

Collaborative Approaches to Setting Expectations

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Jan. 27, 2017

- A better working relationship with faculty advisors develops when new PhD students receive information about program expectations early in their programs (Green, 1991).
- PhD non-completers cite a poor advisor-student relationship as a primary reason for attrition (others include lack of financial aid and an unsupportive departmental climate) (Nerad & Miller, 1996).
- Nearly 50% of non-completers cited lack of integration as the most important factor in their decision to leave (Lovitts, 2001).
- Improving clarity of expectations is a critical factor in the success of a graduate student (Ehrenberg, 2006).
- “Functional mentoring” correlates with later success and satisfaction across multiple career paths (Thomas, Willis, & Davis, 2007).
- “Effective mentoring . . . Extends beyond building early career individuals’ disciplinary knowledge and integrates socialization for future careers” (Montgomery, Dodson, & Johnson, 2014).



Common characteristics of difficult faculty/grad relationships identified by advisors:

- Problematic communication patterns
- Avoidance of addressing conflict
- Lack of mutual response
- A feeling of ineffectiveness on the part of the advisor (Knox, Schlosser, Pruitt, & Hill, 2006)

Consequences of strained faculty/grad student relationships

- Decreased productivity (Bauer and Green, 1994)
- Wasted resources (student, faculty, department, university)
 - time
 - opportunity costs
 - money
 - costs of attrition: “we can basically conclude that the state invests about 1.5 million dollars in the production of a Ph.D. in biomedical sciences” (network.nature.com, 23 Jan. 2009)



Worksheet: *Student-Advisor Expectation Scales*

Ingrid Moses, 1985, Higher Education Research & Development Society of Australasia; adapted by Margaret Kiley and Kate Cadman, 1997; further adapted Chris Golde, 2010



Implicit Expectations: not stated and rarely understood

“What didn’t you understand about what I didn’t tell you?”

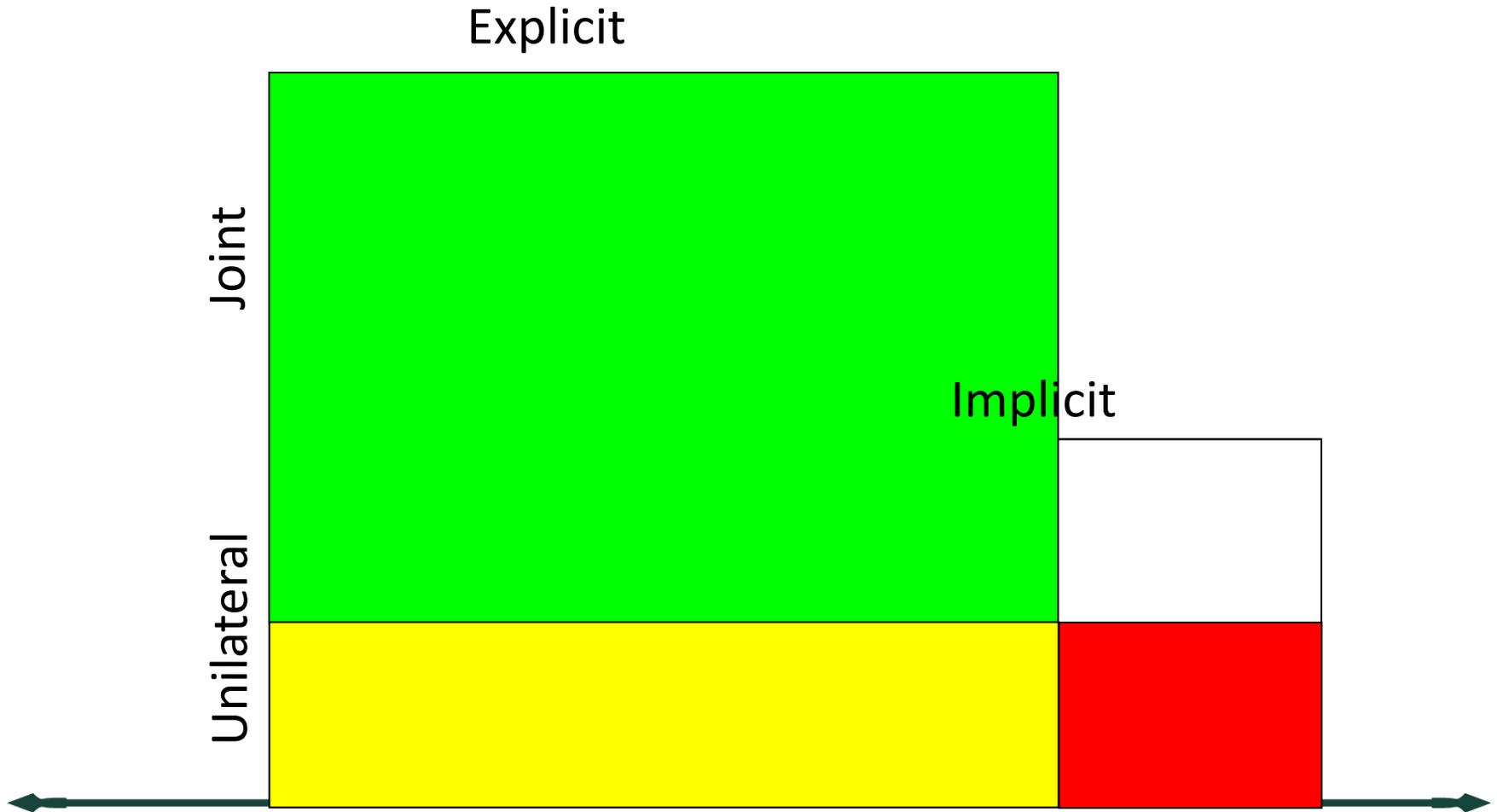
“What part of my silence didn’t you understand?”



