

Nature as extended-self: sacred nature relationship and implications for responsible consumption behavior

Vimala Kunchambo, Monash University Malaysia

Christina K. C. Lee, Monash University Malaysia

Jan Brace Govan, Monash University

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Send correspondence to Vimala Kunchambo (corresponding author), School of Business, Monash University Malaysia, Jalan Lagoon Selatan, Bandar Sunway, 47500 Subang Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia, Phone: +60 3-5514 4934; Email: vimala.kunchambo@monash.edu; Christina K. C. Lee, School of Business, Monash University Malaysia, Jalan Lagoon Selatan, Bandar Sunway, 47500 Subang Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia, Phone: +60 3-5514 6285; Email: christina.lee@monash.edu; Jan Brace Govan, Monash Business School, Monash University, 900 Dandenong Road, Caulfield East, Victoria 3145, Australia; Phone: +61 3 990 32491; Email: jan.brace-govan@monash.edu

ABSTRACT

This study explores alternate ways to conceptualize the relationship between the self and nature. Specifically, how does nature in general, rather than specific places in nature, become part of the extended self? While the theory of the extended self has been applied to understanding relationships with tangible possessions, the theory's application to intangible objects such as nature remain scant. The ethnographic data reveals three dimensions of the self-nature relationship: the relational extended self, the encapsulated self, and the assimilated self. These dimensions illustrate the intensity to perceive nature as part of self. This study provides theoretical insights into understanding how consumers relate to nature, and the processes they employ to view nature as part of their extended self to develop concern for nature, thus encouraging responsible consumption behavior. These dimensions of the self-nature relationship help explain why attitudes and responsible consumption behavior differ among consumers.

Keywords: Extended self, responsible consumption behavior, ethnography, self-nature relationship.

1. Introduction

A sense of self in a favorite place generates an attachment to a special physical location, including physical aspects, experiences, and symbolic representations (Pretty, Chipuer, & Bramston, 2003). This research pushes the boundaries of knowledge by exploring the inner motivational enablers of the self-nature relationship, and how nature becomes part of the extended self. This relationship is important because nature's influence as the extended self likely affects responsible consumption behavior. Prior work establishes that place attachment is an emotional link with specific places resulting from a sense of belonging and identity. Researchers commonly examine this attachment within the context of cities, neighborhoods, and homes (Lewicka, 2010), or natural settings such as gardens (Freeman, Dickinson, Porter, & Van Heezik, 2012), recreational parks, and marine life (Halpenny, 2010; Wynveen, Kyle, & Sutton, 2014). Prior studies also identify the significance of possessions to extending the self. These possessions may include "body, internal processes, ideas, and experiences, and those persons, places and things to which one feels attached" (Belk, 1988, p. 141). The present study explores a full range of factors through ethnography, including the attachment to places, emotional relationships, symbolic meanings, and personal experiences, that work together to form a web of meanings to understand nature as part of the extended self. Findings demonstrate different types of relationships to and with nature.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. The extended self

The self represents a person as a whole, and includes personality, personal beliefs, feelings, experiences, and the regulatory self (Leary & Tangney, 2011). Self's formation develops through social interactions, and is the outcome of language and self-reflection (Owens, 2006). Kleine III, Kleine and Kernan (1993, p. 209) describe the self as "a sense of who and what we are." Therefore, the self encompasses physical appearance, roles,

experiences, values, beliefs and goals, and incorporates both physical and symbolic properties. The self is a dynamic concept involving psychological characteristics and self-regulation that determine personal characteristics and actions. Individuals strive to match their self's beliefs and actions.

Barresi (2002) cites William James' classification of the self into the subjective self (I) and the objective self (me)—knower versus known self. Studies distinguish the knower (I) self and the known (me) self, where the former relates to experience, and the latter is the product of experience (Leary & Tangney, 2011). Much research focuses on the known (me) self rather than on the knower (I) self. Following James' classifications, the "me" comprises the material, social, and spiritual and the "I" as the thinker (Barresi, 2002). Hence, exploring factors, situations, and experiences that form the known self is critical to understanding the overall formation of motivation that drives a person's behavior.

