

Imagining and Caring about Distant Future Welfare

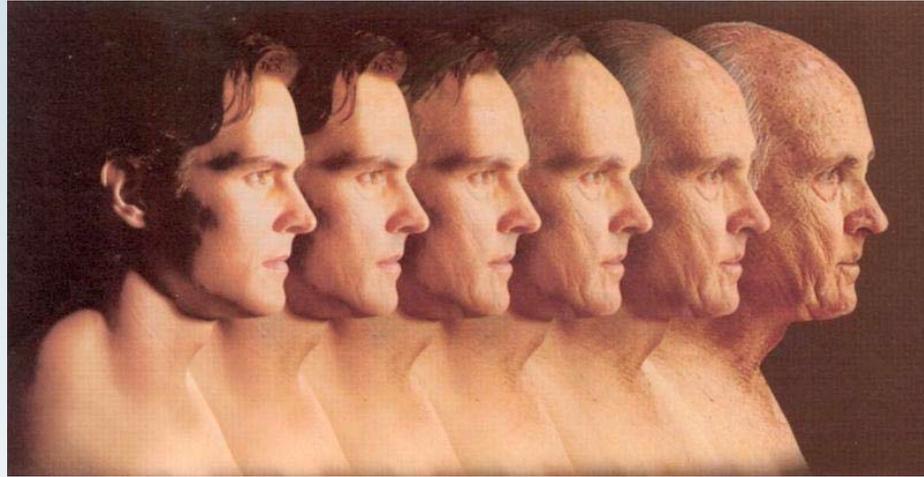
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Overview

- A basis for caring more/less about future welfare
 - Role of psychological connectedness to one's future self in
 - Discounting over time
 - Setting and achieving plans
 - Willingness to take preventive/protective actions
- Precondition: thinking about the future
 - Failures of imagination
 - Engendering a representation of risk matters
 - Role of individual differences in tendency to think about future
 - Vivid representations of future self increase investment in long-term welfare

Personal Identity and Concern for Distant Future Welfare



We care less about our further future . . . because we know that less of what we are now—less, say, of our present hopes or plans, loves or ideals—will survive into the further future . . . We may, because of this, act knowingly against our own long-term self-interest... [If] **what matters holds to a lesser degree, it cannot be irrational to care less.** (Parfit 1971, p. 99) This claim defends a new kind of discount rate... Unlike a discount rate with respect to time, this new discount rate will seldom apply over the near future. **The psychological connections between me now and myself tomorrow are not much closer than the connections between me now and myself next month... But they are very much closer than the connections between me now and myself in forty years.** (Parfit, 1984, p. 313-314)

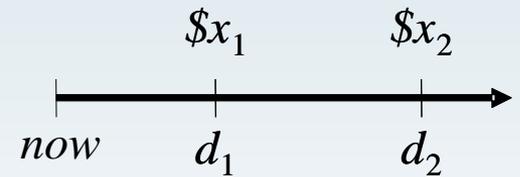
Changing Connectedness and Patience Over Time

- **Predictor:** Judged connectedness between current self and future selves in 1, 5, 10, 20, 30, 40 years

- **DV:** Discount Factor δ
(proportion of value retained over delay)

– Preference Matching AND Choice

– Monetary AND non-monetary outcomes (good days at work)

