



Oluwakemi Izomo

Mitigation and Adaptation Studies



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Class 19: Decision-Making: Human Nature

Contents

- Decisions and Human Nature: Behavioral Economics
- Biases
- Overcoming Biases
- Fast and Slow Thinking



Ethics, value systems, norms

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Civilization on a Crash Course? Imperialism, Subimperialism and the Political-Ecological Breaking Point of the Modern/Colonial World-System

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Modern/colonial civilization has already breached several planetary boundaries and its ecological footprint is overwhelming the Earth's carrying capacity. The ecological space for the growth of modern urban civilization is at its breaking point. We conduct two case studies, of Russia and Brazil, to show that the aspirations of semi-peripheral "emerging economies" to catch-up, clone and compete with the West within the hegemonic terms of an ecologically unsustainable and socially stratifying civilizational model requires their systematic practice of internal colonialism and regional subimperialism. Playing catch-up with the North and its unsustainable mode of political economy demands the present-day rehearsal, in accelerated, compressed and subimperial modes of the structurally violent practices that have underpinned the North's "rise" to planetary dominance. Yet in striving to catch-up and join in the overconsumptive and exploitative lifestyle of economic cores, large "emerging economies" like the BRICS are in an economic, political and military crash course against the hegemonically-entrenched Northern core powers they aspire to emulate, in what looks like an increasingly volatile scramble to grab whatever dwindling ecological space is left in a rapidly degraded planet.



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SPRINGER BRIEFS IN PUBLIC HEALTH · ETHICS

Travis N. Rieder

Toward a Small Family Ethic

How Overpopulation and Climate Change Are Affecting the Morality of Procreation

 Springer

years. Our population is growing so fast that anyone alive today who was born prior to the mid-1960s has seen the population *double*.¹ In other words: we humans have made a lot of people very quickly. The concern that will occupy me in the rest of this short book is that we now have very good evidence that we made too many.

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quickly enough. We are on track to be at nine or ten billion by 2050,³ and so a question that gets asked a lot is whether the earth can sustain a population of ten billion people. However, the answer to that question is, in one sense, unequivocally 'yes'. If those ten billion people renounce all unnecessary greenhouse gas-producing activities, turn to a sustainable vegetarian diet, and live simple lives, then there is no reason to think that the world cannot support a population of ten billion. Call this fictional version of our future **Modest World**.

On the other hand, we might think both that such a conversion by the world's wealthy is unlikely, and that we have a duty of justice to pull some of the world's poorest people out of poverty, increasing their resource consumption. Can the earth support a population of ten billion people, some of whom are fantastically well-off, and the rest of whom are living decent lives? Let's call this case **Excess World**.

Finally, we can even consider what is likely to be the *actual* constitution of a population of ten billion people: a population much like ours, only bigger. Such a population has some fantastically wealthy people, who consume a vast majority of the planet's resources, and then very, very many poorer people, who live modest or desperate lives, and who consume far fewer resources. Perhaps this is the population that, as a matter of realism, we ought to be most concerned with, so let's call this one **Real World**. Can the earth sustain this version of our future selves?

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1.5 Conclusion: The Population Crisis is a Public Health Emergency

The main lessons of this first chapter are (1) that population is a major driver of climate change, in addition to raising concerns about other limited resources; and (2) that climate change is a morally urgent problem. As a result, it seems appropriate to say that we have a *population crisis*—that the size of our population generates a problem that is massive in scale and dire in consequence.

The final observation that I want to make here, then, is that the population crisis presents us with a particular kind of threat—namely, one in ‘public health’. A failure to mitigate climate change is a failure to adequately protect the well-being of the population as a whole, albeit while allowing disproportionate harm to the poor and the weak. But who, exactly, fails the population? Who is responsible for the harms of climate change? It is difficult to say, but whatever the answer is, it

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occupy us for the rest of this book. Although no one of us can solve the population crisis, we all make decisions relevant to making the problem better or worse—that is, we all make procreative decisions. Must I, then, refrain from procreating? Or should I at least refrain from creating *too many* people? What kind of responsibility is it plausible to say that I individually inherit as a result of a public health emergency? Is it possible that I have a *duty* or *obligation* not to procreate?

close to this suggestion is true. We have, I think, something that we can call a ‘moral burden’ concerning our procreative choices, and this leads me to what I call a *small family ethic*.