Belk (1988) describes the extended self to be multidimensional and identifies two distinct versions of the self: the inner self (me, or the core self), and the extended self (mine). Every individual has an inner "natural nature," or the "very early acquired roots of individual self" (Maslow, 1962, p. 178). The early intrinsic or raw self is shaped by external forces such as environment, culture, and family (Maslow, 1962). Differentiating between the inner self and the extended self, Belk (1989) argues that the inner self consists of one's mind, and the extended self includes anything a person perceives to possess. Further, an object's sense of attachment formation depends on whether an object is experienced by controlling or being controlled by. The concept of the extended self suggests that individuals either accept an object's identity into their self, or they impose their identity onto the object. This factor significantly determines the relationship dimension with the object.

Regarding possessions, Belk (1988) suggests that external objects include physical environments. Objects exercising power over individuals may become part of the self. For

example, garden ownership strongly associates with the self-identity of the gardener (Freeman et al., 2012). Also, an object may become part of the self by creation and knowing (Belk, 1988) resulting in “psychological ownership,” or a “feeling of ownership” over objects (Wong & Hogg, 2011, p. 65). Applying psychological ownership to experiences in nature, an attachment forms. Nature attachment examples include conquering a mountain (controlling), gardening (creating), or experiencing river trekking (knowing). These experiences form personal meanings and attachments to elements of nature, extending the identity of the participant. Prior studies apply the theory of the extended self to understand relationships with tangible objects. This study broadens the theory of the extended self to intangible objects of nature.

People construct self-relevant meanings by reflecting on their experiences. Self-reflection encourages a person to examine his/her thoughts, emotions, or priorities, and this activity enhances self-understanding, guides behavior (Leary & Terry, 2012), and adds meaning to experiences (Devos, Huynh, & Banaji, 2011). To comprehend the self-nature extension, the present study examines the experiences of people through their engagement with nature, and how these experiences contribute to symbolic meanings and the formation of self-nature relationships. Exploring a person’s self from various dimensions, namely, their values, experiences, and self-beliefs achieves this research objective. Additionally, this study explores nature’s influence as the extended self on responsible consumption behavior. The term responsible consumption behavior means understanding the self-directed motivation of individuals towards the preservation of nature. Thus, responsible consumption behavior is the purchase, use, and disposal of goods and services with the goal of minimizing negative impacts on nature while still achieving personal gains.

3. Method

The research was conducted in Malaysia, mainly around the cities of Kuala Lumpur, Petaling Jaya, and Port Dickson in West Malaysia, and in Kota Kinabalu in East Malaysia. This study employs short term ethnography. Short term ethnography engages in immersive data collection while concurrently achieving a tight focus deriving from a theoretically-defined context (Pink & Morgan, 2013). Ethnographic data were gathered through participant observation in suitable activities, in-depth interviews and home visits, and recorded in-field notes, photographs, or transcribed tape recordings. Initially, participant observation offered a route to immersion in the topic, and researchers decided to maintain this approach for the study's duration. The first author engaged in participant observation over 17 months, participating in 11 nature-related activities totaling 115 hours of observation. Nature-related activities included bird watching, mountain and river trekking, cleaning waterfall areas, and nature and botanic walks. Augmenting observations, long interviews aimed to deepen the etic, or researcher, view and purposive sampling maintained the focus of the research. Participants were sourced through connections with nature societies, from participant observation activities, by word-of-mouth, and through snowball sampling. Participants' privacy and identity was protected through the use of pseudonyms. Fifteen English speaking informants met the criteria of the purposive sampling, ranging from informants who connected with nature on a regular basis to environmental activists involved in nature conservation activities. Each interview lasted over an hour, and 20 hours of conversation were recorded and transcribed verbatim. During the interviews, projective techniques were used to uncover participants' personal meanings of nature. Follow-up interviews were conducted with the informants until data saturation was reached and to check the developing etic analysis. Finally, the first author visited homes to observe and photograph participants' consumption practices. Coding and categorizing data was conducted progressively with data collection. Two researchers independently read the data and

formed interpretations. The interpretations were compared to ensure trustworthiness and consistency, using part to whole analysis to develop the categorization represented by the final model (see Figure 1). Any discrepancies in the interpretation were resolved through extensive discussion.

