it is necessary to find a new concept or social representation able to overcome the flaws of future generations, namely it should reduce the perception of temporal distance and consequent temporal discounting, while increasing the sense of similarity and affinity of identity between present and distant generations. Following this line, we introduced the concept of humanity, attempting to prove its validity and suitability.

The concept of humanity stretches across various disciplines and currents of thought, assuming different connotations and characteristics. The number of interpretations is considerable and it requires more dedication than the one available for this research. For this reason, when talking about humanity, we wished to refer to it as a working definition, based on a determinate understanding of the human condition and able to meet the conceptual and motivational flaws of future generations. Hence, we start from an assumption that all human beings share the same moral identity¹, which is intimately connected to what characterizes an individual in his or her sense of self and life's project (Hardy, 2005), thus, something which, we think, might join all individuals in a more independent way from their cultural, historical and temporal dimension. This shared moral identity determines a human condition, characterized by the individuals' constant desire and tension to create relevance and significance in their life. According to Professor John Vervaeke², what makes human beings special is their capacity to care about what they do in their life and the fact that they attempt to realize relevance and value. For instance, in comparison to other animal species and forms of artificial intelligence, human beings do not only process information or pay attention to what surrounds them, but they also attempt to find and create something in which they can invest commitment and passion. Consequently, the tension toward the creation of significance and relevance contributes to the creation of many diverse systems of traditions, culture, beliefs, projects of life and institutions.

¹ By shared identity in a transgenerational community, we do not want to refer to an idea of identity anchored on specific culturally based values, in so far as we wish, indeed, to consider a community which largely expands through time, comprising a vast number of individuals living in different periods of time and places. For this reason, when considering the passage of time, elements of change are inevitable and we cannot expect that people in the future will share the same exact values, traditions and culture (Noonan and Curtis, 2014).

² John Vervaeke is professor at the University of Toronto, teaching in the Cognitive Science program, in the Psychology department and in the Buddhism, Psychology and Mental Health program.

Owing to this, we considered humanity as an imagined transgenerational community of systems of relevance and significance, which embraces past, present and future individuals. In this regard, we conceive humanity as the group of communities, traditions, history, cultures, projects and social understandings that create a framework of reference, where individuals can exercise their ways of life, valuing attitudes and relevant connections. In other words, humanity represents the background of significance and meaning in which the unfolding of people's lives takes place. Indeed, humankind as a species requires not only to be surrounded by the environmental world, from which it depends for its survival, but also by a cultural and historical background in which the results of its actions and understanding are collected and preserved. We believe that humanity can exercise a better emotional appeal and connection on individuals in comparison to future generations, as it is possible to recognize among people a certain tension to care about and to protect humanity and its fate. For instance, it is worth mentioning the widely recognized effort to preserve and protect the common heritage of humankind, formalized through the UNESCO Convention on World Heritage in 1975³. In this, it is possible to see a generalized commitment of people and states to adopt, through international law, a cosmopolitan view in order to preserve the heritage composed by the collective culture and natural sites. This pledge has been made with a clear intention to benefit future generations and to avoid a possible tragedy of commons in the future, and when we acknowledge that a natural or cultural site has been ruined or is in risk of being permanently damaged, we often encounter an immediate feeling of discomfort and sorrow. We think that it is in this feeling that we can read a more unconscious concern to protect humanity's collective history and memory which stands against the passage of time and which is often interpreted as the mere consolation against the inescapability of death. It seems that there is, indeed, an inner motivation to preserve determinate elements, as results of the practices of significance and relevance of humankind through history. Furthermore, some scholars argue that there is a duty to protect humanity in virtue of its uniqueness in the world. As we have seen through the exploration of the main characteristics of the human conditions, there is indeed a special distinctiveness, which makes human beings and the result of their actions unique in their own kind and, for the simple reason of being unique, there is also a duty to protect and preserve their existence (Di Paola, 2013: 505).