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Significant Difference : If the consequences of an act make no significant difference to the extent or severity of a moral problem, then the agent is not morally required to refrain from acting in light of the moral problem.

Another comparison to help us see the fairly radical effect that procreation has on one's emissions is by comparing it to one's lifetime, non-procreative emissions. According to Murtaugh and Schlax's calculations, the fact of carbon legacy—that is, the fact that one's children will go on to live and emit, and perhaps procreate themselves—results in the rather strange implication that the activity of having a child raises one's lifetime carbon emissions *by several times*. In particular, on the same constant-emissions scenario, **each child that an individual has adds about 9441 metric tons of carbon dioxide to her carbon footprint , which is 5.7 times the lifetime average emissions of an American's non-procreative activities (2009, p. 14).**

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Principles in favor of limiting procreation :

- Duty not to contribute to harm - not to contribute to massive, systemic harm
- Duty to justice
- Obligation to our potential children

Jeff McMahon 1981):

The Asymmetry: Although the prospect of pain and suffering in the life of a child provides one with reason not to create that child, the prospect of happiness in the life of a child provides one with no reason to create that child.

Rieder, Travis N.. Toward a Small Family Ethic: How Overpopulation and Climate Change Are Affecting the Morality of Procreation (SpringerBriefs in Public Health) (Kindle Locations 952-953). Springer International Publishing. Kindle Edition.

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We are left, I think, with a moral burden to have small families. The powerful reasons in favor of limiting procreation generate a demand for justification; if one fails to meet this demand, then her procreative activity is morally unjustifiable. And meeting this demand, I think, becomes progressively more difficult as one has more children. Given the moral burden to have small families, having any children at all may well be unjustifiable for many people; for some of the rest of us, the case for having one child seems fairly compelling. Might some people be justified in having more than one? Perhaps. But the burden is on them to make the case. Morality has more in its arsenal than merely obligation, duty and rights; reasons can burden us, and acting justifiably looks, to me, to pressure us towards small families.

Rieder, Travis N.. *Toward a Small Family Ethic: How Overpopulation and Climate Change Are Affecting the Morality of Procreation* (SpringerBriefs in Public Health) (Kindle Locations 1752-1758). Springer International Publishing. Kindle Edition.

Social and Political Context

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How do humans make decisions?



Posted by [Prof. Hans-Peter Plag, PhD](#) on June 1, 2013 in [Columns](#), [On the Edge](#), [Summer 2013](#)



When a few people die because of a new variety of bird or swine flu emerging somewhere on the globe, the global community reacts with immediate alert and takes measures to avoid certain plausible trajectories. We are worried because we have experienced the severe impacts of global flu pandemics and still remember the

Latest Tweets

Ubisense launches myWorld 4, with new

Decisions and Human Nature

Behavioral economics studies the effects of [psychological](#), social, [cognitive](#), and emotional factors on the [economic decisions](#) of individuals and institutions and the consequences for [market prices](#), [returns](#), and [resource allocation](#), although not always that narrowly, but also more generally, of the impact of different kinds of behavior, in different environments of varying experimental values.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Behavioral_economics

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THE BEHAVIORAL ECONOMICS OF DECISION MAKING

Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky introduced the idea of cognitive biases, and their impact on decision making, in 1974. Their research and ideas were recognized when Kahneman was awarded a Nobel Prize in economics in 2002. These biases, and behavioral psychology generally, have since captured the imagination of business experts.

Some notable popular books on this topic:

Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness by Richard H. Thaler and Cass R. Sunstein (Caravan, 2008)

Think Twice: Harnessing the Power of Counterintuition by Michael J. Mauboussin (Harvard Business Review Press, 2009)

Think Again: Why Good Leaders Make Bad Decisions and How to Keep It from Happening to You by Sydney Finkelstein, Jo Whitehead, and Andrew Campbell (Harvard Business Review Press, 2009)

Predictably Irrational: The Hidden Forces That Shape Our Decisions by Dan Ariely (HarperCollins, 2008)

Thinking, Fast and Slow by Daniel Kahneman (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, forthcoming in 2011)