- **Explicit Expectations: clearly stated (verbally or in written form)**
 - Checked for understanding
 - Unilaterally or jointly set
 - Revisit regularly



Window of Expectations



Power Differential and Unilateral Decisions

If your intention is to make a unilateral decision make that **explicit** up front

- Accept **responsibility** for unilateral decisions
“Joe I have decided to use a commercially available antibody for the experiments of Aim One of the grant. I know you want to go with a different approach and I respect your opinion. But for this next step, I am going to make this decision unilaterally and take full responsibility for it. If this does not work, we can revisit the issue and evaluate other options.”

Negotiation is not the same as **manipulation**



The “givens”

- Graduate Program Handbook
- Academic Programs Policy
- Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities (GSRR)
- Medical Students Rights and Responsibilities (MSRR)
- Graduate Employees Union (GEU) Contract
- Research Data Management Guidance
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Animal and Human Subjects Regulations
- Procedures Concerning Allegations of Misconduct
- Guidelines on Authorship
- Code of Teaching Responsibility

These and more can be found at: <https://grad.msu.edu/policies-and-procedures>



“A startling number of students report that they do not understand what is expected of them as students and what they can expect from their program....despite the fact that most students told us that some channels for communication are well established” (Golde & Dore, 2001, p. 35)

Information Resource	Available in Programs	Used by Students
Orientation to program	88.1%	92.4%
Program handbook	84.6%	92.4%
University graduate handbook	69.7%	80.3%

