

Accepted Manuscript

Title: Green lifestyles and subjective well-being: More about self-image than actual behavior?

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PII: S0167-2681(17)30068-9

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.1016/j.jebo.2017.03.009>

Reference: JEBO 4003

To appear in: *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*

Received date: 30-10-2016

Revised date: 13-3-2017

Accepted date: 14-3-2017

Please cite this article as: Martin Binder, Ann-Kathrin Blankenberg, Green lifestyles and subjective well-being: More about self-image than actual behavior?, *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization* (2017), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2017.03.009>

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Green lifestyles and subjective well-being: More about self-image than actual behavior?[☆]

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Abstract

Does environmentally-friendly behavior necessarily imply sacrifice? In the metric of subjective well-being, research has shown that green behavior and sustainable consumption are positively related to life satisfaction. We extend this research analyzing UKHLS household panel data for Great Britain, showing that this boost in life satisfaction is mostly due to self-image (i.e. one's own assessment of how environmentally-friendly one's behavior is) but not due to concrete pro-environmental behaviors such as conserving water, recycling and so on. We further show that green self-image increases the extent and intensity of green behavior yet even the greenest (self-identified) individuals do not consistently exhibit all pro-environmental behaviors. By this, our data can be used to assess the varying extent of a value-action gap for different pro-environmental behaviors for our sample. (126 words)

Key words: sustainability, green lifestyle, environmentally-friendly behavior, subjective well-being, UKHLS

JEL codes: I31, Q51, Q58

[☆]We would like to thank Tim Kasser, Jorge Guardiola, Francisco González-Gómez, an anonymous referee, as well as the participants of the ISEE2016 conference for helpful comments. The UKHLS panel data set used in this publication were made available to us by the University of Essex, Institute for Social and Economic Research and NatCen Social Research, Understanding Society. Neither the original collectors of the data nor the Archive bears any responsibility for the analyses or interpretations presented here. Remaining errors are ours alone.

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