



# Navigating Behavioural Change

## Theory Landmarks and Conceptual Guideposts for Applied Behavioural Science Consulting

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# 1. Introduction

As organisations seek effective strategies to address the complexities of human behaviour, the insights and methods from behavioural science are becoming increasingly valuable. This paper explores the field of applied behavioural science consulting, offering a thorough overview of the principles and practices that guide Behavioural Leeway as a science-driven behaviour change consultancy. It will highlight key theoretical foundations and provide conceptual guidance on how behavioural science can drive transformative change within organisations and beyond.

The paper is organised into seven chapters: Chapters 2 to 5 discuss Behavioural Leeway's four main areas of expertise. Chapter 6 offers a brief overview of some cross-cutting issues in the design of behavioural interventions. Chapter 7 concludes with a concise outline of our approach to applied behavioural science consulting, focusing on how we translate behavioural science insights into practical advice and guidance for our clients.

## *Harnessing Behavioural Leeway*

In the field of applied behavioural science consulting, understanding behavioural leeway involves recognising how much freedom individuals have to deviate from habitual or automatic behaviours and the level of control they have in shaping their actions. Behavioural leeway considers the wide range of factors that influence human behaviour, including cognitive processes, social influences, environmental cues, and personal preferences. It highlights the need to consider this variability when designing interventions or strategies aimed at promoting behaviour change.

The leeway to change behaviour can be effectively used to manage organisational change by acknowledging and leveraging the flexibility individuals have in adapting to new situations. This requires an understanding of the contextual factors that influence behaviour within the organisation and the strategic implementation of interventions that make the most of this flexibility to achieve desired changes. By recognising and utilising this leeway, organisations can successfully navigate transitions, engage employees, and drive effective change initiatives.

### **1.1 Overview of Applied Behavioural Science Consulting**

Applied behavioural science consulting is an evolving field that leverages insights from behavioural science to provide actionable advice to organisations and inform public policy. This field focuses on understanding and influencing human behaviour to propel effective change and improve decision making processes.

The development of behavioural science as a foundation for practical applications is supported by several key disciplines highlighted in the scientific literature. Behavioural economics combines psychology and economics to explore decision making processes, challenging traditional economic views of

rationality. Cognitive psychology investigates mental processes like perception, memory, and reasoning to understand how people think and make decisions. Social psychology looks at how social interactions and contexts affect individual behaviour, highlighting the influence of social norms. Additionally, the concepts of nudging and choice architecture focus on subtly guiding behaviour by structuring choices in ways that lead to better outcomes while preserving individual freedom.

### *Prominent Use Cases*

Behavioural science consulting has been successfully applied in a range of contexts. In managing organisational change, behavioural insights are used to boost employee engagement, improve team performance, and create inclusive workplace cultures. In public policy design, behavioural science contributes to crafting policies that address social challenges like health, education, and environmental sustainability. Additionally, by understanding consumer decision making, businesses can develop more effective marketing strategies and product designs.

### *Using Behavioural Science as a Lens*

The "Manifesto for Applying Behavioural Science" (Hallsworth, 2023) advocates for using behavioural science as a lens to enhance policy and organisational outcomes by translating research into practical interventions that address real-world problems. It emphasises context sensitivity, ethical considerations, evidence-based approaches, and interdisciplinary collaboration. The manifesto focuses on scalable and sustainable systemic changes and highlights the importance of public engagement. By incorporating these principles, it aims to apply behavioural science practically, ethically, and impactfully to improve policy and organisational practices.

### *Interdisciplinarity and Cultural Evolutionary Thinking in Public Policy Design*

The growing interdisciplinarity of behavioural science consulting is marked by the merging of various fields, including psychology, economics, sociology, and anthropology. A notable development in this area is the adoption of cultural evolutionary thinking (Schimmelpfennig and Muthukrishna, 2023), which looks at how cultural practices and norms change over time and influence behaviour. Key ideas in this approach include cultural transmission, which explores how behaviours and norms are passed down through generations and across societies; social learning, which studies how individuals learn by observing and imitating others; and group selection, which examines how behaviours that benefit groups, rather than just individuals, can develop and endure.

In public policy design, cultural evolutionary thinking offers a framework for creating policies that consider the changing nature of cultural practices and their impact on behaviour. This approach focuses on long-term behavioural change by crafting policies that encourage sustainable behaviour over time. It recognises the importance of understanding the context in shaping behaviour

and supports adaptive policymaking that can evolve in response to shifting cultural dynamics and behavioural trends.

## ***1.2 Human-Centred Behaviour Change Strategy***

Human-centred design principles emphasise the importance of understanding the needs, motivations, and preferences of target groups to achieve meaningful behavioural change. Human-centred behaviour change strategies are built on several key theoretical concepts from applied behavioural science.

Firstly, the combination of behavioural economics and cognitive psychology has deepened our understanding of how people make decisions and how these decisions can be shaped. Concepts like heuristics, biases, and framing effects play a vital role in designing interventions that work with natural human tendencies.

Secondly, the influence of social dynamics, as explored in social psychology, is crucial. Social norms, peer pressure, and group behaviour significantly affect individual actions, making it important to consider the wider social context in any behaviour change strategy. The idea of choice architecture, which involves structuring choices to guide people towards better outcomes without limiting their freedom, is a practical example of applying these social dynamics.

### ***Integrating Persuasive Design and Habit Formation***

The incorporation of insights from persuasive design (Cialdini, 1993) and B.J. Fogg's Tiny Habits (2020) has greatly influenced the field of behavioural design. Cialdini's principles, such as reciprocity, social proof, and scarcity, offer a solid foundation for effectively influencing human behaviour. These principles are key in developing strategies that connect with individuals and encourage desired behaviours in a subtle and ethical way. The Tiny Habits Method highlights the effectiveness of small, incremental changes, suggesting that behaviour change is most sustainable when it begins with tiny, easily achievable actions that gradually build momentum. This approach focuses on simplicity and immediacy, making it particularly useful in organisational settings where gradual, scalable improvements are needed.