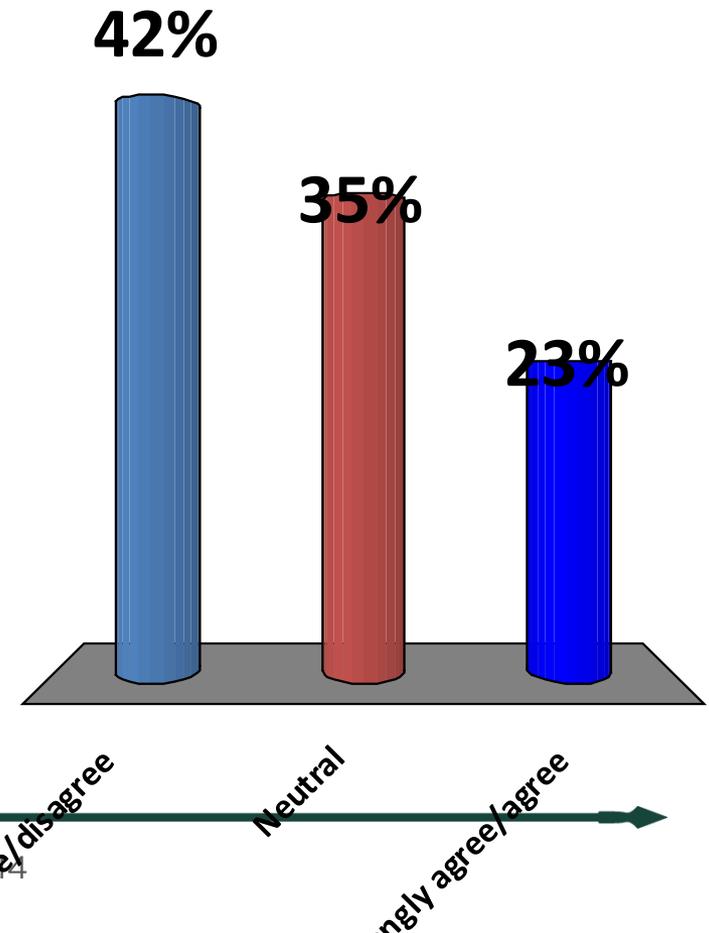


Yet ...

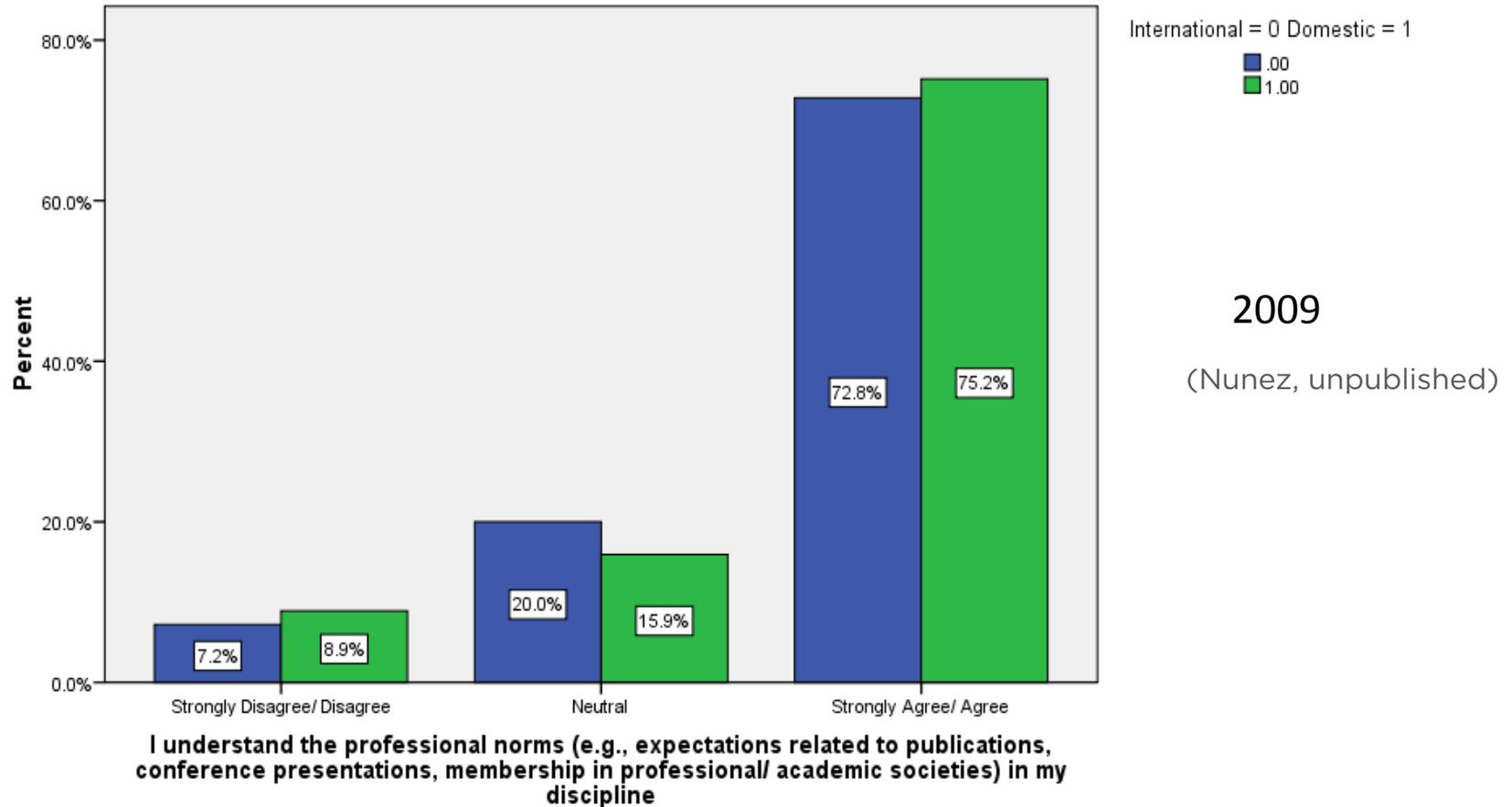
Knowledge of customary practices	% very clear	% not clear
Fulfilling teaching assistant obligations	63.8	7.2
Funding graduate studies	57.3	7.6
Criteria for graduation	45.4	12.8
Grading student work	42.0	11.3
Funding of dissertation research	40.4	20.4
Length of time you would be a student	30.9	14.6
Time spent with advisor	22.5	32.7

