

Spirituality and the Natural World: The Intricate Connector of People and Nature?

Sarah Jackson¹, M.S. and Dr. Ryan Sharp¹, Ph.D.

¹. Kansas State University



Introduction

The connection that draws individuals to the natural world is an intricate point of reflection and reveals the subjective and objective composition of an intriguing concept. The process of describing the draw that individuals feel to immerse themselves in nature-based experiences is one that conveys the diversity in how each individual details their relation with nature. Factors including emotions, motivations, place attachment, and place characteristics are influences that could describe and form an individual's description of spirituality (Heintzman, 2012; Manning, 2011). Internal and external aspects compose spirituality and unveil the gravity that it could have on the foundational meanings for an individual and their viewpoint of life (Hodge, 2003). Thus, spirituality can hold varying levels of significance in regard to the human-nature bond and the influence of a greater, spiritual power (Hodge, 2003).

Place Attachment

Factors concerning social interaction, emotional initiation, memory elicitation, and place bonding are examples of items that compose the presence of place attachment (Manning, 2011). In addition, the characteristics and activity opportunities of a place also plays into the bond that individuals feel towards a location (Heintzman, 2012; Manning, 2011). Place attachment is intricate and can influence the larger connection or self-transcendence of an individual and a location (Cappellen, Saroglou, Iweins, Piovesana, & Fredrickson, 2013).

Emotions

The emotions portrayed by an individual is composed of intrinsic (i.e. biological) and/or extrinsic (i.e. social interactions) stimuli that are individually analyzed (Scherer, 2005). Past experiences can assist in the emotional response(s) exhibited by an individual within present and future situations (Heintzman, 2012). Further, emotions can be distinguished based on their evocation of positive attributes (Cappellen et al., 2013). The type and intensity of emotions encountered can influence the spiritual connection that one correlates to the holistic composition of life and the elements (i.e. nature) that compose the balance.

Motivations

Motivations serve as the reasoning for an individual's actions and can be impacted by the factors of place attachment, emotions, and spirituality as an aggregating element (Manning, 2011). The connection between motivations and spirituality reflects the lasting and infiltrating impact that could result in regard to behaviors based on an individual's perception of spirituality. Dependent upon the subjective description, spirituality can be a basal pillar in the formation of an individual's motivation(s) and draw to the natural world.



What does spirituality mean to me?

Spirituality is a united reflection of the interrelation between the composition of life (i.e. living and non-living organisms) and a potentially greater being as defined by an individual (Heintzman, 2012). **How would you describe spirituality?**