Class Sessions #11  
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# Discussion of final paper

# People not as “rational” as you think: Three myths of Behavior Change

## “Education will change behavior”

### More/better information => better decision-making

### We seek confirming info, ignore other info, & decide in ways that don’t reflect info

## “You can’t change attitudes unless you change behavior”

### Attitudes follow behavior, they do not predict it

### So, set behavioral expectations

## “People know what motivates them to take action”

### Buskers and tip jars – social norms not your generosity

### So, “seed your tip jar”

## Source: Jeni Cross, 2013, TEDxCSU Three Myths of Behavior Change, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l5d8GW6GdR0>

## Lots of evidence that we do not act rationally

# New points to add

## What problems do humans tend to worry about? Those with following characteristics

### Visible (oil slicks vs. CO2)

### Clear link of problem to consequence (Love Canal or disease clusters near power plant vs. CO2 to Sea level rise)

### “Exotic” (Zika virus not flu)

### Immediate consequences

#### Near-term consequences

#### Local consequences (bad framing as about polar bears and Pacific Islanders rather than sparrows and Cascade snowpack)

### Quick-happening problems not slow processes (floods over days, not sea-level rise over decades)

### Human-caused vs. “natural” problems – (terrorists vs. storms [that are hard to show were caused by humans])

### Those that don’t evoke guilt. We avoid the guilt rather than fix the problem.

### “Motivated reasoning” – ideology causes your beliefs about the state of the world, not the other way around. Same event may be seen by non-religious person as explicable and by religious person as a miracle. Republicans interpret big snowstorms as evidence of NO climate change and Democrats interpret as evidence that science can’t predict weather, even though it can predict climate.

# Weber and Swim articles

## Swim article: American Psychological Association’s (APA) report Psychology and Global Climate Change: addressing a multifaceted phenomenon and set of challenges – not required but an interesting read.

## Psychological insight: Experience more important than description

### Learn about risks from description vs. experience

### Descriptions of climate change generally from scientists

### Experience of climate change is more important driver of how risky things seem

#### But we experience weather, not climate

### So, we tend to underestimate the risks of climate change

## How we know people think has implications for how we process climate change.

### Fast vs. slow thinking: Kahneman: “Two systems drive the way we think and make choices, says Nobel Prize winner Daniel Kahneman: System One is fast, intuitive, and emotional; System Two is slower, more deliberative, and more logical. Examining how both systems function within the mind, Kahneman, author of Thinking, Fast and Slow, exposes the extraordinary capabilities, faults, and biases of fast thinking and the pervasive influence of intuitive impressions, showing where we can trust our intuitions and how we can tap into the benefits of slow thinking.”

### Associative or affective reasoning – not learned, very quick, System 1

### Analytic or intellectual reasoning – learned but slower and often goes unused

### We understand things through personal experience (affective reasoning), but climate change is a “statistical phenomena” that requires analytic reasoning

## Psychological insights: People look for information selectively

### Decision-makers only pay attention to certain sources, types of info

#### Republicans go to FoxNews, Democrats go to MSNBC

### We tend to reject information that goes against core beliefs, values

#### Or that suggests something be done that we disagree with (motivated reasoning)

## Psychological insight: How information is “framed” matters

### Humans are sensitive to how information is presented

### CC can be “framed” in multiple ways:

#### Content frames: public health, national security, environmental conservation

#### Structure frames: loss vs. gain; present vs. future

### We generally accept risk if thinking about possible losses; but avoid risk if thinking about possible gains

#### So, take more risks when think we are going to lose something

### Climate change generally presented as losses frame but better to frame it in a “gains” frame: “if we invest, here is the better things we would have”

### Framing: how we frame climate solutions influences skepticism of climate science

#### Costs of climate solutions lead Republicans to disbelieve climate science

#### Climate solution of “promoting green tech” vs. “regulating industry”

#### “I don’t like the solution, so I discount that there’s a problem.”

#### Soure: Campbell, T. H. and A. C. Kay. 2014. Solution aversion: On the relation between ideology and motivated disbelief. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 107(5): 809-824.US: American Psychological Association.

## Psychological insight: Barriers to understanding climate change

### Beliefs influence perceptions, not vice versa

#### Farmers see what they believe, not believe what they see

### We believe personal experience, not the statistics

### Perceptions about climate change causes and consequences are socially constructed within communities and lead us to “attend to, fear, and socially amplify some risks while ignoring, discounting, or attenuating others” (Weber 2010)

## Psychological insight: Barriers to worrying about climate change

### Availability heuristics

#### Use ***easily-available and recent memories*** to estimate likelihood of things happening, regardless of how rare we know them to be

#### OVER-worry about things that have happened recently

#### UNDER-worry about rare things that haven’t happened for awhile

### Not scared enough by rare events, but scared too much when they happen (Sandy/Katrina; Fukushima; earthquakes). Overreact after major event but then “falls off radar”

### Finite pool of worry

#### Can only worry about so much: if worry more about climate change, we worry less about other things

#### If worry more about other things (like the economy), we worry less about climate change, with no change in the objective risks

## Psychological insight: Barriers to taking action on climate change

### Why, when we understand it, we don’t change behavior? Helps us understand why people are NOT homo economicus: E.g., “By attending to a variety of individual predictors, researchers can help explain instances in which individual and household behavior does not follow simple models of economic benefit maximization, such as when individuals and households fail to make energy-saving investments that would yield individual benefits at no cost or very attractive rates of financial return”

### Single action bias

#### “Regardless of which single action is taken first, decision makers have a tendency not to take any further action, presumably because the first action suffices in reducing the feeling of worry or vulnerability.”

#### “The strong negative affect associated with the concrete, immediate costs and sacrifices may well drive ecologically damaging consumption decisions and actions.”

### Status quo bias

#### “People do not move away from hazards even when they are aware of them”

#### Won’t move into bad situation but will stay in one

### “Nudge” issues: wherever we start, there we stay

#### Netflix subscriptions

#### Policies can make a difference – UK auto-enrollment in retirement plan

#### Env’l options: EWEB could make green (not brown) energy the “default”

#### People retain freedom but behave differently

#### Sometimes people prefer the default, even if they won’t choose it

### Optimistic biases (Weinstein, 1980): Uncertainty promotes optimism

#### Not my fault

#### Commons dilemma

##### Undercuts responsibility and action

##### Lack of “efficacy” – feeling that you can make a difference

#### Moral judgment system ill-equipped to recognize and deal with unintended outcome of our own behavior (Markowitz & Shariff, 2012)

##### No obvious villain to blame

##### Unintentional side-effect of modern life

## What strategies can lead us to change behavior?

### “Psychology can also make important contributions by informing efforts to mitigate or limit climate change”

### “Psychologists have also uncovered individual, interpersonal, and social forces capable of explaining and changing human behavior ***in ways that others may fail to consider***.” *“Affect-based decisions about climate change are unlikely to motivate significant action,* as politicians and the general public are not particularly worried about climate risks, and because attempts to scare people into greater action may have unintended negative consequences. *Analysis based decisions are also unlikely to result in significant action*, because of large discounting of uncertain future costs of climate risks compared to the certain and immediate costs of climate change mitigation. *Rule-based decisions that determine behavior based on moral or social responsibility may hold out the best prospects for sustainable action.*”

# Questions

## Could psychological insight prove useful in crafting or advocating for international climate change treaties? If so, how explain how it could be applicable?

## New research from FIELD showing that negotiators are also driven by these sorts of factors