



# THE ARROGANCE OF FACTS AND THE PERSISTENCE OF OPINION

Leading in a Time of Division

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# What do you think when you hear someone talk about 'alternative facts'?

The person is an idiot

The person just doesn't like the facts that someone has presented them

The person is pointing out that what had been presented as factual was not factual

The person is offering additional information to a factual discussion

The person lives in or believes in an alternative reality (one which is, in fact, real)

**Quickly estimate this product:  $1 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4 \times 5 \times 6 \times 7 \times 8 = ?$**

Something less than 500

Between 500 and 5000

Between 5000 and 10,000

Between 10,000 and 20,000

Between 20,000 and 40,000

More than 40,000

**A psychologist has a sample containing 70 lawyers and 30 doctors. The first subject is Joe, a 30 year old married man of high ability and high motivation, someone well-liked by his peers. What is the likelihood that Joe is a doctor?**

Less than 20%

Between 20% and 40%

Between 40% and 60%

Between 60% and 80%

More than 80%




**WHY TALK  
ABOUT FACTS?**



A magnifying glass is positioned over an open book. The entire scene is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The text of the book is visible but mostly illegible due to the overlay and the focus of the magnifying glass.

“something that has  
actual existence;  
an actual occurrence”

– Merriam-Webster.com

A man and a woman are sitting on a light-colored sofa in a modern living room. The man, on the left, has a beard and is wearing a pink shirt and dark pants, resting his chin on his hand. The woman, on the right, is wearing a white top and dark pants, also resting her chin on her hand. The room features a white brick wall, a side table with a vase of flowers, and a patterned rug. The entire scene is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. A vertical yellow line is positioned to the left of the text.

Facts are arrogant.  
They don't care  
whether we believe  
in them or not.



# OBJECTIVE REALITY AND SUBJECTIVE PERCEPTION

- ▶ Objective – about the object being observed.
- ▶ Subjective – about the subject doing the observation.

A hand holding a pen writing on a notebook. The notebook has diagrams and text on it. The background is a blurred outdoor scene with greenery. The entire image has a blue tint.

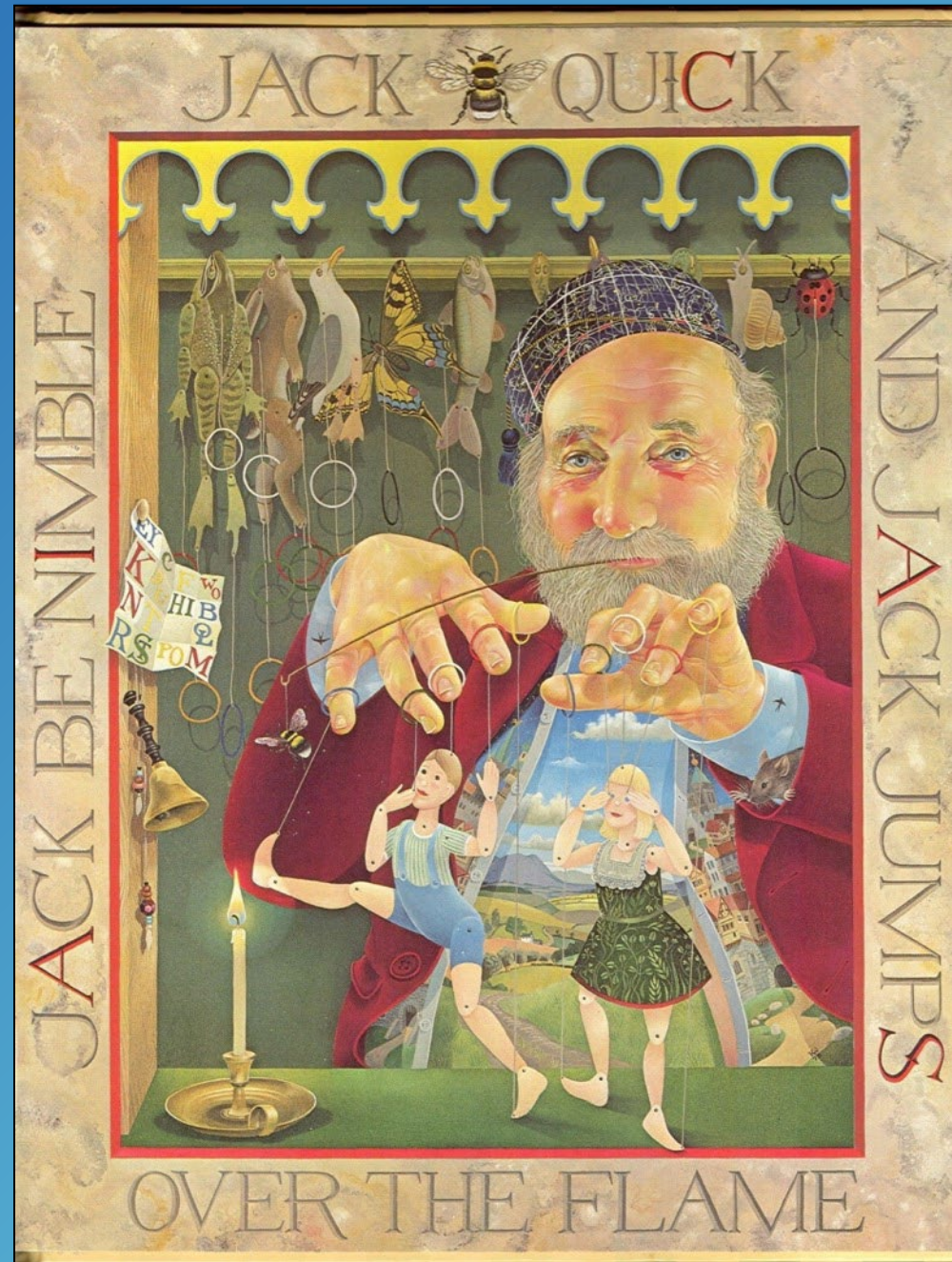
Do we make  
objective observations?