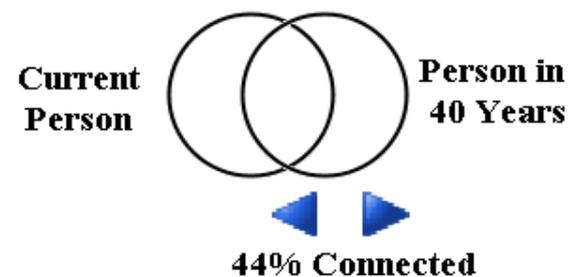
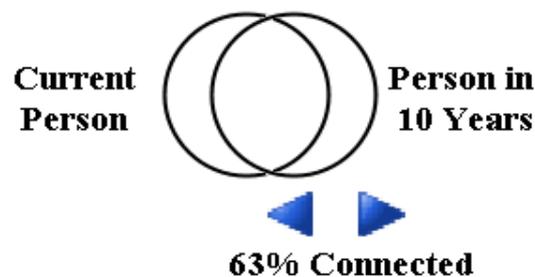
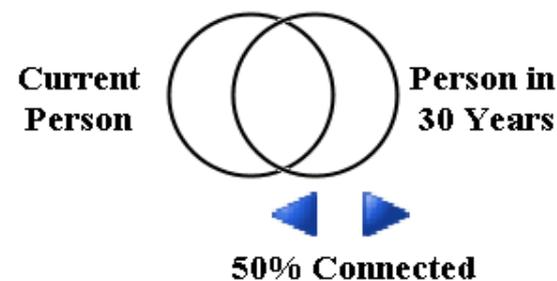
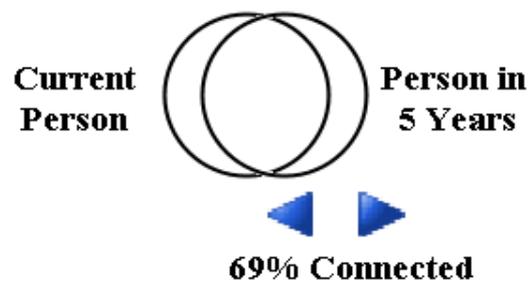
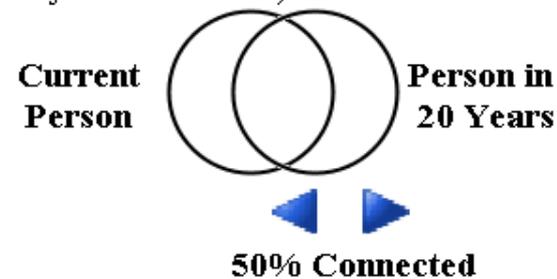
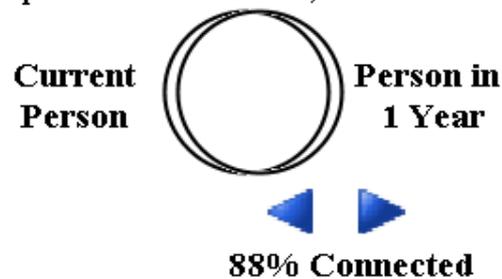


$$\delta = \left(\frac{x_1}{x_2} \right)^{\frac{1}{d_2 - d_1}}$$

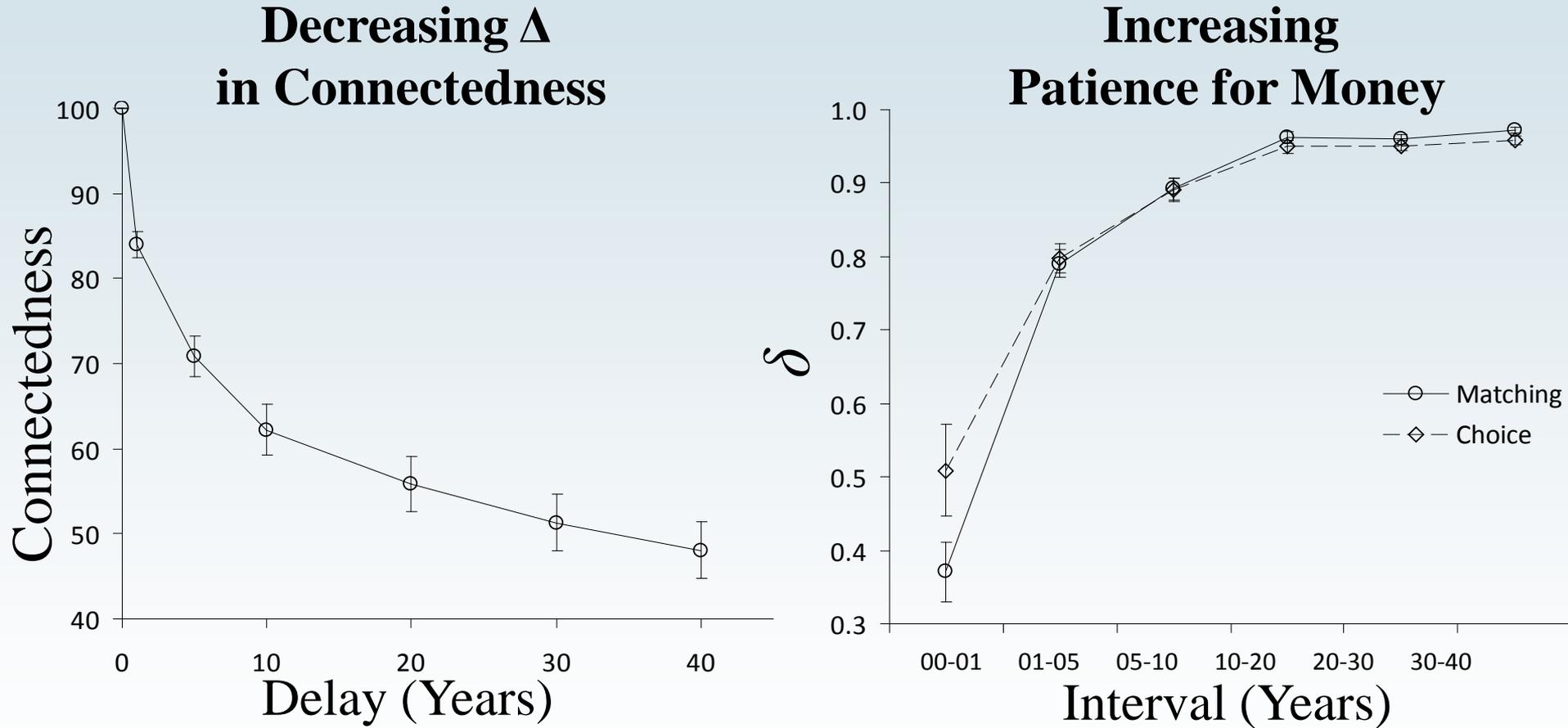
Below, I would like you to rate the degree of "connectedness" between your current self and the person you will be in the future.