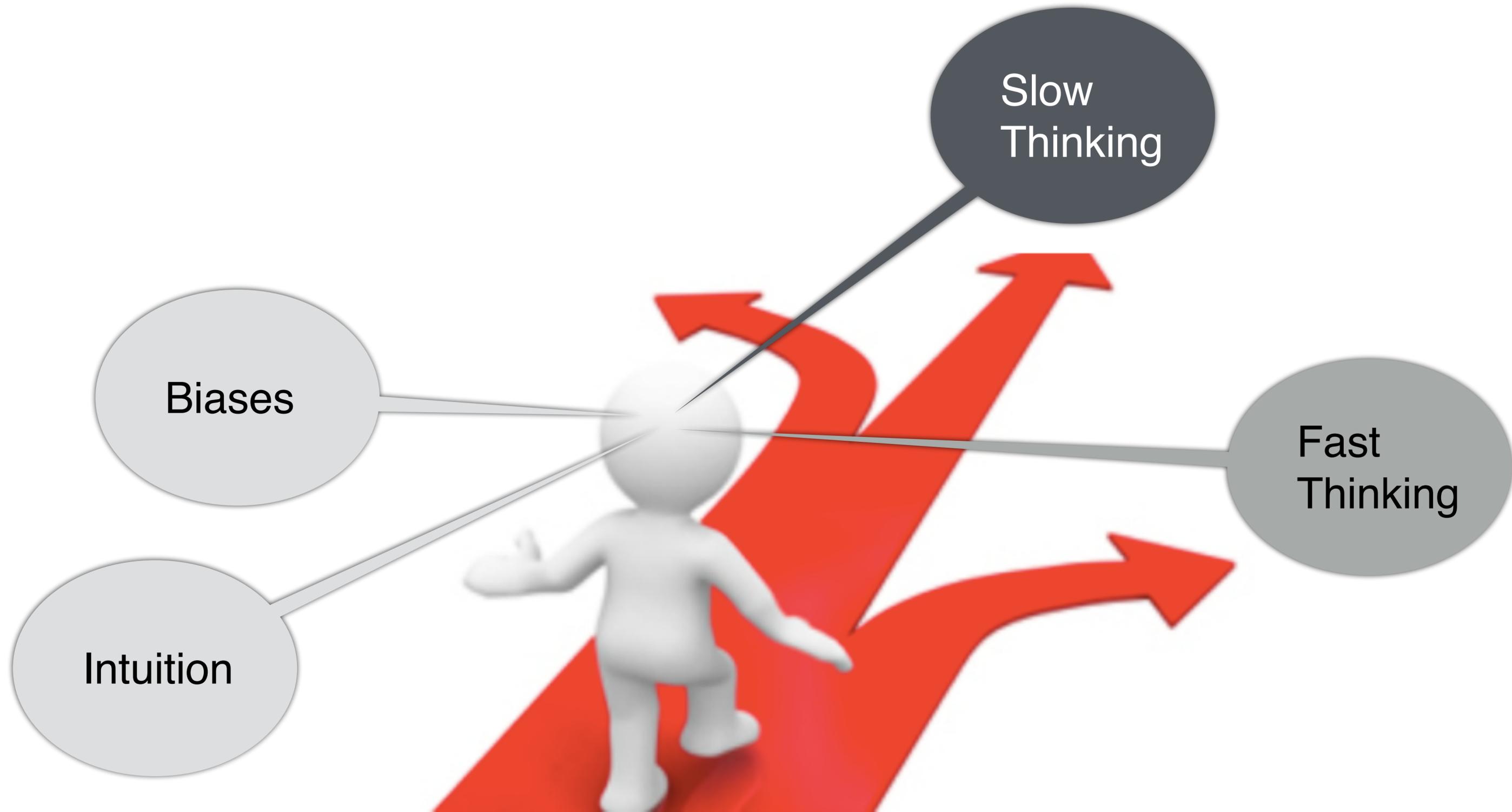


Credit: Impact Hub Network/Flickr under Creative Commons license









20 cognitive biases that screw up your decisions

Samantha Lee and Shana Lebowitz

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You make thousands of rational decisions every day — or so you think.

From what you'll eat throughout the day to whether you should make a big career move, research suggests that there are a number of cognitive stumbling blocks that affect your behavior, and they can prevent you from acting in your own best interests.

Here, we've rounded up the most common biases that screw up our decision-making.

