Calling DIBS

Episode 110: "Working Across Disciplines Towards Climate Solutions"

with Jordana Composto, Postdoctoral Researcher
at UBC Decision Insights for Business & Society (UBC-DIBS).

We're thrilled to welcome Jordana Composto as our new DIBS postdoctoral researcher. Through her contributions to the 2022 IPCC report and her research on the mechanics of social norms, Jordana works across disciplines and levels to tackle the climate crisis. She shares helpful ways to categorize behaviour change, gaps that new research can address, calls to better measure and report impacts, and goals for collaborating to implement research insights.

Transcript:

KIRSTIN APPELT, HOST: Welcome to this edition of Calling DIBS. I'm your host, Kirstin Appelt, Research Director with UBC Decision Insights for Business and Society, or DIBS for short.

Today we're at Calling DIBS on Jordana Composto. Jordana is a postdoctoral researcher with UBC DIBS. And for folks not familiar with the term postdoc, it's someone who has completed their PhD but has not yet started a professor position, often a time to get new training or training in different methods or with different folks, different skill areas, anything new to add to the skillset after, you know, only 20 some odd years of schooling.

So we're really thrilled that we have Jordana with us as our inaugural DIBS postdoc. She does really neat work applying behavioral science to the climate crisis, which is a major focus area for us. We get to expand our own learning through working with her and hopefully a little bit of the same on her end. I'm excited for you all to meet here and to hear more about her work. And let's just go ahead and welcome her on. So welcome Jordana.

JORDANA COMPOSTO, GUEST: Hi, thank you so much for having me.

APPELT: We'll start with what's hopefully a softball question, but is sometimes hard. Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

COMPOSTO: Sure, sure. I am, as you said, a postdoctoral researcher at UBC. I sit in the marketing and behavioral science division, and I'm affiliated with the DIBS Group. So incredibly happy to be here. And the Center for Climate and Business Solutions. I have a PhD in Psychology and Social Policy from Princeton University, and my bachelor's is from Dartmouth College with majors in quantitative social science and environmental studies. I'm giving you all my degrees because I think that explains how I ended up in behavioral science.

But broadly speaking, my research investigates the complex relationships and feedback between individual, collective, and institutional levels in societal transitions. I have a particular focus in the energy transition, climate policy and democratic stability. And I examine how and under what circumstances decisions and policies at one level influence decisions and behaviors at other levels.

APPELT: Awesome. I love how we can see way back in your Dartmouth days who are already an interdisciplinary soul. I'm curious to see how those various disciplines brought you to where you are. So what brought you to behavioral science, behavioral insights?

COMPOSTO: So I actually think the introduction to behavioral science came even earlier than college in middle school. I watched the documentary, Who Killed the Electric Car? It was raining one day at recess and a motivated teacher put it on. My middle school impression was just kind of being mind blown that this technology that seemed to have a lot of potential could fall so short. There was policy support. There was a California initiative that kind of set emission standards for the major automotive companies. And there was some consumer interest.

There was celebrity support, but there was in the early 2000s then a huge push by automotive lobbyists and a rollback of those emission standards that kind of resulted in consumer disinterest. And all of those things came together to quote unquote kill the electric car. And I walked away and it's maybe because I'm a child of engineers where I was like, oh, they have the technology way back. When, I can't believe it didn't work. And so what stuck with me after that recess documentary viewing was that humans and human systems can really have this massive impact on what solutions are available in the climate space.

APPELT: That's slightly insulting to call the 90s way back when. But aside from that, I love that story. I love little middle schooler Jordana seeing that documentary, which is is a fantastic documentary for anyone who hasn't seen it. But I love how your mind even at whatever age, 12 ish, is already seeing how there is these different factors coming together. And so I think that really makes it clear that you were driven by this interest in the climate crisis. And you had all these different disciplines swirling around.

Now that we're in 2025, you've homed in on the behavioral sciences and the psychology as your focal disciplines. Can you talk a little bit about how you homed in on that subset of disciplines?