4. Findings and Discussion

The findings and discussion present various dimensions of nature as the extended self. Results identify three different connection types to nature. This section concludes by discussing how nature as the extended self influences responsible consumption behavior.

4.1. Nature as the extended self

Nature as an extended self is a complex relationship. Influencing this relationship are classifications including perceptions of boundaries between the self and nature, inclusiveness, beliefs, values, emotional bonding, symbolic meanings, purposes for engaging with nature, and behavior towards nature. External factors influence the inner self (core self) and formation of the extended self. That is, the knower self 'I' (the thinker) differs from the known self 'me' (the product of the experiences). Figure 1 conceptually depicts these relationships' dimensions between the self and nature, and illustrates the values, beliefs and ecological worldviews, and the resulting impact on responsible consumption. The first dimension of the self-nature relationship comes from the literature. The self is separate from nature; anthropocentric values and beliefs dominate this dimension. This view regards humans as the core and most significant entity in the universe, and nature as an object for humans to use and exploit (Kortenkamp & Moore, 2001). This study purposely chose participants with an interest in nature, thus, none of the participants have a pure anthropocentric worldview. The results reveal that informants perceive nature as part of the self when they view nature as important to the self and is bound by affective connections. Study results reveal three dimensions of the extended self. These dimensions include: (1)

nature as a part of a larger self (relational extended self); (2) the self as a subset of superior nature (encapsulated self); and (3) the self as one with nature (assimilated self).

4.1.1. Nature perceived as a part of a larger self (*Relational extended self*)

Vani and Sham relate to nature as an outward extension of the self to dominate nature. They perceive self as being more important than nature. Initially introduced to experiences of nature through gardens, these individuals symbolically define nature as a “mother” who provides food, shelter, beauty, and health as well as a place to improve personal characteristics. They connect with nature to fulfill personal needs, and they engage with nature to enhance physical and mental strength, improve personality, and build desired character. For example, Vani reports that her decision to climb Mount Kinabalu reflects her ability to “*handle the journey and how the climb matures self.*” She pushes herself to forgo the comforts of home to trek mountains. Vani believes that discipline makes her a tougher person. In contrast, Keshita seeks nature for solace during periods of distress. Nature helps her to achieve emotional stability and progress towards her desired self. In this context, nature is viewed as a wise person and a space for communion.

Unlike Keshita, who regards nature as a companion, Sham engages with nature to reduce her loneliness through friendships with like-minded others, and to improve her confidence. To Sham and Vani, reaching the peak of Mount Kinabalu is an act of conquering nature. Although these individuals form emotional bonds with nature, their level of emotional attachment is low and situational factors govern their relationships. Achievement of personal goals drives this relationship with nature. The sense of self dominates their thoughts and affection towards nature. While this association indicates a sense of belonging with nature, the dependency on nature for survival is the inducement. Rather than identifying with nature, these participants use nature as a place to build distinct personalities involving adventurousness, toughness, discipline, and confidence. Such consumption of nature

cultivates a one-dimensional relationship that places the self in the center, promoting “me-ness” and reducing the dimensions of “we-ness” (Kacen, 2011).

