

Connectedness with Nature & Support in Life through Spirituality

Elisabeth Hefler, Doris Zeidler, and Renate Cervinka*)

Medical University of Vienna, Center for Public Health, Institute of Environmental Health

*) Mail to: renate.cervinka@meduniwien.ac.at



© Hefler, 2008

Background

- Endeavours in nature are often associated with spiritual encounters.
- In spite of this, the relationships between spirituality or transcendental issues and environmental issues have not been investigated thoroughly in environmental psychology, the only exception being Schultz et al. (2000).
- Spirituality is defined as „... an individual and open approach in the search for meaning and purpose in life, as a search for transcendental truth which may include a sense of connectedness with others, nature, and/or the divine“ (Büssing et al., 2005, p. 2). The authors found one factor, “Support in Life through Spirituality” (SLSp), positively correlated with pro-environmental attitudes.
- Traces of spirituality can be found in diverse measures of Connectedness with Nature (e.g. CNS: Mayer & Frantz, 2004; EID: Clayton, 2003; NR: Nisbet et al., 2008).
- Transcendental aspects seem to be important elements in the human-nature-relationship. Further, they are considered as preventive factors for well-being and health (Bonelli, 2007).
- In several studies we investigated Connectedness with Nature with well-being in detail and correlated it (Cervinka & Hefler, submitted; Cervinka, Hefler & Zeidler, submitted).

Objectives

- Our aim was to relate Connectedness with Nature to Support in Life through Spirituality.

Methods

- In two studies (total $N = 216$, general population aged from 18 to 79) we investigated Connectedness with Nature with respect to Support in Life through Spirituality.
- We applied two Connectedness with Nature-scales, the CNS in German language ($\alpha = .86$) and the Connectedness with Nature single-item (CN-SI), together with a ten-item Support in Life through Spirituality-scale ($\alpha = .96$), see Cervinka et al. (submitted).

Results & Discussion

- The two Connectedness with Nature measures CNS and CN-SI correlated significantly ($r = .533, p = .000$).
- The correlation with SLSp was more pronounced for the CNS ($r = .478, p = .000$; see [figure 1](#)) than for the CN-SI ($r = .240, p = .014$).
- To explore constructs we computed a Principal Component Factor Analysis (Varimax rotation) of the CNS-items together with the SLSp-items. Results revealed three factors with Eigenvalues higher than one, explaining 65 % of variance. We found one “spirituality factor” and two “Connectedness with Nature factors”, one with transcendental content and one without transcendental content.
- Eight of the 13 CNS-items correlated moderately with the “spirituality factor”. These items are displayed in [table 1](#).
- We found Support in Life through Spirituality being substantial to the CNS and less associated with the CN-SI, indicating the CNS as a measure of the emotional-transcendental dimension of Connectedness with Nature. This is an enlargement of Mayer & Frantz’s (2004) proposal.
- Further, we suggest a “sense of belonging” as a higher order concept that would allow for a more comprehensive consideration of all the different aspects of connectedness (e.g. connectedness to nature, connectedness with the divine, or connectedness to others).

References

Bonelli, R. M. (2007). Ist der Faktor „Religiosität“ in der modernen Psychiatrie relevant? *Psychiatrie & Psychotherapie*, 3 (1), 14-22.

Büssing, A., Ostermann, T. & Matthiessen, P.F. (2005). Role of religion and spirituality in medical patients: Confirmatory results with the SpREUK questionnaire. *Health and Quality of Life Outcomes*, 3/10.

Cervinka, R. & Hefler E. (submitted). Connectedness with Nature, well-being, and time spent in nature for recreational purposes.

Cervinka, R., Hefler E. & Zeidler D. (submitted). Measuring Connectedness with Nature beyond borders.

Clayton, S. (2003). Environmental identity: A conceptual and an operational definition. In Clayton, S. & Opatow, S. (Eds.), *Identity and the natural environment: The psychological significance of nature* (pp. 45-65). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Mayer, F.S. & Frantz, C. (2004). The connectedness to nature scale: A measure of individuals’ feeling in community with nature. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 24, 503-515.

Nisbet, E.K.L., Zelenski, J.M. & Murphy, S.A. (2008). The Nature Relatedness Scale: Linking individuals’ connection with nature to environmental concern and behavior. *Environment and Behavior*, doi:10.1177/0013916508318748.

Schultz, P.W., Zelezny, L. & Dalrymple, N.J. (2000). A multinational perspective on the relation between Judeo-Christian religious beliefs and attitudes of environmental concern. *Environment & Behaviour*, 32, 576-591.

Item Examples

CNS (Mayer & Frantz, 2004)

- I often feel a kinship with animals and plants.
- I feel as though I belong to the earth as equally as it belongs to me.
- I often feel that all inhabitants of Earth, human and nonhuman, share a common “life-force”.
- Like a tree can be part of a forest, I feel embedded within the broader natural world.

SLSp (Cervinka, Hefler & Zeidler, submitted)

- Spirituality helps to manage life more consciously.
- Spirituality promotes inner strength.
- Spirituality helps to deal better with illness.
- Distinct places stimulate Spirituality.
- Spirituality provides a feeling of contentment and inner peace.

Correlation Analysis

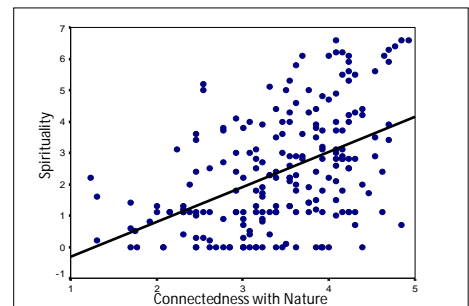


Figure 1. Pearson Correlation between CNS and SLSp

	CNS 2	CNS 5	CNS 6	CNS 7	CNS 8	CNS 9	CNS 10	CNS 11
Spirituality <i>r</i>	.302	.330	.393	.417	.338	.316	.354	.419
<i>p</i>	.003	.001	.000	.000	.001	.002	.000	.000

Table 1. Pearson Correlations between individual CNS items and SLSp



© Heindl, 2008