Please think of the characteristics that make you the person you are—your personality, temperament, likes and dislikes, beliefs, values, ambitions, goals, ideals—and rate how rate how "connected", or similar, you expect to be in the future compared to the person you are now, where 0% means you will be *completely different* and 100% means you will be *exactly the same*.

For each pair of circles below, use the buttons to change the overlap (*degree of connectedness*) and hit 'Submit' when you are finished.



Change in Connectedness Predicts Levels of Patience for Money



$$r = -.36, -.45$$

([Bartels and Rips 2010, JEP: General](#))

Connectedness and Future Loss Aversion

- Accept/reject series of mixed outcome gambles now, 5 years in future, and 10 years in future
 - Measure individual participants' PT value functions for present and future gambles
 - Tom, Fox, Trepel, and Poldrack 2007
 - Predict less loss aversion for future gambles (measured thru higher willingness to accept)
- Measured connectedness to future self

Willingness to Accept

Future gambles:

For the next set of gambles, we would like you to try to answer on behalf of your future self. Specifically, we would like you to think about how you would respond to these questions **five years from now**. Your goal is to answer these questions as you would expect your future self to answer them, rather than answering them as you would today.

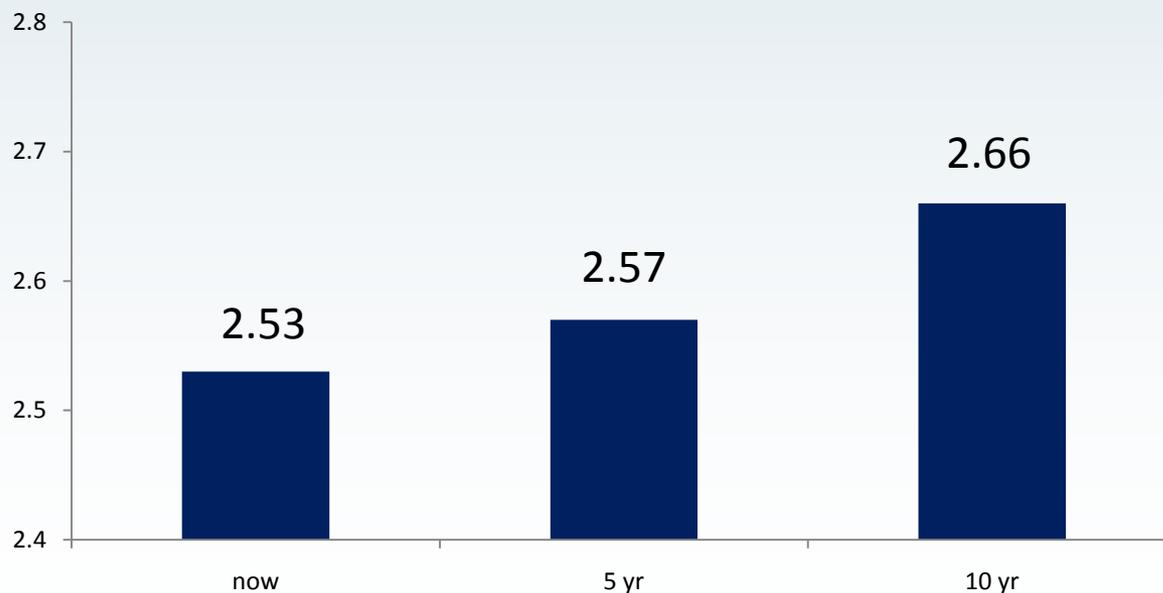
Before we begin, please think about what you will be like in **five years**, in the year 2014

Gamble 1: Win \$28 / Lose \$11 with equal chance

Willingness to Accept

Higher willingness to accept for future gambles

- now vs. 5 yrs $p=.01$, now vs. 10 yrs $p<.001$



Loss Aversion and Connectedness Results

- Based on responses, calculate loss and gain coefficients per respondent
 - Loss aversion: $\lambda = - \beta_{\text{loss}} / \beta_{\text{gain}}$
 - Average λ per temporal period
 - Now: 2.80
 - 5 Year: 2.77
 - 10 year: 2.17
- Connectedness measures
 - 3.88 (5 yr) vs. 3.42 (10 yr), $p < .01$

Fostering Connectedness Affects Investment in Long-Term Goals

Does making people feel [dis]connected to their future self change their success in long-term goal pursuit?