Informants showing signs of relational extended self are at the beginning stage of forming a meaningful relationship with nature. They develop attachments and emotional bonding while exploring and experiencing nature. The accumulation of nature experiences further induces curiosity and knowledge-seeking behavior. The participants begin seeking information and learning about nature and nature-related skills. Through a higher affiliation with nature, the intention to seek nature advances to include the attainment of self-enhancement (i.e., desire to improve one’s personal abilities and personality traits). Progressively, confidence in nature is enhanced, reducing fear and increasing tolerance of discomfort while in nature. As nature experiences internalize to form meaningful connections, individuals attach affection, begin to sense intrinsic values, and form ecocentric beliefs. Nature’s own worth extends beyond just being useful to humans. This level marks the beginning of perceiving nature as part of the extended self. A belief emerges suggesting that the self is more important than nature predominates. Individuals begin to experience outward self-extension and the self-nature relationship becomes a relational extended self.

4.1.2. The self as a subset of superior nature (*Encapsulated self*)

The encapsulated self feels insignificant in relation to nature. Nature’s beauty, vastness, power and mysteries are beyond an individual’s ability to comprehend. Viewing nature as superior generates feelings of smallness and powerlessness, often promoting either respect or fear of nature. Feelings of insignificance derive from perceiving nature as beyond human control; nature is superior, resulting in the encapsulated self. For example, study participant Hasyim’s rock climbing and caving activities produce feelings of amazement relating to the creation of nature: “*You feel very insignificant in this world compared to something so majestic and beautiful.*”

Hasyim's relationship with nature is driven by religious spirituality. The motivation to connect with nature allows a person to feel closer to God. Witnessing nature generates thoughts of the creator, beauty, a human's place in the web of life, and fear of nature's wrath. Motivations to preserve nature demonstrate respect for God's creation and to live in a safe world. These study participants express a sense of responsibility towards the natural environment, and blame human negligence for the occurrence of natural catastrophes. Hasyim states, *"When nature gets angry...how bad they can become. It may look nice and good, but once it turns the other way around it becomes extremely ugly. So learn to respect and know nature well... It is just a warning or a lesson from the universe to teach humans a lesson."*

Similar to people expressing an outward relationship with nature, the need to conserve nature is self-centered. Study participants Rashyid, Alice, and Hasyim derive self-worth by engaging in conservation activities. Moreover, guilt plays a significant role in guiding their actions. Whether nature is part of the self or vice versa, self-need motivates both groups to care for nature.

The encapsulated self perceives nature as larger than the self, promoting nature's dominance over the self. This attachment reversal to the external object reflects a relationship where an object controls self (Kacen 2011). Religious beliefs affect individuals' experiences of the magnificence and mystery of nature, generating thoughts of the creator and questioning the role of self in the web of life. Nature, valued as God's creation, directs the need to respect and protect God's creation based on theocentric beliefs. Awareness of the human contribution to nature's destruction creates guilt or fear that drives their behavior.

Participants' consumption activities who perceive nature as the relational or encapsulated self tend to focus on comforting experiences. These individuals are responsible consumers, but their actions are inconsistent and tend to be situational. Generally, they are aware of their consumption activities, but they belong at the lowest levels of the self-nature

relationship because the strength of their identification with nature is insufficient to place nature before the self. Therefore, attempts to reduce consumption only surface after wants are satisfied. They focus on recycling or reusing, and put minimum emphasis on reducing their carbon footprint. Perceptions of nature as a provider dominate their thoughts and lower their sense of empathy. Hence, encouraging responsible consumption behavior among individuals with such beliefs requires promoting personal gain from nature engagements.

