

Class Activity: Survivorship Bias and Narrative Bias

1. **Good old days.** A common saying we frequently hear is: “They don’t make them anymore like they used to.” This phrase is often used to describe older goods like furniture, houses, songs, cars, merchandises, or equipment, implying that products from the past were of higher quality than those made today. How might this statement reflect survivorship bias?
2. **“Before and After” Transformation Photos.** Fitness magazines, social media influencers, and gym advertisements are full of “before and after” transformation photos showing incredible results — people who have lost huge amounts of weight or built impressive muscle mass in a short period of time. These stories often highlight how the individual followed a specific workout routine or diet, implying that anyone who follows the same plan are likely achieve similar results. How does survivorship bias play a role in the perception of these fitness transformation stories?
3. **Mundane daily stories.** Consider the rationalization that occurs when something bad happens, say getting stuck in traffic. It’s common for people come up with a story that explains why they were stuck in traffic. For example, “If I left 5 minutes earlier, I wouldn’t be stuck in traffic,” or “I didn’t check the traffic report before leaving the house.” Explain how this is an example of narrative bias as discussed in the class lecture.
4. **Politics.** How does narrative bias play a role in the way politicians shape their campaign narratives? What critical realities or complexities might be ignored when politicians present themselves as the ideal leader and their opponents as flawed? Draw instances from how sensitive issues like immigration, economy, and healthcare are talked about in an election campaign.