Christopher Williams, *Sir Isaac Newton (Masquerade)*, J. Cape, 1979. Used with permission of the artist.

# Describe what you saw in the picture





Christopher Williams, *Sir Isaac Newton (Masquerade, J. Cape, 1979)*. Used with permission of the artist.



**Quickly estimate this product:  $8 \times 7 \times 6 \times 5 \times 4 \times 3 \times 2 \times 1 = ?$**

Something less than 500

Between 500 and 5000

Between 5000 and 10,000

Between 10,000 and 20,000

Between 20,000 and 40,000

More than 40,000



# THE PRIMING EFFECT OF NUMBERS

**Quickly estimate this product:  $1 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4 \times 5 \times 6 \times 7 \times 8 = ?$**

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# INVOKING STEREOTYPES

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## THE REPRESENTATIVENESS HEURISTIC

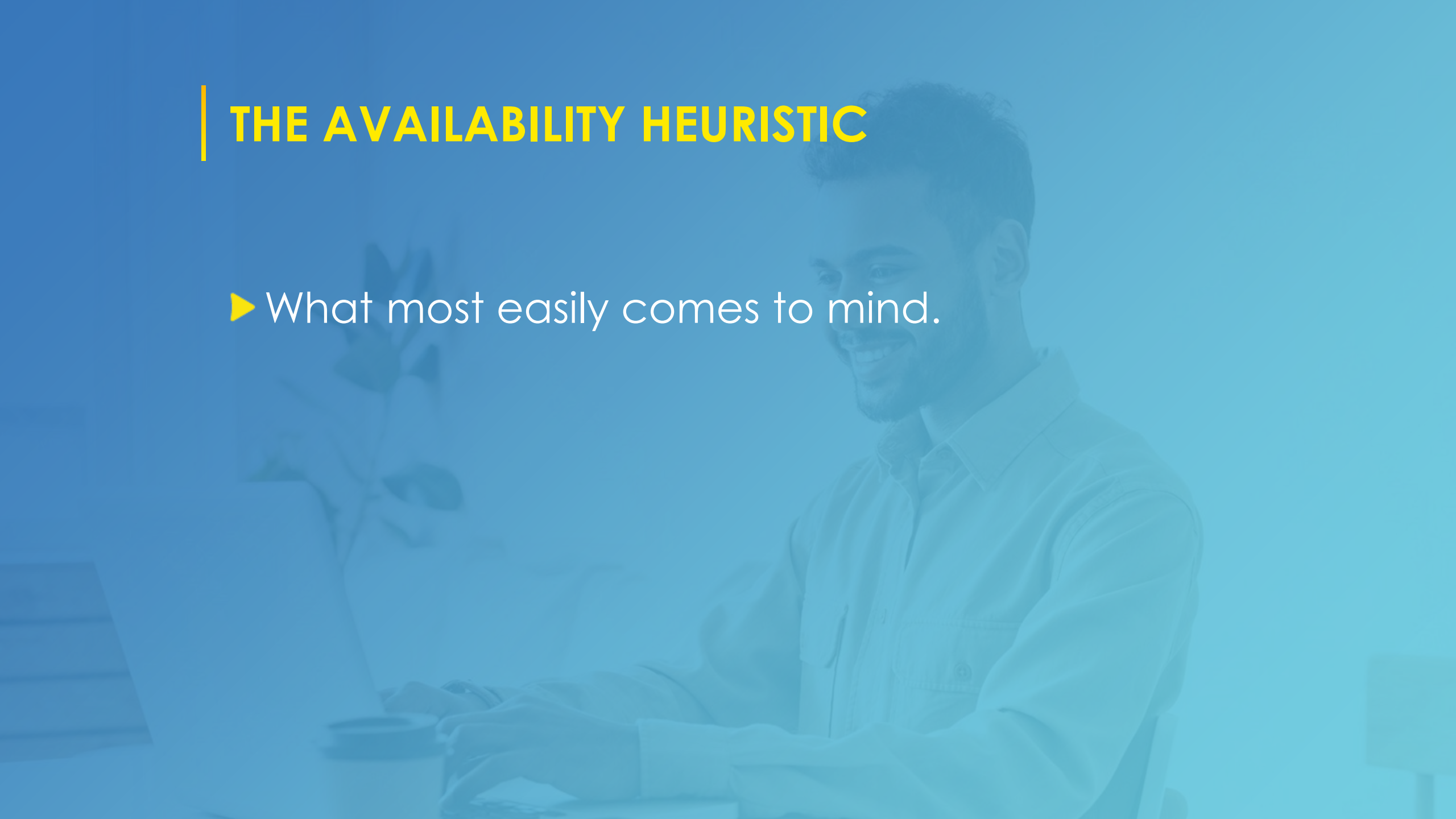
- ▶ Generalization from very small samples.

