

# Book Review

## OECD: Behavioral Insights and Public Policy. Lessons from Around the World

Roger Frantz<sup>1\*</sup>

### Book details

Behavioral Insights and Public Policy.  
Lessons from Around the World

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<sup>1</sup> San Diego State University

\*Corresponding author: rfrantz@mail.sdsu.edu

This book, which comes in both print and PDF forms, has summaries of over 100 empirical studies on various topics in behavioral economics and public policy. The major topics are consumer protection, education, energy, the environment, finance, health and safety, labor, public services, taxes, and telecommunications.

Each study is summarized in two or three pages. There is a two + page glossary at the end of the 400 page text.

Chapter 1, "Why Bother? Context and Approach", begins with a quote from Professor Lunn of the Economic and Social Research Institute of Dublin, who defines behavioral insights and its relation to behavioral science and behavioral economics. Professor Lunn along with Marck Bohacek have an article in JBEP, Volume 1, Issue 2.

Each summary begins with the following information about the study: the country where the research took place, the economic sector involved, the institution where the research originated, the start and end dates of the intervention (experiment), the objective, the method used, and the application(s) of the study.

Each study then has major headlines: the problem, the intervention, the results, the impacts, and additional information about the institution involved.

The nations where the research took place include Australia, New Zealand, U.S., Canada, Columbia, Uganda, Ghana, Kenya, E.U., Denmark, U.K., Ireland, Germany, Israel, and Singapore.

Below is one example of the research from the ten major topics, and one or two concept(s) from behavioral economics used in the study.

1. consumer protection: "Price Transparency in Residential Electricity" – framing.
2. education: "After School Project" – salience and anchoring.
3. energy: "Better Consumption Data for More Efficient Energy Use" – loss aversion.
4. environment: "From Replacement to Repair. Changing Default Options to Decrease Electronic Waste" – nudging.
5. finance: "Investing in Hybrid Securities" – overconfidence.
6. health and safety: "Increasing Organ Donor Registration" – reciprocity.
7. labor: "Acquiring Data from Postal Firms" – social norms.
8. public services: "Renewing Vehicle Licenses Online" – gains/losses framing.
9. taxes: "Completing Online Registration" – simplified language.
10. telecommunications: "Consumer Protection in Columbia" – endowment effect, and hyperbolic discounting.

The summaries have at least two good uses. First, each summary is short and so it is a relatively quick way of becoming aware of behavioral economics and public policy studies

from around the world on various important topics. Second, they are accessible or user-friendly to upper division undergraduate students, and of course graduate students.

There some shortcoming of the book. First, the authors of the individual studies are never mentioned, which I found somewhat disconcerting. Second, there is no indication as to whether the research has been published in journal or book form. Third, there are virtually no references following each summary. Each of these would enhance the reader's own research efforts.