

Annotations - would like to see more note taking in margins

Excellent explanation of purpose: summary of main points!
Pen Clark
1-14-18

AOW Writing

In "A Magician's Best Tricks: Revealing a Basic Human Bias" by Robert M. Sapolsky, he argues that because of confirmation bias, humans will remember the information that supports their opinion and not the opposite information. Sapolsky argues this point by using an example that takes up most of the article. His example is a story of when his family went to a magic show and were able to talk to the magician. The magician showed Sapolsky's son a trick where first, the magician tried to guess which hand a dime was in, and second, had Sapolsky's son try to guess which hand the dime was in. His son was seemingly good at this game, until the magician revealed that he had a dime in both hands. This act demonstrated confirmation bias because Sapolsky and his wife believed that their son was good at the game because they wanted it to be true.

An aspect of the article I thought was interesting was that the magician seemed to use argument skills to show the bias. For example, using ethos the magician gained the spectators trust by saying, "Hmm, you're hard to read" (4). By saying this, he manipulated them into thinking that he was a normal person who makes mistakes. The magician then appealed to pathos by complementing Sapolsky's son, "And my son turned out to be really good at this game" (5). The magician made them feel happy about their son's success. Finally, the magician appealed to logos by saying, "Did you play rock/paper/scissors when you were a kid" (5)? Since he used this "evidence," it was a more believable situation.

good job incorporating support

I see confirmation bias in the article when the parents want their son to be good at the game, even though it doesn't logically make sense. I think confirmation bias occurs often because it is difficult to be unbiased, especially for something someone favors. I have used confirmation bias, but I don't remember many circumstances except Santa/tooth fairy. Even when I was a little kid they didn't logically make sense, but since I wanted them to be true so much, I believed it.

Let's work on stronger topic sentences.

good example.

1. 15. 20. 25. 30. 35. 40. 45. 50. 55. 60. 65. 70. 75. 80. 85. 90. 95. 100.

1. 15. 20. 25. 30. 35. 40. 45. 50. 55. 60. 65. 70. 75. 80. 85. 90. 95. 100.

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Annotations - good work here

Ripley
Full heading,
please.

A Magician's Best Trick: Revealing a Basic Human Bias

~~In~~ "A Magician's Best Trick: Revealing a Basic Human Bias," Robert. M Sapolsky shows the reader the meaning of confirmation bias through an anecdote about his encounter with a street performer. The author argues that almost everyone has fallen prey to confirmation bias at least once, and that it is a fundamental, human behavior. He also says that this bias can greatly affect our world through politics and economics.

good work
articulating
and identifying
the claim

In paragraph 13, Sapolsky describes the reasoning behind why confirmation bias is so effective using the three basic elements of argument: Ethos, Pathos, and Logos.. He says: "First, there was his 'poor' performance at guessing..." Here, the magician is using Ethos to establish credibility, and give the boy a low baseline so that when he later did better than the magician, he felt his skills were superior to the average person. The author goes on to say that "Then, he complimented my son..." By saying this, the magician plays on the family's emotions by making them feel proud or important. "Next, The Magician gave a plausible explanation for my son's success," Sapolsky says. By giving the family evidence, he uses Logos, making his story more credible.

good!
strong
application of
ethos, pathos,
logos

I do think it's true that our world can be greatly affected by confirmation bias. For example, many people choose not to believe in climate change because it would be more convenient for them if global warming simply did not exist. Instead of facing the moral issues and consequences brought up by events such as this, many people would choose to simply ignore them - as Sapolsky puts it - "remembering information that supports your opinion better than information doing the opposite." Another place where this is clearly prevalent is in politics. When supporting a party, many people will choose to look past the many shortcomings of a candidate because of one quality or stance that they agree with. It's easier to say that "the good makes up for the bad" rather than look at the person as a whole and admit they may not be a good person overall.

Often, it's also hard to admit to falling prey to confirmation bias. In the second to last paragraph, the author says "No wonder I'm embarrassed." As humans, we have a hard time admitting our mistakes, especially if they were due to simple psychological manipulation. No one wants to feel as if they are gullible or easily tricked. Instead of owning up to mistakes, it is often easier to stick to your guns and defend your opinion, even if you know it may be wrong. I think this is the main reason that confirmation bias is so prevalent: once you have dug yourself deep enough into an idea, it can be difficult to backtrack and realise or admit your mistake.

Definitely -
strong
commentary

Ah Frost



A Magician's Best Trick: Revealing a Basic Human Bias

An encounter with a magician reveals a lesson: Think critically about whether you're only intermittently thinking critically.

