

BIG Difference BC

Mobilizing Momentum in the Science and Practice of Behavioural Insights



BC BEHAVIOURAL
INSIGHTS GROUP

Where ideas work

WORK SAFE BC

Keynote Address



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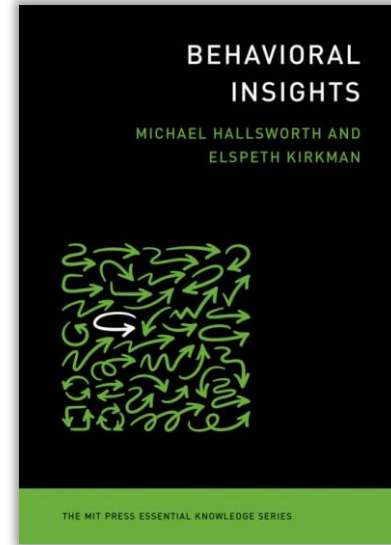
Where ideas work

WORK SAFE BC

Michael Hallsworth



*Managing Director, Americas
Behavioural Insights Team (BIT)*



A new manifesto for applying behavioural science

Michael Hallsworth, PhD

The Behavioural Insights Team



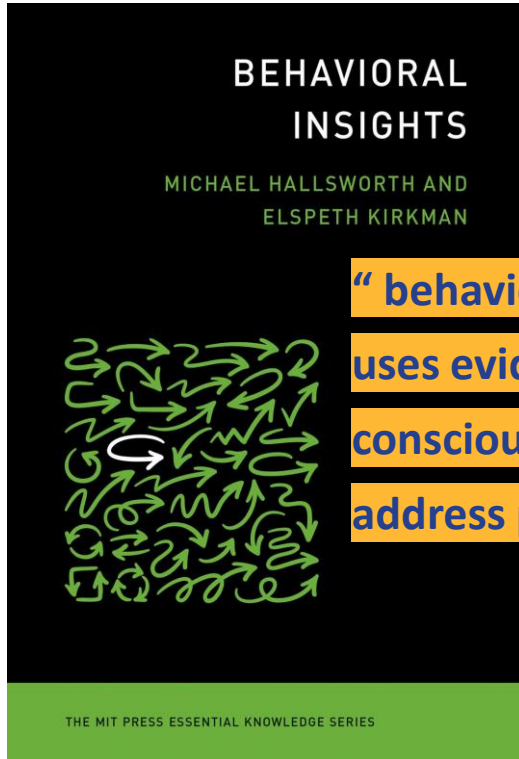
Introduction to BIT

- **2010**: Founded in UK Cabinet Office as the world's first government institution dedicated to the application of behavioural insights
- **2021**: Social purpose company with 200+ staff in offices in London, NYC, Sydney, Singapore, Toronto, Paris.

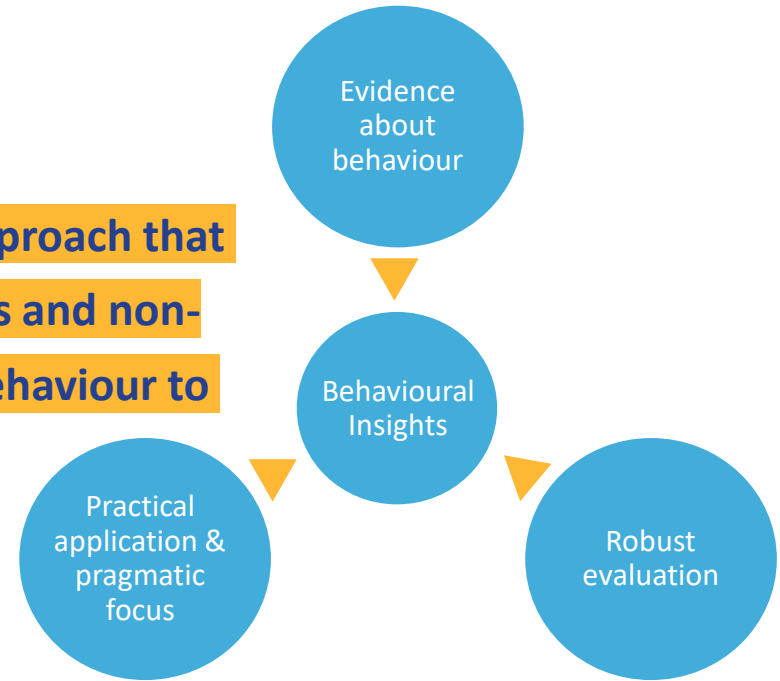


We help organizations to **apply findings** from behavioural science, **design interventions** that tackle their challenges, and **evaluate the results**.

