

# Naive Realism and the Bias Blind Spot

[MUSIC PLAYING]

[APPLAUSE]

JOYCE EHRLINGER: I want to start with just a couple goofy things before I really dive in. One is I'm becoming an amateur magician, and I'm going to try it out on you guys. So I want you to pick a card for me. Just focus in on that card, really think about it carefully. Get it in your mind. And I'm going to try to read it from your mind. OK.

I took out your card. How many people did I get it for them? I rock. That's going to be my new career. All right, a couple more things. Just a quick quiz, what is the capital of Australia? Yell it out.

AUDIENCE: Canberra.

AUDIENCE: Sydney!

AUDIENCE: Sydney!

AUDIENCE: Canberra.

AUDIENCE: [INAUDIBLE]

AUDIENCE: Sydney!

AUDIENCE: The person saying Canberra, shh! Everybody else, what's the capital of Australia?

AUDIENCE: Oakland.

[LAUGHTER]

JOYCE EHRLINGER: OK, how about this. When I ask you, what's the capital of Australia, what's the very first thing that pops into your mind?

AUDIENCE: Sydney.

JOYCE EHRLINGER: Sydney, that's the correct answer that I wanted you to say, which is not actually the correct answer, but we'll talk about that in a minute.

All right, one more. A bat and a ball cost \$1.10 together. The bat costs \$1 more than the ball. How much does the ball cost.

AUDIENCE: \$0.10.

AUDIENCE: Too much.

[LAUGHTER]

JOYCE EHRLINGER: Tell me from the-- be careful, because you're already telling me a lot. I don't know who it is over there, but I will embarrass you. So tell me just the top of your heard, what's the first answer that comes to your head. How much does that ball cost?

AUDIENCE: \$0.10.

JOYCE EHRLINGER: I'm hearing some \$0.05, some \$0.10. So before I get into that stuff, let me tell you. So the title of the book for this Common Reading is Being Wrong. It's something that I love talking about because I sort of love being wrong. It happens all the time. And it's really interesting to me. It's actually a huge part of what inspired me to become a social psychologist.

I remember in an undergrad class, the first time I was learning about some of the judgment and decision-making research that other people had done, and that I was really falling in love with, and that I wanted to do, and the professor who was teaching about this particular concept was explaining, OK, so people always make this judgment. And they were supposed to make this other judgment. Or wait, maybe it's they always do this one. It's supposed to that.

He could've even remember it in his head. He teaches on this. He had dedicated his career to doing this, and yet it was such a pervasive bias that even if he taught about it for 20 years, it took him to say, a minute. Which one's the right answer. Is it Sydney or Canberra. I have to think about this.

It was that pervasive that even after he'd dedicated his research career to looking at this stuff, he still got it wrong. It was a huge part of how our brains are wired, of how we think. And that's just really cool and interesting to me. So when I'm wrong, that gives some insight into how I'm thinking about things and how I might not be always thinking about things the best possible way.

So let's go through examples, so picking a card. There's a trick, obviously. I'm not actually a magician. So you would have focused on one of these cards. And then I changed every last one. So I successfully removed your card, and for a lot of you, probably without you noticing.

So the reason that that works is because of what's called the confirmation bias. Because you looked at-- I'm going to go back to the first thing. You look at this, and let's say you chose the jack of clubs. You're like, OK. That's my card.

The first thing you do when I go to this next screen is see, wait a minute, is the jack of clubs there? It's not there. She is both a professor and a magician. How amazing.

So you're not necessarily looking at, wait a minute. What about all those other cards? Because that's not the way our minds work. And it's the sort of thing that we do that makes us make fast to really, most of the time, accurate decisions, but also can lead to predictable biases.

The capital of Australia, which one person was clever enough to say was Canberra-- I always hate that. You people have to be quiet, because I want this to work. There's a trick here.

Most people say Sydney when you ask that, because Sydney is probably one of the most well-known cities in Australia. And so then you immediately assume, well, if it's the most well-known, it must be the capital. It's the same reason that if you ask people what the capital of Florida is, they'll say either Orlando or Disney World. It's not actually that. It's Tallahassee. But we know about Disney World, so we assume that must be where all the politicians are.

