



Anti-euphemistic reasoning related to value creation in attitudes toward Sustainability in Environmental engineering in a sample of Mexican civil engineers.

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Abstract:

In this exploratory research, a brief questionnaire on sustainability was developed. A sample was selected based on availability and distributed to two groups. The first group was experimental, where cognitive dissonance in favor of sustainability was addressed through a guided visualization and workshop process. The control group only completed the questionnaire. The descriptive results indicate differences between the two groups. Future research is recommended to emphasize strategies for fostering commitments related to social responsibility.

Keywords: *sustainability, cognitive dissonance, social representations, anti-euphemistic reasoning.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

*In our time, political speech
and writing are largely
the defense of the indefensible.
George Orwell*

Indeed, it is crucial for someone to speak out today to stop the mental manipulation stemming from messages designed to control the population. A comprehensive analysis of the discourse from those

in power is essential for establishing an anti-manipulative standard. Ultimately, one euphemism symbolizes a hidden lie.

There are horizontal and vertical lies. Horizontal lies involve saying something contrary to the truth. To claim that I was present to understand what was said when, in fact, I was not there is a horizontal lie. Conversely, if I state that I attended for a long time (having actually been there for only a short while) and assert that I understood everything when, in reality, very little was grasped, this is a vertical lie. Euphemisms serve as a form of language rooted in vertical lies. By using the truth, we can create a better understanding of decisions.

Reig, Soler & Quintana-Kawage

In the book: *ANTI-EUPHEMISTIC REASONING*
ON LEADERS' DECISION-MAKING. Lambert Publishing House

2. LITERATURE SURVEY

2.1. Anti-manipulative criterion, anti-euphemistic reasoning.

Reasoning is the capacity that enables us to solve problems, draw conclusions, and consciously learn from facts, establishing essential causal and logical connections between them. Any reasoning, understood as a statement, consists of two components: premises and the conclusion.

Premises are a set of statements that affirm or deny something about a subject, serving as the starting point for any reasoning process. Like conclusions, premises can be either true or false. Conclusions are the expressions derived from the premises through logical and argumentative processes. The conclusions of one reasoning can serve as the premises for another, and their validity depends on the formal aspects employed in the reasoning.

Knowledge is a social construct and a communal phenomenon, meaning that each individual creates a unique representation of reality while also contributing to larger society. Ultimately, it illustrates the collaborative social construction of reality within a specific group.

Social representation model

We can understand the nervous system as a temporal dimension like that of melody, or the recognition of notes and their distance from each other on the scale, and our appreciation of these as actually affected by the onset of our response to subsequent notes, as when we expect a certain kind of ending.

George Herbert Mead

In his book *Mind Self and Society* pp 86

The nervous system that enables us to engage with our reality has a temporal dimension, and this temporality unfolds through sequences and moments, as noted by Mead, much like the notes of a melody. Together, these notes create harmonies, which in turn form a melody. That melody has a name, and socially, we respond to it, recognize it, categorize it, and draw conclusions about what we have perceived, thus classifying it as good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant, and so forth.

2.2. Connecting with reality through perceptions and representations

Visual perception involves opening your eyes to observe an object, while representation requires closing your eyes and describing that object from your imagination. In both cases, representation always carries an inherent meaning.

Moliner (1996) [1] states that something can give rise to a social representation if it meets certain criteria; let's examine two of these:

The object of social representation must be complex; it should evoke multiple meanings within a social group. This is because each subjectivity is unique to the individual belonging to that group. Additionally, this representation must be shared, thereby generating interactions among the individuals in the group.

“Here and there, there is a tendency to consider social representations as an internal reflection of something external, the superficial and ephemeral layer of something deeper and more permanent. While everything points to seeing them as a constitutive factor of social reality, just as invisible particles and fields are a constitutive factor of physical reality.” (Moscovici and Hewstone, 1986) [2]

Drawing from our experiences, culture, education, personality, and various other factors, we engage in associative processes in our brains. We describe each object or subject with specific adjectives we consider appropriate. Consequently, the concept of strawberry cake is associated with words like delight, celebration, and gift, while in other cultures, it may evoke joy and enjoyment. Conversely, the notion of scolding can elicit feelings of shame, anger, and frustration. Through social representation, one can explore the associations that specific groups, such as civil engineers, have with certain concepts.

