M7 Assignment: Thinking and Intelligence

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Two biases in this chapter that I felt I could relate to were anchoring bias and representative bias. Anchoring bias can be described as the habit of focusing on a singular piece of information when trying to make a decision. Anchoring bias is like someone has an algorithm and is completing their task by following instructions they cannot deviate from. A general example might be for lunch, you only want to go somewhere that sells burgers, however, in your town there is a restaurant that sells the best pizzas in the state. Representative bias occurs when you include a stereotype in your decision-making process. For example, someone with a representative bias might assume that someone wearing a well-fitted suit is rich. The representative bias is similar to an event schema, as you are reacting to the event the same way each time.

I have personally shown examples of anchoring and representative bias in my life. Recently at work, I had set up a laser cutter for our processing department. We recently purchased a CNC rotary engraver that I was responsible for doing the testing and setup on (as part of the IT department, we are responsible for any technology that our end-users interact with) this new machine. I rushed through the instructions and started the machine. I figured with my previous experience with the laser cutter I was doing the right steps. Well, the machine turns, cuts right through the plastic, and begins cutting the aluminum table. There is now a small circle engraved into the table. In this example, I showed anchoring bias due to my mental set and wanting to get the project complete, I overlooked making sure I knew how the machine worked.

I have also shown examples of representative bias in my daily life. I do this in many small ways, such as when I see someone driving fast and recklessly, I get upset and assume they are just a jerk. While they are probably jerks, I have switched my thinking that they just have somewhere they need to be. I have incorrectly assumed that all the engineers at my work understand electricity, as they create wire drawings, however, some of them are closer to technicians than engineers, even though their job title shows them as engineers. Again, representative bias can be described as applying an overgeneralization to a group of people, also known as a stereotype.