**Keeping it Stupid Simple: Heuristics**

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# *INTRODUCTION*

This paper will introduce and explain the ideology of heuristics and their properties as well as include an example of each. *Heuristics* are shortcuts in the brain that allow a decision, judgement, or assessment to be made quicker, regardless of accuracy (Branscombe & Baron, 2016). This is a mechanism implemented by the brain to prevent *information overload*, keeping our brains as efficient as possible. This mechanism is especially relevant regarding *conditions of uncertainty* — conditions where the answer is difficult to know or would take great effort to come to a conclusion.

## *REPRESESENTATIVENESS HEURISTIC*

Representative heuristics is when an assessment is made about a person based on how much they resemble a certain group. Each member would belong to a certain group, each group would have a *prototype*— a collective of attributes that create a certain personality or similarities between a group of people (Branscombe & Baron, 2016).

A decent example of representative heuristics is the gay man stereotype, in which if a male is in tune with his feminine side, speaks with a certain tone or is more understanding of the female emotion— he is stereotyped as homosexual, when it is very possible that he is in fact heterosexual. Another instance of grouping people into the LGBT+ stereotype would be assuming a naturally feminine female to be straight when they could be of any orientation. This heuristic can be useful and incredibly damaging at the same time.

The use of this heuristic can often lead to incorrect inferences by ignoring *base rates* — which is how often an event or pattern occurs (Barnscombe & Baron, 2016). This can drastically change the outcome of an assessment and the statistical properties of how often or likely a persons’ prototypes are accurate.

*AVAILABILITY HEURISTIC*

Availability heuristics is when an assessment is made about the frequency of which an event happens based on how often it can be brought to mind.

A stellar example of the availability heuristic is the rise of police shooting reports since the start of the Black Lives Matter Protests. Before, members of the community could ignore the problem due to not having accurate or readily available. These instances are harder to discount due to video recording of said occurrences. This is an example of availability heuristics because many constituents of the United States of America did not believe that police brutality was as much as an issue as it actually is.

The use of this heuristic can often lead to incorrect inferences by relating judgements of ourselves to others, meaning using the mechanism can lead us to overdramatizing or under-dramatizing the assessment.

ANCHORING AND ADJUSTMENT HEURSTIC

Anchoring and Adjustment heuristics is when someone uses information they’ve been given to make an assumption or assessment about how something will play out with the information given at the beginning of the assessment.

Example: being told that someone has a bad attitude, and thinking someone has a bad attitude no matter what

The use of this heuristic can often lead to incorrect inferences by assuming something is correct simply due to the fact that a person started with that understanding or assessment. This could also interfere with acquiring more factual data on collective realities.

**STATUS QUO HEURSITIC**

The Status Quo heuristic is when someone believes something, or someone is superior or more reliable because it has been used or around longer than the other.

Example: democratic/republican voters not voting 3rd party.

The use of this heuristic can often lead to incorrect inferences by refusing to take risks, or assuming that one action is safer or easier than the other. This also interferes with the possibility of progression as a society.

References

Branscombe, N., Baron, R. (2016). Social Psychology. *Pearson*. Retrieved from <https://revel-ise.pearson.com/courses/5f465fb6c19f9c001afd2067/contents>