

Thinking about Social Phenomena

Constructing Puzzles



Lecture dt. March 23, 2020

Timeline, amended

- March 12, Thu: Submit your puzzle and proposal
- ~~• March 16, Mon: Research methods~~
- ~~• March 26, Thu: office appointments, group-wise~~
- March 30, Thu: Draft of puzzle (incl. methods), 1,200 w.
- April 13, Thu: Project presentation online, invite comments
- Submission deadline TBC
- April 20: End sem exams begin (as of now)

Collective action during a health crisis

Is healthcare a public good?

Public goods

- non-excludable: cannot prevent non-contributors from enjoying benefits of the good or service
- non-rivalrous: once consumed, its supply does not diminish (non-depletable)

No: you pay more, you get access to better facilities

Yes: legally or morally, you cannot be denied healthcare—especially in a crisis

Collective action during a health crisis

Challenges in the current health crisis

How to prevent contagion?

Free-riding behaviour

- Non-contagious diseases: individual decisions do not affect the community
- Contagious diseases: choosing risk behaviours because 'nothing is wrong with me' or 'I don't care'

Collective action during a health crisis

Why do some people free-ride (in this case)?

- Ignorance or compulsion
- Decision dilemmas because of high uncertainty:
 - extent of the problem?
 - what are others doing?
 - larger the group, higher the uncertainty

Collective action during a health crisis

Why do some people cooperate?

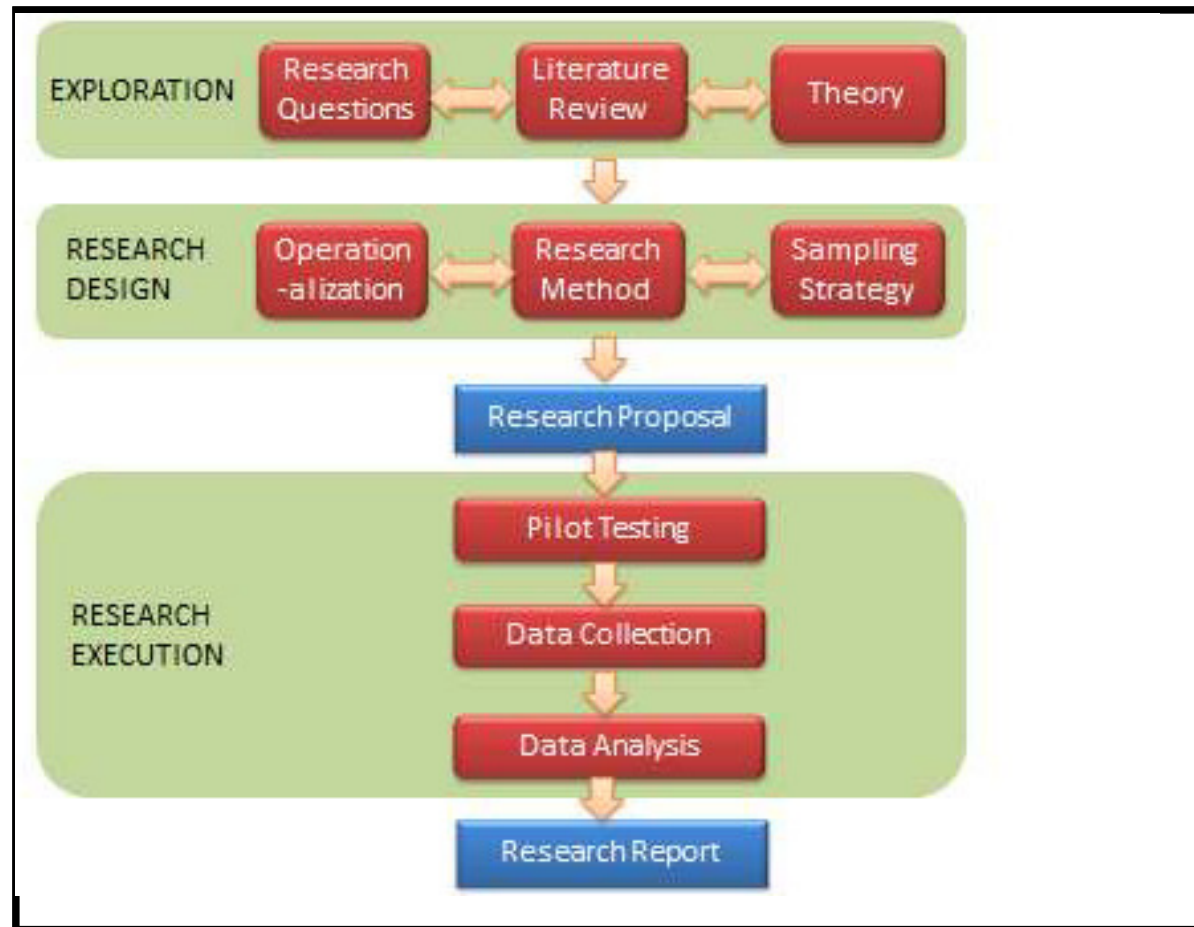
- Norms: altruism (moral); conditional cooperation (quasi-moral)
- Monitoring and sanctioning: informal, i.e. shaming or formal, i.e. fines

Collective action during a health crisis

Uncertainty and cognitive heuristics in decision-making

- Heuristics = rule-of-thumb or mental shortcuts
- 'Availability heuristic' based on specific examples from recent memory, e.g. My friend got infected; one person in my neighbourhood infected
- 'Representativeness heuristic' based on generalizations or prototypes. Gambler's fallacy. If one viral disease can be treated by X, so will Covid-19

Setting up the research project



Bhattacharjee, A. 2012

Why should we follow methods and report them?