20 COGNITIVE BIASES THAT SCREW UP YOUR DECISIONS

1. Anchoring bias.

People are **over-reliant** on the first piece of information they hear. In a salary negotiation, whoever makes the first offer establishes a range of reasonable possibilities in each person's mind.



2. Availability heuristic.

People **overestimate the importance** of information that is available to them. A person might argue that smoking is not unhealthy because they know someone who lived to 100 and smoked three packs a day.



3. Bandwagon effect.

The probability of one person adopting a belief increases based on the number of people who hold that belief. This is a powerful form of **groupthink** and is reason why meetings are often unproductive.



4. Blind-spot bias.

Failing to recognize your own cognitive biases is a bias in itself. People notice cognitive and motivational biases much more in others than in themselves.



5. Choice-supportive bias.

When you choose something, you tend to feel positive about it, even if that **choice has flaws**. Like how you think your dog is awesome – even if it bites people every once in a while.



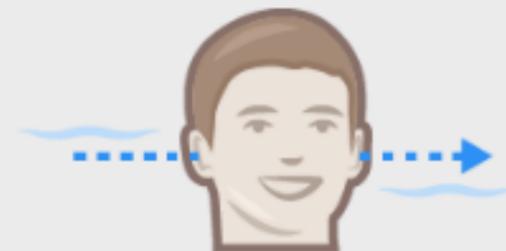
6. Clustering illusion.

This is the tendency to **see patterns in random events**. It is key to various gambling fallacies, like the idea that red is more or less likely to turn up on a roulette table after a string of reds.



7. Confirmation bias.

We tend to listen only to information that confirms our **preconceptions** – one of the many reasons it's so hard to have an intelligent conversation about climate change.



8. Conservatism bias.

Where people favor prior evidence over new evidence or information that has emerged. People were **slow to accept** that the Earth was round because they maintained their earlier understanding that the planet was flat.



9. Information bias.

The tendency to **seek information when it does not affect action**. More information is not always better. With less information, people can often make more accurate predictions.



10. Ostrich effect.

The decision to **ignore dangerous or negative information** by "burying" one's head in the sand, like an ostrich. Research suggests that investors check the value of their holdings significantly less often during bad markets.



11. Outcome bias.

Judging a decision based on the **outcome** – rather than how exactly the decision was made in the moment. Just because you won a lot in Vegas doesn't mean gambling your money was a smart decision.



12. Overconfidence.

Some of us are **too confident about our abilities**, and this causes us to take greater risks in our daily lives. Experts are more prone to this bias than laypeople, since they are more convinced that they are right.



13. Placebo effect.

When **simply believing** that something will have a certain effect on you causes it to have that effect. In medicine, people given fake pills often experience the same physiological effects as people given the real thing.



14. Pro-innovation bias.

When a proponent of an innovation tends to **overvalue its usefulness** and undervalue its limitations. Sound familiar, Silicon Valley?



15. Recency.

The tendency to weigh the **latest information** more heavily than older data. Investors often think the market will always look the way it looks today and make unwise decisions.



16. Salience.

Our tendency to focus on the **most easily recognizable features** of a person or concept. When you think about dying, you might worry about being mauled by a lion, as opposed to what is statistically more likely, like dying in a car accident.



17. Selective perception.

Allowing our expectations to **influence how we perceive** the world. An experiment involving a football game between students from two universities showed that one team saw the opposing team commit more infractions.



18. Stereotyping.

Expecting a group or person to have certain qualities without having real information about the person. It allows us to quickly identify strangers as friends or enemies, but people tend to **overuse and abuse** it.



19. Survivorship bias.

An error that comes from focusing only on surviving examples, causing us to **misjudge a situation**. For instance, we might think that being an entrepreneur is easy because we haven't heard of all those who failed.