- 58 adult participants completed two waves (December 2009 and Spring 2010)
- **Wave 1:** Read passage describing change vs. constancy in personal identity; Made New Year's resolutions
- **Wave 2:** Reported success in maintaining resolutions

Different Resolutions Made in High Connectedness Condition

- Different resolutions in the high connectedness condition (per independent coders):
 - More job/school (34% vs. 20%, $p < .05$)
- Resolutions self-rated as more practical, less enjoyment (2.4 vs. 2.9, $p < .01$)

Examples: Practical

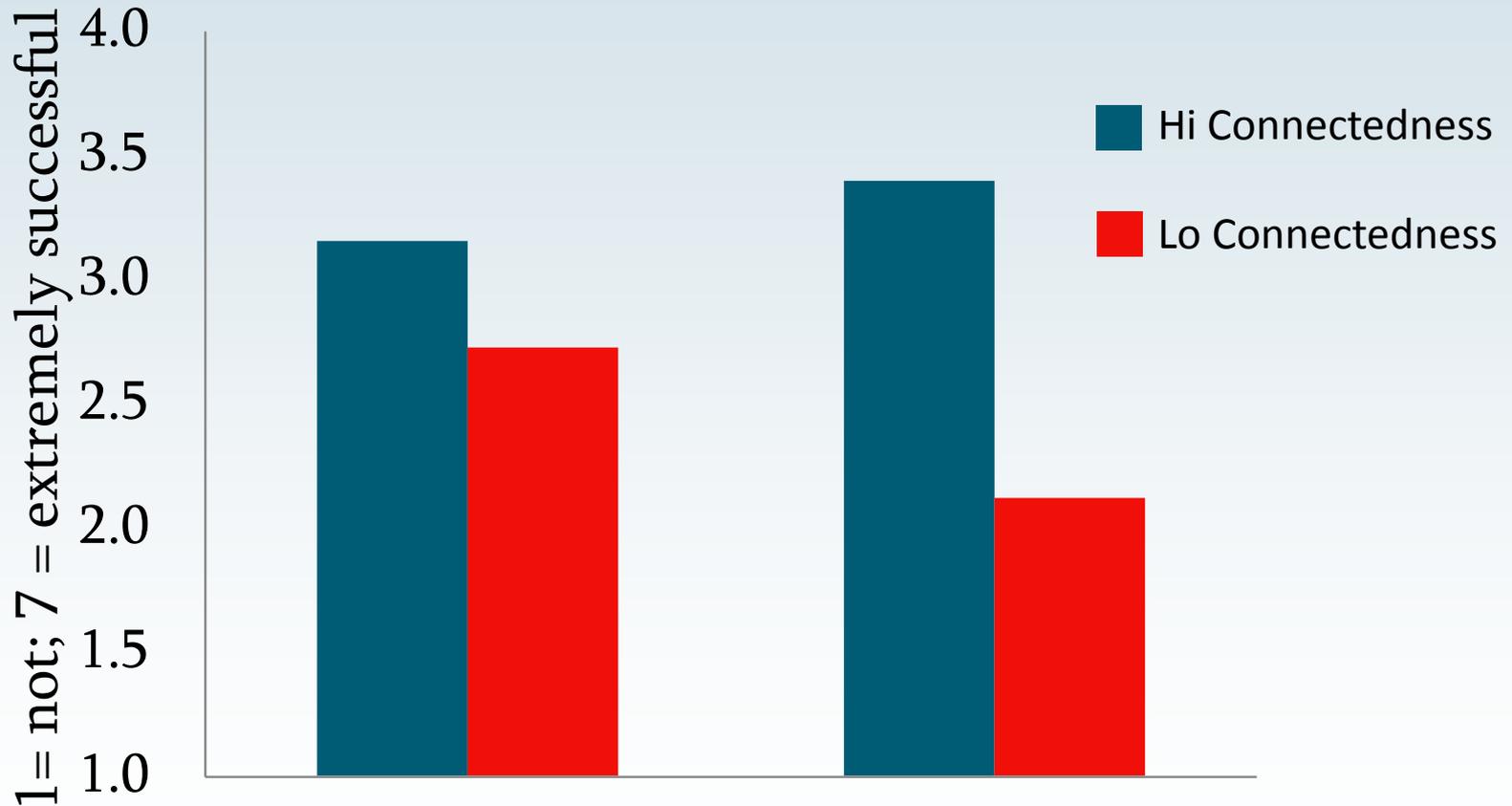
Eating more healthy
Improve grades
To find employment

Enjoyment

Take a tropical vacation
Become more sociable
Do some charitable work

Connectedness Facilitates Resolution Success

Predicted means controlling for average resolution practicality/enjoyment



Overall
 $F_{\text{connectedness}} = 4.54^*$
 $F_{\text{practicality}} = 6.61^*$

1st Listed
 $F_{\text{connectedness}} = 5.55^*$
 $F_{\text{practicality}} = 1.42, n.s.$

Connectedness, Representation, and Preventive/Protective Action

How do people spontaneously think about their distant future selves, and how does this relate to protective action?

