The Psychology of Opinion Change

NC Performance Management Academy
November 9, 2021

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bio | podcast
learning objectives

• Why do we struggle to reason and argue objectively?
• What can we do about it?
motivated reasoning
Dartmouth vs. Princeton

Motivated Reasoning

• Motivation affects reasoning by altering which cognitive processes are used for accessing, constructing, and evaluating beliefs.

accuracy


particular, directional conclusion
Directional Motivation

- Attempt to rationally construct a justification for the desired conclusion.

selective perception  cherry pick memory  lopsided argument

Selective Perception

Selective Perception

Selecting Perception

Cherry Pick Memory

rules

$N \approx 350$ undergraduates

highly educated

streetwise

Lopsided Argument

Palmer and Crandall (1977) compared murder rates in 10 pairs of neighboring states with different capital punishment laws. In 8 of the 10 pairs, murder rates were lower in the state with capital punishment. This research supports the deterrent effect of the death penalty.

Palmer and Crandall (1977) compared murder rates in 10 pairs of neighboring states with different capital punishment laws. In 8 of the 10 pairs, murder rates were higher in the state with capital punishment. This research opposes the deterrent effect of the death penalty.

pause to discuss
thinking with data
• P-hacking
• HARKing
• File drawer problem

See generally, Lindsay, Simons, & Lilienfeld, “Research Preregistration 101,” APS Observer (December 2016).
what to do about it?
pre-analysis plans
See [https://osf.io/yjyng/](https://osf.io/yjyng/) for the publicly pre-registered analysis plan. See also [https://osf.io/q6c45/](https://osf.io/q6c45/) for PVD Talks example.
benefits of pre-analysis plans

1. Enhance research integrity.
2. Promote project management best practices.
3. Enhance political integrity.

stakeholder engagement
Q&A and discussion
exercise
You're the Mayor. Your city is piloting a new police body-worn camera program. You'll need to eventually decide whether to continue and expand funding for the entire police department.

1. What outcome(s) do you measure?
2. Which officers do you include in the study?
3. How long do you collect data?
4. How big of an effect(s) is needed for you to decide to scale the program?

For context, let's assume you have 1,000 officers, and last year there were 968 reported use-of-force incidents (of which 9 were gun shots, 2 of which were fatal).
Q&A and discussion