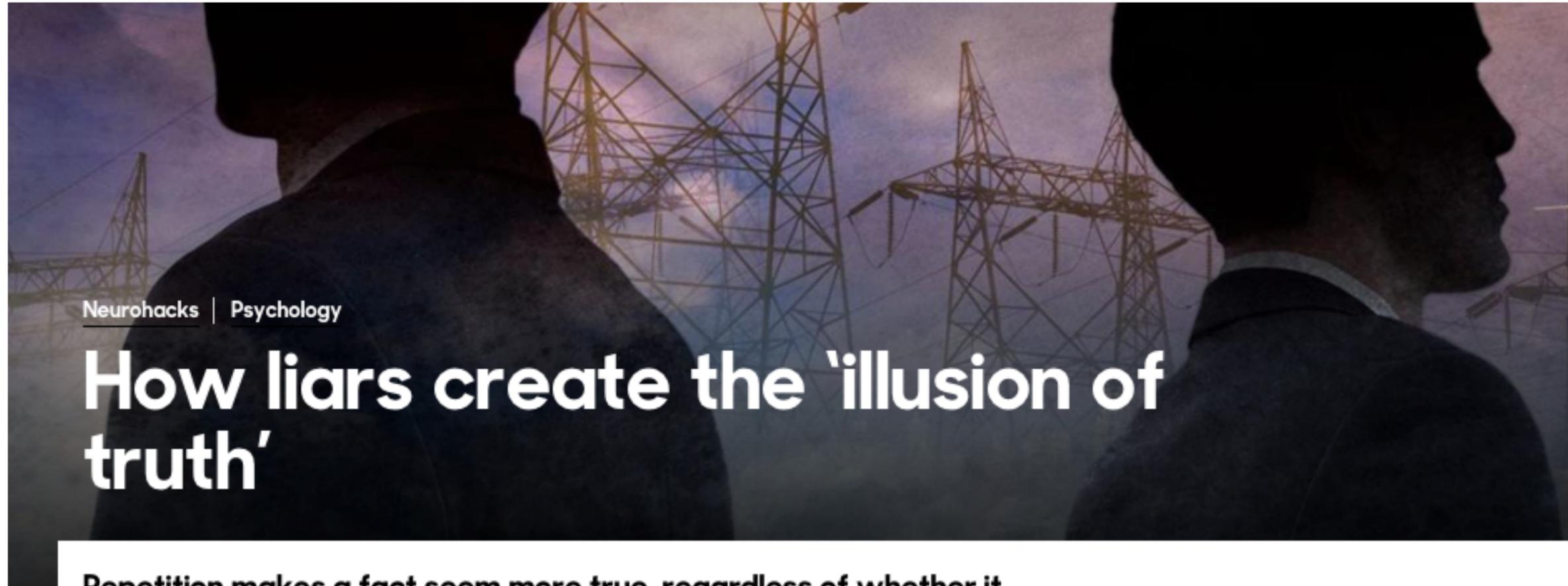
20. Zero-risk bias.

Sociologists have found that **we love certainty** – even if it's counterproductive. Eliminating risk entirely means there is no chance of harm being caused.



SOURCES: Brain Biases; Ethics Unwrapped; Explorable; Harvard Magazine; HowStuffWorks; LearnVest; Outcome bias in decision evaluation, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology; Psychology Today; The Bias Blind Spot: Perceptions of Bias in Self Versus Others, Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin; The Cognitive Effects of Mass Communication, Theory and Research in Mass Communications; The less-is-more effect: Predictions and tests, Judgment and Decision Making; The New York Times; The Wall Street Journal; Wikipedia; You Are Not So Smart; ZhurnalyWiki

BUSINESS INSIDER



Neurohacks | Psychology

How liars create the 'illusion of truth'

Repetition makes a fact seem more true, regardless of whether it is or not. Understanding this effect can help you avoid falling for propaganda, says psychologist Tom Stafford.

