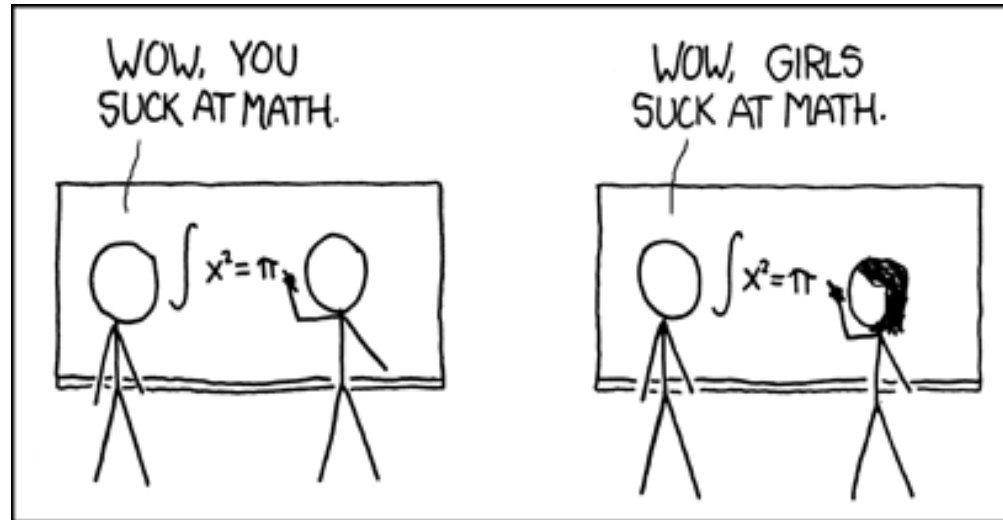

Unconscious bias and stress



Elizabeth Wynn
She/her
23/4/2020

Unconscious bias

- A stereotype about a certain group
- Unconscious and automatic process
- Reflects the associations we learn from the culture we grow up in



