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Tiivistelmä-Referat-Abstract  <p>Social representations of climate change were examined among university students in three focus groups. The study is based on two different data sets: focus group interviews and the free-word association task. Altogether, 12 Finnish and international interviewees participated in the focus groups discussions and in the free-word association task. Word association procedures are a common method used in social representations research. This technique produces unfiltered, relatively context-free and spontaneous utterances thus providing a unique means to access and assess subjected meanings. Through this technique contents of social representations of climate change were identified. More than fifteen associations were generally accepted contents of climate change by the participants. The most mentioned associations include: natural disasters, politics of climate change, global warming and high emissions of CO<sub>2</sub>, environmental pollution, and renewable energy, greenhouse effect, developed vs. developing countries, sea level rising, Al Gore and melting glaciers among others.</p> <p>Focus group discussions usually provide an insight into the formation and change of social representations, beliefs, knowledge and ideologies that circulate in societies. The resulting material of focus groups is source of richness of ideas and interactions. The textual material was analyzed based on themes and content. These analyses indicates that social representations of climate change are composed of eight central themes: knowledge about climate change causes, effects of climate change, personal views and perceptions of climate change, the way in which the mass media reports/portrays climate change, proposed solutions, appreciations of modern human beings, and other global concerns related to climate change. Each theme was made of several topics that emerged during the focus group discussions.</p> <p>The central finding of the study is that social representations of climate change seem to exist among university students of Helsinki region Universities. There is a shared understanding of climate change among the participants, and the term has entered everyday life and is part of many people's daily conversation. Social representations make the unfamiliar familiar; it is from common experiences and memories that people draw the images, language, and gestures required to deal with the unfamiliarities that come along with uncertainties. People's reliance on the familiar as the preferred reference point is a universal phenomenon.</p>		
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