

Christine Clavien  
christine.clavien@unige.ch

**How much responsibility do researchers  
bear for their misconducts?**

# Lessons from research on behavioral insights

Features of the choice architecture alter people's *behaviour* in a predictable way.



Anti-splashback urinal

Will you buy  
Neocitran or  
Panadol?



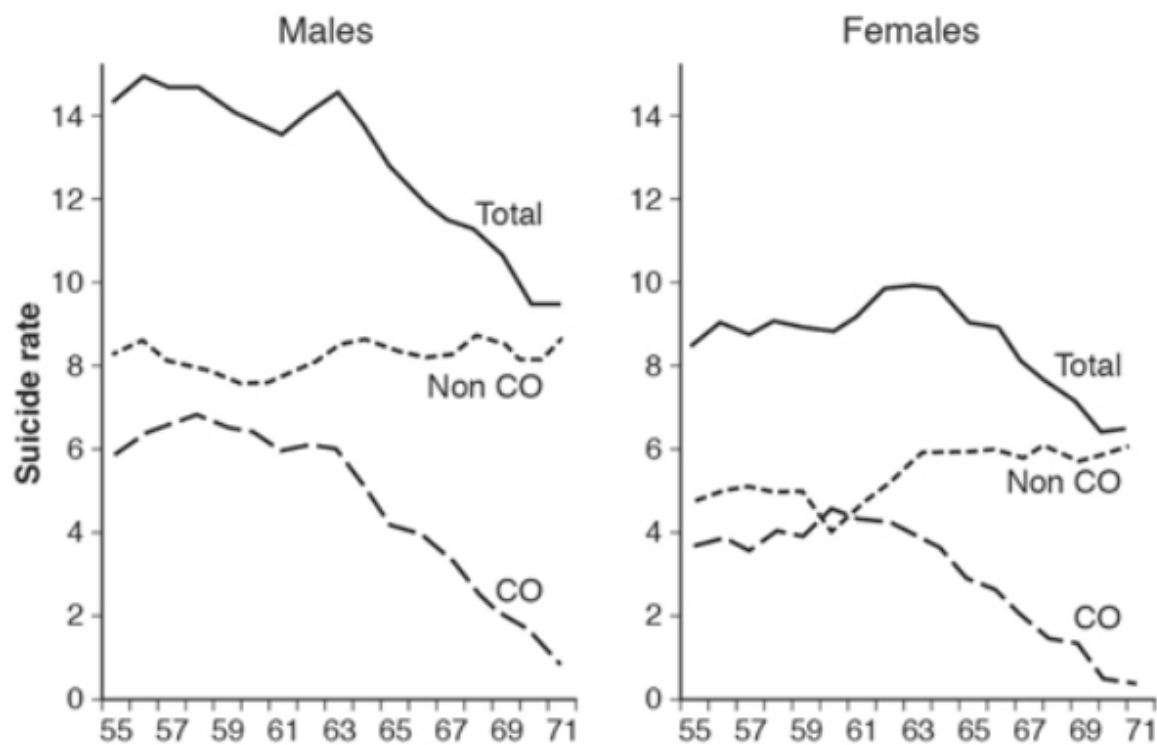
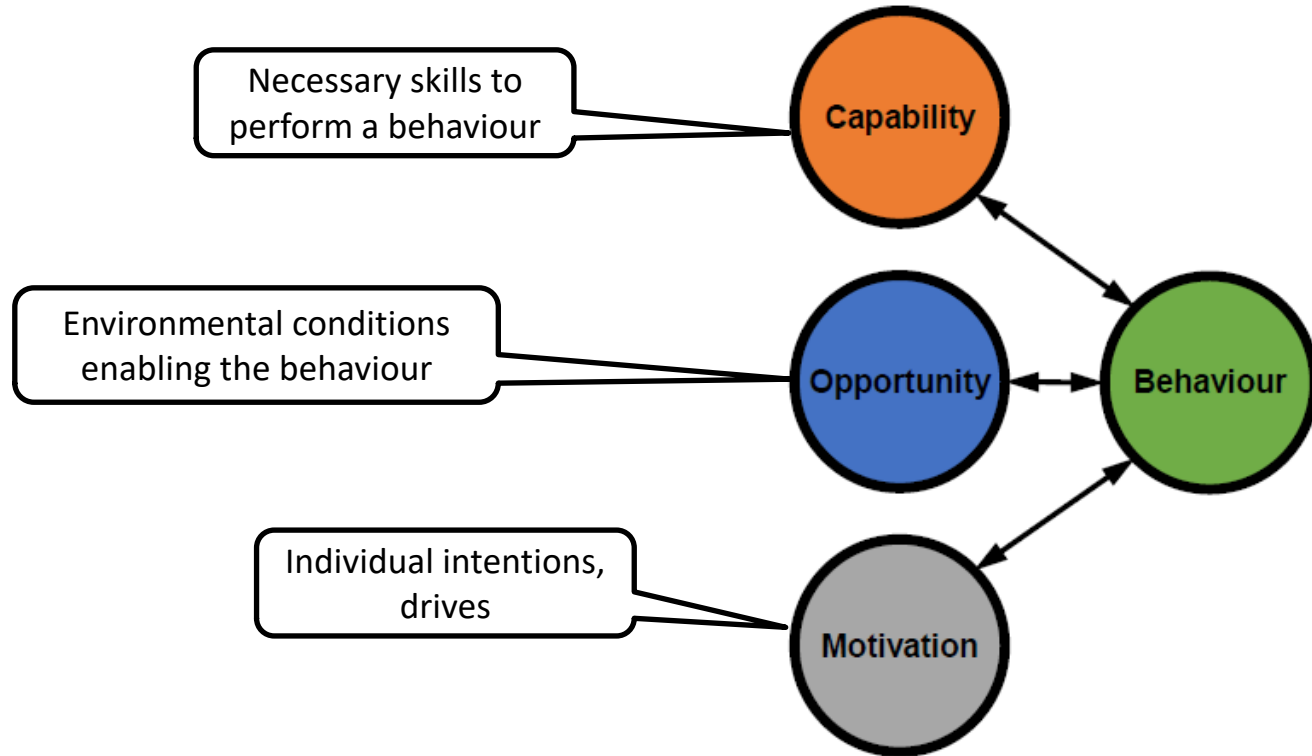
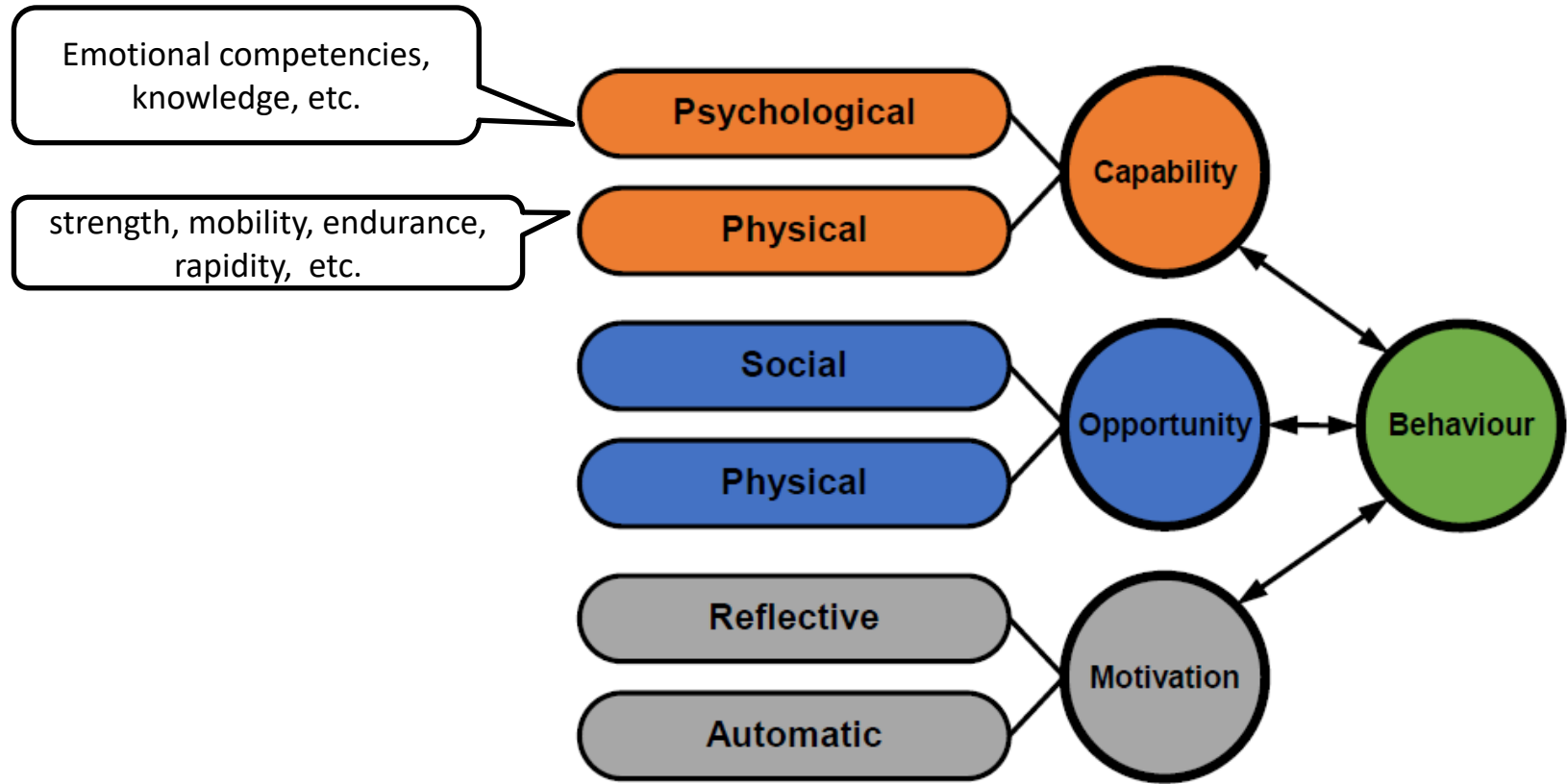
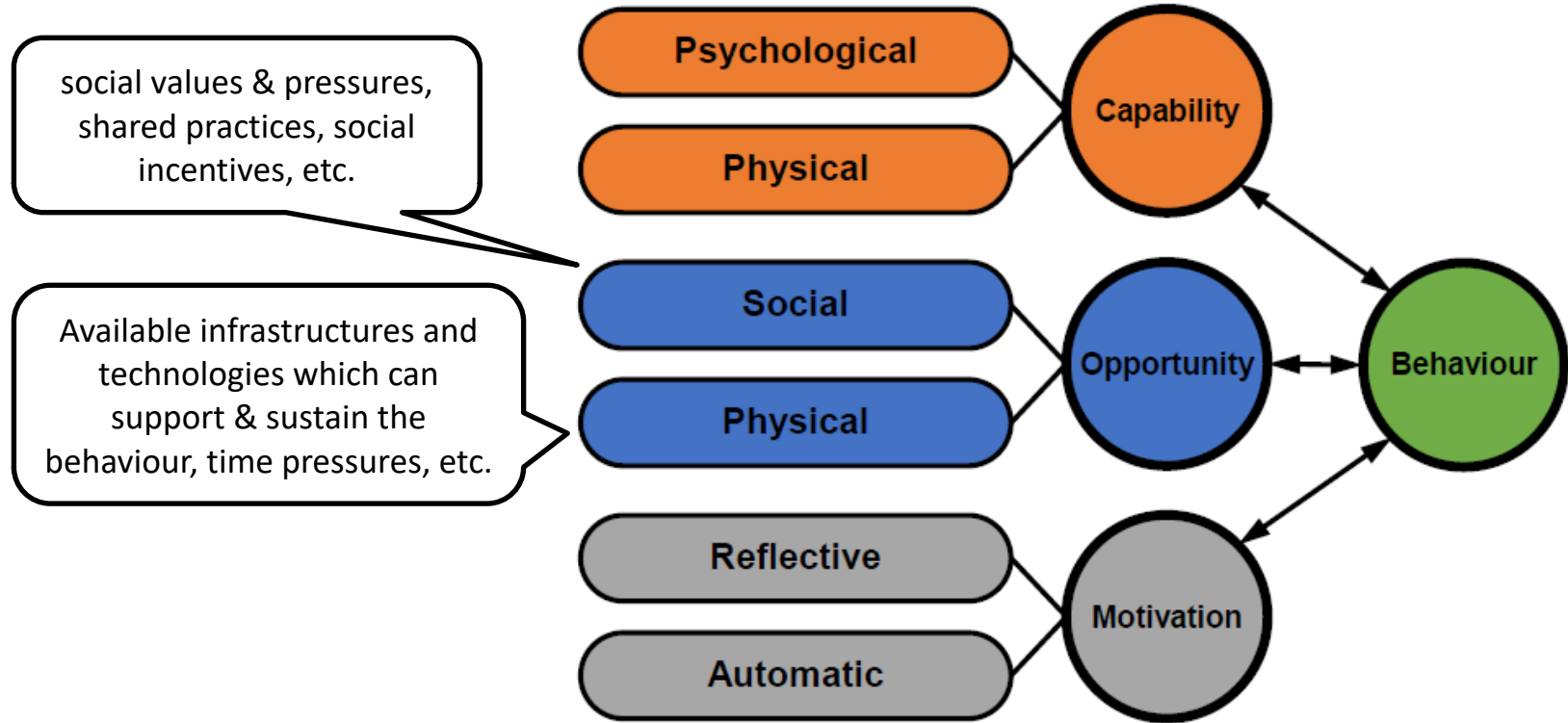