- 44 community members
- *Predictor 1*: Rated connectedness to self in 30 years
- *Predictor 2*: Measured “dehumanization”
- *DV*: Willingness to shoulder burdens in the present for distant future health rewards

Dehumanization: Trait Ascription Task

(Haslam and Bain 2007)

- Traits vary in the degree to which they reflected “human nature”
 - Inherent, deeply-rooted aspects of persons, incl: cognitive openness and flexibility, emotionality,
- When denied, people seen as rigid and inert, lacking in emotionality, and depth

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
I am much more SOCIABLE now than I will be in 30 years				I will be much more SOCIABLE in 30 years than I am now		
-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
I am much more EFFICIENT now than I will be in 30 years				I will be much more EFFICIENT in 30 years than I am now		

Pains in the Present to Mitigate Distant Future Health Risks

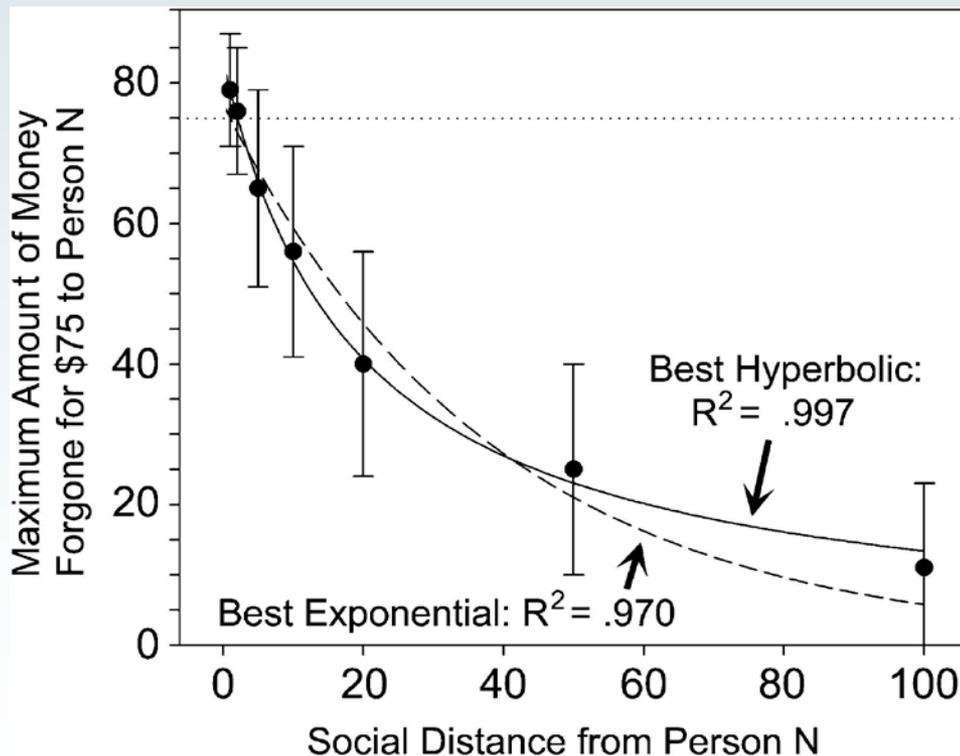
- Willingness to...
 - get a vaccination next week that causes muscle soreness for 10 days...
 - have oral surgery next week that causes a great deal of mouth pain for 7 days...
 - undergo a very uncomfortable medical procedure that will leave you very sore for a few days...
 - $\alpha = .75$

	Simple Correlation	Regression Std. Beta
Connectedness	.30*	-.20
Dehumanization	-.39**	-.33*