The impact of merging persuasive design with habit formation techniques on behavioural design has been significant. This combined approach has led to more refined and effective behavioural interventions that are both theoretically robust and practically useful. It enables organisations to achieve lasting change, improve decision making, enhance team performance, and cultivate a culture of continuous improvement. This comprehensive approach ensures that behaviour change is not only initiated but also sustained, leading to transformative results at all levels of an organisation.

### ***Methodological Pluralism in Behavioural Design***

The advancement of behavioural design methods is being influenced by the creation of structured frameworks that combine behaviour change techniques with design methodologies. By bringing together insights from behavioural

science and design, practitioners can use a wide range of tools and approaches to tackle specific behavioural challenges. Employing a variety of methods in behavioural design is crucial for creating interventions that are more effective, user-friendly, and engaging. The iterative approach to behavioural design, which relies on feedback, ongoing refinement, and empirical evidence, ultimately leads to more impactful interventions that drive meaningful behavioural change and positive outcomes.

### *Connecting Micro with Macro Perspectives*

In transforming complex organisational environments, behavioural design methods operate at multiple levels. At the individual level, strategies aim to encourage personal growth and behaviour changes through targeted interventions that address specific actions. For teams, the emphasis is on improving collaboration, communication, and collective effectiveness. At the organisational level, the focus is on creating an environment that supports and maintains desired behaviours, aligning the culture and policies with behavioural insights.

The interaction between broader and more focused perspectives is crucial for the success of behavioural change interventions. At the micro level, interventions often target individual behaviours, seeking to influence decision making and habits directly. For example, green nudges are designed to encourage environmentally friendly behaviours among individuals. However, the effectiveness of these targeted strategies can be significantly enhanced by considering them within a wider context. By considering broader factors such as social norms, cultural values, and policy frameworks, interventions can leverage these macro-level dynamics to amplify the desired behavioural changes. Presenting green nudges within a larger narrative of environmental responsibility and collective action, for instance, can increase their acceptance and effectiveness among individuals (Grelle *et al.*, 2024). Incorporating these broader perspectives into behavioural change interventions makes them more comprehensive, impactful, and sustainable in achieving desired outcomes.

## **2. Behavioural Change Management**

### *Inspiring Change: Behavioural Change Strategies and Organisational Mindsets*

Recent research highlights the crucial role of behavioural science in shaping organisational mindsets. Dweck's (2006) study on growth versus fixed mindsets shows that individuals with a growth mindset are more inclined to take on challenges, persevere through difficulties, and achieve higher levels of performance. This mindset promotes a culture of continuous improvement and innovation within organisations, encouraging adaptive and resilient behaviours.

Building on Dweck's work, Murphy (2024) examines how organisational environments can cultivate growth mindsets. Murphy identifies key elements such as supportive leadership, inclusive practices, and development

opportunities, demonstrating that these factors boost employee engagement, collaboration, and collective success. By integrating the insights of Dweck and Murphy, leaders can promote growth mindsets at an individual level and embed a culture of growth across the organisation, leading to dynamic and productive workplaces. Additionally, linking mindset theory with evolutionary theories of organisational development highlights the adaptability and growth potential within institutions, offering valuable insights for enhancing organisational effectiveness.

Barrah and Jordanov (2024) underscore the significant impact of cognitive biases, social dynamics, and environmental factors on business behaviour. Their research emphasises the importance of using behavioural science to create evidence-based interventions that address the psychological and social drivers of employee behaviour. This approach not only encourages desired behaviours and adaptability but also ensures lasting organisational change. Furthermore, Gibbons (2019) explores how behavioural science can inspire change at both the team and organisational levels, highlighting its role in empowering leaders to shape organisational dynamics effectively, drive sustainable change, and improve overall performance. Together, these findings provide a strong foundation for developing effective behavioural change strategies, stressing the need for environments that support continuous learning and improvement.

### *Heuristics and Biases vs. Ecological Rationality in Organisational Decision Making*

In the context of organisational decision making, there is ongoing debate about the effectiveness of behavioural science tools and the nature of decision making processes. Johnson (2021) examines the use of nudging and choice architecture in guiding choices, recognising their ability to subtly influence decisions while also highlighting their limitations, particularly within complex organisations. Johnson argues that although nudges can assist decision making, they may not fully address the complexities inherent in organisational settings.

Moore and Bazerman (2022) advocate for the development of systems and processes that empower employees to make informed choices. Central to their argument is the use of nudging—subtly shaping decisions by adjusting the decision making environment. They support the use of nudges and default settings to enhance decision making but caution against viewing these interventions as one-size-fits-all solutions. While acknowledging the effectiveness of nudging, they warn against overreliance on it and call for a more comprehensive approach to building decision making capabilities in organisations.

On the other hand, Kahneman *et al.* (2021) highlight the negative impact of inconsistency, or "noise," in decision making. They show how even experienced professionals can make different decisions under similar conditions due to random variability, leading to inefficiencies and errors. To combat noise, they recommend structured decision making processes, the use of statistical tools, and clear guidelines to ensure consistency and reduce variability.

Todd and Gigerenzer (2007) and Gigerenzer *et al.* (2022) introduce the concept of ecological rationality, challenging conventional views on decision making. They argue that heuristics, or mental shortcuts, are not inherently flawed but can be adaptive and effective in certain contexts. Gigerenzer stresses the importance of understanding the ecological context in which decisions are made and advocates for the use of simple heuristics tailored to specific environments. While acknowledging the presence of noise, they argue that it can be beneficial in some situations, supporting a more nuanced approach to decision making that considers context and complexity.