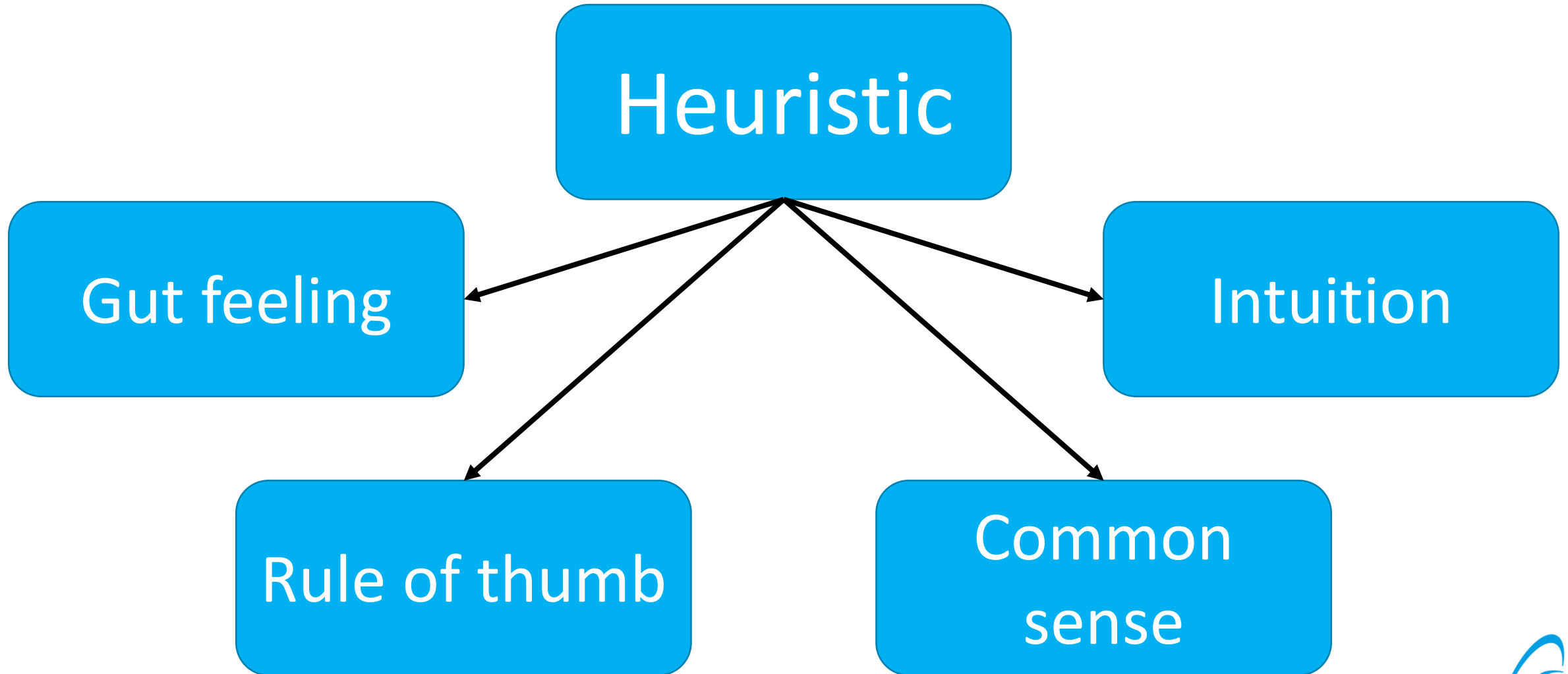
XKCD

Unconscious bias in the workplace

- Unconscious bias can affect hiring, promotion, and evaluation
- Applicants to lab manager roles were judged as significantly more competent and hireable when the CV had a male rather than female name (Moss-Racusin et. al., 2012)
- A legal memo with mistakes was rated lower in quality when the author was perceived to be African American rather than Caucasian (Reeves, 2014)

Unconscious biases limit people's potential and prevent us from making the best decisions.

Heuristics



Heuristics



- Make decisions quickly
- Make decisions with missing information
- Reduce cognitive load

