Information Sampling and Adaptive Cognition

A “sample” is not only a concept from statistics that has penetrated common sense but also a metaphor that has inspired much research and theorizing in current psychology. The sampling approach emphasizes the selectivity and biases inherent in the samples of information input with which judges and decision makers are fed. Because environmental samples are rarely random, or representative of the world as a whole, decision making calls for censorship and critical evaluation of the data given. However, even the most intelligent decision makers tend to behave like “naïve intuitive statisticians”: They are quite sensitive to the data given but uncritical concerning the source of the data. Thus, the vicissitudes of sampling information in the environment together with the failure to monitor and control sampling effects adequately provide a key to reinterpreting findings obtained in the past two decades of research on judgment and decision making.

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Information Sampling and Adaptive Cognition

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**Contents**

**List of Contributors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part I</th>
<th>Introduction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Taking the Interface between Mind and Environment Seriously</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Klaus Fiedler and Peter Juslin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part II</th>
<th>The Psychological Law of Large Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Good Sampling, Distorted Views: The Perception of Variability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yaakov Kareev</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part III</th>
<th>Biased and Unbiased Judgments from Biased Samples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Subjective Validity Judgments as an Index of Sensitivity to Sampling Bias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Freytag and Klaus Fiedler</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 7. | An Analysis of Structural Availability Biases, and a Brief Study | 147 |
| Robyn M. Dawes |

| 8. | Subjective Confidence and the Sampling of Knowledge | 153 |
| Joshua Klayman, Jack B. Soll, Peter Juslin, and Anders Winman |
9. Contingency Learning and Biased Group Impressions  
   Thorsten Meiser  
   183

10. Mental Mechanisms: Speculations on Human Causal Learning and Reasoning  
   Nick Chater and Mike Oaksford  
   210

PART IV WHAT INFORMATION CONTENTS ARE SAMPLED?

    Gerd Gigerenzer  
    239

12. Assessing Evidential Support in Uncertain Environments  
    Chris M. White and Derek J. Koehler  
    261

13. Information Sampling in Group Decision Making: Sampling Biases and Their Consequences  
    Andreas Mojzisch and Stefan Schulz-Hardt  
    299

14. Confidence in Aggregation of Opinions from Multiple Sources  
    David V. Budescu  
    327

15. Self as Sample  
    Joachim I. Krueger, Melissa Acevedo, and Jordan M. Robbins  
    353

PART V VICISSITUDES OF SAMPLING IN THE RESEARCHER’S MIND AND METHOD

16. Which World Should Be Represented in Representative Design?  
    Ulrich Hoffrage and Ralph Hertwig  
    381

17. “I’m m/n Confident That I’m Correct”: Confidence in Foresight and Hindsight as a Sampling Probability  
    Anders Winman and Peter Juslin  
    409

18. Natural Sampling of Stimuli in (Artificial) Grammar Learning  
    Fenna H. Poletiek  
    440

19. Is Confidence in Decisions Related to Feedback? Evidence from Random Samples of Real-World Behavior  
    Robin M. Hogarth  
    456

Index  
485
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