Gigerenzer's perspective contrasts with that of Kahneman *et al.* (2021), who favour greater standardisation and reliance on algorithms to minimise variability. They prioritise consistency and accuracy in decision making processes, in contrast to Gigerenzer's emphasis on the adaptive value of heuristics.

In summary, the debate around decision making in organisations reflects differing views on the role of behavioural science tools, the impact of noise, and the decision making process itself. Some advocate for approaches that are tailored to specific contexts, while others emphasise the importance of standardisation and precision. Integrating these perspectives highlights the need for a multifaceted approach to decision leadership, which incorporates diverse viewpoints, structured processes to reduce biases, and ethical nudging strategies to ensure that decisions align with organisational goals.

### *Enhancing Team Performance*

Improving team performance by applying behavioural science principles and methods requires a solid understanding of key concepts and theoretical foundations. These act as guiding tools, helping organisations effectively use behavioural insights to enhance team dynamics and productivity. Central to this approach is the acknowledgement that human behaviour is shaped by various factors, including cognitive biases, social dynamics, and individual motivations. Behavioural design techniques provide practical strategies, such as using visual cues, to encourage positive behaviours within teams. Understanding these principles is crucial for creating interventions that aim to improve team performance. Examples include better collaboration through targeted communication strategies or increased productivity through structured goal-setting aligned with behavioural science principles.

The COM-B Model (Michie *et al.*, 2011; Michie *et al.*, 2014b) offers a useful framework for designing behavioural strategies, identifying capabilities, opportunities, and motivations as the key factors influencing behaviour. By addressing these elements, organisations can create targeted interventions to encourage desired behaviours within teams. For instance, enhancing team capabilities through training and skill development can lead to better performance, while creating opportunities for collaboration and innovation can boost engagement and productivity. Additionally, aligning tasks with individuals' intrinsic motivations can result in higher levels of engagement and performance.

It is essential to tailor team-focused interventions to the specific context and culture of the organisation. What works in one environment may not be effective in another, so organisations must regularly assess and adjust their strategies based on feedback and changing needs.

### *Using Behavioural Insights to Make Organisations More Equitable and Inclusive*

Behavioural science provides valuable tools and insights for promoting equity and inclusiveness within organisations. It can be used to design inclusive policies and practices (Kepinski and Nielsen, 2021). Nudging techniques, such as organising meetings to ensure all voices are heard or introducing mentorship programmes that encourage cross-departmental interactions, can help encourage inclusive behaviour. Strategies to reduce unconscious biases in recruitment, promotion, and evaluation, such as blind recruitment or standardised evaluation criteria, can also enhance fairness.

Pro-social behaviours, including cooperation, sharing, and helping, strengthen social bonds and create a supportive organisational culture. Findings from experimental research on the origins of pro-social behaviour and the role of reciprocity in economic behaviour, demonstrated in public good, ultimatum, and dictator games, are particularly relevant to applied behavioural science consulting.

Research on motivations and incentives in behavioural economics shows how perceived fairness influences people's responses to different resource distributions. The studies by Falk and Fischbacher (2006) and Fehr and Gächter (2000) demonstrate that individuals are often willing to sacrifice personal gain to ensure fair outcomes, highlighting the importance of social preferences in economic behaviour. For instance, public good games show that individuals are more likely to contribute to collective benefits when fairness norms are upheld, suggesting that organisations should create policies that promote transparency and fair resource distribution to encourage cooperation.

Reciprocal behaviour, which involves responding to others' actions with similar actions, fosters a sense of mutual responsibility and cooperation. This behaviour builds trust and collaboration within teams. When employees feel that their efforts are reciprocated, they are more likely to engage positively with colleagues, contributing to a more cohesive and inclusive workplace. Reciprocal behaviour also helps reduce feelings of unfairness and exclusion by ensuring that everyone's contributions are acknowledged and valued. Encouraging reciprocal behaviour includes establishing norms such as sharing credit for team successes and providing constructive feedback. Platforms that allow employees to recognise and reward each other's contributions can further strengthen reciprocal relationships and create a more inclusive culture.

Applied behavioural science consulting can utilise these insights to help organisations become more equitable and inclusive. This may involve conducting behavioural audits to identify where pro-social and reciprocal behaviours are lacking or where biases exist. Gathering data on employees'



perceptions of equity and inclusion through surveys can help tailor interventions. Moreover, customised workshops aimed at promoting pro-social and reciprocal behaviours, designed to fit the organisation's specific context, can be particularly effective. Implementing interventions such as default options that encourage inclusive behaviour or feedback systems that promote reciprocal interactions also plays an important role in fostering an inclusive culture.

### 3. Behavioural Innovation

#### *Borrowing Evolutionary Principles for a Behavioural Understanding of Innovation*

Understanding innovation through the lens of behavioural science involves recognising key psychological principles that reveal how innovative behaviours can be encouraged at both individual and organisational levels. Cognitive biases, such as status quo bias (Samuelson and Zeckhauser, 1988) and confirmation bias (Kahneman, 2011), play a significant role in decision making, often limiting creative thinking. Overcoming these biases requires a culture that encourages questioning norms and embracing diverse perspectives. Behavioural nudges, such as setting defaults that favour innovation and creating supportive environments, can further enhance efforts to drive innovation.

Tatam (2022) discusses how applying principles from evolutionary biology can unlock the dynamics of innovation. Nature-inspired designs that mimic biological processes provide insights into breakthrough innovations, enabling companies to become more flexible and responsive to market changes. Tatam highlights evolution's preference for simplicity and efficiency, suggesting that businesses can adopt these principles to streamline their operations and products.