Lastly, this bat and ball thing, people very fluidly, very quickly think, well, it's \$1.10. The bat costs \$1, so the ball must cost \$0.10. But that's not actually possible. The ball has to cost \$0.05 for that to work. But people normally will say \$0.10. And some of you did. Some of you were catching onto the fact that there's a trick here.

So these are all ways in which we tend to be predictably wrong and in ways that for research psychologists and economists and other people who are interested in these sorts of things are just really cool. Because it's the sort of bias that doesn't go away once you know about it, that you continue to make.

I'll tell you more throughout this talk about this theory of naive realism, which talks a lot about part of why we make these sorts of biased judgments. And I spent a good part of this week putting together this talk and a good part of the last 10 years or so doing research on this. And yet I realized a couple hours ago that in a conversation I had earlier today, I was totally being a naive realist. I was completely having biased judgment. It was just pretty funny that I've been spending all this time doing this, and yet in the couple hours I took off from working on this today, I was a prime example of the sort of bias judgments that can happen.

So I love being wrong, but not just randomly wrong. Being randomly wrong isn't fun. I love being wrong when it's the sort of mistake that will happen again and again and again, that's predictable, that's repeated, that maybe isn't just something that I do but is maybe something that a lot of people do because that can give you a lot of insight into how people make judgments and why is it that we make these particular mistakes.

And sometimes it's so powerful that even once you know that this is a bias that people are prone to, you can't stop doing it. That's the stuff that makes me the most excited. That's the most fun to look at.

It's something that inspired me to go into research psychology. I thought I'd give another example, probably one of the best examples of a research psychologist who did this, which is Bob Cialdini. He's probably the most famous person who's looked at research on persuasion, so

how do businesses convince us to buy their products? How do cult leaders convince people to give all their possessions and push away all of their family?

He is fantastic, and he is a sucker. He's self-described a total sucker. He will fall for all of these ploys. But it makes him a wonderful researcher, because he will say, OK, somehow I just got suckered into giving \$50 to this billionaire vacation club. How did that happen?

So he'll go into his lab meeting, and he'll present it to all of his graduate students. And he'll explain what happened. And they'll work out together, oh, this is probably what happened. Let's do some research on this. Bob got tricked again. So it's a mistake that tells us a lot about the science, about how persuasion works.

OK, so that's sort of an overview of me going into my career. Now I want to talk to you a little bit about what some of the research is that I have found, that other people who are studying naive realism have found. There is this general theory of naive realism that has three basic tenants. And one of them is that we tend to be naive realists.

So what that means is that we tend to think that the way that we see the world, that is exactly the way the world is. And if you think about it, we kind of can't think anything other than that. You kind of can't think, oh, I think that the sky is blue, but really I know it's purple. If you know it's purple, then you don't think it's blue. You have to have some conviction or you can't say that you believe this thing.

But the problem is that we tend to believe it somewhat absolutely. We tend to think that our way of viewing the world is really the only way that people should view the world. It's the only way people could view the world. But we tend to each see the world slightly differently.

One of the classic studies that showed that looked at football. So they took rival teams. This is Princeton versus Dartmouth that were playing a football game. And they videotaped the game. And then they showed it to Princeton fans and Dartmouth fans.

And it was a really bloody game. There were a ton of penalties. It was just pretty ugly. And so they showed this to Dartmouth fans and Princeton fans. And they asked them, OK, it got ugly. There were penalties on both sides. Who started it?

So they asked them, for example, did Dartmouth start all the foul play? So you notice the Dartmouth students here said, no, we didn't start it. It was totally Princeton. Princeton was nasty. They did whatever, took that guy out. They really started it. And everything that the Dartmouth players were doing, it was just self-defense after Princeton had been so nasty.

Princeton people here, totally different view. 86% of Princeton students are saying, totally Dartmouth started it. And yeah, we were a little nasty afterwards, but really it was just self-defense. So they're watching exactly the same game, but really they're seeing two totally different games. The Dartmouth fans are seeing one game with these completely nasty

Princeton players and the poor Dartmouth players that are just trying to stand up for themselves. And the Princeton fans are seeing something where the Dartmouth fans are just ugly and aggressive and the poor Princeton people are just trying to stand up for themselves.

They're seeing totally different things. And that's just a general thing that we found in psychology, that a lot of the way we see the world is just one possible perspective. So you can imagine it as imagine that you've got four blind guys, all touching one part of an elephant. They're all going to get one small picture of what they might be touching.