Defining the topic



“ behavioural insights is an approach that uses evidence of the conscious and non-conscious drivers of human behaviour to address practical issues.”



Big wins in behavioural science



Helping people save for retirement

Impact: Switching pension defaults from opt-in to opt-out led to roughly 10 million more people in the UK making additional savings of roughly £20 billion each year.



Nudging environmental behaviours

Impact: Giving households feedback on their energy use relative to more efficient neighbours has led to a roughly 2% reduction in energy use per home across contexts as different as the US and Moldova.



Rethinking tax compliance

Impact: Building on initial work by BIT, tax authorities around the world (UK, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Mexico, Poland, Singapore) have changed the way they communicate with taxpayers. These new approaches have brought forward well over \$1 billion.



Making soft drinks healthier

Impact: In 2016, the UK introduced a behaviorally-informed sugar levy designed to incentivize manufacturers to reformulate beverages to be less sugary. It worked. Between 2015 and 2019, average sugar levels in drinks fell by 44%.

The challenges

- **Limited impact.** BI has focused on more tractable and easy-to-measure changes at the expense of bigger impact.
- **Mechanistic thinking.** BI has promoted a simple, linear and mechanistic approach to understanding behaviour that ignores second-order effects and spillovers.
- **Control paradigm.** BI has an elitist approach that pays insufficient attention to people's own goals and approaches.
- **Neglect of the social context.** BI has a limited, overly cognitive and individualistic view of behaviour that neglects the reality that humans are embedded in established societies and practices.
- **Flawed evidence base.** The replication crisis has challenged the evidence base underpinning BI, adding to concerns like the duration of its effects.

The challenges

- **Lack of precision.** BI lacks the ability to construct precise interventions and establish what works for who, and when. Instead, it relies either on over-general frameworks or disconnected lists of biases.
- **Overconfidence.** BI is affected by the wider problem of over-confidence and can over-extrapolate from its evidence base, particularly when testing is not an option.
- **Failure to reach scale.** BI has not paid enough attention to how successful scaling happens - and the fact it often does not happen.
- **Application over innovation.** BI has focused on exploitation of existing findings, rather than exploration, meaning there has been a lack of innovation in the applied use of behavioural science in recent years.
- **Ethical concerns.** BI will face increasing dilemmas around ethics, transparency and privacy as it attempts more ambitious and innovative work.

After a decade of the current phase of applied behavioural science, we need **a new manifesto** to address these challenges and guide our practices





Use behavioural science as a lens



See the system



Put RCTs in their place



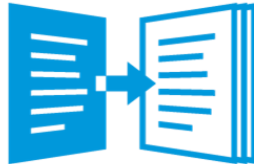
Be humble, explore and enable



No "view from nowhere"



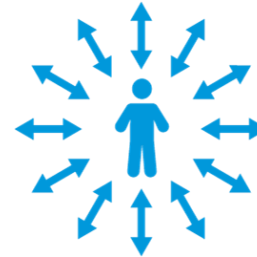
Predict and adjust



Replication not inflation



Move beyond lists of biases



Data science for equity



Build behavioural science into organizations



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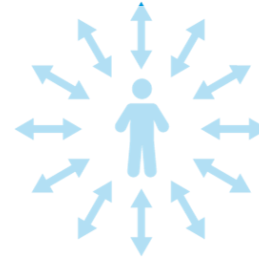
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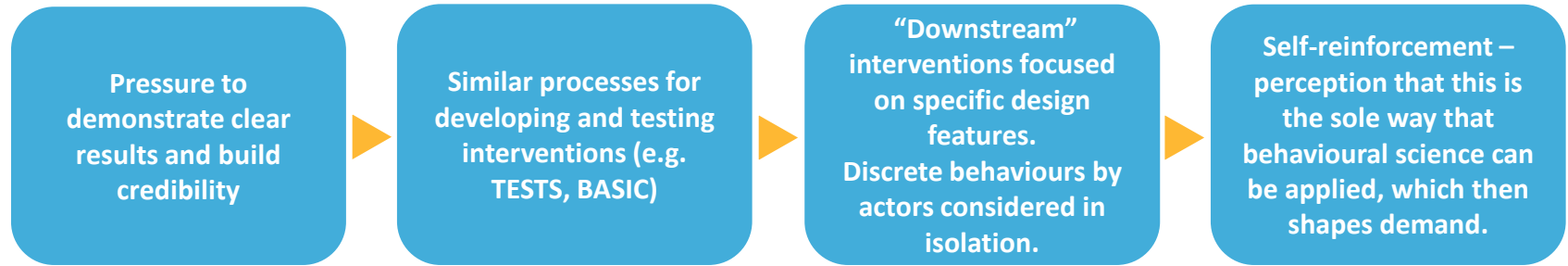
Data science for equity



Build behavioural science into organizations

Use behavioural science as a lens

- The strengths that have brought success may also be holding behavioural science back.