By integrating evolutionary principles with behavioural science, organisations can gain a deeper understanding of the behavioural foundations of innovation. A thorough grasp of how psychology intersects with evolutionary principles also provides the conceptual basis for designing behavioural interventions that support innovation. Combining insights from evolutionary biology and behavioural science can help develop strategies that nurture a culture of innovation, leading to the design of user-friendly products and the creation of adaptable organisations.

In summary, innovations that consider human evolutionary traits, such as the preference for social interactions and risk avoidance, are more likely to be adopted. Making behavioural innovation, underpinned by a blend of evolutionary principles and behavioural insights, a core focus of organisations will help spread and scale innovative ideas, ultimately improving business efficiency.

## *Behaviourally Informed Incentive Design and the Scalability of Innovative Ideas*

Behaviourally informed incentive design takes into account how people actually make decisions, using insights from behavioural economics to create incentives that genuinely motivate the desired actions. Such incentives encourage employees to be adaptable, helping them take on new tasks and responsibilities. This adaptability is crucial for organisations to respond effectively to new opportunities while maintaining efficiency in their core operations. Well-designed incentives also promote a culture of risk-taking and experimentation, which is essential for exploring new possibilities. By reducing the fear of failure and encouraging innovative thinking, these incentives support ongoing exploration. Behaviourally informed incentives ensure that employees remain motivated to innovate, balancing current operational needs with the pursuit of new opportunities.

This approach is vital for scaling innovative ideas, as it directly addresses the specifics of human behaviour, which can either help or hinder the adoption of new initiatives. The scalability of innovation within organisations significantly depends on behaviourally informed incentive design, as discussed in John List's *The Voltage Effect* (2022). List highlights that the success of scaling innovative ideas often relies on how well incentives are aligned with human behaviour to drive wider adoption.

One of List's key concepts is "voltage drops," where the impact of an idea diminishes as it scales up. This often occurs when incentives that were effective in a small setting fail to resonate with a larger audience. Behaviourally informed incentives help prevent this by ensuring that the motivations driving initial success are maintained or adapted effectively for larger groups. List notes that scalable ideas tend to have certain characteristics, including robust incentives that retain their effectiveness as the idea expands. Avoiding false positives—early successes that don't sustain through broader implementation—requires careful testing and adaptation of incentives to different contexts and populations.

Empirical evidence from List's research shows that incentives must be closely aligned with behavioural principles to avoid significant voltage drops. For instance, monetary incentives, social recognition, and other behavioural nudges need to be tailored to maintain engagement and motivation as initiatives grow.

In summary, the ability to scale innovative ideas in organisations is heavily dependent on behaviourally informed incentive design. By applying behavioural insights to create effective incentives, organisations can better scale innovative ideas, ensuring that the motivations driving early successes are sustained and adapted for broader application. This approach supports sustained innovation and long-term competitiveness.

### *Psychological Safety as Key Enabling Factor for Behavioural Innovation*

Effective innovation relies on creating a supportive environment where employees feel confident to take risks and share ideas without fear of judgment. Psychological principles play a crucial role in fostering behavioural innovation within organisations, helping to build environments that encourage and maintain innovative behaviours.

Psychological safety is paramount in organisations, creating a space where employees feel comfortable expressing ideas, taking risks, and making mistakes without fear of negative consequences. This sense of security encourages open communication, leading to better decision making and problem-solving. It supports learning and development by encouraging growth from mistakes rather than punishment. Moreover, it drives innovation by allowing employees to explore new approaches without fear of criticism, enhances team performance by building trust and cooperation, and boosts employee engagement and retention by creating a more committed and stable workforce.

Several psychological principles are key to enhancing behavioural innovation within organisations. A growth mindset encourages the belief that abilities can be developed through effort and dedication, supporting a culture of continuous learning and resilience. Cognitive diversity, which values a range of perspectives and thinking styles, leads to richer ideas and more innovative thinking. Deci and Ryan's (1985) Self-Determination Theory highlights the importance of intrinsic motivation, enhancing creativity through internal rewards and personal satisfaction. Edmondson's (2019) concept of psychological safety underscores the importance of allowing interpersonal risk-taking without fear of negative consequences, which is fundamental to fostering an innovative environment. Bandura's (1977) Self-Efficacy Theory suggests that a key driver of behaviour change is individuals' belief in their ability to make specific changes, an important factor in promoting innovative behaviours within organisations.

Behavioural innovation and psychological safety are closely connected. Psychological safety is a crucial enabler of behavioural innovation, as it provides the foundation for risk-taking. It encourages collaborative creativity by creating an environment where team members feel respected and valued, making them more willing to share unique ideas. By allowing employees to learn from failures without fear, psychological safety treats mistakes as opportunities for growth rather than setbacks. It also promotes diverse perspectives by ensuring all voices are heard, which is vital for generating a broad range of innovative ideas. Finally, psychological safety supports a culture of sustainable innovation by continuously encouraging creativity and experimentation, motivating employees to integrate innovation into their daily work practices.

### *Enhancing Organisational Ambidexterity*

Organisational ambidexterity is the ability to exploit existing competencies while exploring new opportunities (O'Reilly and Tushman, 2021). Behavioural innovation encourages a mindset that embraces calculated risk-taking as part of the innovation process. It depends on organisational adaptability and continuous learning, helping to phase out outdated practices while acquiring new skills, which are essential for balancing exploitative and explorative activities.

Agile leadership, which can manage ongoing operations while guiding the organisation towards new opportunities, is key to involving employees with diverse mindsets in both exploitative and explorative tasks. Leadership and management practices that empower teams, promote autonomy, and instil a sense of ownership also benefit from behavioural innovation.