I understand the professional norms (e.g., expectations related to publications, conference presentations, membership in professional/academic societies) in my discipline: first-year doctoral students (CGS DEANS 2014)

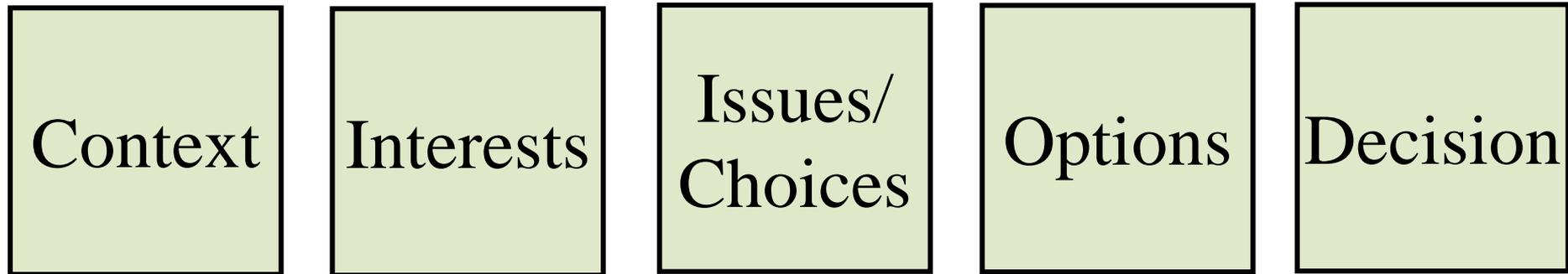
- A. Strongly disagree/disagree
- B. Neutral
- C. Strongly agree/agree



First-year graduate student survey



Expectations can be made jointly explicit by examining:



and then checking for mutual understanding
(statements of expectations)



Interest-based approach: definitions

Context: professional, personal, institutional, cultural

Interests: underlying values, beliefs and principles related to options and choices

