Course Learning Outcomes for Unit II

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Explain bounded awareness and how it can affect decisions.
2. Explain inattentional blindness.
3. Summarize how inattentional blindness can affect decision making.
4. Explain change blindness.
5. Summarize how change blindness can affect decision making.
6. Explain the tendency known as focalism.
7. Contrast focalism with groupthink.
8. Explain focusing illusion.
9. Summarize bounded awareness in groups.
10. Summarize reference group neglect.
11. Summarize system neglect.

Reading Assignment

Chapter 3: Bounded Awareness

In order to access the resource below, you must first log into the myCSU Student Portal and access the Business Source Complete database within the CSU Online Library.

The article includes a brief history of decision making:


Unit Lesson

Through Unit II, you will gain an understanding of the concept of bounded awareness. As we learned in the first unit, “boundedness” has everything to do with placing limits on one's rationality. