



Confirmation Bias

What is Confirmation Bias?

Confirmation bias is the tendency to look for information that confirms what we already think.

By focussing on information that we agree with we disproportionately ignore information that contradicts our point of view.

Look out for Confirmation Bias in articles

Research may be more likely to favour a hypothesis that supports research already carried out by the authors or it may ignore evidence that goes against a pre-existing theory.

It is important to look at the way questions are phrased in interviews or surveys. Are there leading questions or focussed on one point of view?

Question whether data has been interpreted with a degree of bias. Have the authors referenced the same names, or their own work, disproportionately? This doesn't mean it is definitely biased but it may be a point for discussion.

Look out for Confirmation Bias in Journal Club

Try to avoid your own confirmation bias when selecting papers and other reading material for Journal Club meetings. Journal Clubs are an opportunity to explore different ideas and the evidence that supports them.

It can be difficult to question ideas we have invested a lot of time in. The more emotionally charged a topic is, the more pronounced our confirmation bias is likely to be - whether that's things we learnt a long time ago, things we have put lot of time and energy into, or things it's simply easier for us if they're true.

Some people may worry about changing their opinion - they don't want to be seen as indecisive in an environment of accountability. Journal Clubs provide a space to question and challenge ideas without being afraid to go against the group.