So the guy touching the trunk, this imagine says he sees a snake. I don't know what kind of gigantic snake that would be, but some kind of big, scary snake. The guy who's touching one of the legs might think he's actually touching a tree trunk. The guy who's touching the side might feel like this is some sort of very solid wall. The guy who's touching the tail might think this is a rope.

None of them have any real, full idea of what they're seeing. It's only potentially by talking to each other and looking at what each other's perspectives have, what they bring to the table, and you might get a more complete image about what is in front of you. But each of us only sees one possible perspective.

So the second tenant of naive realism is that-- so first we think that the way we see the world is the only way the world is. We're exactly seeing things the way it is. So if we're seeing things exactly the way it is, then it follows that any other rational person is going to see exactly the same thing we do. So this is called the false consensus effect. We assume that everybody is going to see the world exactly the way we see it.

There's a lot of research that looks at this. There's also comics. So for example, your average lion will say, I don't understand how anyone could look at a rotting zebra corpse and not believe that there's a God. It's just the most beautiful thing in the world to a lion, a rotting zebra corpse. You can't really get better than that. Personally, I'm not a big fan of the rotting ones. I like them fresh. But, you know, for a lion, that is pretty big.

There's an example from the recent news that I have to admit I'm partially putting in because, how can you not? It's so awesome. But I'm twisting it to make it fit the point.

Just in case you have not been paying attention to the news, in the last two weeks, you might know that the mayor of Toronto admitted to smoking crack as recently as last year. I will play you the video just so you can hear this bit of wonderfulness.

[VIDEO PLAYBACK]

- Yes, I have smoked crack cocaine. But no-- do I? Am an addict? No.

- When have you--

- Have I tried it? Probably in one of my drunken stupors, probably approximately about a year ago.

[END PLAYBACK]

[LAUGHTER]

So I see this, and I think, there's no way this guy gets to continue to be mayor of a major, major city in Canada. He's obviously going to resign the very next day.

And obviously, there's no other way that anyone could possibly think of anything other than to resign. It's just obvious that that's what he'll do. Except for I was wrong. That's not what he did. He said that he thinks he makes a positive role model for kids who are down and out, and he is most definitely keeping this job.

So then I think, OK, well, he's the one who is just confused, who's warped, who has no idea what's around him in the world. Because there's no way that the people of Toronto are going to let him stay mayor. I mean, you don't really want a guy who's like, yeah, I probably smoked crack during one of those drunken stupors. You sort of felt like, if he kept talking, was he going to say, you know, with the dozens of prostitutes and all of the-- like, what else was he going to say? It just gets worse and worse.

But it turns out that when he made this admission about smoking crack, his approval rating went up. He got more popular by virtue of smoking crack in the last year.

So yeah. First I'm thinking, OK, well, he clearly has this false consensus effect where he thinks, eh, it's not a big deal. I smoke crack. Nobody else is going to think that way. As it turns out, actually a lot of people thought that way and backed him up. Although, there is this little asterisk of, if you haven't kept up in the news, it gets a lot worse. It turns out that that comment about admitting to crack was probably the most polite thing he said last week. So well worth reading the news for that bit.

Anyway, to get to more of a research example rather than just from the news, one of the classic studies that shows this false consensus effect looks at whether people are willing to wear a sandwich board, a big huge board. They didn't actually use this board, but I liked this board, so I put it in my talk.

So if I gave you \$5, would you walk around campus wearing this? And don't answer that question yet, because that's one thing that I'd like to know, is just you can sort of decide in your head how much do you really want \$5? How many people do you think are going to see you? Will they think it's funny?

The other question that's interesting is, think in your head, what percentage of other WSU students would be willing to wear that sandwich board walking around campus for \$5? So they

did this with just a sign that said, Eat at Joe's, about 30 years ago. And what they found was that for the people who said, sure, I'll wear the sign, they thought everybody would wear the sign. They thought 62% of other people are probably going to say, sure. I'll wear the sign.

But the people who were like, no, there's no way I'm wearing that, they also assumed that everyone agreed with them, that's no one's really going to do this. they thought only 33% of people would wear the sign. So if you think, sure, this is normal, you also think, everyone else would do it. If you think, no, that's crazy, you think no one else does is going to do this.

