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Label Entrenchment Heuristic in Political Communities

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Abstract

Hemmatian and Sloman (2018) showed that the degree to which a label is perceived to be entrenched in society impacts the judged quality of the categorical explanation that invokes it, irrespective of how informative the explanation actually is ("label entrenchment heuristic"). Across four experiments, we show that US partisans rate the informativeness of a circular categorical explanation as higher when the label it invokes is perceived to be entrenched in a particular political community than when the label is not entrenched in any community irrespective of whether the label belongs to the political in-group or the political out-group. Furthermore, we demonstrate that one's relationship to the community that entrenches the label mediates the effect: Democrats find the categorical explanations to be more persuasive when the label they invoke is entrenched in the Democratic political community than when it is entrenched in the Republican political community, and vice versa for Republicans.