

Do political elites use heuristics like the rest of us. (#3638)

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Author(s)

Sjoerd Stolwijk (Vrije Universiteit (VU) Amsterdam) - sjoerdstolwijk@gmail.com

Barbara Vis (Vrije Universiteit (VU) Amsterdam) - b.vis@vu.nl

1) Have any data been collected for this study already?

No, no data have been collected for this study yet

2) What's the main question being asked or hypothesis being tested in this study?

Do politicians use the availability and representativeness heuristics to the same degree as ordinary people when making (political) decisions?

3) Describe the key dependent variable(s) specifying how they will be measured.

We will provide our participants with a set of estimation, judgment and preference listing tasks. Each will have answer options in line with using the representativeness/availability heuristics rather than according to rational choice theory and expected utility, and vice versa. In some scenario's participants are presented with choice options, in others they have to specify an amount, i.e. how much are they willing to spend on an issue. Nearly all scenario's will be tested between subjects, the expected outcome of each of the scenarios is different if following heuristic based decision making compared to logical analytic decision making satisfying rational choice theory.

4) How many and which conditions will participants be assigned to?

The experiment embeds a set of smaller tests, each of which have conditions that attempt to contrast heuristic choice and analytic rational choice. Tests relate to representativeness and availability, both corresponding to classic studies as to newly develop political decision applications of these heuristics, specifically also looking at the scope effect, the contrast effect, tone effect, and the effectiveness of decision aids.

5) Specify exactly which analyses you will conduct to examine the main question/hypothesis.

T-tests will be conducted to evaluate whether politicians more often make estimations/base decisions on heuristics rather than rational choice theory.

6) Any secondary analyses?

We specifically expect that politicians will act more in line with rational choice for scenario's more alike to everyday political decision making, but not for abstract decision tasks, compared to a student sample. In addition, we expect left-wing politicians to make use of positive discrimination when asked to decide on a stereotype eliciting scenario, while right-wing politicians do not. Possible moderators are education, knowledge of statistics, self-rated math skill, and finance as a politicians main focus area. For each of which higher scores would lead to less heuristic based choice.

7) How many observations will be collected or what will determine sample size? No need to justify decision, but be precise about exactly how the number will be determined.

Previous studies testing these heuristics included about 150 subjects, so we will aim at 150 politicians and 150 students. This sample size is needed to both test these heuristics separately for these subgroups compared to earlier studies, as well as than also compare these subgroups to each other. In addition, to stimuli comparable to earlier studies (but newly designed), we have also added a test on whether our subjects make use of decision aids, which uses a 2x2 design, rather than a between subjects 2x1 design, and thus may require a larger sample size (and ANOVA rather than t-tests). As this is not the main aim of the study, we will first proceed with the sample sizes of 150 students and 150 politicians, as indicated above.

8) Anything else you would like to pre-register? (e.g., data exclusions, variables collected for exploratory purposes, unusual analyses planned?)

We consider it possible that politicians might be less influenced by decision aids, designed to generate estimations/decisions more in line with rational choice theory, compared to students. This would entail that politicians make inferior estimations compared to students, seen from a rational choice perspective, within the decision scenario we have developed for them. This could be due to their anticipation of public reactions to their decisions, which they might believe to be in line with heuristic estimations, and/or because they a stronger interest in appearing to be consistent and might want to portray themselves to be responsive to smaller issues that might still be important to specific audiences.