

Pickett, Douglas

From: Michael Mulligan [steamshovel2002@yahoo.com]
Sent: Thursday, August 26, 2010 8:06 AM
To: Pickett, Douglas
Subject: Re: Reminder of Tomorrow's Phone Call

"It just engineering, code and regulation word and communication gaming...none of this is the objective facts. The NRC has been doing this kind of destructive cultural word code or rules gaming for many years now. It is also "altruism abuse" with the wording of "This approach is preferable in that it would minimize the time necessary to place the plant in a cold shutdown condition". The overall good of bringing the plant to a timely cold shutdown hides the intent of Entergy and the NRC to cover up the facts that Entergy is to cheap to design a functional and non complicated alternate shutdown system at this uprate power or throughout the history of VY. The new outcome is to blindly depend on the luck of flicking one switch to connect our futures to depending on the cheap Hugo car VHS and the alternate shutdown system

"It is circular crazy logic and technical words games. What do you take us for idiots?"

Doug,

I am going to read the below into the record this mourning...does the NRC take into consideration "*The Cultural Theory of Risk*" and *Identity-Protection Cognition in your NRC safety culture.*? In case the transcription service wants to use it.

The NRC should talk to me about "Altruism Protection Cognition, a mental clitch...the idea of using altruism to rationalizing doing a greater bad.

Mike

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Culture and Identity-Protective
Cognition: Explaining the White-Male
Effect in Risk Perception
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A. The Cultural Theory of Risk

The *cultural theory of risk perception* (Douglas & Wildavsky 1982; Rayner 1992) asserts that individuals' perceptions of risk reflect and reinforce their commitments to visions of how society should be organized. Individuals, according to the theory, selectively credit and dismiss claims of societal danger based on

whether the putatively hazardous activity is one that defies or instead conforms to their cultural norms. Debates that on the surface feature instrumental, and often highly technical, claims of risk and benefit are in essence “the product of an ongoing debate about the ideal society” (Douglas & Wildavsky 1982:36).

The competing positions at stake in this debate are reflected in Mary Douglas’s (1970) “group-grid” typology, which classifies competing sets of norms, or “worldviews,” along two cross-cutting dimensions (Figure 1). The “group” dimension represents the degree to which “the individual’s life is absorbed in and sustained by group membership” (Douglas 1982:202). Those with a low group or *individualistic* orientation expect individuals to “fend for themselves and therefore tend to be competitive”; those with a high group or *communitarian* worldview assume that individuals will “interact frequently . . . in a wide range of activities” in which they must “depend on one another,” a condition that “promotes values of solidarity” (Rayner 1992:86). The “grid” dimension measures the pervasiveness and significance of social differentiation within a worldview. Persons who have a high grid or *hierarchical* orientation expect resources, opportunities, respect, and the like to be “distributed on the basis of explicit public social classifications, such as sex, color, . . . holding a bureaucratic office, [or] descent in a senior clan or lineage” (Gross & Rayner 1985:6). Low grid orientations value “an *egalitarian* state of affairs in which no one is prevented from participating in any social role because he or she is the wrong sex, or is too old, or does not have the right family connections” and so forth (Rayner 1992:86). Groups of likeminded persons, moreover, typically form within the interior of the quadrants demarcated by the intersection of group and grid, thereby becoming committed to social arrangements that combine elements of either “hierarchy” or “egalitarianism,” on the one hand, and with either “individualism” or “communitarianism,” on the other (Douglas 1982; Thompson et al. 1990).

These preferences, cultural theory posits, explain political conflict over risk regulation. Persons who are relatively egalitarian and communitarian are naturally sensitive to environmental and technological risks, the reduction of which justifies regulating commercial activities that produce social inequality and legitimize unconstrained self-interest. Those who are more individualistic predictably dismiss claims of environmental risk as specious, in line with their commitment to the autonomy of markets and other private orderings. So do relatively hierarchical persons, who perceive assertions of environmental catastrophe as threatening the competence of social and governmental elites (Douglas & Wildavsky 1982; Wildavsky & Dake 1990). Building on Douglas’s and Wildavsky’s work, numerous empirical studies have shown that perceptions (lay and expert) of various types of environmental and technological hazards do vary in patterns that conform to these categories (Dake 1991; Ellis & Thompson 1997; Gyawali 1999; Jenkins-Smith & Smith 1994; Jenkins-Smith 2001; Marris et al. 1998; Peters & Slovic 1996; Steg & Sievers 2000; Poortinga et al. 2002; Wildavsky & Dake 1990).

B. Identity-Protective Cognition

Group membership, it has been shown, “can affect how people process information about nearly all categories of stimuli in the social world” (Baumeister & Leary 1995:504). Individuals tend to adopt the beliefs common to members of salient “in-groups.” They also resist revision of those beliefs in the face of contrary factual information, particularly when that information originates from “out-group” sources, who are likely to be perceived as less knowledgeable and less trustworthy than “in-group” ones (Mackie & Quellar 2000; Clark & Maass 1988; Mackie et al. 1992).

Identity-protective cognition is one proposed mechanism for this set of dynamics. Individual well-being, this account recognizes, is intricately bound up with group membership, which supplies individuals not only with material benefits but a range of critical nonmaterial ones, including opportunities to acquire status and self-esteem. Challenges to commonly held group *beliefs* can undermine a person’s well-being either by threatening to drive a wedge between that person and other group members, by interfering with important practices within the group, or by impugning the social competence (and thus the esteem-conferring capacity) of a group generally. Accordingly, as a means of identity self-defense, individuals

appraise information in a manner that buttresses beliefs associated with belonging to particular groups (Cohen et al. 2000; Cohen et al. in press; Cohen 2003).

The existence of identity-protective cognition is most convincingly supported by studies that investigate how group membership interacts with diverse forms of reasoning. Even someone whose sense of worth was *not* invested in any profound way in group membership might treat the views of those he or she associates with and trusts as a rough indicator of the accuracy of a commonly held belief. However, experimental studies show the impact of group membership on belief formation is not confined to this heuristic; the perceived predominance of a belief within a group influences information processing *even* when a member of that group uses systematic reasoning, which is characterized by a relatively high degree of deliberate, critical analysis (Cohen 2003). In effect, an unselfconscious desire to affirm group beliefs *motivates* both heuristic and systematic reasoning, determining which form a person will employ and to what end. The motivational effect of group membership on information processing is most easily explained by the inference that individuals *do* have a profound emotional and psychic investment in seeing their group's beliefs confirmed (Giner-Sorolla & Chaiken 1997; Chen et al. 1999).

From: "Pickett, Douglas" <Douglas.Pickett@nrc.gov>
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Sent: Wed, August 25, 2010 3:35:19 PM
Subject: Reminder of Tomorrow's Phone Call

Mr. Mulligan –

Just a reminder that we're scheduled to discuss your 2.206 petition of June 15, 2010, regarding the Vernon Hydro Station tie-in to Vermont Yankee at 10 a.m. tomorrow morning. The conference bridge number is 1-800-772-3842 and the passcode is 2206.

As before, we would like you to schedule your presentation for no more than about 35-40 minutes. The call will be recorded by the NRC Operations Center and a court reporter will create a transcript of the call. The transcript will be considered a supplement to your original petition and will be made publicly available.

Doug

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