Most importantly, what we wished to underline was that the emotional strength of our working definition lies in the intimate relation of dependence and, thus, connection between individuals and the existence of humanity. We hold that the very performance of the human condition and human

³ Information retrieved from: <http://en.unesco.org/>

flourishing depend on the ongoing existence of the background framework of humanity. People create, see and share significance and meanings within a determinate background, without which those very actions would become pointless. This thought is supported by extensive literature and by several researches in psychology. We can reasonably suppose, as Sheffler does in his work *Death and the Afterlife* (2013), that most of the activities in which people profusely spend commitment, passion and value are made having in mind the ongoing existence of humanity in the future. If that very long-term possibility is eliminated, most of our activities will lose value and will become worthless. For instance, among these activities we can mention the simplest ones as the project of having a family and to have children, but also others such as the commitment to improve institutions, the willingness to conduct research for curing diseases or for advancing technologies, and many others more. Moreover, apart from these desires, as previously seen, human beings care about the protection and preservation of traditions and cultures, which have been passed on them through history. The extreme case of the disappearance of humanity will weaken people's ability to get engage in their lives and it will generate a depressive power on people's enthusiasm and confidence (Sheffler, 2013). In this respect, Sheffler writes, *"I find it plausible to suppose that such a world would be a world characterized by widespread apathy, anomie and despair; by the erosion of social institutions and social solidarity; by the deterioration of the physical environment; and by a pervasive loss of conviction about the value or point of many activities"* (Sheffler, 2013: 40). Thus, one of the striking conclusions of Sheffler's work is that the ongoing existence of humanity, which is the existence in the future of people and systems of significance and relevance, actually has a major relevance for us than our own survival and the survival of the people we care about.

The plausibility of the reaction that we have hypothesized in our scenario is reinforced by various researches in psychology. Indeed, extensive research in personality's studies and social psychology, especially regarding intergenerational behaviour, has shown how individuals, conscious of their own inescapable death, have a personal desire to invest their capacities and efforts in something which will outlive themselves. In social psychology this desire is called generativity, which is "the desire to invest one's substance in form of life and work that will outlive the self (Kotre, 1984), or, more specifically, as concern for and commitment to the well-being of future generations" (Wade-Benzoni and Tost, 2009: 182). This desire is generally understood as the consequence of another inner desire which stems from individuals' awareness of their own death and which regards to feel as one has mattered in her life and to expand oneself in the future in the form of a symbolic immortality. People have a desire to invest and engage themselves in activities and projects that will leave a meaningful legacy (especially a positive legacy) in the future, so that it will work as an imaginative self-extension (Wade-Benzoni and Tost, 2009). However, this desire of self-extension and generativity is based on the very important assumption that there will be a collective afterlife

of people and significance in the future. If that very possibility is eliminated, not only the scenario of death will become much more horrifying, but also people will lose interests in engaging in meaningful projects and commitments. Thus, if our second hypothetical reaction to human extinction is true, we can hold that individuals care about humanity, both as the collective afterlife that will come in the future (on which individuals' projects depend on) and as the collective memory and history that people wish to preserve and protect through time. Thus, the most important aspect of humanity is that its ongoing existence in the future deeply affect the lives of present people. The strong expectation that there will be a continuation of humanity in the future represent a powerful assumption in people's lives, as their valuing attitudes depend on that very context.

Furthermore, the concept of humanity attempts also to meet the conceptual flaws of future generations, in particular attempting to reduce the level of indeterminateness, temporal distance and lack of affinity. Indeed, humanity refers to a spatial-temporal dimension that includes also the present, representing a continuum of generations, overlapped and interconnected with each other. If with the concept of future generations, people were intuitively drawn to think merely about the distant future, triggering free-riding reactions and emotional detachment, with humanity people are invited to consider a community, which is also part of their current realities and experiences. Most importantly, humanity as an imagined transgenerational community of systems of significance and relevance refers to something that people can relate with in their everyday life and that can be easily identified. For instance, traditions, cultures and communities of belonging are elements with which individuals engage and activate processes of social identification.