COMPOSTO: Yeah, I think that really happened in undergrad. I started college and I knew I wanted to do something with the environment and something addressing the climate crisis. So I really front loaded the entire environmental studies degree. My first two years, I think I took all but one of the classes. I did ecology, I did environmental economics, public policy, and the same theme kept coming up, the human dimension, the way that the public views not only the solutions, but the problem itself was a huge limiting factor in scaling, often technological and policy solutions.

So in the kind of second half as well, I was like okay, I have a major completed, I guess I should do something else. I picked up the quantitative social science degree, which is, it's a weird one. It's a interdisciplinary degree where you kind of you pick your social science and you pick some topic. So I did some psychology and psychology modeling really, and environmental studies. And you kind of do a deep dive in the methods. And I started kind of building my toolkit to study human dimensions and public perceptions around energy and climate technology solutions and policies.

So I think that kind of typically people do majors kind of at the same time, but I really did them in sequence and the kind of starting with the problem and ending on my toolkit is how I ended up in this like, well, I think I'm going to study people and the way that people understand the mind.

APPELT: So I'm curious because I have done some interdisciplinary work and consider myself fairly interdisciplinary. I'm starting to hear some of the disciplines that work for you. What other disciplinary approaches do you use or collaborate with? can you talk also a little bit about not just what they are, but how you weave them together and the advantages or challenges? Because I find that to be always interesting and often challenging to work across disciplines.

COMPOSTO: Yes, I love this question and I'm so intimidated by it because I'm still very much figuring this out. I think that being interdisciplinary is maybe more of a practice than anything else because it is the thing that you walk into a room with and you have to really hone your skills and figure out your own strategies for being an interdisciplinary person. So I, my disciplines that I kind of walk into the room with are psychology, behavioral science, I guess even within psychology, there are many, many sub disciplines, I have some social psychology training, some judgment and decision making, some cognitive psychology.

And then typically, the people that I'm working with in various interdisciplinary contexts are folks from the social ecological systems space. So that typically encompasses many, many disciplines, including economists, political scientists, policy scholars, planners, ecologists sometimes. And the advantages are clear, right? When you have that many different disciplines in a room, you are going to think about a problem from so many more angles.

And that is as scientists that want to make a positive impact on the world, that's just, that's good. That is really good. You're going to have solutions. That are more scalable, they are more perhaps naturalistic. There's a huge potential with interdisciplinary work. The huge, huge challenge is the upfront time and tension that you can really feel when you are working across disciplines. I think that there's almost a language barrier, maybe not almost, there is a language barrier between disciplines.

For example, when psychologists talk about decision-making, we are almost always talking about how the individual makes a choice. When a planner is talking about decision-making, they're talking about usually a policymaker or a city planner or some manager making a decision. And that's a really different, it's a different set of theories, it's a different set of measures. So what I mean when I say it takes a lot of time, if you don't give each other the space and the humility to explain things, you're going to end up, you know, four hours into a meeting and you're going to have no idea what you're talking about.

I think that I maybe have two lessons for myself in this interdisciplinary practice. The first is to pick collaborators wisely. Not everybody is an interdisciplinary scholar, researcher, practitioner, and that's totally fine. But if you're doing interdisciplinary work, I typically like to work with folks who at least want to be interdisciplinary. So pick people who you get along with because it's going to be hard and pick people who at least have the intention to do thoughtful interdisciplinary work.

And then the second one, I think we're disconnected is to be humble and to just practice humility throughout the entire thing. I am at this point in my career, I am not so scared to do this, at first I really was, but I am

often the one to be like, to raise my hand and be like, hey, you just used a term. Can you please define it? I actually don't know what that word means. I don't know what that acronym means. And the practice of doing that is scary. It takes some humility, but it is often incredibly valuable to kind of level set.

And you can in those situations, unpack the assumptions that different disciplines bring to the table. Because when you're working from a different set of assumptions, it's really hard to have a conversation that connects all the way.