- Lead to incorrect conclusions
- Prevent new ideas
- Replicate bad learning

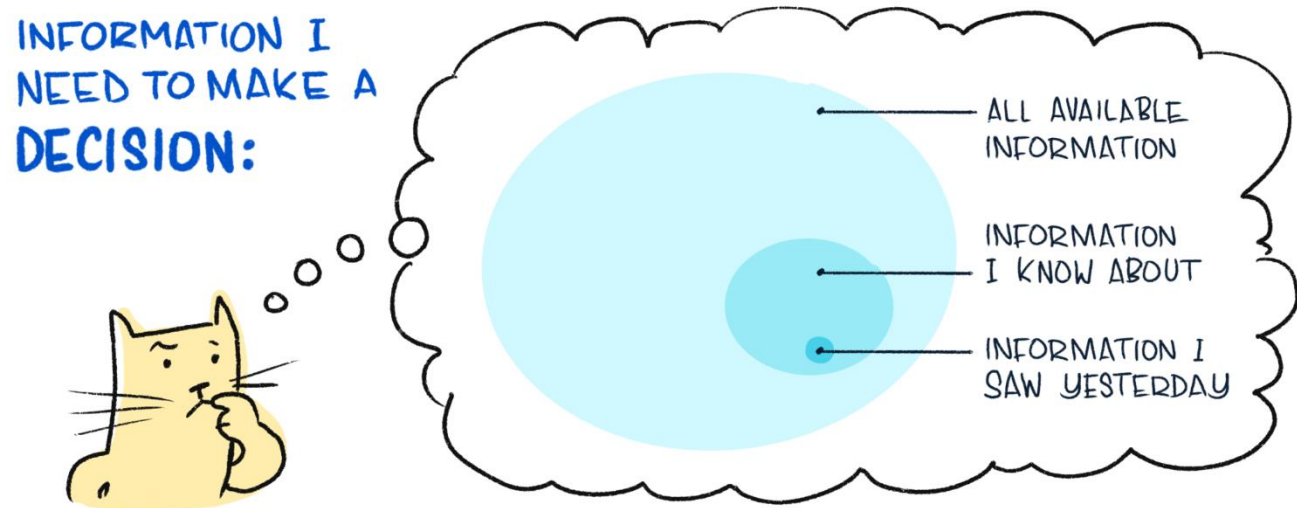


Heuristics

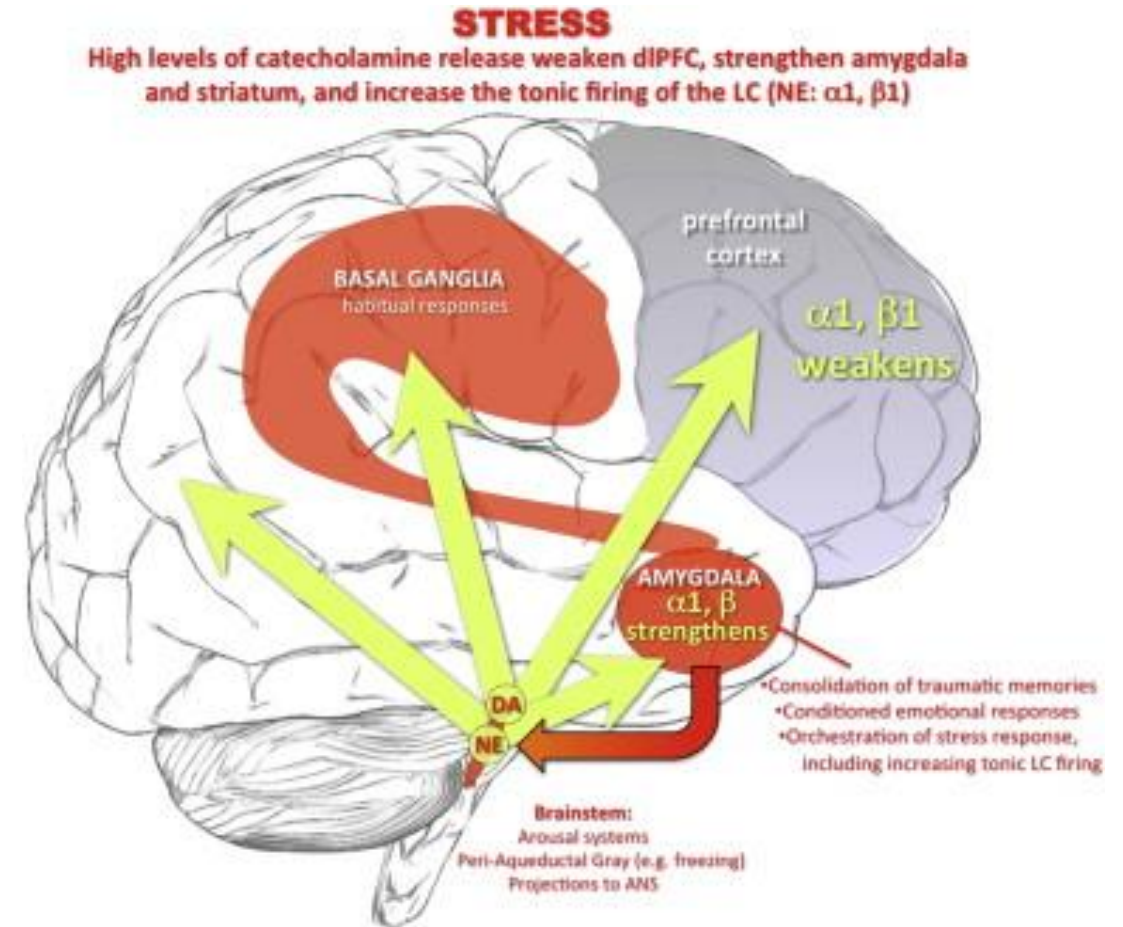
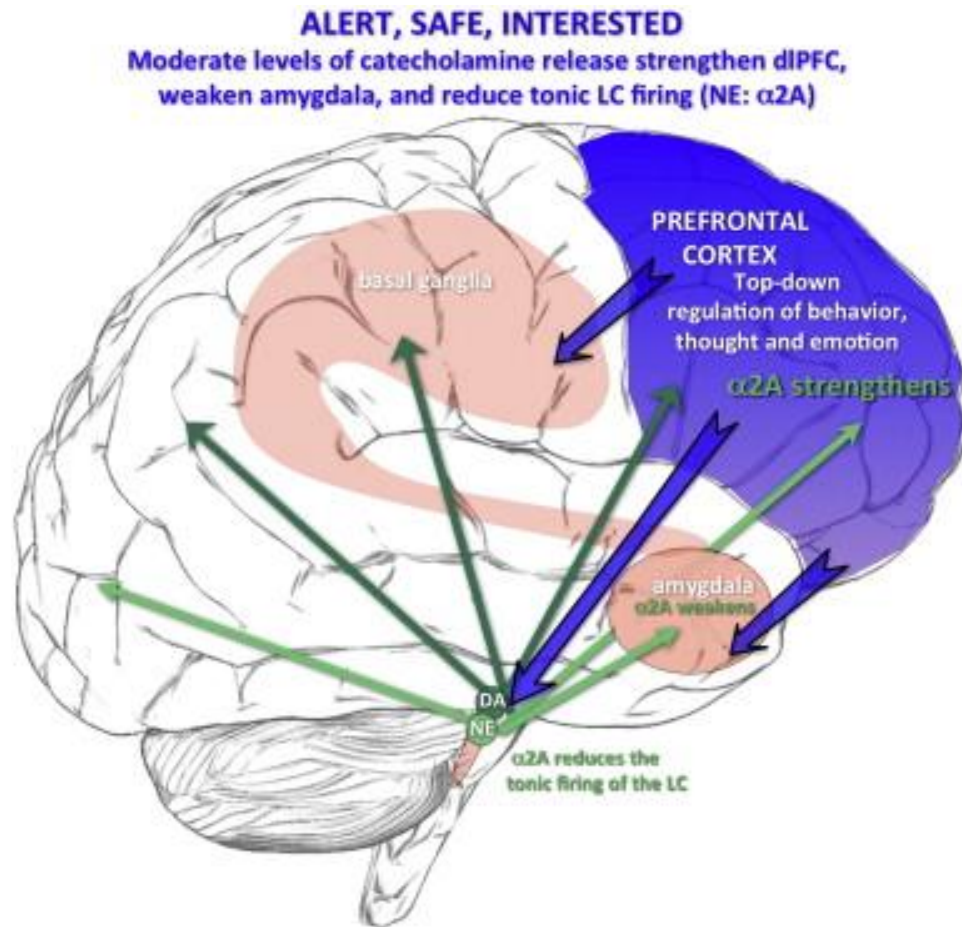
Q: What percent of child abductions are by strangers?

A: Less than 2%

Availability heuristic: treating the information you can recall most easily as the most important



Stressful situations



Arnsten et. al., 2015

Stressful situations

- More habitual responses than goal-directed choices
- More impulsive decisions
- Less likely to adjust initial judgment

Yu, 2016

What to do

The goal is not to get rid of unconscious biases, but to mitigate them

- Learn about and be aware of biases
 - Harvard Implicit Association test
- Take your time
- Create structures like checklists or SOPs
- Mindfulness

Any questions?

Links

- [Science faculty's subtle gender biases favor male students, Moss-Racusin 2012](#)
- [Written in Black and White: Exploring Confirmation Bias in Racialized Perceptions of Writing Skills, Reeves 2014](#)
- [Heuristics](#)
- [The Interactions of Heuristics and Biases in the Making of Decisions](#)
- [The effects of stress exposure on prefrontal cortex, Arnsten 2015](#)
- [Stress potentiates decision biases: A stress induced deliberation-to-intuition \(SIDI\) model, Yu 2015](#)
- [Three Ways Mindfulness Can Make You Less Biased](#)
- [Managing Bias in The Workplace](#)
- [The Truth About Unconscious Bias in the Workplace](#)