- Behavioural science also has much to say about broader, larger issues in society.
- Manifesto proposals address the increasingly urgent question: how can we change behavioural science itself?

Use behavioural science as a lens

Seeing behavioural science as a **lens**, rather than a specialist tool for certain kinds of problems, allows us to realize:

- We cannot separate out ‘behavioural’ and ‘non-behavioural’ issues. Behavioural science therefore needs to be **integrated** into an organization’s core activities, rather than being an optional extra.
- Behavioural science **complements traditional approaches** to influencing behaviour.
- Behavioural science is not just about creating new interventions. Using the lens of behavioural science allows you to **reassess existing actions**.
- We need more **emphasis on the behavioural *diagnosis*** of a situation or issue, rather than pushing too soon to define a precise target outcome and intervention.

Reducing commuter emissions

Applying a **BI lens** to the development and implementation of **traditional policy levers** that promote sustainable commuting options.

- **E.g.**, Incentivize vehicle manufacturers to produce and promote Electric Vehicles over combustion vehicles to help commuters reduce emissions without needing to change their commuting habits.
- **E.g.**, Support the development of models for road pricing that include psychological factors like “pain of paying” and share them with municipal and regional governments.



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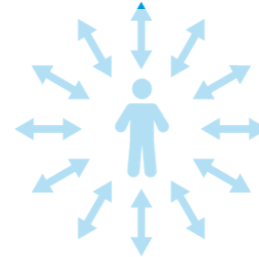
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Build behavioural science into organizations

Behavioural scientists who succeed in the future will be ones who:



Are **humble about their own knowledge**



Carefully **explore people's goals and experiences**



Enable individuals to use behavioural science to achieve personal and collective goals

Drivers of overconfidence in the field of BI

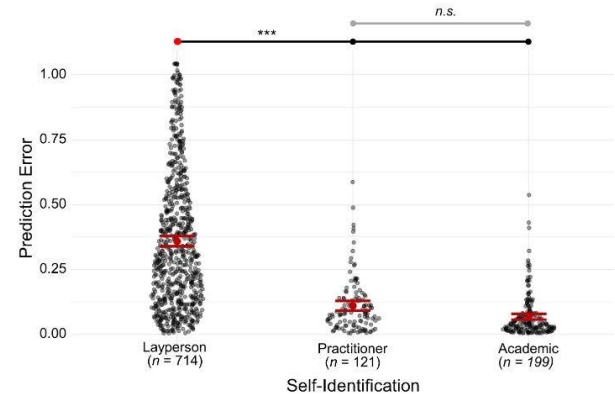
- **BI as technical justification** for seeing some decisions or behavior as flawed, and thus needing corrective action.
 - Can end up increasing the confidence of choice architects in terms of what people “really” or “should” want, and why they are acting as they are. May obscure need to search for less obvious explanations.
- **Contextual brittleness** - ‘a mismatch between decontextualized evidence and the specificity and complexity of real-world settings’.



Proposals for greater humility

- **Avoid language of “irrationality”** and recognize when others are using it to rationalize their preferences.
- **Aim for “epistemic humility”** (reflecting on Covid-19 pandemic):
 - Predict results prior to experiments, and revisit those predictions
- Build behaviourally-informed interventions to **reduce overconfidence** into institutional processes (e.g., “Dark logic” exercises and Pre-mortems to identify risks and weaknesses)
- **Explore alternative motivations and drivers...**

Hypothesis 6: Accuracy of predictions of nudge effects differs among laypeople, academics, and practitioners



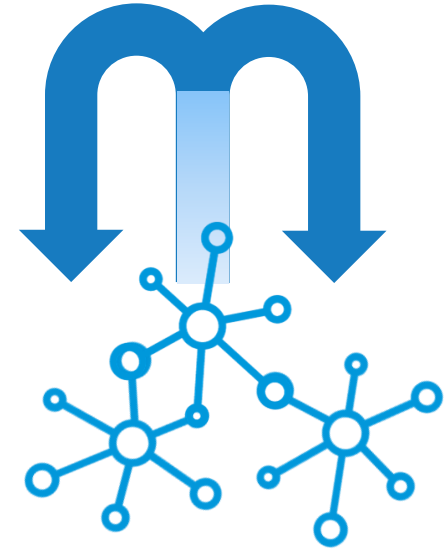
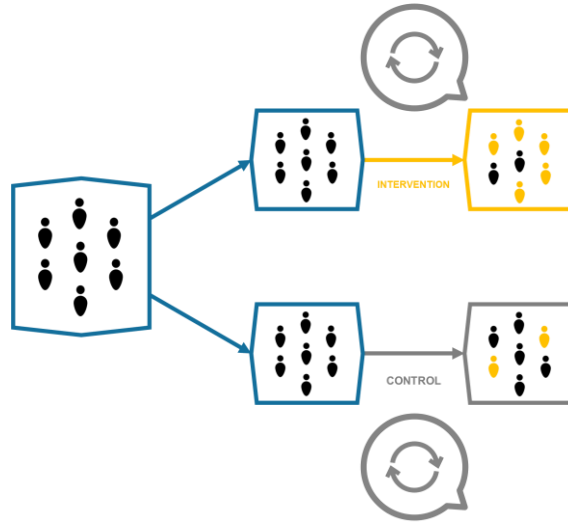
Explore people's goals and experiences