Owing to this, the fourth chapter addresses the second part of the analysis, thus essaying to demonstrate the second hypothesis, namely if a possible way to solve the motivation problem of individuals could be the development of intergenerational virtues that are more likely to subsist with respect to the transgenerational community of humanity than with respect to future generations. By virtue we refer to a psychological disposition and a character trait which is deeply entangled with its possessor. More specifically, a virtue is a complex mindset, which involves emotions, values, choices, desires, attitudes, perceptions, sensibilities and interests. Thus, a virtue is a multi-faces disposition aimed at reaching a determinate purpose, often involving an inner struggle against contrary desires (Hursthouse, 2015). As a subcategory of virtues, civic virtues are those particular dispositions, which are connected to the individual's life in a society and which are considered to be important for the well-being of a community (Crittendend and Levine, 2015). For this reason, as civic virtues are necessary to keep a community together, ensuring its prosperity and flourishing, at the same time we deem that intergenerational virtues would operate in the same way but with regard to an intergenerational community and context. As one might expect, the difference

between the two cases is that the transgenerational community object of investigation is much bigger, with no clear boundaries and stretching indefinitely through time. However, it is also true that the sacrifices required are also more modest, as, for example, there will be no request to die for the community of humanity, but other types of demands, such as consuming less gas and meat or water.

With respect to this research, we illustrated five types of virtue that, if applied in the intergenerational context, would be helpful to motivate individuals to care about the well-being of future people. These five intergenerational virtues, namely loyalty, beneficence, gratitude, mindfulness and curiosity, are aimed at strengthening the sense of belonging and attachment together with the flourishing of the transgenerational community represented by humanity. For each intergenerational virtue, we attempted to illustrate on what basis they can subsist in the humanity's community and thus to what extent they could motivate individuals to adopt pro-environmental behaviors.

We believe that the strength of this argument lies both on the emotional and psychological appeal of the humanity's community itself and on the nature of the chosen virtues. Indeed, what we deem important regarding the described intergenerational virtues is that in each of them it is possible to recognize aspects that also benefit the individuals well-being and which are connected to what individuals intimately care about. Embracing the *internal reason thesis* of Bernard Williams, we hold that individuals' motivation to act has to be linked with what individuals care about and to their inner necessities (Chappell, 2015). Owing to this, we have decided to concentrate on these determinate virtues because they do not solely aim to set pro-social behaviors within a community, but they also accommodate the inner necessities and often unconscious desires of individuals. Loyalty provides psychological security and safety, by enhancing self-esteem and self-perception; benevolence and gratitude meet the desire of self-extension and of symbolic immortality through the creation of a connection with future people; mindfulness and especially curiosity help individuals to engage in their lives in a positive and active way, contributing to the search for meaning in life. To a certain extent, these virtues exploit the individuals' motivation to achieve personal flourishing and fulfillment in life, triggering at the same time pro-social behaviors and dispositions. For this reason, we think that the development of these intergenerational virtues, which are prudentially and morally good, can be more efficacious than the external imposition or enforcement of determinate actions. In the intergenerational context, the intergenerational virtues, because based on the people's concern for the fate of humanity and for their own well-being, can be able to motivate pro-environmental behaviors and caring attitudes toward the distant future.

Owing to this, having described the nature and role of these virtues within the transgenerational community of humanity, at this point of our research we attempted to present a general panoramic of the various ways through which practically instill intergenerational dispositions into individuals, stressing their strengths and interesting aspects. By no means the practices illustrated represent the most suitable instruments and, indeed, due to the limited scope of our research, we left space to further research and exploration for the design of more specific suggestions and possible means. Thus, we stressed the role of education, because as civic education acts as a way to instill determinate behaviors useful for the life in a society, in the same way education can help individuals to adopt a cosmopolitan sensibility and awareness, setting the condition for the spring of intergenerational dispositions. With respect to the quandary of climate change and the distant future, an education based in particular on awareness and reflection can make the difference. Furthermore, apart from the role of education, other quite ambitious researches have suggested the possibility of moral enhancement through biomedical and genetic means (Persson and Savulescu, 2008). At the basis of this suggestion, there is the idea that individuals' moral dispositions are not a mere product of culture, but they are mainly based on people's biology, in particular the disposition of altruism and of a sense of fairness, thus allowing the possibility of biomedical and genetic treatment. However, both these two mechanisms are no free from objections and there are several difficulties regarding how to practically instill these types of virtues.