Indirect path 95% C.I. = (.0001, .0192)¹⁶

Connections to Others: Social Discounting

- Generosity sharply declines across social distance



Overview

- A basis for caring more/less about future welfare
 - The connectedness you feel with your future self and others affects willingness to share with and protect them
- Precondition: thinking about the future
 - Failures of imagination
 - Engendering a representation of risk matters
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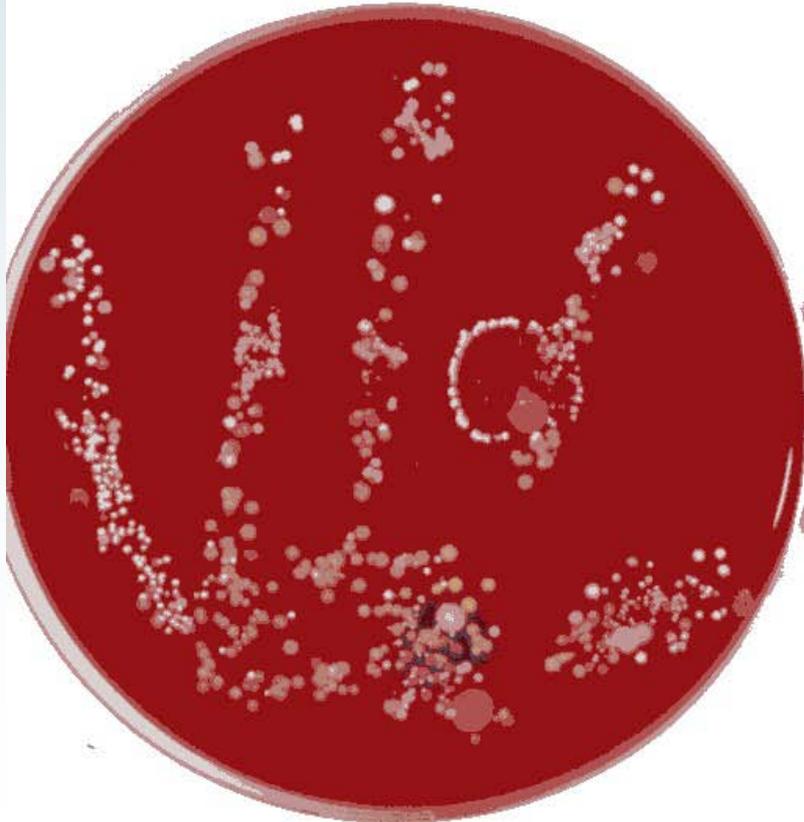
Role of Risk Representation in Risk Mitigation

- Problem: Hospital personnel wash their hands in fewer than half the instances where they should
- Paul Silka, Cedars-Sinai Hospital Chief of Staff, wanted to get to 90% compliance
- Increased compliance to 80% by...
 - Distributed hand sanitizer in parking lot
 - Gave hand-washers \$10 gift certificates

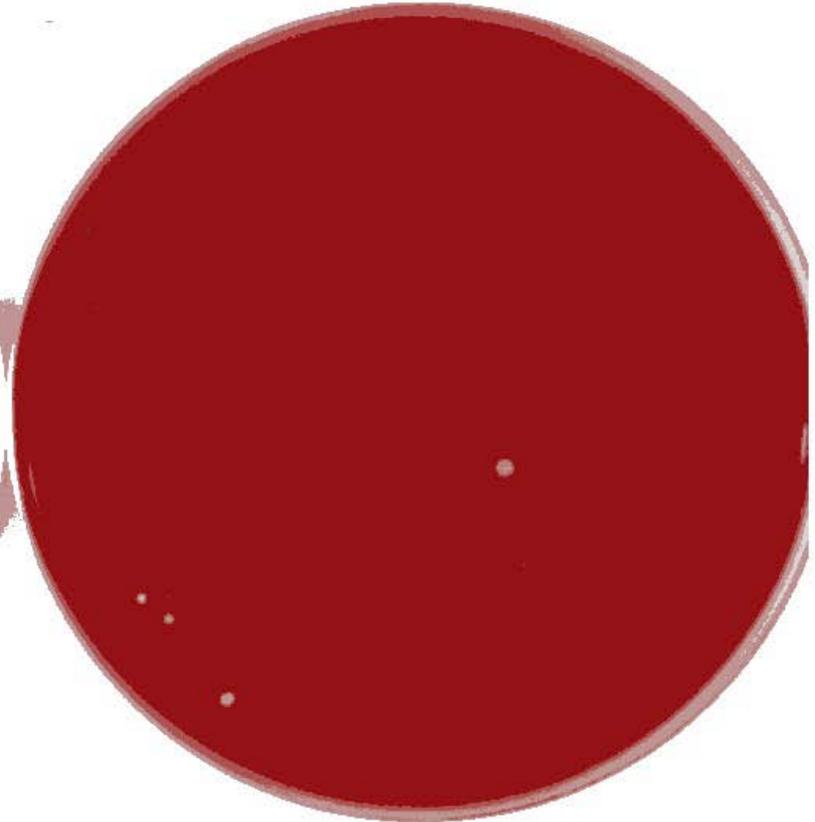
Vividness to the Rescue:

Screensaver increased compliance to 100%

Potentially harmful
microorganisms



Handwashing can
remove Germs!