APPELT: Interesting. Also that you are framing it some of that as humility, because I think humility is extremely important. But I think there's also some bravery and courage there, because it is intimidating to be the person to ask the question and to m point out the assumptions because often those assumptions are so entrenched that people can have a bit of a negative reaction when you ask the question, even though you're coming from a place of like, want to, you like you said, even the word decision or decision maker can be so differently interpreted.

So you might be asking a question that's like, what is a decision maker, which sounds like a really dumb question. But then you, like you said, you probe and you realize that For a planner, they're talking about a policymaker, whereas for a decision scientist, they might just be talking about Joe Cube Public, who's walking around making decisions. So I think it's like this interesting mix of being extremely humble, but also brave to ask the questions and to do things differently. That's one of the things I've really found is when you're being interdisciplinary, it's not necessarily walking down the well-trodden path.

My mom always loved the Robert Frost poem about, you know, the path less traveled. I think interdisciplinary work is in many ways that less traveled path. And so it means that you're having to figure things out and, like you said, put together your little village of collaborators. And so it's challenging work. But like you said, there's so many advantages and it's so rewarding.

Something else that I think is interesting in this spirit of being inter, is the idea that you're also working between levels because with the climate crisis, you already alluded to, there's individual behavior, group behavior, organizations, systems, and those are, set aside different acronyms and terminology, those are also just different ways of thinking. So how do you navigate working at those different levels?

COMPOSTO: Another banger of a question. I think that it is about being intentional with your scope. I am constantly switching between which level of the system I am studying. But when I'm learning, when I'm reading, when I am reading the news and academic literature, like when I am taking in information and work from other people, I'm casting a really, really broad net, because I want to understand how the entire system works, how the individual and the collective and the organization, all of those things really matter. And maybe there's a touch of humility in like knowing that psychology alone is not the answer.

Behavioral science alone is not the answer, but all of these things together really matter. And so when I'm taking in research and findings and just insights from others, I cast a really broad net. And then when I am designing research myself, I'm trying to get really specific. I think to do quality research, you have to have, clear, you know, in independent variable, dependent variable, you have to, you have to design clean experiments and interventions. So that's where the narrowing and the specificity really, really matters. And in

climate and maybe behavioral science, generally, in the last five years, we're really talking about the individual and systems frames.

And there's a lot of people kind of in that nebulous space between them and even just talking to colleagues, people are like, oh no, is everything a systems problem? Maybe, but also everything's an individual problem. Like carve out the specific piece that you're working on and continue to take in insights more broadly. That has been my strategy and it's mostly kept me pretty grounded, but it's a continual challenge and continual practice.

But I think actually the climate folks have been doing this for a really, really long time. And maybe behavioral science more broadly can kind of look to some of that science and think about how those folks are doing it. Because we're really practiced at the kind of interactions between ecological and social systems. And it can maybe be a bit of a model for the behavioral sciences more broadly.

APPELT: Yeah, absolutely. I also just love how your framing it because it's connecting some dots for me of there's always talk of is it this or that and then I almost always land on the side it's both it's an and not an or and I think in many ways since you and I are both more interdisciplinary we're just coming from an and mindset that it's so very rarely this, it's usually this and that and that and that and that, and so I think also with this talk of levels like you said things have so many different components so there's a lot of and. But that doesn't mean for any given project you can't focus in.

And I think sometimes people have this critique of like, well, if you're only looking at this, then you're ignoring all the other things. It's like, I'm only looking at this for this 10 minutes. I will look at other things also. But by focusing, you can do really powerful work that then you can plug into the other levels. So I love the idea of taking things in broadly, but then allowing yourself to focus and do good work on that piece, and then plug that piece back in.

COMPOSTO: Yeah, I think the plugging back in piece is like, I completely agree. I think the broad view, the specific work, it then allows you to plug back in in a really exciting way.

APPELT: So talking about interdisciplinary stuff and working across levels, one really obvious example of that is the work of the IPCC or Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to throw our first acronym into the podcast. You contributed to the 2022 IPCC report, which is so cool.