- Qualitative work in behavioral science clearly not new. BIT has always stressed importance of Explore work (plus deliberative forums, etc.)
- But need new & deeper ways of exploring:
 - people's **needs and strategies** for navigating contexts to fulfil those needs
 - people's **own interpretations** of their beliefs, feelings, behaviors



HEALTH help NOW.	If you need to get advice and find the right local health service for you <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Health Help Now is a free website and app to find the most appropriate local health service for common symptoms, and to get medical advice for people of all ages. Visit www.healthhelpnow.nhs.net
	If it's not an emergency, but you need medical help fast <ul style="list-style-type: none">• NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.• 111 will give you advice and directions to any local health service that you need.
Go to a Minor Injuries Unit	If you need to see someone today for minor illnesses and injuries <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A Nurse Practitioner can give advice and treatment for minor illnesses and injuries in adults. You do not need an appointment.• Please see the enclosed leaflet to find the centre closest to you.
Call your GP	If you need to see a doctor for an illness or injury that won't go away <ul style="list-style-type: none">• If you need to see a GP urgently when your GP practice is closed, call 111.

Explore people's goals and experiences



Enabling individuals



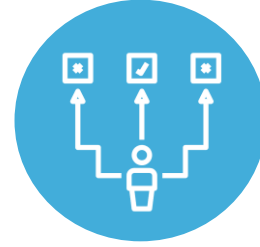
**Co-designing options
and interventions**



**Move away from
hierarchical authority**



**Nudge Plus, Boosts
and self-nudges**



**People as their own
choice architects**



**Increased democratic
engagement**

Behavioural science and self-organization

The Fair Tax Mark

Over 50 organisations have now been accredited with a Fair Tax Mark. From FTSE100 companies to SMEs, from the high street to heavy industry.

OUR ORGANISATIONS

GET THE MARK





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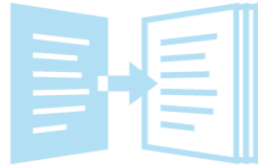
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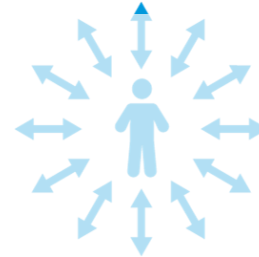
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Replication not inflation



Move beyond lists of biases



Data science for equity



Build behavioural science into organizations

Building behavioural science into organizations

Building capacity of dedicated teams is clearly a priority, and we're learning how this can best be done:

- Applied workshops with teams working on real challenges in real time, followed by ad hoc support.
- Mix of formal and informal guidance to create a safe environment for learning and experimentation.

But we need to think about capacity building in a broad sense – how new abilities can be grafted onto existing processes.



Building behavioural science into organizations

		Level of BI knowledge and capacity		
		Limited	Centralized	Diffused
BI incorporated into organizational processes	No	Baseline	Proactive consultancy	Behavioural entrepreneurs
	Yes	Nudged organization	“Call for the experts”	Behaviourally-informed organization

Greater potential for scale

Greater levels of investment



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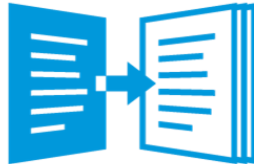
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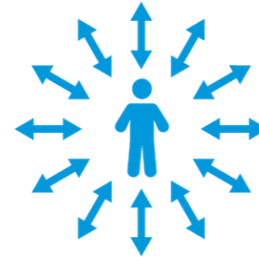
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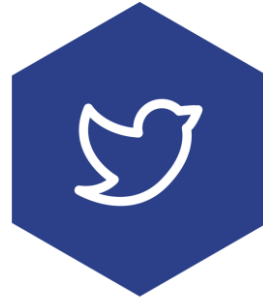
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michael.hallsworth@bi.team



[@mhallsworth](https://twitter.com/mhallsworth)



www.michaelhallsworth.com



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