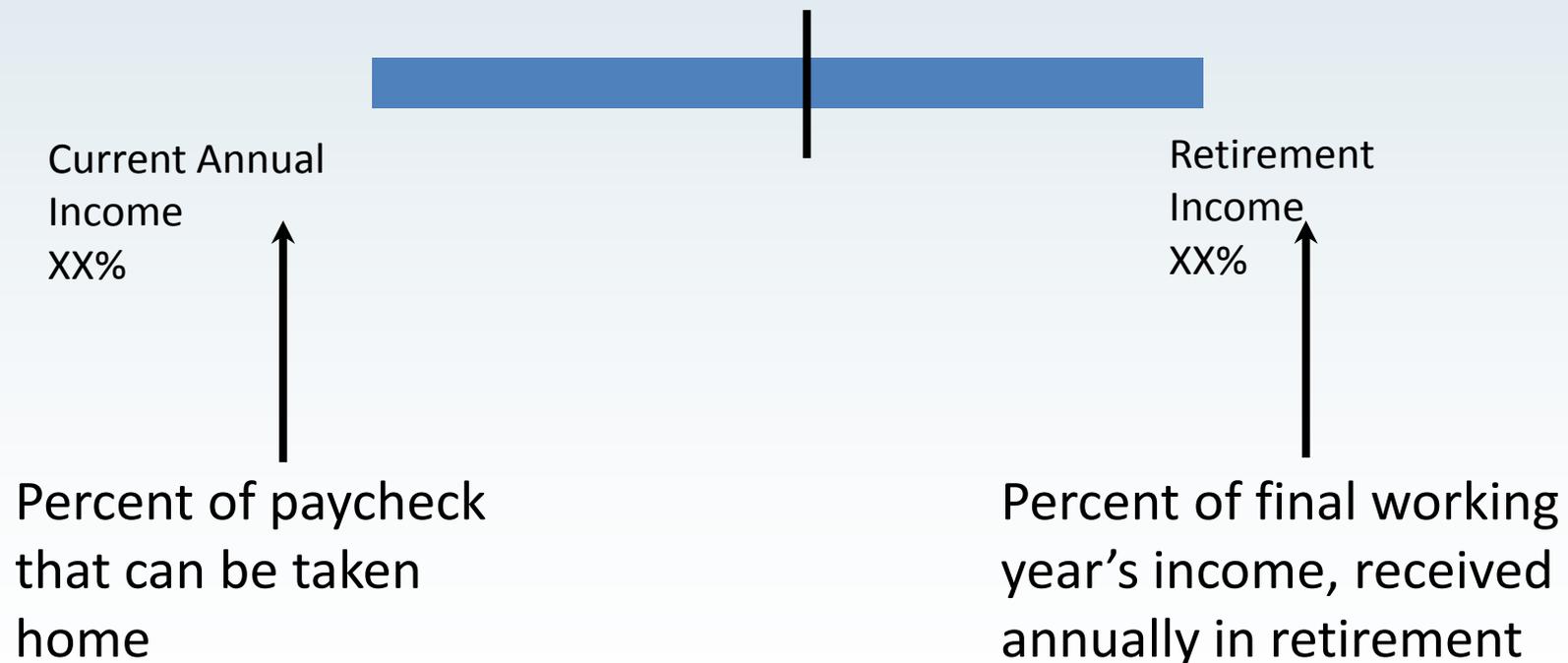


Individual Differences in Spontaneous Future-Oriented Thought

- Consideration of future consequences (Strathman et al 1994)
 - Relates to self-reported health-related behaviors
- Elaboration on likely outcomes (Nenkov, Inman and Holland 2008)
 - Relates to hypothetical 401(k) contributions
- Future time perspective scale (Shell and Husman 2001)
 - Relates to persistence in studying and academic achievement
- Propensity to plan
 - Relates to use of coupons and FICO scores (Lynch, Netemeyer, Spiller, and Zammit 2010)
 - Accumulated wealth (Ameriks, Caplan and Leahy 2003)

