

LEARNING CHECK

1. In college, it sometimes seemed as though the harder I studied for a test, the worse I did on it. Explain how my thinking could be an example of an illusory correlation.

A: If I study hard, I should do well on tests. If I don't study hard, I should do poorly on tests. Those are normal states of affairs. What I recall, though, are the "weird" instances in which I studied hard but did poorly on a test. Because such instances are rare, they stand out and are easier to recall. Thus, I've made a false (illusory) connection between my study habits and test scores.

2. If a couple has had three children who were all girls, they might assume their fourth child is likely to be a boy. Explain why the couple might think their fourth child is likely to be a boy.

A: There should be an "evening out" that occurs eventually (or so it feels to this couple). Of course, the sex of their fourth child has nothing to do with the sex of their first three children. This is an example of the gambler's fallacy.