4.1.3. The self as one with nature (*Assimilated self*)

The assimilated self feels a oneness with nature through efforts to create a characteristically natural appearance. These participants dress simply with no accessories, and their clothing choices include earthy, natural colors. Further, projective techniques and observations uncover that participants perceive nature as wild and unorganized. Mary portrays nature as “*asymmetric*,” Prema considers nature as “*untouched*”. Sam states, “*Messiness in the forest, it is not organized. I like it because it is messy. Like my table is messy. I know my tendency is to be messy. I feel it’s like me also.*” Viewing Sam’s home furnishings and belongings reveals disorganized settings and a preference for wild gardens; “*House is old, equipped with basic furniture which is generally old. House is un-kempt; things like clothes, gear, cushions are scattered everywhere. Sam mentions that he likes the house to be unorganized which is in line with his preference of wild nature.*”

Addressing nature’s elements as “*friends*” or “*relatives*” indicates that participants feel that nature is in tune with their self. Participants perceive nature as calm and knowledgeable. Their nature look, hunger for knowledge, and peaceful demeanor link to a perception of a self and nature collective. Combining childhood exposures, direct nature experiences, positive parental and friend influences, and knowledge extension through education consolidates these participants’ ecological selves. Freedom to explore nature functions as a “*field of free action*”

to a child, results in a deep imprint in the child's mind that fosters ecological behavior in adulthood (Chawla, 2007, p. 153).

Educational nature experiences lower feelings of discomfort, or fear of being harmed, and increases participants' sense of oneness and belonging. Prema claims, "*I have become more alert to things around and to see beauty around you. ... I know how to take care of myself in nature.*" These participants refrain from disturbing or challenging nature; instead, they seek protection by showing respect. An expanding ecological-self forms empathy (Kuhn, 2001), leading to a view that suffering nature equates to their own suffering. Perceiving nature as an essence of being, these individuals build psychological relationships with the environment through the process of self-actualization. In the forest, June's states "*you can actually hear yourself for the first time,*" suggesting a process of inner search.

The self-realization and transformation in nature are strongly aided by experiencing sacred nature (Canniford & Shankar, 2013). Certain elements of nature become a medium to purify oneself. Sam states, "*I feel I am a part of that phenomenon that is going on...There is no distinct difference between me as inside this body and me as outside. So I feel I am dissolved...It's like putting an ink bottle under running water. So the water just keeps coming, cleansing slowly [and] the ink bottle becomes white, clean. So I feel that cleansing feeling.*" A self-actualized individual protects nature as part of the self. Being part of nature is not solely for their enjoyment but also to fulfill a need to belong. Free from social pressures of a materialistic culture, these participants establish relationships with nature as a protector, and their environmental activists' roles enhance feelings of self-worth. Prema's role as a professional nature guide and volunteer for nature events expresses her gratitude to nature: "*As long as there is greenery, tropical rainforest, as long as there is greenery around us, it is beneficial to man and other creatures. So let us maintain and fight for the conservation of all of our forests.*"

These participants' consumption behavior is consistent with their ideology that nature should be protected. They believe that even the smallest action contributes to nature's preservation. They focus on mindful living, and need to care for nature originates from a preservation concern for their children and future generations. Although self-focused benefits exist, these participants value nature as precious and irreplaceable.

In assimilation, self dilutes to become one with nature, promoting a sense of oneness and mutual care. As connecting with nature intensifies, individuals begin seeing nature as a self-relevant object. Familiarity and in-depth knowledge strengthen the nature identity. Motivation to engage with nature goes beyond the need for rejuvenation or health benefits and involves a desire for self-realization in an authentic self. Petersen (2011, p. 9) refers to the authentic self as "an inner impulse which will blossom if it is merely given a helping hand." Each individual has an authentic self; however, they must "discover" this true self (Ahuvia, 2005). This discovery involves a process of inner-searching resulting in self-understanding, and realization of self beliefs and values that guide their actions. Leary (2003) argues that conforming to one's authentic self allows a person the freedom to be oneself and to engage in personally satisfying behavior. At this stage the self-nature relationship evolves to a spiritual level, promoting a sense of oneness with nature through a trans-centric view. The term trans-centric refers to rising above the self to minimize boundaries that separate the self from nature. The sense of belonging nurtures strong positive attitudes, intentions, and actual conservation behavior.