They also asked them to describe the type of person who might wear this sign. And so for people who said, sure, I'll wear the sign, they said things like, what's wrong with someone that refuses? I think they must be really scared of looking like a fool. So they thought, you're just a coward if you're not going to wear this sign. They just can't imagine a normal person that wouldn't want to walk around campus for 30 minutes wearing this sign.

For people who said, no, there's no way, I'm not wearing that, they say, these must be show offs who would agree to carry this. I know people like that. They're weird. They had this totally different perception of the sort of person that would wear this sign.

So each group of people are assuming the way I see the world, that's the way everyone should see the world. And importantly, if they don't see the world the way I do, they're weird or they're scared or they're a coward. There's something really, really wrong with them.

So that brings us to this third tenant of naive realism. So just to remind you, the first one, the way I see the world, that's the way the world is. The second one is, well, I see the world, right, so obviously everybody else is going to see the world in front of them and agree with me. What happens if people don't agree with me? That means there is something wrong with them. They're stupid. They're uninformed. They're biased. Something is messed up with them if they don't agree you.

And this is where there's been a lot of research. Also I gave this quote and this little description of the talk. George Carlin, I think-- rather than listen to me talk for 45 minutes, you could just see this one line by George Carlin, which really sums it up. Because it does really seem like people who are driving slower than us are complete idiots. What are they doing, driving 22 miles per hour on a road where the speed limit is 25. What are they doing?

And the people who drive faster than us, they're crazy. They're maniacs. What are they doing? So it's almost as if each one of us believes that we know the exact correct speed to drive on every road. And if anybody's two or three miles faster than us or two to three miles per hour slower than us, they're screwed up. They're idiots, or they're crazy. Something is terribly wrong with them.

In case it took you too long to read the George Carlin quote, if you want this same point made by the eminent scholar Homer Simpson, [INAUDIBLE].

[VIDEO PLAYBACK]

- Whoo. Boy, everyone is stupid except me.

[END PLAYBACK]

That's the basic point-- everyone is stupid except for me. I know exactly how to do things. Everybody else, not so much.

So I've told you a little bit about how people's judgments can be biased. I gave you an example of the bat and ball thing, the Sydney. There's a number of biases that are in human judgment. Some of them are what you might call motivated biases. So we believe what we want to believe. That kitten really wants to believe it's a lion.

We tend to think that we are above average on pretty much everything. We tend to think that like almost all people in this room probably thinks that they're more attractive on average than the rest of the people in the room. It's not possible for us all to be more attractive than most of the other people in the room, and yet each one of us probably believes it. Each one of us probably believes that we're smarter on average, that we're nicer on average, that we're better able to get along with others on average than everyone else in the room.

And again, not actually possible. Just in case you think I'm making fun of you guys while thinking that I'm not also a part of it, 94% of college teachers think they are above average teachers-- not possible. Really, only 50% of us can be above average. And yet 94% of us think, no, definitely, I am.

Another one that like is if you interview people who are in the hospital as a direct result of a car accident, most of them believe they're above average drivers. And if there's any time when you might want to be willing to admit, you know what, maybe I could use a little bit of brushing up on the rules of the road, you would think that might be the time. But no, we don't tend to.

There's also these more cognitive biases, biases that it's not a matter of believing what you want to believe. You guys weren't particularly motivated to believe that Sydney was the capital of Australia. It's just a feature of the way we think. Because Sydney was the first city that came to the mind for a lot of people, that was the one you would assume was most likely to be the capital of Australia. It's not, but it's a feature of how we think.

So one thing that's interesting about these bias is there's a ton of them. And one thing that we know is true of them is that maybe we do it a little bit. So this is one study I did where I asked people, OK. Here's this bias. How susceptible are you to it? Like, yeah, maybe I do it a little bit. But whatever, I definitely don't do it as much as everybody else. Everyone else does theirs way more than me.

And it sort of doesn't matter what bias it is, if it's the above average, if it's how much you're going to say things like Sydney about the capital of Australia. Whatever it is, I do it as much as everybody else. I'm better. Everybody's stupid except me, just to go back to the Homer quote. That's a really standard thing.

This is the bias blind spot that was talked about in being wrong. Not only do we have these biases in the way we think, we tend to think we don't have it.