Can you tell us a little bit about what it was like to contribute to that report? What did you contribute? What was the process of collaborating in an environment like that with so many amazing people coming from so many disciplines and countries and yada yada? Lots of and in that. So what was that like?

COMPOSTO: I think maybe I should practice what I preach and explain a little bit about the IPCC more generally because again, we're in acronym land. You said it yourself, it's the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. It's part of the United Nations. It was founded in the late 1980s. The IPCC is tasked with a pretty lofty mission. The goal is to provide a comprehensive, objective report on the state of climate science. Period. Just summarize all of it. Exactly. With the intention then of informing governments in order to develop evidence-based climate policies.

Practically speaking, the IPCC brings together thousands of experts who volunteer their time and review all of the scientific research on climate, both on the impacts of climate change and on potential solutions. And this is a global group, right? So this is also working across every time zone in which people live. The collaboration part, the coordination part is crazy. There are years and years of planning meetings and negotiations to decide what even goes into an assessment report and kind of what the different chapters are. I worked on the sixth assessment report, which was published in 2022.

The sixth assessment report had three different working groups. The first focuses on or focused on the physical impacts or the physical science of climate change. The second working group on the impacts and kind of adaptation strategies, and the third, which is the group that I was in, focused on mitigation of climate change. Within that third working group or working group report, there are many chapters. And I was on-

APPELT: Can I just pause you to define mitigation for people? Because I think that's a term that people interpret differently.

COMPOSTO: Yes. Mitigation is strategies to prevent climate change. Thank you for the definition question. Yes, it is often the kind of prevention side. And I was in the demand side mitigation chapter, which means kind of anything consumer focused. So how do we reduce individual household level demand for energy? So the sixth assessment report was the first time that demand side solutions or anything individual or social science was really included in an IPCC report. Which was so exciting.

You know, like having behavioral science in there is a huge advancement and just an important acknowledgement of the importance of behavioral science. But, but it also meant that we were starting from level zero as far as assessing the literature. So my involvement, I think was pretty much born of that. When we're starting at zero, we need to pull in as many people as we can to to kind of get the ball rolling and review a ton of literature.

So I'm a contributing author, which means I was asked to review a pretty prescribed topic, and then it balloons and it's refined. Boots on the ground reading hundreds of papers and trying to categorize them. The work of the more senior authors is to kind of apply frameworks and synthesize literature. One of the main frameworks that was used across the entire chapter was the avoid, shift, improve framework, which is kind of a way of prioritizing different types of behavior change.

So in addition to reading hundreds of papers, I was trying to categorize the different behaviors that were being intervened on. There's a whole lovely set of challenges, but I worked on it in the summer of 2020. So what else are you going to do besides read? papers.

APPELT: Oh, I'm impressed it was only a summer because I can just that literature is massive. That must have just been Yeah. Eye crossingly computer screen time.

COMPOSTO: It was. Yes, it was a very intense summer. Some tail on some tail follow on and then another very intense summer. Yeah.

APPELT: That's a lot. So you did review all of it and you sorted it and summarize it. So what were some of the key takeaways? Were there any clear conclusions about what works to reduce household energy use and what doesn't?

COMPOSTO: I think that the main takeaways were more about how the science happens and how we are prioritizing what we choose to intervene on and how we choose to design our interventions. I think my main takeaway and what I am kind of speaking out to researchers and practitioners is that we need to match our effort to the potential impact of behavior change.

So maybe to come back to this avoid, shift, improve framework, it's a bit of a long walk, but I think it's a helpful framework to understand. It's a way of breaking down energy related behavior changes into three different categories. So the avoid behavior change reduces demand. So you prevent unnecessary energy use. For example, you don't take a flight if some trip is optional. You maybe don't do loads of laundry if you could perhaps re-wear clothes instead. So kind of wholesale reducing demand.

The shift behavior change moves people from a high impact technology to a low impact technology. So if I am thinking about how I heat my house using a heat pump, substitutes in a new, more efficient technology. So uses energy still has emissions associated with it, but it is a much more efficient way to get the same service.