Individuals adopt a broader view of life and develop a strong sense of belonging with the broader universe. As the self is seen as nature, loss of nature becomes a loss of the self. A stronger the sense of inclusion (i.e., nature in one's self) leads to a more intense need to value and protect nature. These participants' strongly rooted self-nature identity drive consistent behavior irrespective of social norms, rewards, or punishments. Concern for the environment

goes beyond egocentric concerns to altruistic motives, a relationship of mutual gain. Nature identity is strongest at this level. Individuals try to look “wild” or natural to convey their nature identity. Efforts to feel at one with nature include a shared, group identity as nature lovers and protectors.

4.2. Sacred nature relationship

Nature as part of the self positively influences responsible consumption behavior. The results suggest that: (1) development of the nature relationship is progressive and evolves with prolonged contact; (2) direct and prolonged exposure to nature is a prerequisite to initiating the process by which nature becomes an extension of the self; (3) interactions with nature create personal meanings that guide beliefs and values; (4) attachment plays an important role in determining the strength of the self-nature relationship; (5) perceptions of similarity between the self and nature are necessary to develop empathy and establish relationships; and (6) the extent to which an individual perceives the self as part of nature influences the consistency of engagement in responsible consumption behavior.

Personal and unique memories from encounters with nature promote the view that nature is more than ordinary. Likewise, hardship endured during experiences with nature makes the experiences meaningful and, therefore, sacred. Hence, nature consumption establishes a system of meanings that, in turn, helps to form views of sacredness. Such beliefs guide an individual’s behavior while in nature, signal attempts by the self to be accepted by nature, and result in a relationship that supports mutual benefits (we-ness).

The results show that inferred images, thoughts, and feelings of nature result in meaningful attachment, and that self-nature relationships involve functional, emotional, religious or spiritual attachment. Functional attachment limits linking the self to the characteristics of objects, limiting attachment meanings and lowering affection. If nature is solely an object, with emphasis on usefulness to humans, the primary aim will be to control

and exploit. In contrast, nature as part of the self comes from personal experiences such as gardening (creation) or mountain trekking (knowing) activate emotions, self-meanings, self-involvement, and identity. Further, self-actualization needs may move individuals to seek higher affiliation levels with nature. Internalizing nature forms a sense of oneness. This self-extension broadens to encompass general nature or the wider universe. Seeing the self as part of the web of life works as a mechanism bringing together mind and body to merge with nature and, ultimately, the whole universe.

Nature's special meanings encourage individuals to develop a positive ecological worldview, leading to a sacred relationship with nature. Thus, individuals view nature as either profane or sacred based on the extent to which they perceive nature as part of the self. A profane relationship with nature guides individuals who perceive nature as being separate from the self, promoting anthropocentrism. Such a view limits the perceived importance of nature to the self, promoting a sense of "me-ness," and a low level of emotional bonding and meaningful attachment. Functional attachment guides a profane relationship with nature. From a religious point of view or intense personal attachment, people view natural objects as sacred. Direct engagement with nature cultivates this sacred aspect. The existing literature generally links sacredness to religious beliefs and conduct (Ruback, Pandey, & Kohli, 2008). Participants link their religious beliefs to nature's supernatural powers or extraordinary experiences.

Rituals are used to transform objects from the profane or ordinary, to the sacred (Belk, Wallendorf, & Sherry, 1989), and signify an individual's attempt to develop a deeper relationship with nature. Additionally, individuals 'tangibilize' their nature experiences through their collections of photographs and items collected from nature (e.g., an abandoned bird's nest, seeds and dried leaves), and by keeping detailed memos of plants and animals.

In addition to cognitive reasoning, the creation of meanings initiates affection, which

strengthens the perception of closeness in a relationship. Hence, this research argues that an individual's emotional relationship with nature functions as a conscious process that aims to establish a close relationship.