One thing that's really cool that actually just came out a couple months ago is that you might think, OK, yeah, some people don't see that sometimes their judgments can be biased. Certainly that's not me, but some people think that way. They're probably stupid.

It turns out that it goes the opposite way. So there's a group of researchers that took people's IQ through a series of tests and also asked them about, how likely are you to be susceptible to all these different biases? The smarter people were, as measured by their IQ, the more that they showed a bias blind spot.

The smarter they were, the more likely they were to say, no, my judgment isn't biased. The people that maybe weren't so smart or at least were less smart than the really smart snotty people, they were like, well, yeah, sure. Every once in a while I make a mistake. It's no big deal. But the smarter you were, the less likely you were to admit that you might have some biases. So that's pretty crazy.

So it means you can choose. Either you can think you're smart or you can think you're good at not doing this bias blind spot. But probably, you can't think both things.

So one of the reasons that this is important is not just that you get to feel nice because you think you're not biased. But it's important for how you treat other people. How do you treat those people who think differently from you? Both on a level of when you're just talking with a friend or a her romantic partner and on sort of national levels.

So a lot of the research that I've done is coming out of the lab of Lee Ross, this pretty amazing guy at Stanford who's been doing this stuff for years. And he has actually become crazy involved in trying to help reduce conflict in the most conflict-prone areas. So he's gone to the Middle East and met with Yasser Arafat. He gone to Northern Ireland and tried to reduce some of the conflict there.

He's tried to get the people who most want to kill each other because they don't agree with each other's point of views, he's gone directly to them and said, OK. Let's look at this and let's see how maybe you're only seeing part of the elephant. And let's try and see the whole thing, look at it from different perspectives.

When people don't agree with us, we immediately think they're stupid. They're biased. They're unformed.

Just to give you a window into this, I just quickly Googled, what do Republicans say about Democrats? Not so nice things-- ignorant, dishonest, misinformed, wasteful, incompetent, stupid, hypocritical. I also Googled to see what Democrats say about Republicans. I'll give you a little window into this. These aren't equal studies, so the next one's going to be meaner, but it's because these are college students who are just randomly tapped. They don't have any time to think, so they think of the first things.

The second study, the study where Democrats are talking about Republicans, these are coming from speeches from some of the higher up people. But they've had enough time to be more imaginative. So Republicans are anarchists and arsonists and murderers and squealing political pigs.

I think the difference there isn't because Democrats hate Republicans more but because of the particular study, the way this was done. They just were give more time to be imaginative and come up with even better titles.

This was also taken from speeches about the recent government shutdown. So the Democrats were particularly pissed off. So this is them being pissed off-- extortionists and hostage takers.

So we don't necessarily think well of people who have the opposite view of us. And we tend not to see bias in our own judgments even when really it should be obvious. So one time when it really should be obvious is when you have some personal connection to the issue that we're talking about.

One example would be, if you were talking to a parent who is watching their child play in sports or in a school play, that person is not going to have a completely objective point of view about how well their kid is doing. And that's fine. We understand that. You probably shouldn't have a completely objective point of view about whether or not your kid is a good actress or a good soccer player.

But even in those cases, do people say, no, no, no. I'm not biased Everybody else is biased. But not me, I'm not biased. My kid really is the best soccer player on the planet or the best cowardly lion in the school. Even then, do they say this?

And it's interesting this question of when people have some personal connection to an issue, like the parent has for a child, or another example, one that I looked at in the study I was doing at the time, there was a lot in the news about stem cell research, whether or not that should be allowed with federal funds and whether it should be legal.

And One thing that came up that was interesting is that if you have a family member or someone that's close to you that's suffering from a disease that could perhaps benefit from stem cell research, how does that inform your view of the issue? Does it bias your views? Does it just mean you can't think about it clearly because you have this loved one who has a disease

that might have some relevance here? Or does it maybe give you more information? Does it maybe give you an enlightened perspective about the real importance of this?

And you can see in some of the quotes of people who were connected to the issue, some people saying, no, if you have some relative or loved one that's connected to a disease, that has this disease, you cannot see clearly. So [? Carrie ?] [? Gordon ?] Earl suggest that every time you have a story, a story trumps the statistic. And often a story trumps an ethic.

