



Confirmation Biases

MyJoVE Corp,
2016

Material Projectable

The confirmation bias is the tendency to focus on information that confirms our existing beliefs and ignore information that is inconsistent with our expectations. For example, if you think that your professor is not very nice, you notice all of the instances of rude behavior exhibited by the professor while ignoring the countless pleasant interactions he is involved in on a daily basis. Have you ever fallen prey to the confirmation bias, either as the source or target of such bias? Another Example of Social Stereotypes If an employer expects an openly gay male job applicant to be incompetent, the potential employer might treat the applicant negatively during the interview by engaging in less conversation, making little eye contact, and generally behaving coldly toward the applicant (Hebl, Foster, Mannix, & Dovidio, 2002). In turn, the job applicant will perceive that the potential employer dislikes him, and he will respond by giving shorter responses to interview questions, making less eye contact, and generally disengaging from the interview. After the interview, the employer will reflect on the applicant's behavior, which seemed cold and distant, and the employer will conclude, based on the applicant's poor performance during the interview, that the applicant was in fact incompetent. Thus, the employer's stereotype of gay men are incompetent and do not make good employees is reinforced. Do you think this job applicant is likely to be hired? Treating individuals according to stereotypic beliefs can lead to prejudice and discrimination. In this scenario, can you pick out the confirmation bias? The employer may not have noticed that the job applicant was friendly and engaging, and that he provided competent responses to the interview questions in the beginning of the interview. Instead, the employer focused on the job applicant's performance in the later part of the interview, after the applicant changed his demeanor and behavior to match the interviewer's negative treatment. This text is adapted from OpenStax, Psychology. OpenStax CNX

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Título: Confirmation Biases

Editorial: Cambridge, MA MyJoVE Corp 2016

Descripción física: 1 recurso electrónico (91 seg.) son., col

Mención de serie: JOVE Science Education Core Psychology

Nota general: Tít. sacado de la página de descripción del recurso

Audiencia: Para estudiantes universitarios, graduados y profesionales

Detalles del sistema: Forma de acceso: World Wide Web

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