And then the improve is kind of the lowest emissions impact, but is often the easiest. And that is focused on enhancing how people engage with existing technologies. So that might be washing your clothes on cold instead of hot water. So you still need to do stuff, but you're just changing how you engage with the existing technologies.

I think the framework is helpful because it helps to prioritize both behavior changes and intervention strategies. I think that for policymakers, there's certainly a cost effectiveness component there, but maybe for a behavioral scientist, we can just think a little bit more holistically about how we're asking people to change.

If we're thinking about laundry, for example, Asking people to just do less laundry is, that's a hard ask. And I think we have to, as a science, be really careful that we are not asking people to reduce their emissions exclusively by avoiding some critical or necessary behavior. Like necessary being like true necessary, but also for human comfort and quality of life. But if we take this avoid, shift, improve framework, we could say, okay, we want to avoid so we want to educate people on rewearing clothes and kind of how to rewear effectively, maybe we want people to improve their use of their existing technologies.

So using a cold water cycle instead of a hot water cycle. And when people are, if you own your washing machine, which as a renter, of course, I do not. But if you are replacing your washing machine, then we want you to engage in the shift behavior. So buy a more energy efficient washing machine. And I think that this framework for policymakers, for practitioners and for researchers can help us to really understand the more holistic behavior change system that we're asking for participants, for consumers, for individuals to engage in.

APPELT: That's very helpful to think through and. Is interesting because you can see how some of those could be easier and more difficult to measure, which might be why some of the research ends up being on some and not others. So now that you you you reviewed this literature in 2020, the report came out in 2022. Any kind of

updates on what you're seeing since that new insights or new results or just reflections? I have seen kind of maybe two pretty different responses, maybe not responses.

COMPOSTO: I've seen two different trends in the literature. The first is the introduction of mega studies where researchers are kind of putting all of the, quote unquote, best practice interventions from the literature. They're kind of putting them toe to toe in comparable experiments. I think it's a helpful way to kind of take some steps forward and say, okay, like in this kind of behavioral online context, because they're typically done online for something at scale.

This type of intervention works better. This type doesn't work quite as well. So I think there's something helpful. There's a helpful instinct there to kind of compare this really broad set of interventions that the field has come up with. So I think that there's like, there's some interesting stuff happening there. And maybe the other, the piece I hear at conferences more is that policymakers and practitioners, like they just want to see data from their constituents.

Like we have to keep our feet on the ground and understand and study behavioral interventions in context. It is, I think, really hard to convince a policymaker that your, you know, beautiful theoretical solution intervention that you totally you piloted, you studied. You had so many online studies. Had a nationally representative sample in five countries. And I well, does that work for my city?

Even if all of your statistics can put evidence behind your intervention, policymakers still really want to see evidence in context. And I think that those two trends are maybe pulling in opposite directions, but it's really important to keep both and to put value and importance, I think, behind both.

APPELT: There we go with another and. I like it. Yeah, I think that's really interesting because I think they also can serve really different purposes. Like the mega studies are amazing at allowing us to do more apples to apples comparisons. But then not everything is apples. So we also still, it's not like we want to get rid of the oranges and the bananas. We just, we need to compare them apples to apples, but then also still try things out and the other so.

It's really interesting to think more critically about what is serving which purpose and how we can meaningfully, like when is the time to do a mega study? When is the time to do a local study with real behavior and going back and forth between those, which is not easy to do and often requires different subsets of project teams for different skill sets and different timelines and different resourcing and so I can already guess a little bit about some of, at least some of your answer to this next question.

But usually when we review the literature, not only do we identify what's great that's been done, but also these gaps that we're like, there's really important gaps that we need to tackle. And I think the mega studies and the local on the ground work are both key pieces. But beyond that, what do you hope research stories tackle in the next five to 10 years?

