

# How Self Interest Shapes Our Opinions and Why We Won't Admit It

Our opinions are like cherished possessions - we hold them close, defend them vigorously, and often refuse to consider any evidence that contradicts them. But what if our opinions are not as objective and rational as we believe? What if they are, in fact, shaped by our own self-interest?

This is the provocative premise of Dan Ariely's book, *How Self Interest Shapes Our Opinions and Why We Won't Admit It*. Ariely, a professor of behavioral economics at Duke University, argues that our opinions are not simply the product of logical reasoning and objective analysis. Rather, they are often driven by our own self-interest, even when we are unaware of it.



## The Hidden Agenda of the Political Mind: How Self-Interest Shapes Our Opinions and Why We Won't Admit

It by Jason Weeden

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Ariely provides a wealth of evidence to support his claim. In one experiment, he asked people to estimate the number of calories in a slice

of cake. He found that people who were told that the cake was for themselves estimated that it contained significantly more calories than people who were told that the cake was for someone else.

This experiment demonstrates how our self-interest can bias our perceptions. When we believe that something will benefit us, we tend to see it in a more positive light. Conversely, when we believe that something will harm us, we tend to see it in a more negative light.

Our self-interest can also bias our judgments. In another experiment, Ariely asked people to evaluate a job candidate. He found that people who were told that the candidate was a member of their own social group were more likely to rate the candidate as being competent and qualified.

This experiment demonstrates how our self-interest can lead us to favor people who are similar to us. We tend to trust and believe people who share our values and beliefs, even when there is no objective evidence to support our positive assessment.

Ariely's research has important implications for our understanding of ourselves and our world. It suggests that our opinions are not as objective and rational as we believe. Rather, they are often shaped by our own self-interest, even when we are unaware of it.

This can have a significant impact on our decision-making and relationships. For example, if we are unaware of how our self-interest is biasing our opinions, we may make decisions that are not in our best interests. We may also be more likely to conflict with people who have different opinions than us, simply because we are unable to see their point of view.

So, what can we do to mitigate the effects of self-interest bias on our opinions? Ariely offers a few suggestions:

- Be aware of your own self-interest. The first step to mitigating the effects of self-interest bias is to be aware of it. When you are making a decision or evaluating something, ask yourself if your self-interest is influencing your opinion.
- Consider the opinions of others. When you are trying to make a decision, don't just rely on your own opinion. Seek out the opinions of others, especially people who have different perspectives from you. This will help you to see the issue from a more balanced perspective.
- Be open to changing your mind. If you are presented with new evidence that contradicts your opinion, be willing to change your mind. It is okay to admit that you were wrong. In fact, it is a sign of intelligence and maturity.

Mitigating the effects of self-interest bias is not easy, but it is important. By being aware of our own self-interest, considering the opinions of others, and being open to changing our minds, we can make better decisions and build more meaningful relationships.

*How Self Interest Shapes Our Opinions and Why We Won't Admit It* is a fascinating and thought-provoking book that challenges our assumptions about ourselves and our world. It is a must-read for anyone who wants to understand the hidden forces that shape our opinions and behavior.

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