IPMA-HR: Critical Thinking in an Era of Partisanship

September 24, 2018
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Creative vs Critical Thinking

- Creative thinking involves a divergence of ideas.
- Critical thinking involves a convergence of thought to distinguish between poor and good judgment.

Critical Thinking Concepts

• Requires mental energy as opposed to heuristics (mental shortcuts)
• Mental models – your understanding of how the world works
• Cognitive biases – flawed mental models that influence decision making
• Logical fallacies – faulty reasoning in a belief or argument
Key Elements of the Model

• Concern vs Problem – Proactive vs reactive analysis
• Point of view – how people see the world
• Assumption – belief held to be true
• Inference – conclusion something is true in light of something else being true or appearing to be true

Cognitive Biases

• Confirmation: preference for ideas that are consistent with preconceptions
• Fundamental attribution error – judging others on character but one’s self on situations
• Self-serving: successes are due to the individual, and failures are due to external factors

Adapted from https://yourbias.is/
Cognitive Biases

- Spotlight effect: overestimating how much people notice how you look and act
- Blind spot: belief one is less biased than others

Adapted from https://yourbias.is/
Cognitive Biases

- Anchoring: first information influences subsequent judgments
- Sunk cost: clinging to things when we have invested irrecoverable time, money, or emotion

Adapted from https://yourbias.is/
Cognitive Biases

- Optimism or pessimism – overestimating the likelihood of positive or negative outcomes

- Just-world – presuming justice exists (karma)

Adapted from https://yourbias.is/
Cognitive Biases

• Halo effect – our judgment of others is influenced by their attractiveness or how much we like them

• Reverse halo effect?

Adapted from https://yourbias.is/
Cognitive Biases

- **In-group: tribalism**, favoring those who are most like us or belong to our groups
- **Groupthink**: allowing first or strongest voices to dominate group decisions
- **Bystander effect**: presuming someone else in a crowd will act

Adapted from [https://yourbias.is/](https://yourbias.is/)

When all think alike, then no one is thinking.
- Walter Lippman
Logic/Reason Example

Assumptions
- If \( a = b \)
- and \( b = c \)

Conclusion (inference)
- then \( a = c \)

Conclusions are true/valid
only if the underlying assumptions are true/valid.

Logical Fallacy: Flaw in Reason

Who recalls?
Transitive Property of Equality
Logical Fallacies: Straw Man

- Misrepresenting someone's argument to make it easier to present one’s position as reasonable
Logical Fallacies: False Dilemma

• False dilemma/dichotomy: presenting two alternative states as the only possibilities when in fact more possibilities exist.

Adapted from https://yourlogicalfallacyis.com/
Logical Fallacies: False Cause

• False cause: correlation may be coincidental or attributable to a common cause.
  – Texas sharp shooter: cherry-picking a data cluster to suit an argument or finding a pattern to fit a presumption

Adapted from https://yourlogicalfallacyis.com/
Logical Fallacies: Appeals to Emotion

• Appeal to emotion: when emotion is used instead of a logical argument to obscure the fact that no compelling rational reason exists for one's position.
  – Slippery slope: an appeal to fear in which the argument at hand is unfairly tainted by an extreme hypothetical

Adapted from https://yourlogicalfallacyis.com/
Logical Fallacies: False Authority

- Appeal to authority: the authority a person or institution holds does not have any intrinsic bearing upon whether their claims are true.
Logical Fallacies: Evidence

• Anecdotal: using personal experiences or isolated examples instead of compelling evidence.

• Burden of proof: the inability, or disinclination, to disprove a claim does not render that claim valid.

Adapted from https://yourlogicalfallacyis.com/
Logical Fallacies: Credibility

• Ad hominem: attacking or casting doubt on opponents’ characters or personal attributes as a way to discredit their argument.

• Genetic: judging something as good or bad on the basis of where it comes from, or from whom it came.

Adapted from https://yourlogicalfallacyis.com/
More About Critical Thinking?

- “Becoming a Critic of Your Thinking” by Dr. Linda Elder and Dr. Richard Paul
Online Programs

• Executive Master of Public Administration
  – graduate degree program
  – 19-month, one-course-at-a-time
  – 3 in-person sessions (Phoenix & Washington, D.C.)

• Certified Public Manager® Program
  – One per state, only one available online
  – 10 months

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