# Name a famous scientist



# THE AVAILABILITY HEURISTIC

- ▶ What most easily comes to mind.



## POLITICAL HEURISTICS

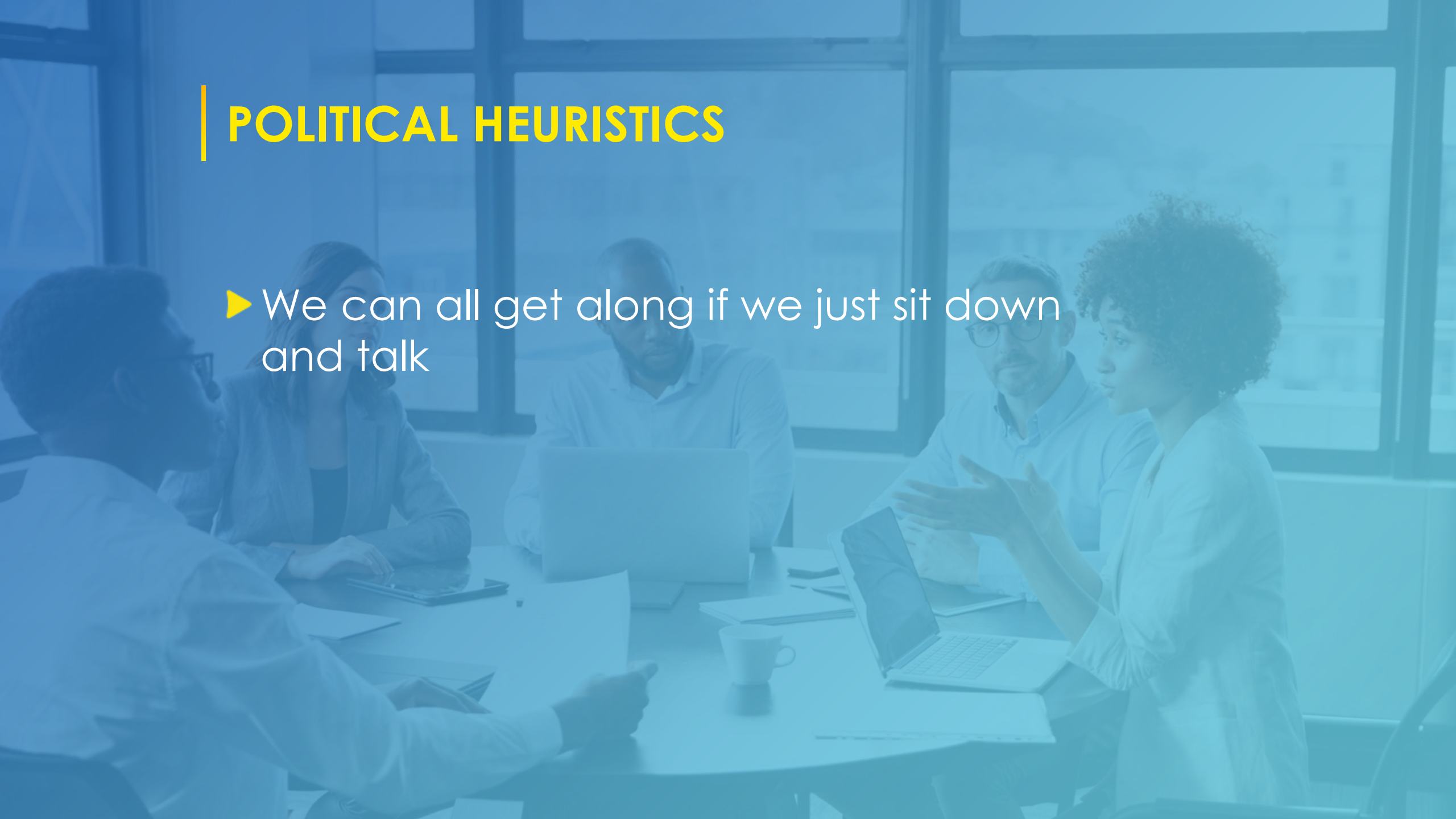
- ▶ The private sector can do everything better than the public sector