Figure 9. Trends in suicide rates per 100,000 in England and Wales, 1955–71, involving carbon monoxide and not involving carbon monoxide.

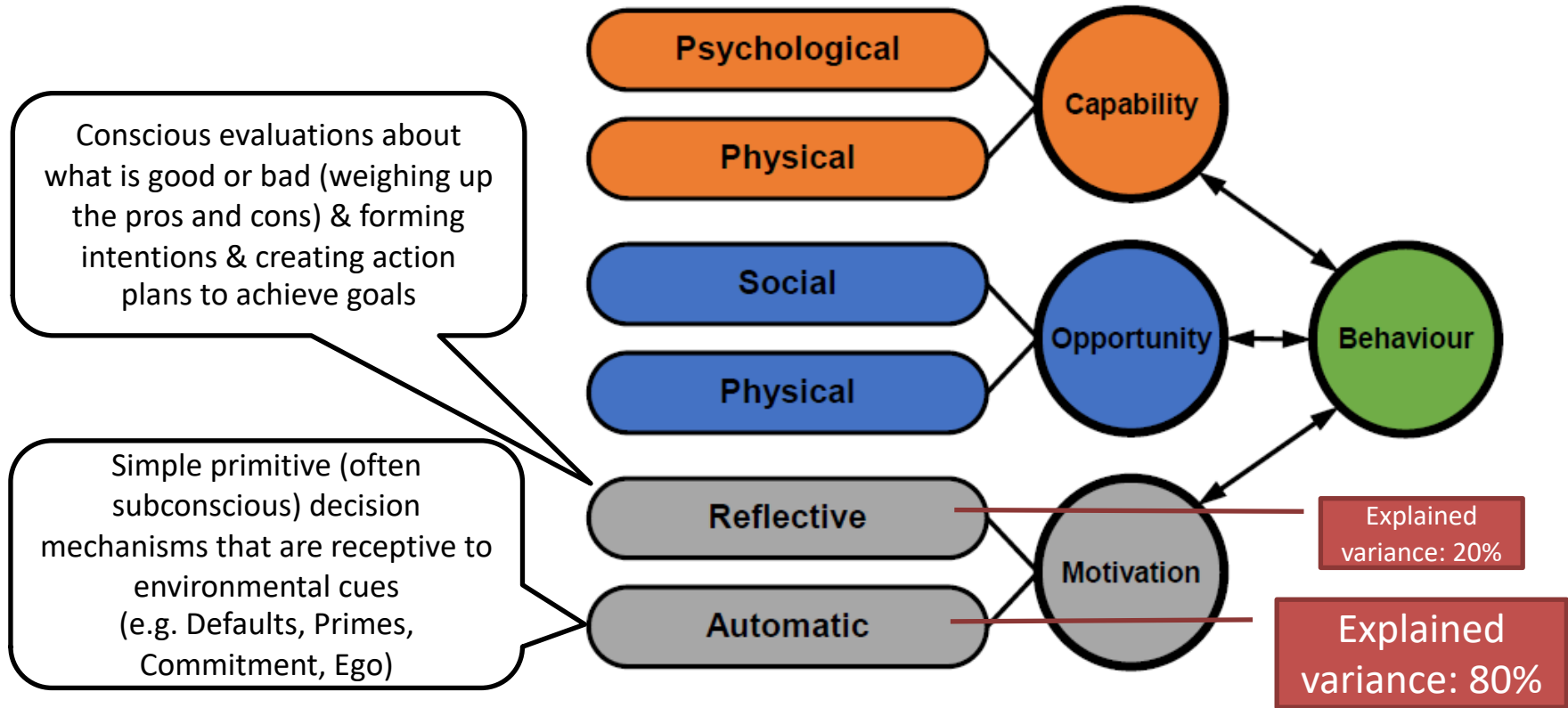
## Causal factors underlying people's choices of action







