



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on September 18, 2015

Obama Decree Unleashes “Behavioral Science” Squad to “Nudge” You

Prepare to be “nudged” by Obama’s new “behavioral science” squads — for your own good, of course. Under the guise of better “serving” the American people through government, Obama signed an [executive order](#) this week calling for federal agencies and departments to deploy emerging “behavioral science” techniques against the public.



Among other goals, the expansion of federal mind manipulation is supposed to help more Americans access government welfare programs, take their “recommended” vaccines, supply more information about themselves to the federal government, and accelerate the transition toward what Obama called “a low-carbon economy.” The controversial decree, signed on September 15, explicitly seeks to use “behavioral science” to prod Americans — [or “nudge” them, as Obama’s “regulatory czar” Cass Sunstein put it](#) — into making “choices” that the White House considers desirable.

Obama celebrated his plan to manipulate the minds of Americans as a means to advance a dizzying array of his controversial agendas to fundamentally transform America. “Adopting the insights of behavioral science will help bring our government into the 21st century in a wide range of ways — from delivering services more efficiently and effectively; to accelerating the transition to a clean energy economy; to helping workers find better jobs, gain access to educational opportunity, and lead longer, healthier lives,” he was quoted as saying on the White House website. The order also establishes a Social and Behavioral Sciences Team charged with applying psychological research to manipulate the beliefs and behaviors of Americans under various pretexts, and guide the vast federal bureaucracy as it hones its abilities to manipulate the public. The [White House fact sheet](#) says the administration has already been conducting experiments on the public in its efforts to prod more Americans into joining ObamaCare and other deeply unpopular federal schemes.

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The plan to more effectively use psychological manipulation against the public will be led by none other than [John Holdren](#), Obama’s [forced abortion-touting “science czar,”](#) who formerly embraced *global-cooling* alarmism and predicted a billion deaths from a new ice age caused by human activity. Currently embroiled in [multiple scandals and lawsuits](#) surrounding his potentially unlawful use of a private e-mail account for official business and his statements blaming “*global warming*” for record *cold*, Holdren has



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perhaps one of the most troubling backgrounds of any top White House official. In his 1977 book *Ecoscience*, for instance, Holdren and his cohorts proposed drugging the food and water supply with sterilizing agents and creating a “planetary regime” with an armed force to control resources and the population, as well as advocating Communist China-style compulsory abortions and medical sterilization to deal with alleged overpopulation, and much more. Now he runs Obama’s White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, as well as the newly unveiled Social and Behavioral Sciences Team.

The first public information on Obama’s plan to use psychological operations to manipulate the American people [came in 2013, when a document](#) outlining the White House’s plans to create a “Behavioral Insights Team” and engage in “behavioral interventions” surfaced. The paper made clear that the purpose of manipulating the public was to “nudge” the U.S. population into thinking and behaving in ways that Obama officials deem best, on everything from sustainability and health to education and welfare. Similar schemes to manipulate the public by U.K. authorities, praised by the Obama document for helping to “further advance priorities of the British government,” had already come under fire. Separately, a planetary plot by the United Nations and Obama policy architect John Podesta for a “global partnership” to “[encourage everyone to alter their worldview, profoundly and dramatically](#)” also attracted criticism. In other words, even your *mind* is now in the government’s crosshairs.

Another Obama czar with totalitarian views, Cass Sunstein, appears to be the primary inspiration for the “nudge” agenda. The use of the word “nudge” in the 2013 behavioral science document provided a great deal of insight into the genesis of the schemes — and the real agenda. Indeed, the whole idea of having government “nudge” citizens to obey, believe, and love government came from Cass Sunstein, the Big Government extremist who co-authored *Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness*. Sunstein, who styles himself a “legal scholar” and now teaches law at Harvard, has faced intense criticism and ridicule for a variety of ideas that would turn American traditions of constitutional self-government on their head. Among them: pushing the notion that animals should have legal standing in the courts, advocating a plan to have taxpayer-funded skills engage in “cognitive infiltration” of groups authorities disagree with, and even proposing a government “ban” on “conspiracy theorizing.”

The British government already fields a forerunner of the U.S. psychological operations. And among other controversial schemes, U.K. authorities [employ armies of tax-funded Internet trolls](#) to encourage “conformity” and “obedience.”

And soon, U.S. nudge teams will be working to influence you and your family, too. Speaking at a White House forum on exploiting behavioral science this week, Sunstein proposed, as an example, automatically enrolling utility customers in expensive “clean”-energy programs unless they specifically take action to opt out, such as apparently has already been done in Germany. “You might worry that people are being tricked into green energy. And it is a little more expensive,” Sunstein was quoted as saying. “But people consciously knew, ‘It’s a little bit more expensive. It’s green energy. It’s OK by me.’” In Germany, precisely such a scheme resulted in more people paying additional money to receive so-called green energy, though the green energy is [dangerous, costly, and unreliable and is only available because crony capitalists are subsidized by government](#). A marvelous testament to the power of “nudging” indeed. After manipulating green energy usage, the sky is presumably the limit.

