



Study: Why people ignore facts

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Many people seek out information confirming what they believe, instead of searching for information that confirms or disconfirms a belief, U.S. researchers say.

Study co-author Steven Hoffman, a visiting assistant professor of sociology at the University at Buffalo, and colleagues say for the most part people completely ignore contrary information.

For example, before the 2004 U.S. election there was strong resilience of the belief among many Americans that Saddam Hussein was linked to the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, despite strong evidence otherwise.

The misperception that Hussein was responsible for the terrorist attacks was very persistent, despite all the evidence suggesting no link existed, Hoffman says.

"The study demonstrates voters' ability to develop elaborate rationalizations based on faulty information," Hoffman says in a statement. "We form emotional attachments that get wrapped up in our personal identity and sense of morality, irrespective of the facts."

The study, published in *Sociological Inquiry*, did not find that people were being duped by a campaign of innuendo so much as they were actively constructing links and justifications that did not exist.

People wanted to believe in the link because it helped them make sense of a current reality and they were seeking justification for a war already in progress, Hoffman says.

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