“Behavior is not so much thought about; it simply comes about”



Teaching research integrity via academic lessons →  
education of the rational mind

These interventions draw on the assumption that people  
change behaviour according to endorsement of reasons  
and intention formation (the reflective mind).

The problem is that a substantial proportion of the  
variance in behaviour is not explained by intentions.



# MINDSPACE

## motivating behaviour in automatic ways



Messenger

We are heavily influenced by who communicates information to us



Incentives

Our responses to incentives are shaped by predictable mental shortcuts e.g. strongly avoiding losses



Norms

We are strongly influenced by what others do



Defaults

We go with the flow of pre-set options



Salience

Our attention is drawn to what is novel and what seems relevant to us



Primes

Our acts are often influenced by subconscious cues



Affect

Our emotional associations can powerfully shape our actions



Commitment

We seek to be consistent with our public promises, and reciprocate acts



Ego

We act in ways that make us feel better about ourselves

Authority

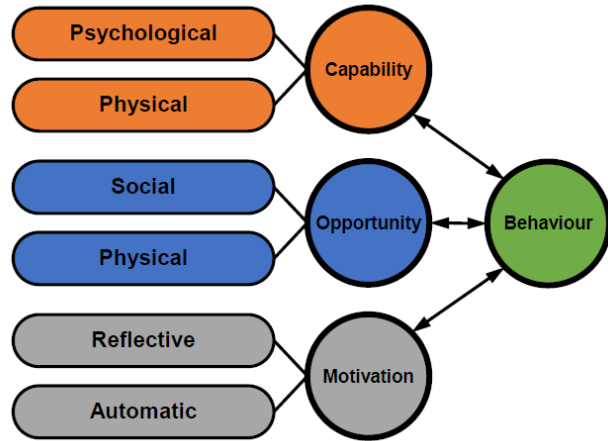
Social norm

Friction

Incentives

Reputation

# To what extent is it warranted to hold researchers *responsible* for their misconduct?



\* *Level of control:*

a) *Capacity to identify deep preferences and form coherent evaluations*

b) *Matching between deep preferences & action choices*

## Minimal conditions for attributing practical responsibility

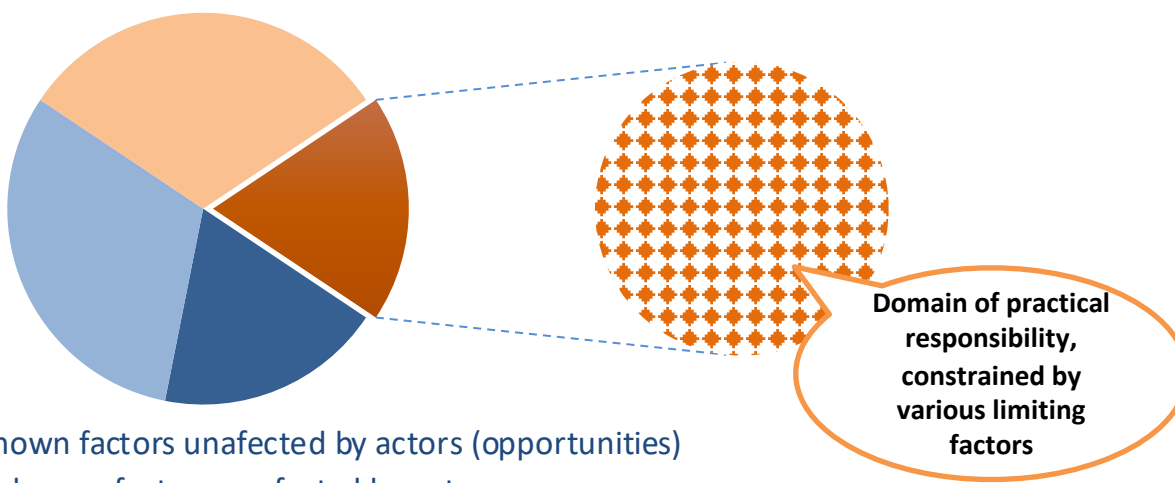
<b>Condition 1</b>	Responsibility depends on the existence of minimally valuable choice options
<b>Condition 2</b>	Responsibility requires some prior knowledge of existing options, their causal effect, and their fair value
<b>Condition 3</b>	Responsibility depends on actors' minimal <i>level of control*</i> over their choices

## Additional condition for attributing moral responsibility

<b>Condition 4</b>	Moral responsibility depends on actors' level of practical responsibility and on their understanding and endorsing that some choices are 'wrong'
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## How to attribute responsibility to a typical research misconduct

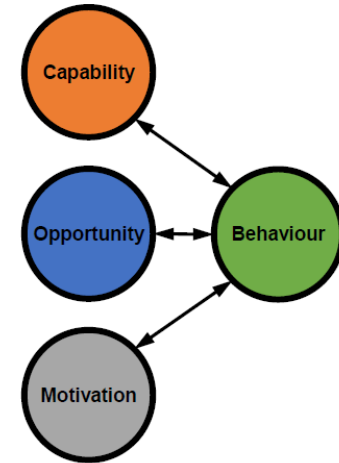
*For any given type of misconduct, it is (theoretically) possible to represent all causal factors that have a statistical effect on the occurrence of that type misconduct. Each of these factors can be attributed an explained variance which ranks between 0 and 1.*