Robert M. Sapolsky, Wall Street Journal, December 31, 2014

My family and I recently watched a magician perform. He was not of the sleight-of-hand ilk but, instead, had a stunning ability to psychologically

manipulate his audience into doing and thinking what he wanted: con man as performance artist. He was amazing.

Afterward, we had the fortune of talking about neuroscience and psychology with him. In the process, he offered a demonstration of a small building-block of his craft.

The Magician gave a dime to a volunteer, my son, instructing him to hide it in one of his hands behind his back. The Magician would then guess which hand held the dime. He claimed that if you're attuned to subtleties in people's behavior, you can guess correctly at way above chance levels.

Not that day, though. The Magician wasn't doing so hot. After a string of wrong guesses, he mumbled to my son, "Hmm, you're hard to read." More rounds, and The Magician was only running 50-50.

They traded roles. And my son turned out to be really good at this game. The Magician looked impressed. After a stretch of correct guesses, he asked: "Did you play rock/paper/scissors when you were a kid?"

"Yes," my son said.

"Were you good at it?"

"I suppose so."

"Ah, makes sense, there are similar skills involved."

Another string of successful guesses; we were agog. The Magician, looking mighty alert, asked: "So, are you trying to imagine what I'm thinking? Or are you focusing on my facial expressions? Or on something I'm doing with my hands?"

The near perfect streak continued; we were flabbergasted. Finally, another guess by my son—"I'm guessing it's in your right hand." The Magician opened his right hand displaying a dime. And then opened his left hand, which contained...another dime.

how do these link?

good word choice

how does this relate to human bias?

a statement that somewhat contradicts itself

using personal experience

how does a simple magic trick link to neuroscience + psychology?

uses a very casual conversational tone

stay aware of

small, precise details that are difficult to analyze

somewhat of a superior/negative perspective of the Magician?

what does this have to do with psychology or a simple dime trick?

story: dialogue

very curious to see/hear something using word choice

sentence is weirdly written

more strong word choice

chronological text structure

1 Make aware
2 State of being so delicate or precise as to be difficult to analyze or describe
3 Very curious to see or hear something
4 Greatly surprised

casual, conversational tone

We dissolved with laughter, seeing what dupes we were. Ohhh, he had dimes in both hands the whole time. We started imagining cons built on manipulating a mark into believing that he has an otherworldly skill at something unexpected, and then somehow exploiting that false belief.

chronological

parents having thoughts that are too quick to judge, connecting to bias statement?

The guy had played us every step of the way. First, there was his "poor" performance at guessing—hey, we concluded, this guy puts on his pants one leg at a time. Then he complimented my son with "Hmm, you're hard to read." Next, The Magician gave a plausible⁵ explanation for my son's success: "The experience with rock/paper/scissors, of course." Finally, as my son's run continued, The Magician indicated it was now a given that my son was virtuosic at this game: The point now was to analyze how he was doing it. Hook, line and sinker.

casual tone

author is realizing real trick behind the magician's tricks and how he lead them up to these thoughts/ideas

Something was painfully obvious. If my son had had a string of failures, with the hand containing no dime, we would have instantly used Critical Thinking 101, saying to the magician: "Hey, open your other hand, let's make sure both hands aren't empty."

turning point of article

But faced with this string of successes, it never occurred to us to say. "Let's make sure you don't also have a dime in that other hand." Instead, I had been thinking: "Wow, my son turns out to be the Chosen One of dime-guessing; my wife and I now have the heavy responsibility of ensuring that he only uses his gift for good; he'll usher in world peace with his ability; he'll..."

parents have bias toward son

I think the conclusion will fully explain the real intention by the magic trick

No wonder I'm embarrassed. - PATHOS - using his emotions + story to appeal to readers' emotions; possibly being able to relate to his experience

point of article

doesn't use logos or ethos

It's what psychologists call "confirmation bias": remembering information that supports your opinion better than information doing the opposite; testing things in a way that can only support, rather than negate, your hypothesis; and—the variant we fell for—being less skeptical about outcomes we like than we would about less-pleasing results. Confirmation bias infests diplomacy, politics, finance and everyday life. This experience offered some wonderful lessons: Think critically about whether you're only intermittently thinking critically; beware of Ponzis bearing gifts; always examine the mouth and the other hand of a gift horse.

story making the definition of "confirmation bias"

driving home his point

I agree w/ this & c Many current events could be a result of confirmation bias.

uses something more of a story to prove his point in his argument

thesis (?)

The author's purpose for writing this is to make readers aware of confirmation bias and that it is a large part of everyday life in society. The significance of the title "A Magician's Best Trick: Revealing a Basic Human Bias" is to allude to the story and how easy it is for humans to make an assumption about something.

⁵ Seeming reasonable or probable