Behavioural innovation is crucial for breaking down silos and encouraging collaboration across departments and functions, which is necessary for effectively reallocating resources and maintaining a balance between exploitation and exploration. The development of dynamic capabilities also depends on behavioural innovation, as it improves an organisation's ability to respond to market opportunities and supports the creation of ambidextrous organisational structures. Long-term competitiveness is closely linked to behavioural innovation. It nurtures a culture of continuous improvement, refining existing operations while driving transformative changes within organisations.

In summary, behavioural innovation is essential for advancing organisational ambidexterity. It offers the adaptability, cultural flexibility, leadership agility, collaborative spirit, and dynamic capabilities needed to balance exploitation and exploration. Without encouraging innovative behaviours and mindsets, organisations may struggle to develop the dual capabilities required for ambidexterity, which could affect their ability to remain competitive and responsive in a rapidly changing business environment.

## **4. Pro-Environmental Behaviour Change**

### *Combining Environmental Psychology and Behavioural Design*

Combining environmental psychology with behavioural design offers a powerful approach to encouraging pro-environmental behaviour change. Drawing on a wealth of theories, methods, and techniques from both fields, this integration enables applied behavioural science consulting to lead sustainable transformations within organisations. This approach goes beyond traditional nudge theory and choice architecture, providing a more comprehensive strategy that taps into deeper psychological insights and practical techniques to achieve lasting change.

Theories from environmental psychology, such as Restorative Environments Theory (Kaplan, 1985; Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989), emphasise the role of nature in cognitive restoration, while Place Attachment Theory (Lewicka, 2011) explores the emotional connections people form with their environment, which influence conservation behaviours. Environmental Self-Identity Theory (Van der Werff *et al.*, 2013) further explains how individuals see themselves in relation to their surroundings, affecting their environmental actions.

Behavioural design principles work alongside these theories. Techniques like nudging subtly guide people towards desired behaviours, while changes in choice architecture make pro-environmental decisions more appealing. The use of social proof (Cialdini, 2001) strengthens this effect by highlighting the pro-environmental actions of others.

Practical methods enhance this approach. Environmental audits identify areas for intervention, and behavioural mapping reveals the triggers and barriers to pro-environmental actions. Co-creation workshops involve stakeholders in developing tailored interventions, and behavioural trials assess their effectiveness before wider implementation.

Key concepts such as normative messaging, feedback loops, and the use of defaults and incentives are also crucial. Normative messaging conveys the prevalence and appeal of pro-environmental behaviours, while feedback loops offer real-time data to encourage behaviour change. Defaults and incentives gently steer individuals towards environmentally friendly choices and reinforce these behaviours.

Incorporating these elements into applied behavioural science consulting involves environmental assessments to identify opportunities and challenges, workshops to develop customised interventions, pilot programmes to test their effectiveness, and ongoing evaluation and optimisation. This consultancy approach is particularly relevant for corporate entities aiming to integrate sustainability into their operations, public sector agencies promoting environmental responsibility, and educational institutions seeking to encourage eco-friendly behaviours within their communities.

By integrating environmental psychology with behavioural design, this approach can drive significant pro-environmental behaviour change. Through interventions guided by theory and supported by evidence, it lays the groundwork for sustainable transformations that benefit both organisations and the environment.

### *Behavioural Decision Theory and Environmental Decision Making*

Behavioural Decision Theory (BDT) and Environmental Decision Making (EDM) are closely linked fields that offer valuable insights for applied behavioural science consulting, particularly in encouraging pro-environmental behaviours within organisations and society. This connection arises from understanding how people make decisions and how their choices can be influenced to support sustainable practices. The integration of BDT and EDM creates a strong framework for applied behavioural science consulting, enabling the

development of interventions that effectively steer behaviours towards sustainability.

BDT explores the psychological processes behind decision making, showing that individuals often deviate from rational choice models due to cognitive biases, heuristics, and emotions. Key concepts include Prospect Theory (Kahneman and Tversky, 1979), which explains how people perceive gains and losses, focusing on loss aversion and the framing effect. Heuristics and biases highlight mental shortcuts and systematic errors that affect decision making, such as the availability heuristic (Tversky and Kahneman, 1973) and confirmation bias (Kahneman, 2011). Temporal discounting (Ainslie, 2015) describes the tendency to prioritise immediate rewards over future benefits, which is particularly relevant in environmental decisions with long-term consequences. These elements form the foundation of environmental decision making.

EDM examines the choices individuals and organisations make regarding the environment, incorporating insights from BDT to understand and encourage pro-environmental behaviours. Key concepts include the Value-Belief-Norm Theory (Stern *et al.*, 1999), which suggests that people's environmental behaviours are shaped by their values, beliefs, and perceived social norms. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) emphasises the importance of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control in shaping environmental intentions and actions. Social Practice Theory (Hargreaves, 2011) looks at how everyday practices and social norms influence environmental behaviours.

At the organisational level, this relationship is crucial for tailoring interventions to different employee segments based on department, role, and tenure. Departmental segmentation recognises the varying environmental impacts and motivations across departments. For example, operations might prioritise energy efficiency, while marketing may focus on promoting eco-friendly products. Role-based interventions acknowledge that employees in different roles have unique responsibilities and decision making authority. Executives might respond to interventions highlighting cost savings and regulatory compliance, while frontline workers could be motivated by immediate, tangible benefits like a healthier work environment. Tenure considerations recognise that new employees might be more receptive to adopting pro-environmental practices during onboarding, while long-serving employees may require interventions that emphasise the evolution of organisational values and the cumulative impact of ongoing environmental efforts.

