

Connectedness as a core conservation concern

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Calls to Reconnect

- Balmford & Cowling (2006: 694) see:

“...a great need for interdisciplinary efforts to tackle perhaps the most pervasive underlying threat of all by *reconnecting people and nature*...even if all the other building blocks of effective conservation are in place, we will not succeed unless the general public cares, and they are unlikely to care enough if they no longer experience nature directly.”

Contents of Presentation

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Drivers of the (Western) Disconnect

	Physical	Psychological
Separation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early civilization (abandoning 'the wild') • Totalitarian agriculture & land tenure • Roman system of divide & rule • Migration from rural to urban centres • Colonialism • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advent of language & the written word • Select interpretations of the Judeo-Christian tradition • Cartesian dualism & deductive reasoning • Enlightenment ideals of educated mind • General disenchantment of the universe •
Perpetuation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scale (size and speed) of urbanization • Physiological needs easily met • Distancing from animals • Indoor sedentary entertainment • Extinction of experience (with nature) • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stronger, sharper ego "I" structure (than, e.g. Indigenous persons) • Embrace of mechanistic achievements and a preoccupation with 'progress' • Rejecting non-Western ways of knowing • "Environmental numbness" through insulation from natural sensory stimuli • "Shifting baselines" (memory, perception) •

Connectedness & Consciousness

- *Perception* is a mode and prerequisite for experience
- *Experience* forms consciousness
- *Consciousness* is always directed toward something
- *Intentionality* determines what we give attention and how we experience it - choices feedback to shape consciousness
- Society's 'super stimuli' = constant demands on attention
- *Inattention nature blindness* : ecological phenomena edited out
- Reinforces perception of separation since nature no longer forms a part of the experiences which shape consciousness
- 'Extinction of experience' = 'crisis of consciousness'

Connectedness with Nature (CWN)

- **Cognitive:** The extent to which an individual includes 'nature' within their cognitive representation of 'self'
(e.g. Schultz 2000, 2002)
- **Affective:** feeling emotionally bonded, belonging to & love, respect for nature
(e.g. Kals et al. 1999; Mayer & Frantz 2004)
- **Behavioural (and experiential):** physical interaction, comfort level in nature, familiarity, personal responsibility
(e.g. Nisbet et al. 2009)

Definition for CWN?

