Comparing Two Strategies for Frame Questioning: *Providing Counterfactuals is More Effective than Self-Generation*

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INTRO

- Strategies for questioning one's frame have not been suggested or tested. Highlighting mutability using counterfactuals (CF) is a potential basis for these strategies.

METHODS

1. N=167 (Study 1), N=125 (Study 2)
2. Questioning measures: Outcome likelihood ratings (Study 1), distribution of points among possible explanations (Study 2)
3. Tested with 2 Strategy x 4-5 Scenario mixed factorial repeated measures ANOVA

RESULTS – Strategy

1. No main effect, Generating CF = Control: $F(1, 166)=0.03$, $p=0.86$, $\eta^2_{partial}=0.00$
2. Main effect, Reading CF > Control: $F(1,121)=79.89$, $p<0.01$, $\eta^2_{partial}=0.39$

DISCUSSION

- People are more likely to question their initial frame when given a counterfactual than having to generate it. Generating CF mutability is hard, makes other frames less convincing (c.f., Schwarz et al., 1991). Reading a given CF is easy, makes mutability + other frames available.

Reading a counterfactual *"What if"* is more effective than a control strategy to get people to **question** their initial frame of a situation.

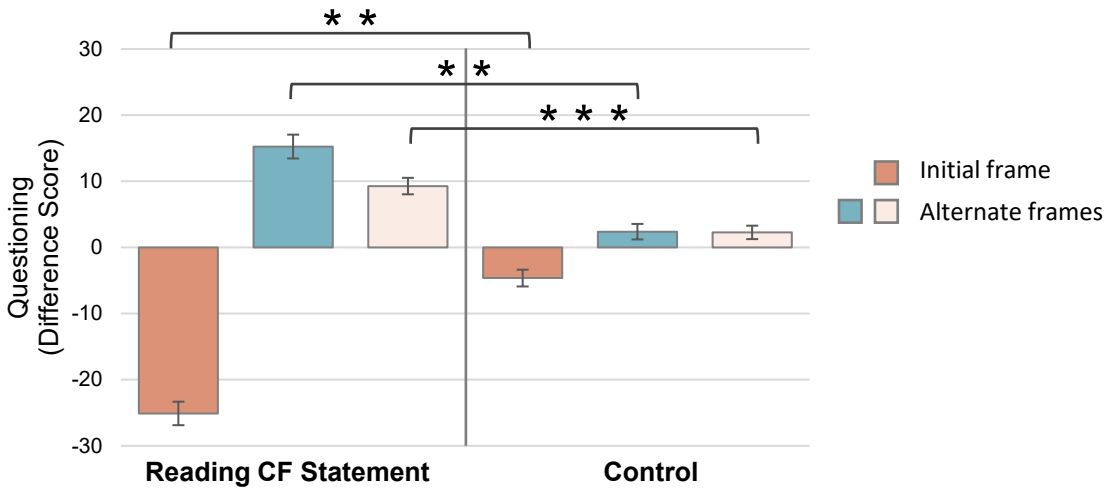


Figure 1. Study 2 results show greater questioning after reading a CF than Control statement.

People are *unlikely* to **question** when asked to **generate** the counterfactuals themselves.

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Study 1

- Strategy: Generate CF mutability for each scenario (vs. Control)
- "What are factors that, if changed, could affect the interpretation of the scenario?"

Study 2

- Strategy: Read CF statement highlighting mutability for each scenario (vs. Control)
- "What if you and your coworkers hadn't gone to a new restaurant and you had still gotten sick?"
- Results in Fig. 1
- Effect recently replicated (N=167)

Application

- Hiring – present "What if" statements to encourage questioning frames formed about candidates.
- Cybersecurity – ask "What if" statements to promote questioning regarding potential phishing attacks.

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