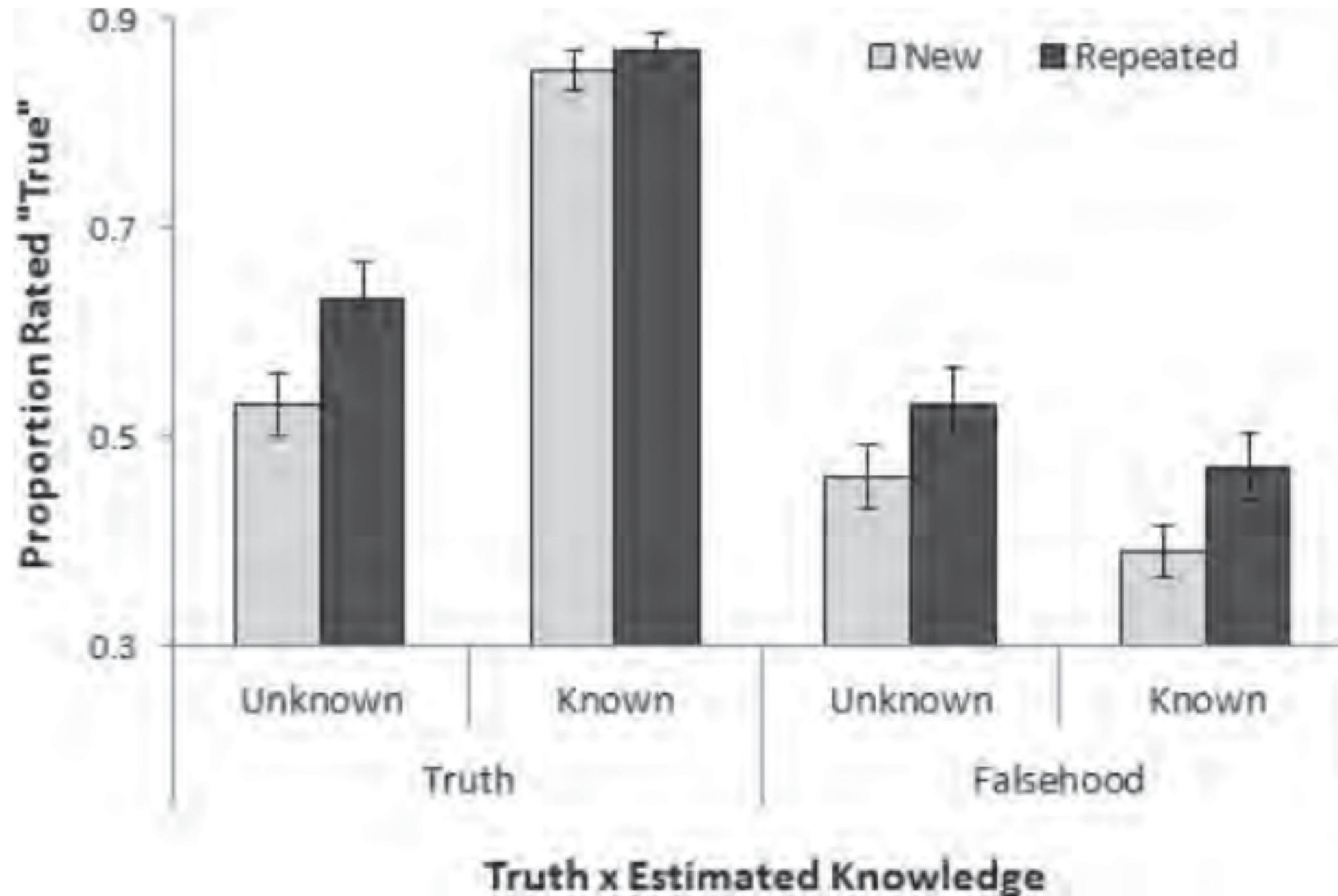


By Tom Stafford
26 October 2016





“Repeat a lie often enough and it becomes the truth”, is a law of propaganda often attributed to the Nazi Joseph Goebbels.



of truth effect interacts and un-true statements, the Pacific Ocean is the and "The Atlantic w the actual truth).

sound more believable

ement was judged to be true without repetition, people

ower to make things sound

Figure 4. Proportion of statements rated "true" as a function of repetition, truth, and norm-based estimates of knowledge (Experiment 2). Error bars reflect standard error of the mean.

Creating the 'Illusion of Truth'



The illusion of truth is not inevitable – when armed with knowledge, we can resist it

If repetition was the only thing that influenced what we believed we'd be in trouble, but it isn't. We can all bring to bear more extensive powers of reasoning, but we need to recognise they are a limited resource. Our minds are prey to the illusion of truth effect because our instinct is to use shortcuts in judging how plausible something is. Often this works. Sometimes it is misleading.

Once we know about the effect we can guard against it. Part of this is double-checking why we believe what we do – if something sounds plausible is it because it really is true, or have we just been told that repeatedly? This is why scholars are so mad about providing references - so we can track the origin on any claim, rather than having to take it on faith.

But part of guarding against the illusion is the obligation it puts on us to stop repeating falsehoods. We live in a world where the facts matter, and should matter. If you repeat things without bothering to check if they are true, you are helping to make a world where lies and truth are easier to confuse. So, please, think before you repeat.