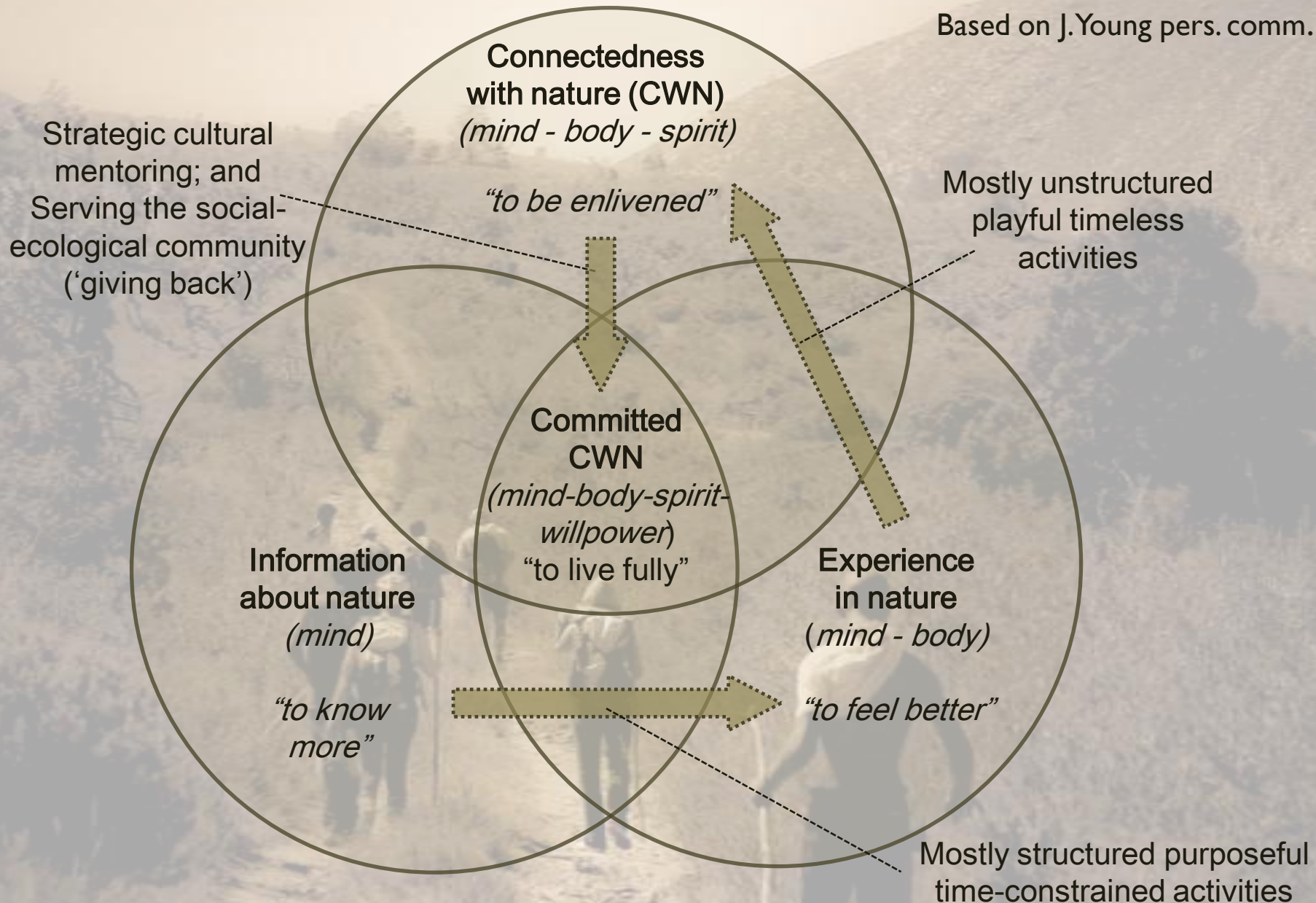
CWN is a stable state of consciousness comprising symbiotic **cognitive**, **affective** and **behaviourial** dimensions that reflect a sustained realization of the interrelatedness of one's 'self' and the rest of nature

Measures for CWN

- Emotional Affinity toward Nature (EATN) Kals et al. 1999
- Inclusion of Nature in Self (INS) Schultz 2001
- Environmental Identity Scale (EIS) Clayton 2003
- Implicit Associations Test (IAT) (modified) Schultz 2004
- Connectedness to Nature Scale (CNS) Mayer & Frantz 2004
- Connectivity with Nature Scale (CwNS) Dutcher et al. 2007
- Nature Relatedness Scale (NRS) Nisbet et al. 2009
- Love and Care for Nature (LCN) Perkins 2010
- Disposition to Connect with Nature (DCN) Brügger et al. 2011
- Dispositional Empathy with Nature Scale (DENS) Tam 2013

Differentiating CWN

Based on J.Young pers. comm.



Practices for CWN

- **Individual:**

Stilling ('sit spots'), engaging senses, focusing on nature's signs (tracks, calls, phenology), mapping, wandering, creating, playing, questioning, reflecting, breathing...

(e.g. Shaw 2003, Cornell 2009, Young et al. 2010)

- **Collective:**

'Invisible schools' (cultural fabric, supportive social networks), citizen science, service to the community, local eco-literacy campaigns, ecological restoration, dialogue, social norms...

(e.g. Pyle 2003, Miller 2005, Young et al. 2010)

- Evidence? Which practices are most effective for CWN?

