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Data analysis protocols: The similarities and differences between academic research and the analytic processes of the intelligence community

Intelligence Community

In order to provide governmental decision makers with valid and truthful data analysis the community utilizes refined techniques. The following is a Lifvendahl synopsis of those techniques. It is limited to defining processes alone, not report findings. The process is as follows:

- Determining and communicating opinion as to sources of information utilized and the uncertainty/reliability of the information (*who said what about whom and can we believe who said it*)
- Clarification of the affect the data analyzed has on judgments and assumptions of the analyst with the function of isolating bias (*to what extent is the researcher conclusions derived from his/her biased beliefs*)
- Exploration of alternatives to findings thus increasing the veracity of the analysis (*can the researcher find counter arguments that confirm the truthfulness of their findings*)
- Utilizing rigorous logic and transparency in judgement (*applying lucid judgement in an open way*)
- Providing explanation of uncertainties with judgement based on the quantity and quality of source material (*defining that which we don't know in ways that critically question what the researcher discovered*)
- Judging what might happen based on understandable formats (likely/unlikely) and confidence levels (low, moderate, high); see below (*assigning subjective findings based on professional opinion and coding same*)
- Assessment of attribution of information used in analysis based on comparison of existing verified knowledge to new findings (*comparing new information to trusted known facts*)

- Testing alternative hypotheses and associated ambiguities (*critically being skeptical and remaining open to alternative conclusions*)

Judgements of Likelihood

Almost no chance	Very unlikely	Unlikely	Roughly even chance	Likely	Very likely	Almost certainly
Remote	Highly improbable	Improbable	Roughly even odds	Probable	Highly probable	Nearly certain

When analysts judge likelihood of an action happening they usually associate high, moderate or low levels of confidence in their findings. HOW IS THIS PROCESSING THE SAME OR DIFFERENT FROM RESEARCH FOR YOUR PAPERS?

Reference:

National Intelligence Council (January 6, 2017). *Background to "Assessing Russian Activities and intentions in recent US election": The analytic process and cyber incident attribution*. Office of the Director of National Intelligence, Washington, D.C.