So her perspective was, politicians, people who have some connection to someone who has a disease, they cannot have a clear view about whether or not stem cells should be used in research because their emotions get involved, and it just clouds their view. It biases them.

Another perspective is that actually having this connection gives you more of the story. It gives you some insight. It gives you more information. For example, Strom Thurmond said, "As a father of a daughter with juvenile diabetes, I know firsthand of the devastating nature of this disease, therefore I've been a long-time supporter of medical research." Where Dick Gephardt said, "Unless you've gone through something, you don't really understand it."

So their perspective was, having this personal connection, it gives you more insight. So you can see this personal connection in both ways, either as really clouding your view or as really illuminating your view. And which way are we going to see it?

And what I suspected was that which was we were going to see it, depended on whether you were talking about your view or the other guy's view. And I did a couple studies that I'll tell you about quickly, looking at this. One of them I did just with college students. I talked to athletes that were either on varsity teams or were on intramural teams.

And I told them, imagine that we're thinking about making this new gym. It's going to be amazing. It'll have all the newest equipment. It will be fantastic. It'll have a good cooling system. You won't be hot. It'll have-- I don't know, whatever isometric amazing things that you could have. The thing is, only the varsity athletes are going to get to use it. Nobody else is going to get to use it.

So when you think about this, and I asked varsity athletes and intramural athletes, and then I asked those people, do you think that your status as a varsity or intramural athlete, clouds your perspective on it? And then I also asked them, what about the other guys? So I asked intramural people, imagine your average varsity athlete. Do you think they can really think about this issue clearly or no? And I asked varsity athletes, imagine your average intramural athlete. Do you think they can clearly think about this issue or no?

And just, if you had to guess, what do you guys think happened? What did varsity athletes say about their own perspective, other varsity athletes? Did they say that that is totally fine, in fact, gives them more information or that it would bias them? I'm hearing these little shy, like, maybe-- come on, speak up. Somebody be brave.

AUDIENCE: They probably think that it gives them more information.

JOYCE EHRLINGER: Totally, yeah. The varsity athletes were like, you know what? This gives me so much information. I know how hard it is to work out in the gym and find space. And I've got to fight with like, I don't know, the various librarians and other people who are trying to use the machines. And what about if they're talking about intramural athletes, what would a varsity athlete think about what an intramural athlete's perspective would be like? Would it cloud their judgments? Or would it inform and enlighten their judgments?

AUDIENCE: It would cloud [INAUDIBLE].

JOYCE EHRLINGER: It would cloud their judgments. I should tell you. You guys haven't taken my class yet, but there's this is really awkward moment when somebody asks a question and there's this silence. And it's uncomfortable for you, and it's uncomfortable for me. But the thing is, I've been teaching for a while. So I can totally wait out longer than you guys. Somebody will cave before I do. So then you may as well just cave right away and nobody has to wait and be uncomfortable.

But you're exactly right. So this graph's a little bit confusing. Basically the lower the numbers go, the more that people are saying, that's going to provide a really biasing influence. The higher the numbers go, the more that they're saying this is going to provide a really enlightening influence.

And so these are varsity participants, so varsity athletes. And in the red, they're talking about, what would a varsity athlete do? And they're basically saying, oh, they're going to be totally enlightened. They're going to know so much about the situation. For the intramural participants, talking about intramural athletes-- that's this white bar up here-- they're going to say, yep, totally enlightened perspective. They're seeing so much about it.

But these two middle guys, this is when the varsities are talking about the intramurals, the intramurals are talking about the varsities. So basically it's when you're talking about somebody on the other side issue. And if you've been listening to what I've been saying so far, the one thing we know about people who think differently from us, they're biased. They're stupid. They're wrong. They're uninformed. And that's exactly what this says.

These people on the other side of the issue, they don't know what they're talking about. It totally biases them. I also looked at this with more consequential things. So this study was run a while ago in 2001. And at the time, there was this temporary stay in some of the violence that was going on in the Middle East. There was a peace treaty that had been proposed, and there were a lot of demonstrations and discussions going on at the campus I was at at the time, where you had a bunch of people who had personal connections, so people who were from Palestine, from Israel, or had family back there or some sort of a connection to that time.