4.3. Implications for responsible consumption

Findings validate Jakovcevic et al. (2014), who suggest that motives to engage in responsible consumption behavior are intrinsically driven, beyond rewards or monetary savings. Study participants reason that monetary savings motivate them to consume responsibly. For example, they choose to walk rather than drive to save fuel, buy cheaper, locally produced goods, and reuse items to avoid spending on new purchases. At a deeper level, responsible consumption's motives include intrinsic satisfaction, gratitude, aspiration for a simple life, self-contentment, escapism from consumption clutter, a sense of control, the valuing of God's creation, concern for their children or animals, the achievement of a stable and consistent self-identity, and the formation of an ecological identity. To demonstrate their appreciation, participants try to minimize their carbon footprint, engage in growing gardens and in conservation activities for animals, adopt careers relating to nature conservation, and participate in environmental activism. Additionally, participants attempt to withdraw themselves from materialism and focus on simplifying their lives to achieve a sense of control by using donated clothes to reduce shopping for new ones, avoiding plastic bag use, and choosing to take local holidays. Others engage in responsible consumption to value nature as God's creation. Some participants aspire for a healthier world for their children. Minimizing further destruction of nature motives them to be responsible consumers.

This research suggests that emphasizing self-gain addresses environmental problems and brings about lasting behavioral changes. Self-interest differs from selfishness because the latter suggests minimal concern for others (De Young, 2000). For example, people boycott unsustainable products to communicate their self-identity and to show concern for nature.

Therefore, an effective strategy to encourage behavioral change involves highlighting environmental problems as being detrimental to the immediate self. Highlighting positive outcomes to the self generates positive attitudes towards responsible consumption behavior. An additional insight is that engagement in responsible consumption behavior is inconsistent despite the perception of nature as an extension of the self. Hence, the question arises of what determines behavioral consistency with respect to responsible consumption. The results show that one's level of attachment to nature and ecological worldviews influences responsible consumption activities. A stronger attachment results in consistent behavior towards nature and less focus on benefits to the self. Getting individuals to develop an attachment to nature encourages them to consume responsibly and to generate consistency in their actions.

5. Theoretical contributions

This research offers theoretical alternatives to conceptualize the relationship between the self and nature. The three dimensions of the self-nature relationship (i.e., relational extended self, encapsulated self, and assimilated self) illustrate nature's intensity as being part of the self. These dimensions explain why attitudes and responsible consumption behaviors differ among consumers. Specifically, an attachment with nature has significant behavioral implications for responsible consumption. The findings add insights into the processes through which nature experiences become sacred, and how consumers sustain these experiences. Such knowledge provides suggestions for developing positive consumer attitudes towards consuming responsibly in the mainstream consumption culture. We acknowledge that the small sample size and lack of diversity in age, education and culture limits the applicability of the findings beyond the current setting. Do these relationships hold true in different settings? Perhaps different geographical areas, cultural settings and contrasting groups of participants affect the socially constructed meanings. A natural progression of this work is investigating the self-nature relationship dimensionality based on this study's

conceptual framework. Assessing the impact of different attachment types and ecological worldviews on responsible consumption behavior through empirical study offers fruitful area for future work.

6. Conclusion

This research highlights how boundaries between the self and nature potentially regulate consumption behavior. To motivate responsible consumption behavior, consumers need to perceive nature as part of the self. Thus, encouraging individuals to adopt responsible consumption behavior requires them to form more than just a functional attachment with nature; they must change their current view of nature as a distant object. Encouraging connections with nature and promoting the embedding of nature in the self are steps in the right direction. Understanding the behavioral drivers helps to explain the reasons for consumer apathy to connect with nature and to adopt responsible consumption behavior. This research concludes that encouraging responsible consumption behavior requires consumers to see themselves as part of, or at total oneness with nature. However, the research acknowledges that the development of this kind of internal desire may prove to be a challenge and requires a gradual process. Nevertheless, exploring consumer experiences provides an avenue to positively address and change consumption attitudes and behavior.

