

Jennifer Carman, University of Michigan

Title: Expanding the role of human behavior in climate change adaptation: Proposed framework and practices

Abstract: Climate change is becoming a day-to-day reality of human life. We know that climate change has been caused by our behaviors, and to date research on human behavior and climate change has predominantly focused on how humans can mitigate climate change and minimize harm to the environment. With the changes that are already happening, however, it is critically important that climate change researchers and practitioners also consider the role of human behavior in climate change adaptation and resilience, i.e., behaviors that individuals can undertake to survive and thrive in the face of inevitable climate change impacts. Based on a review of 69 academic papers on individual-level climate change adaptation behavior, we propose that adaptation behavior be defined as individual-level actions responding, either on one's own or with others, to anticipated and actual consequences of climate change. In this presentation, we offer a typology of applicable individual and household level behaviors: coping, learning, pro-environmental behavior, citizenship behavior, self-protection actions, household protection action, lifestyle change, and migration. We will also present a preliminary theoretical framework outlining adaptation behaviors, psychological and social antecedents of those behaviors -- such as risk perception, social connections, and skills -- and potential outcomes of those behaviors -- including mental and physical health, social benefits, and environmental quality outcomes. Finally, we will also provide preliminary results from interviews with adaptation practitioners to identify potential practices that support those behaviors, such as emergency response skills training workshops and mental health support. Our goal is to advance individual-level adaptation behavior research and practice by bringing clarity about the types of actions needed to safeguard individuals' short- and long-term well-being in the face of climate change.