At the societal level, integrating BDT and EDM is essential for designing large-scale interventions that guide public behaviour towards sustainability. Normative messaging uses social norms to highlight the commonality of pro-environmental behaviours. For instance, campaigns that showcase widespread recycling practices can encourage individuals to align with perceived societal standards. Feedback mechanisms provide real-time information on energy consumption or waste generation, prompting individuals to adjust their behaviours, drawing on feedback loops from BDT.

The relationship between BDT and EDM is critical for applied behavioural science consulting aimed at promoting pro-environmental behaviour. Understanding the cognitive processes that shape decision making, along with the social and environmental factors that influence behaviour, is fundamental to designing targeted, effective interventions that encourage sustainable practices at both organisational and societal levels.

### *Employee Green Behaviours*

Embedding pro-environmental change in large and complex organisations requires a thorough approach that draws on the methodologies and frameworks of applied behavioural science consulting. By incorporating insights from behavioural economics, environmental psychology, and motivation science, organisations can effectively shape and influence employee behaviours towards more sustainable practices. The following key aspects outline how this can be achieved:

**Understanding Employee Behaviour:** The first step in encouraging pro-environmental behaviours is to understand the factors that influence employee behaviour. Applied behavioural science consulting relies on empirical research and data analysis to identify behavioural patterns, cognitive biases, and motivational drivers within different workforce segments. Relevant literature includes insights from behavioural economics, such as nudge theory and choice architecture, which offer strategies for designing interventions that promote environmentally friendly choices without restricting individual freedom. Foundational works in this area include Thaler and Sunstein (2008) on nudging and Kahneman and Tversky (1979) on Prospect Theory. Environmental psychology also provides valuable perspectives on the psychological factors influencing environmental behaviours, drawing on concepts like Place Attachment Theory (Lewicka, 2011), Environmental Self-Identity Theory (Van der Werff *et al.*, 2013), and Restorative Environments Theory (Kaplan, 1985; Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989).

**Enhancing Intrinsic Motivation:** Understanding what motivates employees is crucial for designing interventions that resonate with both intrinsic and extrinsic drivers. Organisations should focus not only on external incentives but also on enhancing employees' intrinsic motivation towards pro-environmental behaviours. This involves cultivating a supportive organisational culture that values sustainability, promotes ethical leadership, and offers opportunities for skill development and personal growth. Insights from Self-Determination Theory, as developed by Deci and Ryan (1985), suggest that individuals are more motivated when their basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are met. This theory provides a strong framework for fostering intrinsic motivation in the workplace. Additionally, Pink's (2009) research on the significance of autonomy, mastery, and purpose in motivating behaviour offers further theoretical support for enhancing intrinsic motivation.

**Designing Interventions:** With insights from behavioural science, organisations can design interventions tailored to different employee segments. These interventions should be evidence-based, targeted, and aligned with the

organisation's sustainability goals. Effective interventions might include behavioural nudges, such as changing default settings or providing social norms feedback, to steer employee behaviour towards pro-environmental choices. Involving employees in sustainability initiatives through education, training, and participatory decision making processes can help foster a sense of ownership and commitment to environmental goals. Co-creation workshops and sustainability committees offer opportunities for employees to contribute ideas and solutions, enhancing their sense of autonomy and competence. Providing rewards, recognition, or incentives for adopting green behaviours can offer tangible benefits and reinforce desired behaviours. However, it is important to design incentive programmes that align with employees' values and preferences to ensure their long-term effectiveness. Research by Gneezy and Rustichini (2000) on incentives and behavioural change provides valuable insights for creating effective incentive schemes.

In summary, embedding pro-environmental change in large and complex organisations requires a systematic approach that draws on behavioural economics, environmental psychology, and motivation science. By understanding employee behaviour, designing targeted interventions, and enhancing intrinsic motivation, applied behavioural science consulting can help shift organisations towards sustainable practices, contributing to long-term environmental impact and organisational success.

## 5. Behavioural Public Policy Design

### *Behavioural Science in Policy Formulation: Beyond Nudging and Choice Architecture*

Behavioural Public Policy (BPP) is an evidence-based approach to policymaking that draws on insights from behavioural science, including behavioural economics, cognitive psychology, and social psychology (Reisch and Sunstein, 2023). The goal is to understand and predict how people make decisions by considering bounded rationality and acknowledging the influence of cognitive limitations and contextual factors. BPP uses knowledge of human behaviour, such as heuristics and biases, to design policies that improve welfare across various sectors. This approach employs tools like nudges and choice architecture to support better decision making, aiming to create effective and widely accepted programmes. However, applying BPP requires careful consideration of context and strict adherence to ethical standards to ensure its effectiveness and fairness.

BPP includes several core elements grounded in the idea of bounded rationality. Nudging, as popularised by Thaler and Sunstein (2008), involves making subtle changes to the environment to influence behaviour without limiting freedom of choice, such as positioning healthier food options at eye level. Another important aspect is choice architecture, which involves structuring decision contexts to encourage better outcomes, using methods like default settings. Behavioural insights, based on empirical research, focus on cognitive biases and heuristics that shape decision making, stressing the importance of



understanding how people actually behave, rather than assuming they are perfectly rational actors.

The concept of bounded rationality, introduced by Herbert Simon (1955), acknowledges that individuals are not fully rational due to cognitive limitations, incomplete information, and time constraints. This understanding is crucial for designing effective public policies and has important implications for policy development. These implications include simplifying decision contexts to reduce complexity, tailoring interventions to suit the cognitive capacities and informational needs of different demographic groups, designing robust policies that can withstand deviations from rational decision making, and providing timely feedback mechanisms to help individuals adjust their behaviour.

