
SRV MATTERS

Rationality

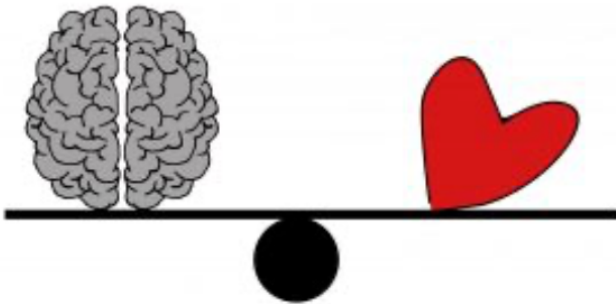
What does SRV and rationality have in common you might ask. Well, stay tuned and find out!

Traditional economic theory says that if prices rise, demand goes down, all the time, in every case, for every product.

And that is mostly correct. But not always, and in fact, the reverse can happen.

This thinking presumes we are all rational actors. And that, in and of itself, is a pretty irrational assumption (check out Kahneman).

We are anything but fully rational agents. We have rationality but also a complexity created through numerous biases, heuristics, instincts, snap-judgements, and other tricky psychological stuff that is often ignored, and not just by traditional economics!



SRV of course tries valiantly to bring many of these issues to the fore. Think about unconsciousness, mindsets, the cycle of social devaluation, the 'if this, then that' schema, and how we perceive/decide about others.

In 1993, the 1st 3-day Reflective SRV theory event was held in Brisbane. An incredibly important module was 'My favourite devalued group'. I distinctly recall Peter Millier, Senior Trainer, asking us to reflect as he read so that we could identify who we held (often unconscious) biases against. I was shocked that I indeed had one or more 'favourite devalued groups'!

About six years later, when spending time in conversation with Professor Wolf Wolfensberger and his colleague, Susan Thomas, I saw their clarity around devaluation. They didn't seem to have a 'favourite devalued group'. Wolf held great concern for all people, for prisoners, for people experiencing homelessness, for Muslims, for First Nations Peoples, for asylum seekers and so on.

Yet, over the years I have been shocked to realise that quite a few people who are totally into SRV for people with a disability or for aged people and so on, don't feel the same way about other groups.

While this is saddening for me, it serves as a reminder as to how invasive and pervasive devaluation is.

BUT that's not sufficient. The question is 'how can each of us begin to address our own biases?'

Firstly, we need to strive for increased awareness of our own personal biases, thoughts, and feelings. Do we react to people differently, unfairly, based on assumptions?

We need to be conscious of and question decisions we make. Self-reflection is critical to see our biases and to adjust our perspectives.

Educate one's self. Access resources online to uncover one's implicit biases. This can show the way to act objectively and limit the influence that our biases have on our behaviour.

We need to hold ourselves accountable as we work to consciously change our stereotyping. Let others challenge us about our assumptions; be open to feedback.

Spend time with people who are different from you and become more inclusive to help counter any stereotypes that might be lurking. Learn about history, like the treatment of people with mental health issues, homeless people, Aboriginal people.

And periodically, we need to celebrate our development in this regard, seriously.

SRV Ideas: Countering our unconscious biases
