

Research Project

Evidence-based pathways towards sustainable judgment and decision-making: A multi-dimensional perspective

Third-party funded project

Project title Evidence-based pathways towards sustainable judgment and decision-making: A multi-dimensional perspective

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Climate change is among the largest threats for humanity, calling for significant changes at various levels, including individual actions. Psychology can contribute to a better understanding of human judgment and decision-making shaping individual actions and “climate footprints” and can ultimately provide solutions for interventions to promote sustainable decisions. Despite this potential, however, there is still a lack of consideration and inclusion of psychological research in climate policy design. Here, I propose that this disregard of findings is due to the fact that previous research has mainly examined climate relevant behavior, affect, and cognition in isolation, without considering the cultural and temporal contexts in which they take place. Most research on environmental psychology has focused on Western samples. Studies examining variation in climate change relevant variables or the effectiveness of behavioral interventions across nations are scarce. It thus remains unknown whether the knowledge generated in the field can be applied to policy design around the globe, including the world’s most significant regions for climate change. Similarly, longitudinal studies investigating judgments and decisions across time are scarce, limiting assumptions about how the effectiveness of interventions depends on temporal context. The existing research applying cross-cultural and longitudinal approaches is mainly based on correlational designs, while research using experimental designs to infer decision processes is missing. As a consequence, little is known about the cognitive and affective mechanisms underlying cultural and temporal variation in decision-making and causal conclusions cannot be drawn. The here-proposed Eccellenza project aims to address these knowledge gaps. The first major goal of the project is to better understand how individual judgments, decisions, and the underlying psychological processes vary across nations and time. To this end, we will develop and validate experimental paradigms to assess decisions and underlying cognitive and affective processes in the climate and energy domain. We then seek to examine cross-cultural variation in decision-making in a large cross-cultural study with 12 nations around the globe as well as temporal variation in decision-making in a longitudinal 4-years study in three selected nations from North America, Europe, and Asia. The experimental approach coupled with cutting-edge cross-cultural and longitudinal research methodology will not only provide more reliable, valid, and causal evidence about cross-cultural variation in decision-making but also reveal in-depth why such differences occur. The second major goal is to better understand how the effectiveness of behavioral interventions to promote sustainable decisions varies across nations and time. To this end, we will integrate the generated findings into the development of behavioral interventions and examine the ef-

fectiveness of the interventions across 12 nations as well as across an important climate change event (i.e., UN climate conference). The cross-cultural and longitudinal validation of behavioral interventions will reveal when, where, and how behavioral interventions work, either in isolation or in combination with classic policies. The combination of cross-cultural environmental psychology with rigorous experimental research methodology as proposed here is likely to make a strong contribution to theory development and at the level of society. To address the multidimensional nature of climate change, we will mobilize a group of international leading experts from various disciplines including psychology, sociology, economics, affective science, information science, and energy policy. This international network will ensure that the findings will be disseminated broadly across scientific communities as well as specifically into the regions where the insights are needed. This means that the policy recommendations drawn from this project can be applied to the design of targeted behavioral climate policies in the world's most significant regions for global climate change.

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