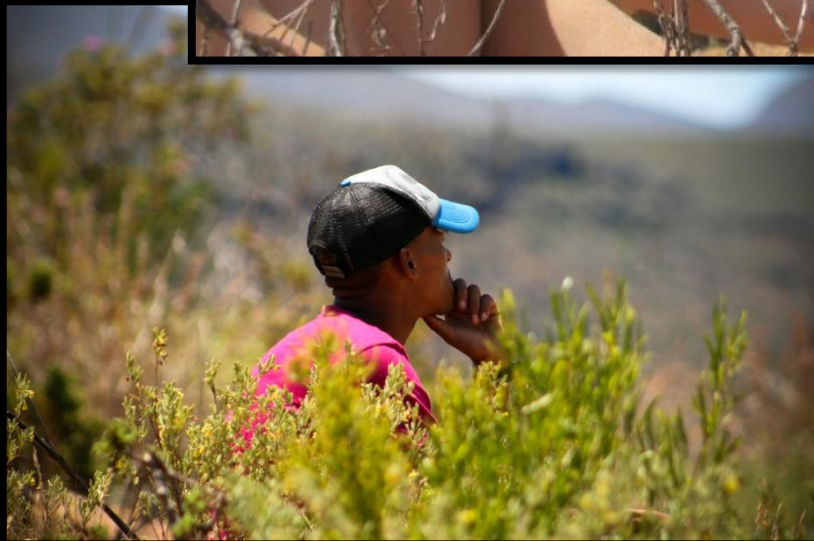
Benefits of CWN

- **Contact with natural environments:** physiological, physical, emotional, mental health and well-being.
(e.g. Bratman et al. 2012)
- **Nature exposure does not necessarily translate to CWN** but positively correlated to similar variables as well as: 'distinct happiness benefit' and making our lives more meaningful, purposeful and fulfilling (Zelenski & Nisbet 2012)
- **Reliable predictor for environmentally responsible behavior (ERB)**
(e.g. Mayer & Frantz 2004; Schultz 2011)

CWN in Education



CWN in Education



CWN in Conservation

Modern Man says, 'Something is wrong with the world.
How do we fix it?'

Indigenous people say, 'Something is right with the world.
How do we connect with it?'

~ Michael Beckwith (in Davies & Cohen (1995))

CWN in Conservation(ists)

- Answer the call for more compelling language
- Build hope in the face of 'crisis addiction'
- Buffer against 'post traumatic embitterment disorder'
- Constitute a more enduring motivation for ERB
- Provide a more accepted avenue for tackling the 'big fuzzies' avoided in conservation research and practice
- Not just another conservation 'fad' (cf. Redford et al. 2013)

CWN & Invasive Alien Species (IAS)

Inaction

Operating from
a fragmented
perspective
(subject-object
separation)

**Disconnected
Inaction**
(IAS Apathy)

*'A problem if it
affects me'*

**Connected
Inaction**
(IAS Empathy)

*'Know
thy self'*

Information

Understanding

Knowledge

Wisdom

**Disconnected
Action**
(IAS Antipathy)

*'Know thy
enemy'*

**Connected
Action**
(IAS Responsibility)

*'The problem
& solution
are me'*

Performing from
a consciousness
of wholeness
(subject-object
unity)

Disconnected

Connected

Action

CWN: Radical but relevant

- A return to pre-scientific animism? No.
- More empirical evidence needed? Yes.

But we know enough to act.

- Promote theory (knowing) & embody practice (doing) of CWN to become role models and sources of inspiration:
- If conservationists don't connect with nature, who will?

(Swaigood & Sheppard 2011)

A group of hikers is seen from behind, walking along a dirt path that winds through a hilly, brush-covered landscape. The hikers are wearing backpacks and some are using trekking poles. The scene is captured in a sepia or brownish tone, giving it a historical or documentary feel. The path leads into the distance, flanked by low hills and sparse vegetation.

