

Chapter 4

Social Cognitive Bias

ABSTRACT

Within social psychology and sociology there is a field of study in charge of studying how the social group affects the individual in all areas. In fact, several studies have found that the social decision-making process can be influenced by cognitive biases. This field establishes two large categories of social groups called ingroup and outgroup depending on whether individuals are part of this group or not. Therefore, an ingroup is a social group to which a person psychologically identifies as being a member. By contrast, an outgroup is a social group with which an individual does not identify. Moreover, the psychological membership of social groups and categories can be related with different aspects such as race, profession, religion, among others, so that individuals can categorize themselves and others in different ways, usually dependent on the context. This categorization that individuals do based in the pertinence to a group and the influence of the group on the person reproduce in the person social cognitive biases that can lead to erroneous decisions. Within these biases the best known is the ingroup bias. This chapter explores some of these social biases and how they influence the decision-making process.

INTRODUCTION

The human being is a social being. Within each society people are influenced by the different individuals who make it up. These people influence (and sometimes manipulate) their decision making. These decisions can be simple or insignificant (for example, I will buy such dress because it is fashionable this season or/and I will see a movie, even though I do not like its genre, just because everyone talk about it). Or they can be complex and transcendental in personal and social level. To explain how work this type of decisions in social psychology, there are two main theories which are Social Identity Theory (SIT) and Social Categorization Theory (SCT) (Anderson, 1991) These theories try to understand the networks of individuals such as governments, communities, institutions, political parties, interest groups...etc.

On the one hand, Social Identity Theory (SIT) was developed by Tajfel (e.g., Tajfel, 1974, Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Later, Turner (Turner, John, Hogg, Michael, Oakes, Penelope, Reicher, Stephen, & Wetherell, 1987; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994) based on this theory (SIT) postulated Social Categorization Theory (SCT). In general, these theories try to examine the social psychological processes associated with group membership and action. On the other hand, Social Identity Theory (SIT) postulates that people act in terms of their social identity whenever they see themselves and others in term of group membership rather than as particular individuals. On the other hand, Social Categorization Theory (SCT) postulates that when individuals self-categorize as group members they come to see ourselves as similar to other in-group members.

Therefore, individuals derive their personality partially from the groups they belong to. In addition, individuals of in-group are seen of positive way. According to sociology and social psychology, an ingroup is a social group to which a person psychologically identifies as being a member. By contrast, an outgroup is a social group with which an individual does not identify. Thus, the psychological membership of social groups and categories can be related with different aspects such as race, profession, religion, gender, age, ethnicity, sports teams, education, status, culture...etc. (Cialdini, Borden, Thorne, Walker, Freeman, & Sloan, 1976; Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2009; Garcia, Song, & Tesser, 2010). Therefore, people can categorize themselves and others of different ways and usually it is depending on the context (Tajfel,

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