While nudging and choice architecture are key tools in BPP, the approach goes beyond these techniques. It involves a deep understanding of human psychology, recognising that individuals may not always act in their own best interest due to biases like present bias, overconfidence, and loss aversion. For instance, policies can be designed to account for loss aversion by framing benefits as avoiding losses rather than achieving gains. In summary, behavioural science in policymaking extends beyond simple nudging and choice architecture by fully integrating the concept of bounded rationality. By recognising and addressing the cognitive limitations and biases of "humans" rather than "econs," policymakers can create more effective interventions, resulting in policies that not only better influence behaviour but also empower individuals to make more informed choices, ultimately leading to more sustainable and impactful outcomes.

### *Choice Infrastructure: A Deviation from the First Wave of Behavioural Public Policy*

In a recent article, Schmidt (2022) advocates for an expanded approach to behavioural public policy that transcends traditional choice architecture. She introduces the concept of "choice infrastructure," which includes the systems, processes, and contexts that shape decision making environments on a larger scale. Schmidt critiques choice architecture for oversimplifying the complexities of decision making and emphasises the importance of considering regulatory frameworks, cultural norms, and institutional practices to support and sustain effective decision making processes.

Schmidt contends that modern behavioural public policy should focus on developing robust choice infrastructures rather than relying solely on simple nudges. This approach involves designing policies that consider the wider contexts in which decisions are made, ensuring they are sustainable, fair, and adaptable. Unlike the first wave of behavioural public policy, which was heavily based on the concept of choice architecture and focused on small-scale interventions targeting individual choices, Schmidt calls for a shift towards a more comprehensive approach that considers the broader choice infrastructure. She argues for addressing systemic factors and institutional contexts to achieve lasting behavioural change and promote social justice.

While Thaler, Sunstein, and Reisch focus on individual-level interventions within existing systems, Schmidt advocates for systemic changes that modify the choice infrastructure itself. She also highlights the need for flexible, context-sensitive interventions that can evolve over time, offering a comprehensive framework for enduring behavioural change, in contrast to the more static nature of earlier behavioural interventions.

### *The I-Frame vs. S-Frame Agenda for Behavioural Public Policy*

In a recent paper, Loewenstein and Chater (2022) argue that behavioural public policies have traditionally concentrated on individual behaviours (the i-frame), often neglecting broader systemic issues that could be addressed through more comprehensive changes (the s-frame). They suggest that shifting the focus to systemic changes could yield more substantial and lasting effects by altering the overall decision making environment.

Supporters of the s-frame believe that systemic changes offer comprehensive and enduring solutions, influencing a wider population and encouraging desired behaviours without the need for constant individual interventions. The s-frame tackles root causes, such as socioeconomic factors and institutional structures, leading to more equitable and inclusive policy outcomes. Furthermore, structural changes are viewed as scalable and efficient, with the potential to bring about significant societal shifts without the need for repeated interventions.

However, critics caution that the s-frame might undermine individual autonomy by implementing top-down changes that restrict personal freedom. They also point out the complexities and practical challenges of enacting systemic changes, which require considerable political will, resources, and time. On the other hand, the i-frame allows for more targeted and specific interventions, enabling policymakers to craft nuanced strategies tailored to particular contexts and populations.

Loewenstein and Chater's paper has sparked debate over the best focus for behavioural public policies. While the s-frame presents a promising approach to addressing systemic issues and achieving broader societal impact, concerns about practicality and ethics persist. A balanced approach that combines the strengths of both frames may offer a more holistic and effective strategy for behavioural policy design, incorporating individual-level interventions while pursuing necessary structural reforms.

### *Leveraging Reciprocity in Behavioural Public Policy*

Behavioural science has become a valuable resource for informing public policy, offering insights into human behaviour that can help policymakers create more effective interventions. Among the various principles of behavioural science, reciprocity is particularly important, with significant implications for policy design.

Reciprocity reflects a social behaviour where individuals feel inclined to return acts of kindness or favours received from others. This principle highlights the

importance of mutual exchange and cooperation in human interactions. Sugden (2019) points out that this concept is deeply rooted in human nature and plays a crucial role in shaping social relationships and norms.

In public policy, reciprocity can be a powerful tool for influencing behaviour and encouraging cooperation among citizens. Oliver (2019) has shown how policymakers can use reciprocity to design interventions that promote pro-social behaviour and civic engagement. By offering incentives or rewards for positive actions, such as volunteering or charitable giving, policymakers can tap into individuals' natural tendency to reciprocate, encouraging them to contribute positively to society.

Reciprocity can be applied in various areas of public policy, from healthcare to environmental conservation. In healthcare, policymakers could use reciprocity to encourage adherence to treatment plans by offering incentives or rewards to patients who follow prescribed medication or attend appointments. Similarly, in environmental policy, governments could promote sustainable behaviour by recognising and rewarding individuals who adopt eco-friendly practices.

However, while reciprocity holds promise for policy design, it also raises ethical considerations and challenges. Policymakers must ensure that reciprocal interventions are implemented ethically and transparently, avoiding manipulative or coercive methods. There is also the risk of unintended consequences, such as the potential for reciprocal incentives to undermine intrinsic motivation or worsen social inequalities. Therefore, policymakers must carefully evaluate the advantages and risks of using reciprocity in policy design.

Reciprocity is highly relevant to the development of behavioural public policy, providing policymakers with a powerful means of influencing behaviour and fostering cooperation among citizens. By understanding and applying the principles of reciprocity, policymakers can create interventions that encourage pro-social behaviour, increase civic engagement, and contribute to societal well-being. However, the ethical challenges associated with reciprocity highlight the need for careful and responsible implementation in policy design and execution.

## **6. Cross-Thematic Issues in Behavioural Intervention Design**

### *Behaviourally Informed KPIs*

Behaviourally informed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are essential for assessing the effectiveness of behavioural interventions. Unlike traditional KPIs, which may concentrate only on outcomes, behaviourally informed KPIs provide a more detailed view by including behavioural metrics such as engagement, adherence, and changes in behaviour. By considering these metrics, stakeholders can gain a fuller understanding of the impact of interventions and make informed decisions based on the data.