Ultimately, leadership and decision-making hinge on how authority impacts those who follow. Zurlini, G., Petrosillo, I., and Cataldi, M. (2008) [3] examined the relationship between policies and management. They discovered that enforcing rigid rules in policies and management can lead to a loss of resilience within systems. In other words, these systems weaken and diminish their capacity to recover. Resilience entails confronting complex yet manageable challenges, and overcoming these obstacles empowers those who adhere to the rules. However, when it becomes impossible to surmount these challenges, disenchantment sets in, resulting in a loss of strength. The severity of rules is often connected to dysphemisms, as noted by Pfaff et al. (1997) [4]. Dysphemisms are crude expressions; for example, "kick the bucket" refers to dying, while the equivalent euphemism would

be "pass away." Familiar dysphemisms are deemed more appropriate and easier to comprehend when there is a conceptual link between them and the context in which each individual interacts with others. Felt, C., & Riloff, E. (2020) [5] assert that dysphemisms approach sensitive topics in a harsh or impolite manner. In this context, the population is pressured to accept an obvious lie filled with contradictions, as those who employ this language wield power and instill fear in their audience. Ren, C., & Yu, H. (2013) [6] point out that the origin of the term "euphemism" clearly indicates its purpose. "Eu" originates from Greek, meaning "well," while "pheme" translates to "to speak"; therefore, the term "euphemism" originally meant "to speak well." In the vocabulary of any language, we can find synonyms that soften an otherwise rude or unpleasant concept.

Euphemism is sometimes figuratively referred to as "a whitewashing device." However, certain elements deserve further examination. McGlone, M. S., Beck, G., & Pfister, A. (2006) [7] indicate that communicative pragmatics theory suggests that conventionality can give euphemisms camouflage properties, enabling recipients to process these messages unconsciously.

According to Rababah, H. A. (2014) [8], people frequently use direct or indirect expressions that can be formal, casual, polite, or informal in their daily conversations. However, it is essential to carefully analyze the consequences of distorted communication, regardless of how commonly accepted such distortions are in everyday language for the sake of politeness. Portero-Muñoz, C. (2011) [9] noted that a euphemism replaces an unpleasant or offensive term with another that obscures the true meaning. Nominal sequences require contextual cues or the activation of specific conceptual metaphors to help listeners distinguish between truth and falsehood in speech. Arriola, J.M., and Odriozola, J.C. (2008) [10] point out that nominal sequences possess characteristics that complicate automatic interpretation due to fear or overwhelming emotional impact. For this reason, Slovenko, R. (2005) [11] highlights the numerous euphemisms for death, which reflect our denial of it. Cestero Mancera, A.M. (2015) [12] also emphasizes the complexity surrounding taboo subjects. In the context of leaders' decision-making, the issues of deception and distance from the truth are crucial due to the potential harm they pose to those who heed and believe such falsified discourses. Consequently, Burkhardt, A. (2010) [13] notes that it is not merely about what a euphemism means or how the concept should be defined, but rather about how euphemisms operate and whether they can be deemed true or false. The emergence of euphemisms varies across different contexts. Today, according to Aytan, A., Aynur, B., Hilal, P., Aytac, E., & Malahat, A. (2021) [14], rhetorical strategies are utilized in political speeches, as highlighted by Karam, S. (2011) [15]. He emphasizes that in modern society, significant attention is paid to the application of rhetorical strategies in nearly all public spheres.

In discussing euphemisms related to architecture and civil engineering, DiLorenzo, T. J. (2000) [16] addresses the concerns of smart growth advocates regarding suburbs in the United States. Smart growth acts as the euphemism adopted by the environmental movement for centralized governmental planning on where and how people live and work. The same author notes that a common justification cited for smart growth regulation is the assertion that suburban development is allegedly consuming the nation's farmland, threatening the agricultural industry and individuals' ability to sustain themselves in the future. The primary objective of smart growth advocates is to significantly reduce the housing supply in the suburbs and use the state's taxing and regulatory

powers to encourage part of the population to return to the cities. So, why are euphemisms employed? Let's explore Freud's theories on defense mechanisms. In psychoanalysis, instinctual impulses arise from a structure known as the id. The moral censor that prevents inappropriate instincts from reaching consciousness is the superego. It evaluates the feasibility of expressing these impulses and either grants or denies approval. The superego seemingly assesses the consequences of expressing the impulse, taking into account self-image, social perception, societal benefits of such expression, and the associated costs and benefits. At this point, the manner of expression becomes crucial. A euphemism undermines the superego by diminishing the demands of the impulse and reducing its capacity to repress instincts.