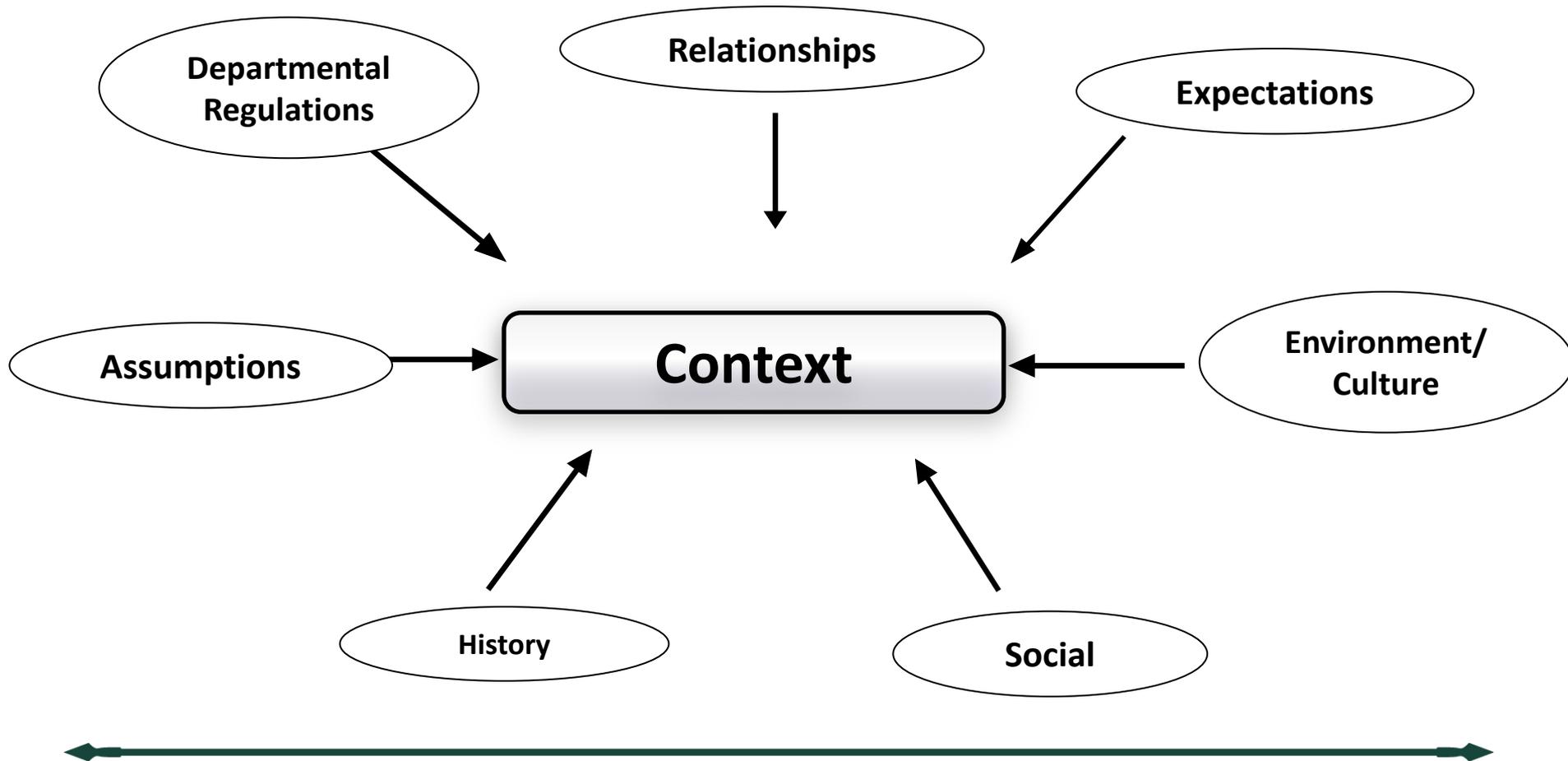
Issues: anticipated questions that need immediate attention

Options: specific alternatives for addressing questions and choices

Decision: action or choice made based on an evaluation of options against interests and contexts



The Importance of “Context”



The interest-based approach

- Focuses on the underlying interests and concerns of individuals
- Emphasizes finding options which satisfy multiple people and their interests
- Aims to retain and strengthen relationships

Context

Interests

Issues/Choices

Options

Decision



ANGER and DECISIONS

Take anger, one of the emotions Lerner and other psychologists understand best. Where fear breeds uncertainty, **anger instills confidence**. Angry people are more likely to put the blame on individuals, rather than “society,” or fate. Anger makes **people more likely to take risks and to minimize how dangerous those risks will be**. Other researchers have shown that angry people rely more on **stereotypes** and are more eager to act. It’s an activating emotion.....

Commentary about the work of J. Lerner and co-workers
The Atlantic, September 19, 2016

<http://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2016/09/the-best-headspace-for-making-decisions/500423/>