CWN targets society's underlying crisis of consciousness

**A 'radical' but necessary call for CWN to become
a core conservation concern**

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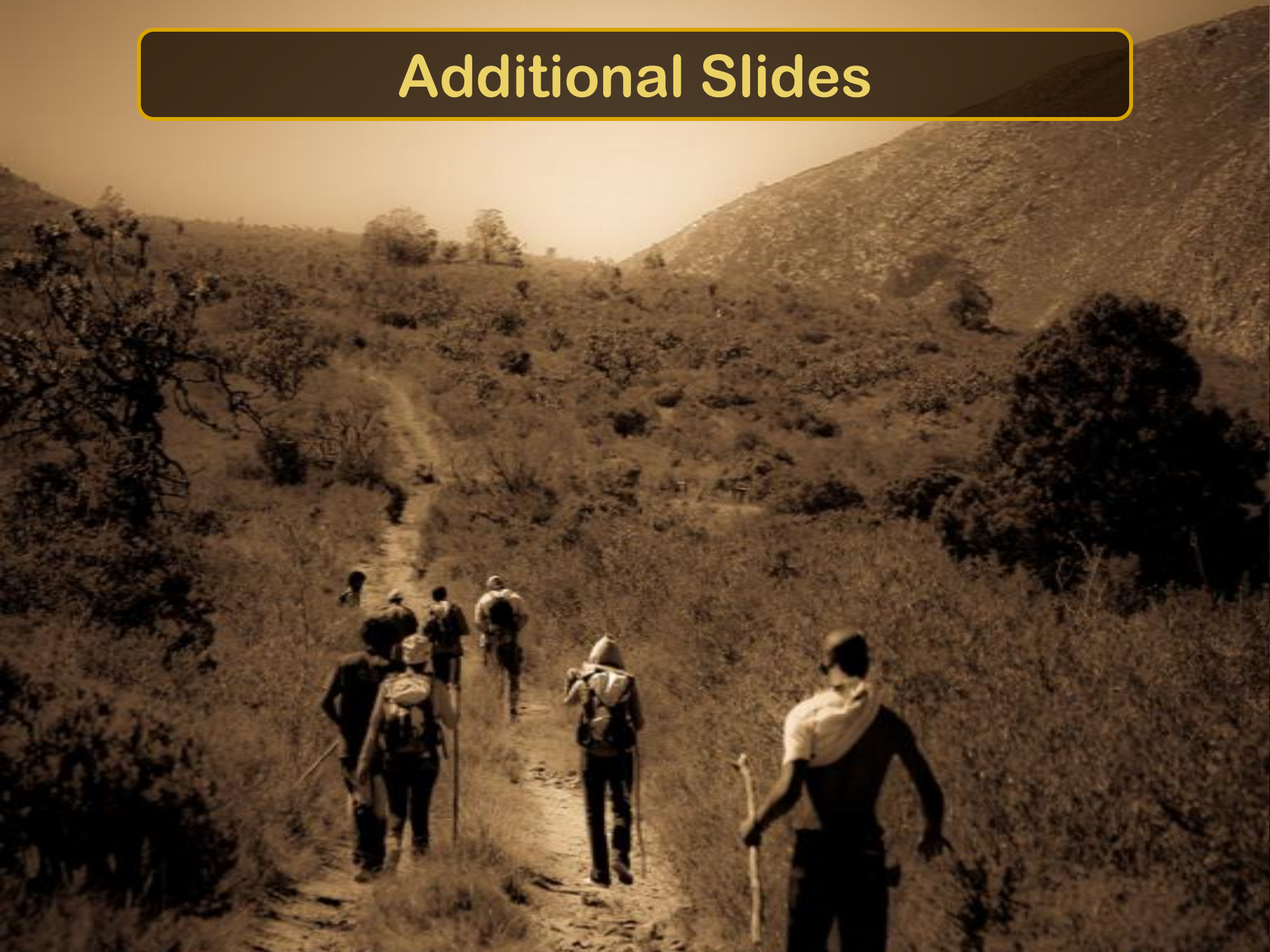
Presentation based on:

Zylstra, M.J. et al. (*submitted*) Connectedness as a core conservation concern: An interdisciplinary review of theory and a call for practice.

References / citations available on request: matt@earthcollective.net

connect: eyes4earth.org / facebook

Additional Slides



Terminologies

- “connectedness to nature” (e.g. Mayer & Frantz 2004)
- “connectivity with nature” (e.g. Dutcher et al. 2007)
- “connection to nature” (e.g. Luck et al. 2011)
- “nature connection” (e.g. Young et al. 2010)
- “nature relatedness” (e.g. Nisbet et al. 2009)
- We prefer:
“Connectedness *with* Nature (CWN)” because subtly:
 - i) Reflects that humans are part of nature; and
 - ii) Denotes a sense of reciprocity and mutualism

Defining Perception

Primary
immediate
sensory
awareness
feeling

Perception

Secondary
reflective
conceptual
memory / recall
thought

‘Experiencing Self’

‘Remembering Self’

The idea of an ‘experiencing self’ and ‘remembering self’ is based on Kahneman 2010