In conclusion, we attempted to assess the overall work, stressing both several limitations that have emerged in the present research and contributions. We believe that one of the strongest objection regards the very concept of humanity. Although, we have attempted to demonstrate that humanity can work better than future generations, at the same time we acknowledge the objection moved by several scholars according to which the concept of humanity might be too abstract and essentialist in order to be a proper object of care. The philosopher and professor Brinbacher (2009) has argued that it is common to devote actions and projects for the sake of humanity, but this reveals itself to be an easy commitment to make in a theoretical and abstract way, but much more difficult to feel and to put into practices. In response to this objection, we wish to stress that the aim of our working definition of humanity was actually to avoid any essentialist or abstract community and to attempt, instead, to embrace a background of significance and relevance with which people daily relate, depend on and create meaningful connections and projects. Moreover, the strength of the concept of humanity in comparison to the one of future generations is represented by its being a transgenerational community, which includes past, present and also future people. The temporal and cognitive distance triggered by the concept of future generations, can be highly reduced when reasoning in terms of humanity. Owing to this, even though we acknowledge the limitations

belonging to the concept of humanity, at the same time we hold that it can help to partially meet the emotional and conceptual gap present when thinking about future generations alone.

Following this line, it is also worthy to acknowledge that some scholars have proposed different suggestions in order to encourage pro-environmental behaviours. For instance, instead of the concept of humanity, some have advanced the one of ecological citizenship, whose theory aims at promoting life-style changes based on a radical rethinking of individuals' relationship with the environment. According to this, the ecological citizenship entails a new idea of individual responsibility, where the personal obligations depend on individuals' ecological footprint (Jagers et al, 2004). Moreover, other studies have attempted to investigate the relationship between religion and sustainability and, thus, how religious belief can help individuals to adopt pro-environmental behaviours for the benefit of future people. We acknowledge the fact that the concept of humanity is not the only mean aimed at solving the motivation problem, but at the same time we hold that the particularity of this concept lies in its capacity to project people's attitudes toward the distant future and in its being intimately connected to the very nature of human beings, regardless of different political systems and cultures.

Another limitation of our work regards the difficulty of actually instilling intergenerational virtues into individuals. In our research we have attempted to illustrate possible ways to do so, but they can be vulnerable to several objections. For instance, the suggestion of using education to develop determinate dispositions runs the risk to be judged paternalistic and there are no clear directives in order to know how and what things should be taught. On the other hand, the practice of moral enhancement through biomedical means is still at its embryonic stage and there is no common agreement among scholars whether this type of practices would be preferable or not, despite its intriguing nature. For this reason in particular, we believe that the second hypothesis is only partially verified, as although we have attempted to demonstrate how a different concept is needed and how intergenerational virtues with regard to humanity can motivate individuals, at the same time, the development of these very virtues presents some constraints. Further research and investigation is surely needed in this area.

However, despite the limitations and shortcomings, we believe in the contribution of this study in suggesting a possible way to motivate individuals, while filling a relevant gap in the literature and stressing the role of emotions and social representations in shaping people's attitudes and motivation. Through our findings we wish to encourage further research and investigation. Indeed, experimental and more practical studies in psychology may help to base our results on more reliable data, disclosing more motivating factors or constraints. Moreover, the study of the moral motivation problem can support and can be aligned with other open debates in this field, such as

the ones regarding which obligations and how much should individuals sacrifice for the future, contributing to the creation of an entangling and vivid area of research. To conclude, as previously mentioned, we think that individuals' action can make a difference in the process of mitigation and adaptation regarding climate change. Most importantly, it can trigger a systematic change that sparks from everyday practices and it transforms itself in new political decisions and agreements. Thus, the understanding of individuals' motivation to act is of vital importance.