Let's examine a controversial issue. If the impulse is presented to the superego like this: "I want permission to terminate the pregnancy because it will interfere with the freedom I need to continue studying" (termination implies an incomplete process, something that can be halted), the superego would likely respond, "Maybe so." However, if the impulse approaches the superego and states, "I want to abort," the superego would be much more decisive about whether to suppress this impulse.

2.3. Environmental Management.

Environmental management encompasses decisions and actions regarding the policies and practices involved in the appraisal, protection, allocation, development, use, rehabilitation, remediation, and restoration of resources and the environment (Zurlini et al., 2008) [3]. Therefore, sustainability can provide a foundational framework for developing and assessing decision options while protecting ecological systems that are vital for human health and wellbeing.

2.4. The Desirable Purpose of Thinking

The following is part of a series of interviews conducted with Edward de Bono in 2017 at his home in Malta, where he discusses value creation. This interview is included in the book "Anti-Euphemistic Reasoning in Leaders' Decision-Making," published by Lambert Publishing.

Mr. De Bono - The idea is to create value. It's about thinking of ways to create value.

Enrique Reig - According to this model, what is the process for creating value?

Mr. De Bono - It is essential to have a value dream. Then, you should search for ideas and identify the practical ones to create value.

Analysis: concepts connected to the main idea. What are the objectives of a civil construction project? Ideally, the primary goal of these projects is to meet the needs of the population and enhance their quality of life. Montañés, P. (2012) [17] emphasizes that the central idea is to create value for all stakeholders. Therefore, the main objective of a civil construction project is to address stakeholders' needs and improve their quality of life. Stakeholders in a project can be identified by asking a simple question: Will the work being done impact these organizations and individuals?

Continue the interview:

Enrique Reig: Edward, how can leaders create value for everyone?

Mr. de Bono: The problem begins in school; people have never been taught to create value.

Enrique Reig: They have never concentrated on how to apply knowledge?

Mr. de Bono: That's right.

Sandra Dingli: Edward, why aren't leaders interested in creating value for all?

Mr. de Bono: They don't prepare people. Most were trained in traditional education, and furthermore, they don't encourage people to take their place.

Analysis: This research focuses on value creation for future generations, highlighting our study of sustainability. Sustainable value involves leaving resources in their original state, ensuring that future generations can depend on them; however, regarding value addition, these resources must be in a better condition than they currently are. How can we achieve that? Who are the stakeholders in such a project? They are the individuals making decisions to turn this vision into reality. How can we encourage rapid learning among leaders so they can develop skills often not taught in school?

2.5. Anti-euphemisms and the creation of value

Enrique Reig - Edward, do you believe that some leaders can utilize cognitive distortions to persuade their followers to back certain decisions, even when those decisions may not be in their best interest?

Mr. De Bono- What kind of deformations?

Enrique Reig - Euphemisms. We are working on developing the concept of euphemisms, their negative effects on cognitive processes, and the vaccine: anti-euphemisms.

Mr. De Bono - I agree, but how can this be accomplished?

Enrique Reig - Through education in values, the development of skills like altruism, practicing discernment, and learning how to create value for everyone.

Mr. De Bono - The key point here is whether people can innovate fair uses of classical thinking. It is essential to create something new.

Sandra Dingli - There are countries with high levels of knowledge development.

Mr. De Bono - Yes, but what matters is whether those countries can create new concepts or import

them from elsewhere. To generate concepts, you must transcend conventional thinking and introduce new ideas that add value.

Analysis:

Let's enrich the adjectives associated with stakeholders through social representation. Our value dream is to create value for all stakeholders. First, we need to recognize and address euphemisms.

Analysis: The first point is to understand that attribution theory refers to the process by which individuals explain the causes of behaviors and events. The development of models to clarify these processes is known as attribution theory. Psychological research into attribution began with the work of Fritz Heider, who argued that people continually try to explain situations using attributional schemas. If someone intentionally seeks to manipulate data and presents misleading yet plausible information, others may mistakenly attribute credibility to something that is incorrect and false. This is the crux of the problem. What can we do to mitigate the damage? It will be necessary to implement changes.