COMPOSTO: Thank you so much. Let me get my soap box out. There are three things, and I've said this in maybe a few too many contexts at this point. The first is to look at combinations of interventions. So look at the combinations, systematically look at them in context, please. People, please do that research. There's a

bunch out there. There's good research out there, but that is going to be and solution sets that we actually put out into the world. So like, let's do the research.

Let's actually figure out how different intervention strategies come together. Then the other two are methodological because I am a data and methods person. There are far too many studies and maybe it's just a field-wide thing that just don't calculate the emissions impact of behavior change. If we are going to reduce global emissions, we need to actually start to do some accounting. And maybe that's unfair. People are starting to do that accounting, people do that accounting.

But in behavioral science, there is not a strong, comprehensive, like rigorous practice of actually accounting for the emissions reduction, the water saved, etc, etc, of the interventions that we are deploying. And, we want to think about this as um, not just a way to kind of put interventions against each other, but how do you actually put solutions in front of a decision maker? And you know, decision maker, policy maker, practitioner in this case, how do you put that? How do you put something in front of a policy maker without knowing the emissions impact?

If you're making the case that your incredible, you know, maybe default intervention is changing behavior with the purpose of addressing climate change, we need to do the extra work. And we need to pull in the collaborators to do high quality emissions reduction estimates. You'll note, I think it's a collaboration problem. Think we need more people working on this. It's a really, really tricky thing to do, which is why it's not done universally right now. If it was easy, everyone would do it. So I think we need collaborators.

So call the behavioral scientists and call to people that wanna work with us. Please help us do this better. And then the final thing is that we need to measure more outcomes. I think we need to measure a more holistic set, like equity related outcomes for these interventions, particularly around health and things like job growth even. Like if we're working on, for example, the energy transition, there are massive job implications with scaling down fossil fuel and scaling up renewables. If

that's where you're working, we need to figure out how to measure things better to get a realistic understanding of the equity implications, both short term and long term of the solutions and of the challenges that we're studying. I'm done with my soapbox.

APPELT: That is a very good agenda though. I love it. Also, I like it's something where it's really challenging, but I do feel like I'm seeing movements in the right directions. But I do think like you were saying, part of it is collaboration problem. And part of it is the when you do interdisciplinary work, different fields reward different things. So if you're publishing in a behavioral science journal, you have to talk about behavioral impact. There's not you have to talk about environmental impact. And if you're publishing somewhere else, you might get the opposite.

So it'd be nice that as the interdisciplinary work becomes more commonplace and as there's more applied work, because also applied work in behavioral science is is relatively newer compared to the long history of lab work. That maybe there'll be more push towards this. But it is definitely some of the stuff that has not been traditionally required or rewarded. Optimistic. See the changes out there, and I hope they become more commonplace. Because I think those are really powerful ideas as well.

So we've talked about some of the work you've done to look at the other literature, you're also generating your own literature with your own research. And I know a lot of your work is on the area of social norms. And maybe before we get into talking about the work, we should just define social norms, because I think that's a term that is often defined differently. And a lot of people actually say social norms when they mean something different within the social sphere. So can we just start by saying, you work on social norms. What does that mean to you?

COMPOSTO: Yes. So for my work, I define social norms as the as the shared expectations about how people in a group typically think or behave. These expectations guide individuals actions through social influence, through approval, and sometimes through sanctions. That's a pretty common social psychology definition. And in social psychology, at least, we typically divide norms into two types, maybe more categories, but I'll also give you more definitions.

So the first is descriptive norms, which describe what people commonly do, and injunctive norms, which describe what people approve or disapprove of. More recently, there's been some literature that introduces dynamic norms. So that describes changes in expectation and behaviors over time.

APPELT: Great. Well, with that in our back pockets, what do you do within the social norm space? Can you tell us a little bit about one or more of your research projects?

COMPOSTO: I think I'll tell you about one of my dissertation projects. So my dissertation research focused on the cognitive mechanisms of social norms. But simply put, I looked at how social norms influence outcomes. The emphasis is on how in that sentence. What's the process, not just what's the effect? First, I introduced a policy context. For example, expanding large scale solar farms. I gave participants information about the policy, just basic facts.