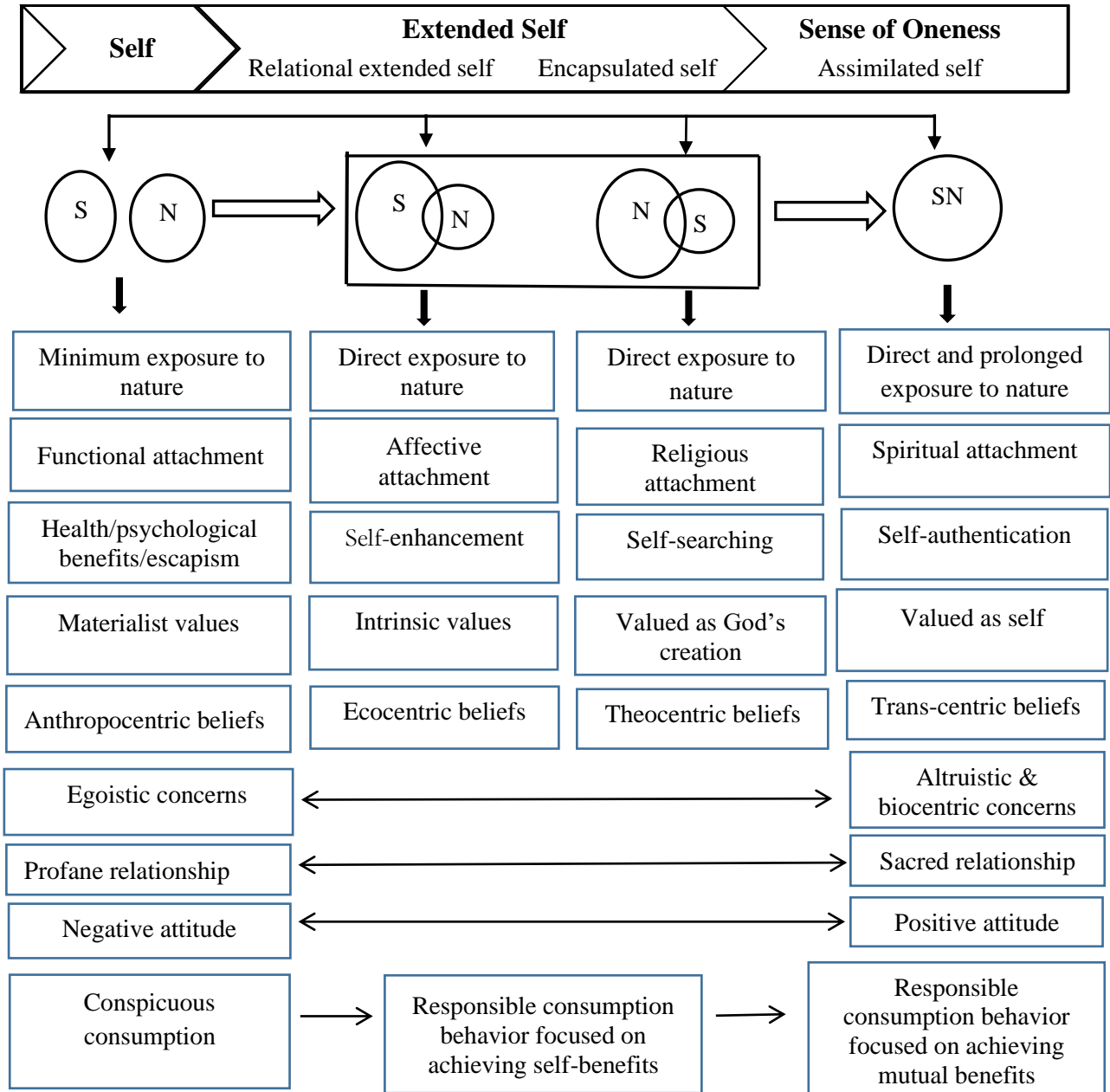
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Figure 1: Dimensions of the self-nature relationship



*Self (S) and Nature (N)