### *The COM-B Model and Behaviour Change Wheel*

The COM-B Model, comprising Capability, Opportunity, and Motivation, forms the basis of the Behaviour Change Wheel (BCW). This framework supports a structured approach to designing interventions by aligning intervention functions and policy categories with specific behavioural factors. By using the COM-B Model and BCW, practitioners can create focused interventions that effectively address the key drivers of behaviour change.

### *Habit Formation Techniques*

Habit formation plays a crucial role in behaviour change, though it is often neglected in the design of interventions. Techniques for habit formation draw on principles from behavioural science to develop desired habits in a structured way. Strategies such as implementation intentions, habit stacking, and context priming can help establish and maintain habits over time. Including these methods in intervention design improves long-term effectiveness and sustainability.

### *Behavioural Journey Mapping*

Behavioural journey mapping is a methodical approach that clarifies the steps individuals take when engaging in a particular behaviour. By mapping this journey, practitioners gain valuable insights into key decision points, barriers, and factors that influence behaviour. This information helps in designing targeted interventions that effectively address specific obstacles and take advantage of opportunities for behaviour change.

### *Effectiveness of Behavioural Intervention Design*

The effectiveness of behavioural intervention design depends on several factors, including intervention fidelity, scalability, and adaptability. Fidelity ensures that interventions are carried out as planned, while scalability allows them to reach a wider audience. Additionally, interventions need to be adaptable to different contexts and populations to achieve the greatest impact. Rigorous evaluation methods, such as randomised controlled trials and quasi-experimental designs, are crucial for assessing the effectiveness of interventions and guiding ongoing improvements.

### *Enhancing Nudging Acceptance: The Role of Framing*

Nudges, which are subtle adjustments in the choice architecture aimed at influencing behaviour, have become increasingly important in behavioural intervention design. However, for nudges to be effective and widely accepted, they must be framed carefully. Techniques such as positive framing, social norms, and salience can shape how individuals perceive and respond to nudges. By using these framing strategies, practitioners can improve the chances of nudges being accepted and achieving the intended behavioural outcomes.

## *Ethical Challenges in Behavioural Intervention Design*

Transparency, accountability, and continuous ethical review are essential in addressing ethical concerns and maintaining high standards in the design of behavioural interventions. Potential ethical challenges include issues related to autonomy, informed consent, and manipulation. Practitioners must navigate these challenges with care, ensuring that individuals' autonomy and well-being are respected. Ethical oversight of nudging is crucial to ensure that its impact is beneficial to both individuals and society, avoiding unintended negative consequences. This requires the use of transparent and inclusive processes in the design of behavioural public policy interventions. Tools like the OECD BASIC Toolkit (OECD, 2019) support this process, ensuring thorough evaluation and implementation of behavioural policies.

It is also important to consider the specific context, as what works in one community may not be effective in another. For example, while using social norms can be effective in some cultures, its success may vary elsewhere. To account for these differences and prevent unintended outcomes, proposed behavioural policies should be systematically tested through limited trials. This approach ensures that interventions are ethically sound, effective, and in line with the values of the communities they are designed to serve.

To develop successful behavioural interventions across various sectors and domains, it is essential for practitioners to integrate ethical considerations into their designs. This approach ensures that ethical standards are maintained and that the interventions have a positive impact on society.

## **7. Conclusion**

### *Understanding the Core Business of Applied Behavioural Science Consulting*

Behavioural science consulting focuses on understanding human behaviour and using this knowledge to drive positive changes across various fields. At its heart, behavioural science consulting involves applying scientific principles and empirical evidence to address behavioural challenges and encourage behavioural changes. Drawing on insights from disciplines such as psychology, economics, and neuroscience, behavioural science consultants provide valuable expertise in identifying behavioural issues, designing tailored interventions, and evaluating their effectiveness. The aim is to help individuals, organisations, and policymakers achieve their goals by guiding behaviour in the desired direction.

### *Translating Behavioural Scientific Insights into Actionable Guidance*

Translating behavioural scientific insights into practical advice involves a structured and iterative process. It begins with a detailed analysis of the issue, identifying behavioural barriers and motivators. Applied behavioural science consulting then uses relevant theories and empirical data to design intervention strategies tailored to specific contexts and goals. These strategies are tested and refined through pilot studies or experiments to ensure their effectiveness and feasibility. Once validated, actionable recommendations are developed, along with implementation plans and monitoring systems to track progress and make necessary adjustments.

In summary, applied behavioural science consulting provides an effective approach to tackling behavioural challenges and promoting positive change, both on a small and large scale. By applying scientific principles and empirical evidence, consultants help clients understand, influence, and change behaviour in ways that align with their goals. Whether focusing on individual behaviour change, organisational development, or policymaking, applied behavioural science consultancy plays a crucial role in navigating the complexities of human behaviour and achieving meaningful results for clients.

### *The Benefits of Hiring a Behavioural Science Consultant*

Enlisting the services of an applied behavioural science consultancy presents numerous advantages. Firstly, consultants bring specialised knowledge and expertise in comprehending human behaviour, enabling them to offer distinctive insights into intricate behavioural dilemmas. Moreover, behavioural strategy consultants use rigorous scientific methodologies to accurately diagnose issues and devise evidence-based interventions with higher probabilities of success. Additionally, behavioural consultants offer an external viewpoint, providing impartial recommendations and innovative ideas that internal stakeholders may overlook. Ultimately, by collaborating with an external behavioural strategy consultant, organisations can refine their decision leadership and propel sustainable behavioural transformations.

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