Cognitive Change

Reig, Soler, and Quintana-Kawage (2017) [18] discussed euphemistic reasoning in leaders' decision-making in their book, stating that, according to the Theory of Cognitive Dissonance in psychology, cognitive dissonance refers to the internal tension or disharmony within an individual's system of ideas, beliefs, and emotions (cognitions) when they hold two conflicting thoughts or exhibit behavior that contradicts their beliefs. This term describes the perception of incompatibility between two simultaneous cognitions, all of which can affect attitudes. People cannot remain in contradiction between their values and actions; they are influenced by them. If someone finds themselves in this contradiction, they will urgently need to revert to their original state. Otherwise, the dissonance will cause individuals to shift from their beliefs to their behaviors. Martinie, M., Milland, L., & Olive, T. (2013) [19] discussed how the emotional component of dissonance affects people and reviewed various methods for measuring and identifying the negative effects associated with dissonance. How important is creativity oriented towards sustainability? Li, W., Li, X., Huang, L., Kong, X., Yang, W., Wei, D., & Liu, J. (2015) [20] stated that creativity is essential for the advancement of human civilization. What characteristics should future citizens possess, driven by creativity to advocate for sustainability? Individuals are more likely to be well-aligned with scientific discoveries if they embody certain personality traits associated with creativity, including imagination, curiosity, a sense of challenge, and a willingness to take risks. Li et al. (2015) [20] raised the question: How can we cultivate these traits in future generations? Through proper education focused on creativity and sustainability. Baas, Matthijs, et al. (2016) [21] identified two pathways to creative outcomes: (1) cognitive flexibility (the adaptable processing of information) and (2) cognitive persistence (the ongoing exploration and systematic, incremental combination of elements and possibilities). Education should also address future challenges and resilience. In other words, we should anticipate problems and confront them with two objectives: learning to find solutions and developing resilience. Farkas, D., Denham, S. L., Bendixen, A., Tóth, D., Kondo, H. M., & Winkler, I. (2016) [22] explored ego-resiliency as a personality trait and discovered that ego-

resilience reflects a tendency toward adaptive flexibility and experience-seeking. This insight serves as a valuable example for designing educational programs for future citizens.

3. PROBLEM DEFINITION

To explore the relationship between sustainability principles in civil engineering—such as environmental stewardship for future generations, addressing social dynamics, and ensuring the economic viability of actions that impact both the environment and people to promote productive enterprises. In other words, the three pillars of sustainability are environmental, social, and economic sustainability.

The challenge is to guarantee that it benefits the environment by conserving resources for future generations, protecting individuals and their social relationships, and fostering economic growth.

4. METHODOLOGY / APPROACH

Participants:

An exploratory research project was designed, selecting a sample of 27 civil engineers aged 27 to 64 based on their availability. All participants were graduates in civil engineering with relevant work experience.

Instruments:

- a) Questionnaire about sustainability attitudes

Definitor a: The concept of "sustainability" was introduced in 1987 at the United Nations World Conference on Environment and Development. "Sustainable development refers to the capacity of human systems to meet the needs of current generations without compromising the resources and opportunities available for the growth and development of future generations." Sustainability objectives: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy. Reduce pollution in the air, water, and soil. Encourage the use of renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and geothermal. Promote carpooling. Advocate for gender equality. Improve the quality of life, healthcare, and education.

1. I believe that I have an obligation to adopt a pro-sustainability attitude and behavior creating better conditions for future generations

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

2. I believe that I have the responsibility to embrace pro-sustainability attitudes and behaviors

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

3. I believe that I have the obligation to value the natural resources of our planet.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

4. I believe that I have the duty to value our planet's natural environment.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

5. I believe that I have the desire to work for the next generation caring our ecosystem as much as I can..

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

b) Relaxation and guided visualization.

c) Cognitive dissonance procedure chosen the pro sustainability practices in the imagination.

Procedure

The two groups were randomly assigned: Group A included 13 participants, while Group B included 14. The first group received a social representation of sustainability and took part in a workshop using the cognitive dissonance technique; afterward, they answered the sustainability questionnaire. The second group only completed the sustainability questionnaire.

We convened the control group one day, with 13 of the 17 selected participants in attendance. A Jacobson relaxation session was conducted to help them unwind. They were then asked to visualize the concept of sustainability. Through a guided visualization, they were presented with the following example: Introduction: The concept of sustainability embodies a strong moral principle that human well-being must be pursued within the limits

of the natural environment's capacity to support it. Consequently, economic growth and technological development must acknowledge certain physical constraints to enhance people's living conditions. Participants were then prompted to visualize themselves engaging in the following behaviors: a) reusing products, b) recycling waste, c) using energy wisely, d) creating a small garden at home, e) supporting companies with ethical practices, f) using public transportation or bicycles, g) consuming non-industrial products that generate waste, and h) volunteering for environmental causes.

