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Personal and Planetary Well-being: Mindfulness Meditation, Pro-environmental Behavior and Personal Quality of Life in a Survey from the Social Justice and Ecological Sustainability Movement

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Abstract

Employing data from a mailed survey of a sample of ecologically and spiritually aware respondents (N = 829), the study tests the hypothesized relationship between ecologically sustainable behavior (ESB) and subjective well-being (SWB). The proposed link between ESB and SWB is the spiritual practice of mindfulness meditation (MM). In multiple regression equations ESB and MM independently explain statistically significant amounts of variance in SWB, indicating, for at least the study's sample, that there can be a relationship between personal and planetary well-being. The inter-relationships among SWB, ESB and MM

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suggest that for specific segments of the general population (e.g., the spiritually inclined) there may not necessarily be an insurmountable conflict between an environmentally responsible lifestyle and personal quality of life. The research reported here also points to the potential for meditative/mindful experiences to play a prominent role in the explanation of variance in SWB, a direction in QoL studies recently highlighted by several researchers (Layard 2005, pp. 189–192; Nettle 2005, pp. 153–160; Haidt 2006).

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Notes

1. Hypothesis 1, the predicted relationship between MM and ESB, from Fig. 1 is not taken up in the multiple regression equations in order to use the space available to focus on explaining variance in SWB. Spirituality measures, however, did continue to explain variance in multiple regression equations with the ESB measures as dependent variables, although the spirituality indicator, feeling pleasure in simple tasks like doing the dishes, ended up as the best predictor of the ESB measures rather than MM. A tabular specification of these results is

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available from the corresponding author upon request.

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