

“Why the Future is Bigger (and Badder) than the Past”

People’s emotional reactions to future events tend to be more extreme than their emotional reactions to equivalent events in the equidistant past (Van Boven & Ashworth, 2007). Because emotion is used as a cue in evaluative judgment, I suggest that there is a systematic tendency for people to judge emotionally-laden events and actors more extremely in the future than in the past. In a series of studies, this temporal asymmetry was found for participants’ judgments of 1) the value of experiences, 2) the fairness of events, and 3) the intentionality of moral agents. I discuss the implications of this asymmetry for current models of judgment and decision making over time.