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News Item

This study shows how people reason their way through echo chambers — and what might guide them out | Nieman Journalism Lab

By Shraddha Chakradhar
September 20, 2021

> Preaching to the choir, shouting in an echo chamber — whatever your preferred metaphor is, a study published earlier this week in the Journal of the European Economic Association sheds some light on what may be happening when people are surrounded by others with like-minded views — and especially when they have a tough time gauging whether the information being presented within the chamber is accurate.
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> The researchers behind the study, who are economists at the University of California, Santa Barbara, conducted an experiment among 220 college students. The underlying concept driving the study was this idea of motivated belief — where a person believes something because they *want* it to be true, not necessarily because that belief is supported by facts or other evidence.
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> This kind of reasoning often plays out in the political realm, where underlying biases or wanting a particular outcome could cause people to hold onto beliefs that are factually inaccurate. A simpler example might be how fans of competing sports teams can have wildly different takes on a referee's call, because each fan wants their respective team to win.
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