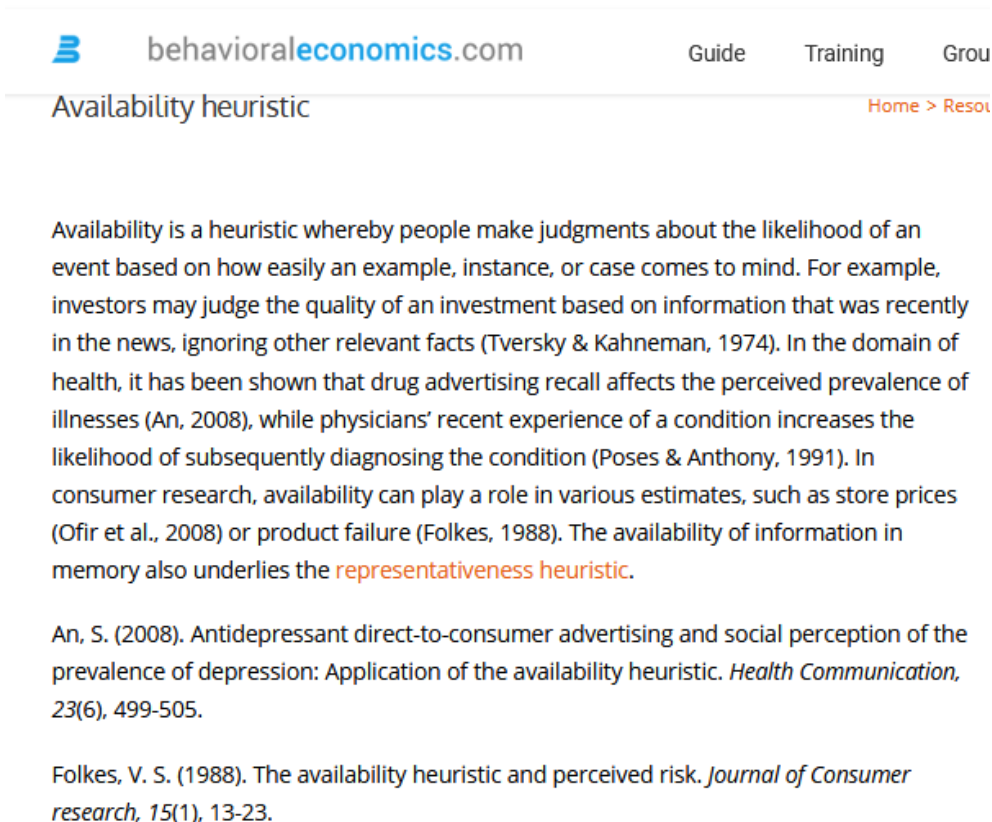
Because the goal of scientific research, incl. social science, is

- Producing valid inferences, descriptive or causal (to avoid 'folk psychology')
- Inferences are uncertain → uncertainty, *falsifiability*, and critical thinking are central to research
- Value-neutrality impossible, yet does not discount obligatory measures to improve data quality

Literature review: a quick review

- Purpose: to assess theoretical frameworks, methodologies, questions addressed and questions not addressed but researchable
- Is it peer-reviewed?
- Find literature using key terms from your subject
- Look for literature which uses falsifiable theories and evidence
- Other forms of familiarising, e.g. consultation with key groups or experts

Literature review: a quick review



The screenshot shows the website behavioraleconomics.com. The page title is 'Availability heuristic'. The breadcrumb trail is 'Home > Resources'. The main text explains that availability is a heuristic where people make judgments about the likelihood of an event based on how easily an example, instance, or case comes to mind. It provides examples from investment, health, and consumer research. Two references are listed at the bottom: An, S. (2008) and Folkes, V. S. (1988).

behavioraleconomics.com Guide Training Groups

Availability heuristic Home > Resources

Availability is a heuristic whereby people make judgments about the likelihood of an event based on how easily an example, instance, or case comes to mind. For example, investors may judge the quality of an investment based on information that was recently in the news, ignoring other relevant facts (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). In the domain of health, it has been shown that drug advertising recall affects the perceived prevalence of illnesses (An, 2008), while physicians' recent experience of a condition increases the likelihood of subsequently diagnosing the condition (Poses & Anthony, 1991). In consumer research, availability can play a role in various estimates, such as store prices (Ofir et al., 2008) or product failure (Folkes, 1988). The availability of information in memory also underlies the [representativeness heuristic](#).

An, S. (2008). Antidepressant direct-to-consumer advertising and social perception of the prevalence of depression: Application of the availability heuristic. *Health Communication*, 23(6), 499-505.

Folkes, V. S. (1988). The availability heuristic and perceived risk. *Journal of Consumer research*, 15(1), 13-23.

- Go to a reliable repository like JSTOR:
<https://www.jstor.org/>
- Look for 'heuristic' or 'availability heuristic'
- Can you access the journal via IIIT?
- If not, write to the author, requesting the paper

Readings

- King, G., R.O. Keohane and S. Verba 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. [Introduction is compulsory reading for everyone]
- Lubet, S. 2017. *Interrogating Ethnography: Why Evidence Matters?* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Tversky, A. and D. Kahneman 1974. 'Judgment under uncertainty: Heuristics and biases', *Science* 185:1124-31.