

NOAM CHOMSKY'S COGNITIVE REVOLUTION

The rise of psychologists' interest in behaviourism, linguistics, neuroscience and computer science saw a shift in the scientific community where humanistic psychologists focussed on humans as a whole rather than simply their minds. This movement was known as the cognitive revolution and whilst he wasn't the person who coined the term, Noam Chomsky played an influential role in the early days of the movement. A renowned American linguist, Chomsky argued against the supposed narrowness of behaviourism when considered without the role of the mind.

SENSORY ANCHORING BIAS (MEMORY RELIANCE)

Whenever someone makes a decision, they will instinctively 'anchor' down onto a detail or value about that thing. This first detail people anchor down onto becomes the bias adjust themselves to within their circumstances. This is why the phrase 'you never make a second first impression' exists: people will anchor onto the first piece of information you reveal about yourself (i.e. you were late, you were rude, you were loud, you cursed, etc). The same goes for other people: when we're young and impressionable, we will pick up the biases our parents hold because we, instinctually, want to survive and therefore want to appease and agree with our primary caregivers. We will pick up on little things like their disgust of certain habits, foods, dislike of certain people and animals, styles and even shops! Sensory anchoring also affects our memory. Our sensory anchoring bias is responsible for some of our distorted memories when it comes to relationships, events and our self-perception.

Important questions to ask ourselves when it comes to challenging our biases include: How do I know this is bad? Where did this idea come from? Who taught me this was good/bad? How authentic is this thought to me?

AVAILABILITY HEURISTIC (SELF-JUSTIFICATION)

Also known as a mental short-cut, Availability Heuristics is when we rely on information which comes quickly to us and estimates the value of our own experience more than others'. When we try to make a decision, a number of related events or statistics may jump to the forefront of our mind, which results in us putting more statistical weight and value in their probability. This is because, when we are in situations which are somewhat dangerous or anxiety-inducing, our brain needs to make a quick decision. Say you're nervous about leaving your dog tied up outside a shop and you're suddenly able to recall several news articles and stories about dog-nappings - you will suddenly perceive dog nappings as more common than they actually are and therefore perceive yourself at a greater risk of being a victim to it. This, obviously, also affects our relations with other people because the examples you have to hand may conflict with someone else's: this is why we become closed minded to counter-arguments, conflicting evidence or conflicting anecdotal evidence in debates and discussions.

THE BANDWAGON EFFECT (IF YOU GO, I'LL GO)

Have you ever been asked 'and if all your friends jumped off a cliff, would you do it too?' This phrase is connected with the bandwagon effect, a psychological phenomenon which causes people to do something just because everyone else is doing it, even if it conflicts with their personal values. We all went through teenage years of influence where we did and said things because we wanted to fit in and be accepted by our peers, but even in adulthood, we find ourselves manipulated by this effect by politics and consumerism. Herd mentality is responsible for waves in politics, fashion trends, music hits, technological development,



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and shifts in social acceptance and culture. We become so stimulated by what other people do and invest time into that we adopt their behaviours, attitudes and interests. The problem arises when we surround ourselves with people who aren't living worthy and fulfilling lives: people who engage in unhealthy or dangerous habits, have little to no aspiration, are unkind and judgemental, etc. We are the sum of the five core people we surround ourselves with: so we should make a conscious effort to surround ourselves with empowered, passionate, energetic, kind and like-minded people who are striving for something greater than themselves.

PERSONAL BLIND-SPOT BIAS (I'M OK, YOU'RE NOT OK)

Most of us know what we don't like in other people and things: being judgemental is easy. The trouble is, very few of us are able to turn the critical eye in on ourselves where necessary. Of course, there will be many of you reading this who are incredibly self-critical people who claim to know all their flaws - but the reality is, self-critical people also have blind spots. In fact, overly self-critical people tend to be critical in the wrong areas, because their criticism stems mainly out of self-shame rather than honest critique with an empowered intention to change. Our blind spots develop out of our desire to see ourselves more positively - something which most self-critical people crave the opportunity to do. After spending a lifetime of criticising ourselves, what could be more perfect than taking fifteen minutes to critique someone else whilst turning a blind eye to all our own (probably very similar) flaws? However, personal blind spots not only occur more frequently in people who don't think they're biased but also amongst people who are the least receptive to criticism and advice.

CONFIRMATION BIAS (I DETERMINE WHAT'S RIGHT AND WRONG)

We are all inclined to accept ideas which validate our beliefs more than those which challenge them, regardless of whether or not our beliefs are positive or negative. For example, most of us have been in a situation where we've texted a friend who never replied to us and have been left wondering if they hated us because we'd upset them somehow. Whether the information is given to us or we seek it out, we are all inclined to finding ways to validate our beliefs, opinions, thoughts and actions, even if this confirmation puts us in a worse state and leads to self-sabotage. Confirmation bias serves to show us that we rarely look at ourselves and circumstances objectively: if we have incredibly low self-esteem, we seek out words in conversations which we believe implies insult or criticism; if we're struggling with our health but don't want to challenge it now, we seek out people who don't tell us to lose weight; and if we agree with one political party, we only surround ourselves with others who align with us politically, refusing to converse with those who challenge or question our stances.