Then I assigned people to one of three conditions. They either received a piece of social norm information in support of the policy, social norm information against the policy, or a no information control. Next, I asked participants to tell me the thoughts that went through their mind as they evaluated whether they support or oppose the policy. So just the naturalistic thought listing paradigm. Finally, they reported their policy support.

And what I find is that social norms affect policy support by directing attention to the norm aligned thoughts first during the deliberation process. So I'll break that down a little bit. So participants that received the norm information that most people support, or many people support the solar policy, they first attended to or first thought about reasons why they also supported the solar policy.

But what was really interesting actually is that the norms didn't enter the thought process as facts or reasons in of themselves. So we didn't find that participants were like, oh, well, a lot of people support the policy, so I support the policy. What was happening in the thought listing is for folks that saw the support norm, they were listing reasons earlier and just first that were aligned with that norm.

So for example, well, one of the participants talked about job growth. So a solar farm is probably gonna create more jobs. So I think it's important to note that in this study, we also asked about skepticism related to the source of the norm information. So we live in a highly polarized political climate and we're talking about policy

here. And we found perhaps an unsurprising boundary condition, which is that when people were skeptical of the norm information that they received, we didn't see this norm effect.

So if you didn't kind of receive norm information as authentic, it didn't affect your thought process. There's an important takeaway for communicators. I communicators, when we're talking about climate policy, we need to sequence our strategies.

So first, build credibility before invoking norms. You can't just go in and kind of apply a norm intervention if you don't have credibility. Then pair community endorsement, so that norm information, with substantive factual information. And recognize that changing minds really requires changing the questions that people ask themselves. Well, this is at least what my study find. Norm information on its own does not change minds. It directs people's attention to the reasons that they already hold and that they've already picked up from other sources that are norm aligned.

APPELT: So many interesting pieces in there. And I think one of the things that I really like in there is the idea of establishing credibility, because I think that's also interesting in the way people use and misuse norms. People will say, well, like, we want more people to be doing this. So let's go ahead and say people are doing that.

But then that's actually going to multiply backfire because not only is it wrong, but then you're going to lose credibility, so then then later, if that does actually become the behavior, people won't be attending to what you're saying. So I think that's a really important piece is the credibility and then the norm information. So I really think that's a really powerful insight.

COMPOSTO: This is part of my work more broadly, but breaking down some of that kind of information environment into the different norm information and norm signals that people receive. Because I don't think in our everyday lives, we receive clear, unidirectional information about kind of anything. I'm never walking down the street and saying, oh, 98 % of people support yada yada.

You know, I'm seeing things on my phone and getting texts from people and you have so many different sources of information and all of those things together can aggregate to be your norm perception. But this is maybe the strength of psychology where we have the tools to of piece apart how those perceptions are constructed and changed.

APPELT: It's a great point about the realities of being in the world where you're getting different information from different sources and different subsets of sources and aggregating everything. Thinking of how we use social norms, how do you hope researchers and practitioners leverage them to make a difference for the climate crisis?

COMPOSTO: I think actually this maybe continues on from this conversation that we're having. I think that norms can be a really powerful kind of coalition building effort. A lot of behavioral interventions are, know, I have my behavioral tool and I apply it to a specific behavioral outcome I'm trying to get. So maybe defaults or information or feedback. I think norms actually can kind of exist in kind of a meta space where they can draw connections across all of those different things.

And because we're getting norm information from so many different sources all the time and the way that each individual understands the world is going to kind of filter and shape what we take on as norm information. I think that practitioners and policymakers can maybe use that kind of meta level dimension of social norms to to maybe make some sense of the really, I think a really rich intervention space, but I think that norms could kind of sit on top and kind of point us all or maybe help point in a in a single direction.

APPELT: I love that idea. Well, on this note of looking ahead and looking around, do you have a message for our BI practitioners in training, folks who are newer to the field, no matter what topic they're tackling?