- known factors unaffected by actors (opportunities)
- unknown factors unaffected by actors
- unknown factors related to actors' individuality
- known factors related to actors' individuality (capability & motivation)

e.g. opportunities to cheat / availability of information about how to cheat / proportion of cheaters in the domain

e.g. researcher's degree of competitiveness / aim for direct benefits / degree of respect for the victim / pleasure in causing harm / level of understanding that it is a misconduct / unconscious receptivity to subtle social cues



*Explained variance: how much the factor accounts for the occurrence of the misconduct, assuming that the sum of the explained variances of all causal factors equals 1*

Researchers' responsibility is reduced by limiting factors	Condition 1: Existence of minimally valuable choice options	Condition 3: Actors' knowledge about existing options, their causal effect, and their fair value	Condition 4: Actors' minimal level of control: a) Capacity to identify deep preferences and form coherent evaluations / b) Matching between deep preferences & action choices	Condition 5: Actors' understanding and endorsing that some choices are 'wrong'
Suboptimal framing of choice options (publish or perish, no reward for integer behaviour, no sanction for misconducts)	too strong incentive towards competitively	too strong incentive towards competitively		
Suboptimal information about impartial structures for reporting misconducts		Lack of knowledge about existing structures		
Questionable role models			Unconscious conformity bias	
Gender & cultural biases			Unconscious prejudices against women or minority groups	
Poor teaching of research integrity issues		x		Little awareness of ethical problems (e.g. prejudice linked to certain behaviours)

**All these limiting factors are correlated with institutional responsibility for research misconduct**

## **Heads of academic institutions have responsibilities**

- **Responsibility to present minimally valuable choice options to researchers**  
→ modify incentive framework (e.g. cheat or perish are no valuable choice options)
- **Responsibility to inform researchers about existing structures supporting integrity**
- **Responsibility to increase researchers' level of control over their choices**  
→ e.g. help them reduce the effect of their unconscious biases
- **Responsibility to teach integrity**