**Efficient**

**Inefficient**

# POLITICAL HEURISTICS

- ▶ We can all get along if we just sit down and talk



# POLITICAL HEURISTICS

- ▶ Government should run like a business





# POLITICAL HEURISTICS

- ▶ Public safety is job #1

GENCY  
1

POLICE

# POLITICAL LABELS AS HEURISTICS

- ▶ Our opinion about a policy can be influenced by the label assigned to it (even though the substance is unchanged):
  - Names of legislation
  - Associations with parties, interests, or individuals
- ▶ This can be (and is) exploited by political actors


A background image of a business meeting with a blue tint. A man in a suit is looking at a laptop, and a woman is gesturing with her hand. The text is overlaid on this image.

# **PROTECTING OURSELVES FROM FACTS**

**Selective retention**

**Confirmatory bias**





Facts exist ... it's just  
incredibly hard for us not  
to color them with our  
subjective perceptions.



QUESTIONS?

## WHY THIS MATTERS

The word “fact” has two relevant meanings:

- ▶ “something that has actual existence; an actual occurrence.”
- ▶ “a piece of information presented as having objective reality.”

– Merriam-Webster.com



## WHAT KIND OF FACTS ARE WE DEALING WITH?

When we speak of “facts” ...  
people may accept that they are facts ...  
or they may hear us *claiming* they are facts ...  
which is a very different thing.

A woman with curly hair is sitting at a desk in an office setting. She is looking towards the left of the frame. In the foreground, the back of another person's head is visible, suggesting a meeting or conversation. The image has a blue overlay.

**NAVIGATING THE  
PERSISTENCE OF OPINION**



# THE HADOC METHOD

Hear

Accept

Depersonalize

Own

Care



A photograph of a man and a woman in a meeting, overlaid with a blue gradient. The man is in the foreground, looking towards the woman. The woman is in the background, looking towards the man. The text '1. HEAR THE CHALLENGE' is overlaid on the image.

# 1. HEAR THE CHALLENGE





## 2. ACCEPT WHAT IS SAID



**3. DEPERSONALIZE IN RESPONSE  
TO THE CHALLENGE**





**4. OWN OUR OWN SUBJECTIVITY**





## 5. CARE

- ▶ About the critic.
- ▶ About the public's perception of the event.



QUESTIONS?

# THE HADOC METHOD

Hear

Accept

Depersonalize

Own


Care



A woman with dark hair, wearing a dark sleeveless top, is smiling and presenting to a group of people in a meeting room. She is holding a tablet or document. The room has large windows in the background. The image is overlaid with a blue gradient.

# CONCLUDING THOUGHTS






## HUMAN BEINGS ARE ACTIVE SUBJECTS ...

- ▶ In our observations.
- ▶ In our interpretations.





People will see  
and interpret  
facts differently  
than we do.



IT'S REALLY NOT ABOUT YOU

**Q**UIT

**T**AKING

**I**T

**P**ERSONALLY

**TO SERVE THE PUBLIC,  
WE MUST:**



**HEAR  
THEM**



**ACCEPT  
THEM**



**CARE  
ABOUT THEM**

**What's one thing of value you will take away from this presentation?**



Thank you  
for choosing  
to serve!