Overcoming Failure of Imagination in Consideration of Long-Term Welfare

Please use the scale below to indicate your preferred retirement allocation



Please use the scale below to indicate your preferred retirement allocation



Next

Please use the scale below to indicate your preferred retirement allocation



Next

Please use the scale below to indicate your preferred retirement allocation



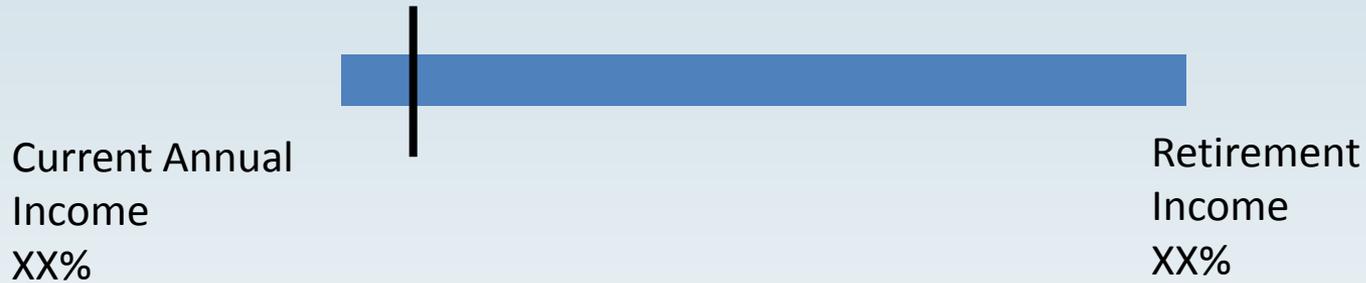
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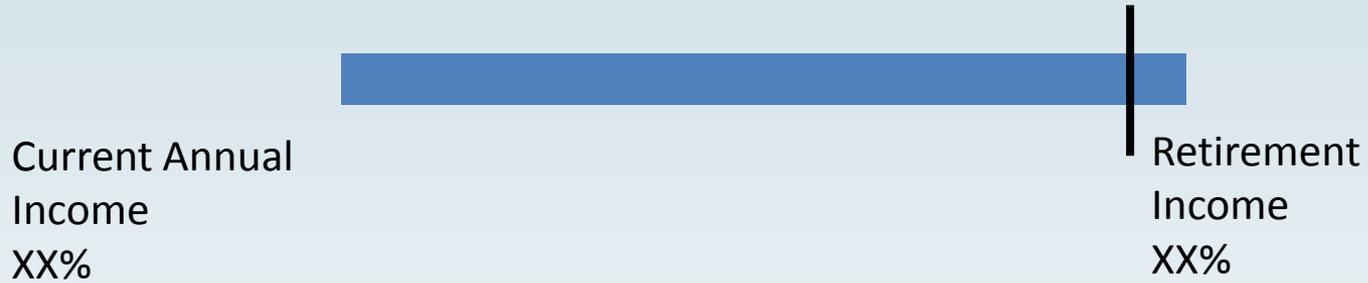
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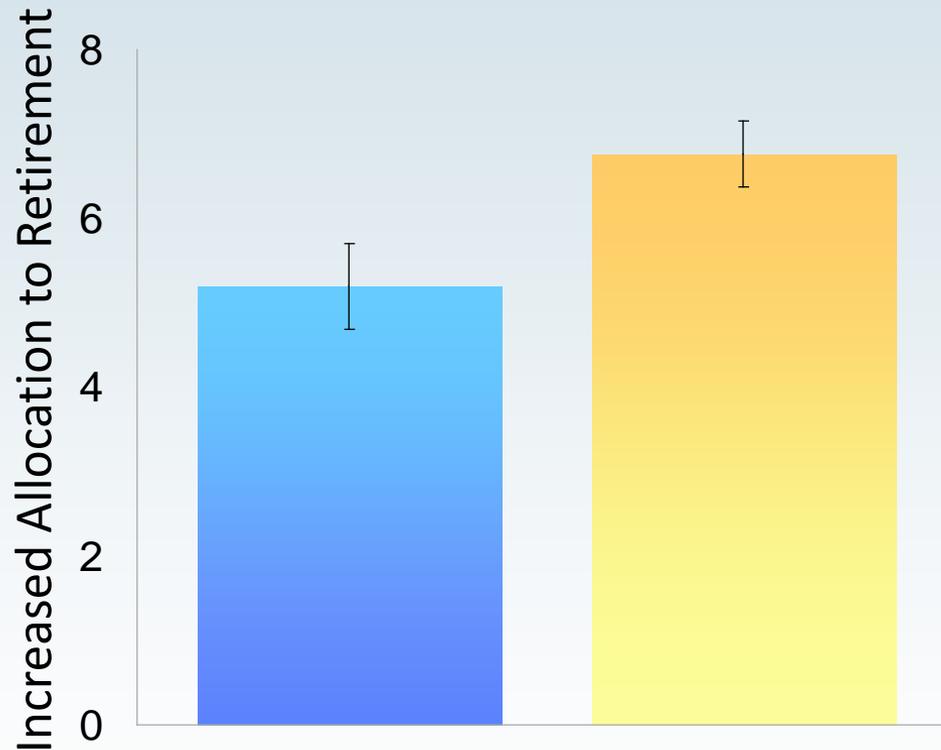
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Next

Overcoming Failure of Imagination: Increased Saving



Summary

- Fostering investment in distant future welfare often requires both:
 - Representation of risks and future welfare
 - People differ, but can be induced to think about these issues
 - Caring about future welfare
 - People differ, but can be induced to care by fostering sense of connectedness to people to whom benefits accrue

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Thank you