Obama’s latest executive order, dubbed “Using Behavioral Science Insights to Better Serve the American People,” claims that a “growing body of evidence” from psychology and behavioral economics can help design better government policies. “Where Federal policies have been designed to reflect



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behavioral science insights, they have substantially improved outcomes for the individuals, families, communities, and businesses those policies serve,” Obama claimed, ridiculously conflating coercive government policies with “service.”

Two examples are cited. The first is automatic enrollment and automatic escalation of retirement savings plans, suggesting the White House hopes to further restrict Americans’ choices to achieve its own objectives. The second example, streamlining federal applications for taxpayer-funded financial aid, suggests Obama intends to make more Americans reliant on the government and beholden to it.

To bring Americans on board with his agenda, first, federal departments and agencies are told to identify programs and policies where “behavioral science insights” might yield improvements in “public welfare” and “program outcomes.” Those bureaucracies are also supposed to develop “strategies for applying behavioral science insights to programs.” Additionally, federal bureaucracies should recruit as many “behavioral science experts” as needed to achieve the goals of Obama’s directive, the decree states. The sprawling federal bureaucracy is also commanded to strengthen relationships with the research community to better use the findings from behavioral sciences.

In implementing Obama’s imperial directives, federal bureaucracies “shall,” among other measures, identify opportunities to get more individuals, families, communities, and businesses dependent on tax-funded programs and benefits. Any processes that “limit or delay participation” in federal welfare programs, cronyism, and strings-attached funding should be streamlined.

Bureaucrats are also instructed to set “standards” for how information more generally is presented to consumers, borrowers, and “other individuals.” They are also charged with finding programs that offer “choices,” then “carefully consider[ing] how the presentation and structure of those choices, including the order, number, and arrangement of options, can most effectively promote public welfare.” The White House administration, of course, will determine what the “public welfare” is, and how to promote it most effectively by manipulating your choices.

Finally, the nudging is demanded in explicit language. All federal bureaucracies must “review elements of their policies and programs that are designed to encourage or make it easier for Americans to take specific actions, such as saving for retirement or completing education programs,” the executive order commands. “In doing so, agencies shall consider how the timing, frequency, presentation, and labeling of benefits, taxes, subsidies, and other incentives can more effectively and efficiently promote those actions, as appropriate. Particular attention should be paid to opportunities to use nonfinancial incentives.” In simpler terms, relying on “behavioral science” schemes, federal bureaucracies are being ordered to figure out how to make you make the “choices” the White House wants you to make, then implement it. If done successfully, most Americans will probably never even realize they were “nudged” by Obama’s behavioral science team into making the decisions they made.

“To more fully realize the benefits of behavioral insights and deliver better results at a lower cost for the American people, the Federal Government should design its policies and programs to reflect our best understanding of how people engage with, participate in, use, and respond to those policies and programs,” the executive order states before getting into all the things being decreed by Obama. “By improving the effectiveness and efficiency of Government, behavioral science insights can support a range of national priorities, including helping workers to find better jobs; enabling Americans to lead longer, healthier lives; improving access to educational opportunities and support for success in school; and accelerating the transition to a low-carbon economy.”



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Why Obama's priorities, misleadingly labeled "national priorities," are even worth pursuing — especially with the attendant loss of freedom and self-government, the cost, the opportunity costs, and the lack of any legal authority to pursue them — is never made clear. A "transition to a low-carbon economy," for instance, implies further unconstitutional government interference in what remains of the market. It also means drastically higher energy prices, [as Obama himself boasted](#), translating to higher prices for virtually everything — a policy that even Obama's top officials have acknowledged will hurt the poor the most. Under the guise of "enabling Americans to lead longer, healthier lives," meanwhile, swarms of federal bureaucrats could justify just about any assault on liberty, ranging from restrictions on the food people eat to the way they live their lives. But if enough behavioral science techniques are deployed, you will learn to love the priorities — and Big Brother as well.

All ages will fall under the government's spell: Likely to make sure the government's manipulation of the populace takes maximum effect, there's an education component of the psychological plan. Yet if Obama was truly interested in "success in school," he would not have [bribed state governments to impose the widely criticized, unconstitutional, dumbed-down "Common Core" standards that even members of the Common Core Validation Committee exposed as a farce](#).

Obama claims that the power to pass such an executive has been "vested" in him by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, but in reality, he usurped the power and there is no legitimate legal basis for his action.

Of course, the U.S. Constitution delegates all legislative powers to Congress — and none to the White House, whether for "behavioral science" to nudge Americans or anything else. Neither does the Constitution authorize the deployment of "behavioral sciences" to pursue unconstitutional "national priorities" established by the White House. The GOP-controlled Congress could still easily nip Obama's radical "nudge" agenda in the bud merely by not appropriating a single penny for it. And with the appropriations fight heating up, now would be an excellent time. Whether or not Republicans in Congress will rein in the out-of-control Obama administration, as they promised the American voters on the campaign trail, remains to be seen.

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