COMPOSTO: Well, welcome to the field. I think we always need more people. And I think maybe two pieces of advice. First is to practice your interdisciplinary skill set. And remember that know, whatever your training is, if you're new to behavioral science, you have expertise in a space. And being new to a space doesn't diminish your expertise in your other space. Remember that, you know, you're wearing multiple hats, and kind of practice how you bring whatever your background is into behavioral science, because there's a lot of value. And I think as a field, we really like that. So practice your interdisciplinary skills.

And then the second is be careful with data. Get more data, do good data. I think that measuring behavior is an insanely complicated challenge because people are so complicated and to do quality field work where we study real behaviors in context, we need to work with so many different, so many different people and so many different systems. So whenever you are doing, know, BI out in the world, make sure your data is good and measuring what you think it's measuring. And it is always okay to have backup plan for a data set that maybe doesn't exist.

So yeah, think data skills, data literacy is a critical part of being a well-trained BI practitioner. Even I know a lot of people really struggle with data work and that can maybe be one of the intimidating parts of the space, but it is so, so, so worth it. And it's also very hard. So welcome, sympathies.

APPELT: That's great. Yeah, and I think one of the pieces about data is, I think it's really important not only with your own data, but anytime you're reading or being exposed to someone else's data, don't assume, going back to something we said at the very beginning around assumptions, don't assume that their data is good. Be critical. Think about it. Think about the source and how it was done and does it actually measure what they were saying?

I think, yeah, especially in our world where there's so much misinformation out there, if you can hone in on the data, it'll help you disentangle what's worth paying attention to and what's not. Well, any last thoughts? Any questions I should have asked and didn't or anything else you want to share?

COMPOSTO: I think I just want to pick back up on something you said. I think part of maybe the most exciting thing as a researcher and as somebody that is working on real world problems is when my work can or, you tries to plug back in to the larger challenge and the larger set of solutions. I think it takes a huge amount of effort for work to be plugged into the solution.

And I hope that we do not get complacent or just assume that because I wrote my paper or I wrote my report, my results are out there. The answer exists and I found it. And if you read my thing, you'll get it. Let's not

assume that. Let's give ourselves the time and the space to really engage in that translation and in plugging what we find into the system of solutions. It's, again, a huge challenge.

And I think there are people who have advanced training in how to do that translation. But as BI practitioners and researchers think that we should all know, give it give it some good solid effort to try and plug our work back in. It's so critical and it's how we address these collective societal challenges.

APPELT: Absolutely, we can't rest on if you build it, they'll come if you publish, they will read it. Not the space we want to be in. If like, yeah, I always think, you know, we do such amazing work, we don't want it to gather dust, we need to be part of actually plugging it back in, getting it, working with the people who need to know about it so that they can action it and so that we can support them actioning it. Well, good thing we have you as a postdoc to help tackle that very easy challenge. We'll get it done and dusted.

COMPOSTO: So easy. Appelt: Well, thank you so much. It's exciting to hear about some of work you've done. It's exciting to think about the work that we're getting to do and that you'll continue to do. And I know your work is going to, speaking of having real world impact, your work will be impactful in the real world. So I'm excited to get to work with you. I'm excited for folks to hear about your work. And thank you for doing the work and bringing all the disciplines and levels together to do the work. So thank you.

COMPOSTO: Thank you so much. As always, I learned so much just from talking with you. So thank you so much for your time.

APPELT: That's so nice of you. And thanks to our listeners for joining another episode of Calling DIBS.

Calling DIBS is recorded and edited on the traditional ancestral and unceded territory of the xwməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Səlílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil̓-Waututh) Nations. Calling DIBS is edited by Rishad Habib, Siobhan Cook, Isabella Jaramillo, Parnian Ashrafi, Kashish Khatri, Olin Becker, and Kirstin Appelt. Intro and outro music are excerpts from "resonance" by airtone (2020; http://ccmixter.Org/files/airtone/61321), licensed under Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial 3.0.