After the visualization, a dynamic exercise was conducted, dividing the group into subgroups of three (three groups of three and one group of four). They discussed their initial steps, how to achieve them, when they would take action, what to expect, and how these individual efforts could help preserve their generational legacy.

- 1) They were asked to meet online for the next three days to continue and enhance the discussion.
- 2) They completed the sustainability questionnaire.
- 3) The questionnaire was scored and compared with the control group, which did not receive relaxation, visualization, or a workshop; they only filled out the questionnaire.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1. Results: According to cognitive dissonance, when a person acts in a way that contradicts their beliefs, it results in dissonance between those beliefs and their actions. Over time, to resolve this dissonance, the person often adjusts their beliefs to align with their prior behavior, swapping adjectives that reflect the shift from terms like difficult, unpleasant, and not my concern to more positive ones like desirable, responsibility, and pleasure in serving, among others.

Table of equivalences

Answers	Value
Strongly agree	5
Agree	4
Neutral	3
Disagree	2
Strongly disagree	1

Table of results of both groups

Group experimental	Medias	Medias	Group control
1. I believe that I have an obligation to adopt a pro-sustainability attitude and behavior creating better conditions for future generations	(60/13) 4.61	(49/14) 3.5	1. I believe that I have an obligation to adopt a pro-sustainability attitude and behavior creating better conditions for future generations
2. I believe that I have the responsibility to embrace pro-sustainability attitudes and behaviors	(58/13) 4.46	(42/14) 3.0	2. I believe that I have the responsibility to embrace pro-sustainability attitudes and behaviors
3. I believe that I have the obligation to value the natural resources of our planet.	(57/13) 4.38	(40/14) 2.85	3. I believe that I have the obligation to value the natural resources of our planet.
4. I believe that I have the duty to value our planet's natural environment.	(61/13) 4.69	(40/14) 2.85	4. I believe that I have the duty to value our planet's natural environment.
5. I believe that I have the desire to work for the next generation caring our ecosystem as much as I can..	(62/13) 4.76	(42/14) 3.0	5. I believe that I have the desire to work for the next generation caring our ecosystem as much as I can..

5.2 Discussion

Despite being exploratory research that employs descriptive statistics, differences between the two groups are evident, showing an effect in the control group that alters attitudes toward sustainability. It is advisable to conduct this experimental design using a randomized group and to apply a correlational hypothesis to determine whether greater resolved dissonance leads to a stronger commitment to sustainability. Existing references already support this direction. Durán, M. E. M. (2011) [23] discusses sustainability as a crucial aspect of branding strategy, emphasizing the necessity of a professional commitment to making urgent decisions regarding environmental respect and attention.

5. SCOPE

There are some ideas that can help us reflect on what can be studied in the future. To do this, we will review some research, and from these, we should be able to deduce what can be done tomorrow.

Gillette, G. (2004) [24] notes that Kant believes the will is free only when an individual defines an agenda based on a perceptive understanding of the truth of their situation and the conditions that allow them to exercise their abilities, maintain their relationships, and access certain opportunities. The truths of each situation depend on external factors; as we have observed, people adjust their attitudes according to how things are presented.

An interesting observation: Kirsch, C., Lubart, T., & Houssemand, C. (2016) [25] noted that incorporating sustainability into individual actions can complicate design. While students studying construction, particularly architecture, tended to exhibit a "scientific" creative profile, social science students displayed an "artistic" creative profile. Let's consider some differences:

Artistic creativity can be anarchic. It is flexible and can dispense with observation; it does not require hypotheses. On the other hand, scientific creativity is methodical, rigid, requires observation, and necessitates formulating hypotheses.

Future research is encouraged to validate this relationship due to the significant importance of this generation's collaboration with sustainability values.

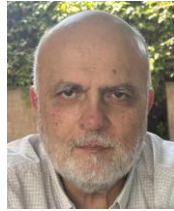
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7. Author Biographies



Enrique Reig-Pintado Physician specializing in psychiatry, PhD in psychology, author of numerous books and articles, former professor at the University of the Americas Puebla.



Bernardo Kintana-Kawage, civil engineer, with an MBA from the Instituto de Empresa in Madrid, author and co-author of some books and articles related to engineering and leadership. President of the Bernardo Quintana Institute.



Cecilia Cervantes-Silva, PhD in Psychology, author of the book *The Competitive Company*, president of the Institute of Business and Leadership for Women, author of several scientific articles.



Enrique Reig-Salazar, holds a BA in Psychology and a master's degree in business administration. He is the author of books such as "Talent Discovering", works on talent management for organizations, and is the director of H.Q. People.

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