So I went to them and I asked them a bunch of questions. I asked them, OK, so we've got this peace treaty that's proposed. You know, there's a lot of controversy over whether this is really helping both sides equally. You have views on it because you're at these events where people are discussing this. Do you think that your view is enlightened by your connection to the event or clouded by your connection to the event?

And you see exactly the same pattern as we saw with the athletes, where it's not quite as strong here. But you have the people who have some connection to Palestine. So these are people that were Arabic, Muslim, often have family back there. They're saying, yep, my view's more enlightened.

For people that were Jewish, you didn't get something that was significantly above this bar. But they definitely weren't saying that they weren't biased. And actually, these people had less of a close connection. Sometimes they were people who had family back in Israel. Sometimes they just were people who lived somewhere in New York, and they might not have as close of a connection. I think that's why it didn't go higher.

But the important part, these middle bars, basically people who are on the other side of the issue, biased. They totally can't see the issue clearly. Their personal connection is introducing bias.

So in general, they're saying that, across both studies, that when you're personally connected to an issue, it clouds your view. You can't understand it, at least when it's the other guy. But when it's me, all of a sudden, that personal connection isn't biasing. It's really helpful. It really illuminates my view. It really helps me know more about it.

I'm working on this research some now. And I should say since there's a bunch of freshman here, I'm always recruiting people to be a part of my lab to help me run these studies. So this is a little window in one of the things we're working on now.

There's been a lot of work looking at whether we think others are biased. But as I said before, people tend to think you're biased, stupid, or uninformed. The thinking that the other person's uninformed is interesting, because that's easily fixed. That sort of suggests that, OK, if it's the case that-- let's take the abortion debate. So you've got people who are pro-choice, pro-life. They generally don't have the nicest conversations with each other.

But if it's the case that the person on the other side of the issue from you is just uninformed, then you should be able to just tell them how things are, and then they'll just suddenly change their view. And I don't know how much you guys have discussed your political views with other people, but is that generally the impression you've had? You've outlined the reasons for your view and then everybody agrees, and you all go off and have a drink together? Is that pretty much how that goes? No.

Sometimes I find myself just repeating my reasoning but louder. Like maybe they didn't hear me. And if I just say it louder, they'll hear me, and then they'll change their view and we'll happily go off and have a drink together. Somehow that doesn't really help either.

So that's a really interesting thing that hasn't been studied and that I'm starting to study now. And we're always recruiting people for the lab. You can just Google my name. You'll find information about the lab and how to get involved if you're interested.

Well, lastly I just wanted to sum up with some sort of take-home points about how we avoid naive realism and this bias blind spot. So the first thing you might ask is, how exactly do you mean that?

So when I say, how do you avoid this bias blind spot, you might be thinking, because everyone around me is being really stupid. How do I get them to stop being stupid? If that's what you're thinking, you haven't been listening, so we have to start back over, and we're going to be here all night.

But if you were instead saying, no, I mean for me, this is something where I recognize that I am susceptible to the biases, how do I change that? One thing you need to think about is that you actually can't. This is a hugely built-in part of the way we think. It actually helps make better judgments a lot of the time, but it's how we think.

As I said, I've studied this for many, many years. And this afternoon, I found myself totally being a naive realist. Someone said their view, and I was shocked. Like, it was shocking to me that they could have this different perspective from me. And I was spending the whole week writing this talk. It's ridiculous. But it still totally happens.

So you can't change it, but what you can do is be aware of the fact that your views might not be as perfectly, obviously real as you think and that other people might actually have genuinely different perspectives that have value. That seems sort of silly when you say it that way. But the thing is that we very automatically think that those other perspectives don't have value. So you have to sort of stop yourself and think about, OK, wait.

And also think about, maybe are they another part of the elephant? Are they seeing another part of it that because of the way you grew up or the experiences you've had, you're just not seeing? In which case, you might actually, by trying to understand their perspective, get to a larger understanding of the issue, get to a better place.

So that's the best you can do. Unfortunately, we can't totally reduce the bias, because it's just such a huge part of how we think. But the more that you are aware of the fact that it plays a role in how you think, the more that you can avoid just coming off like a big jerk and maybe try to actually hear other people's points of view.

So that's my main point. And thanks for listening. And I'd be happy to take any questions you guys have.

[APPLAUSE]

[MUSIC PLAYING]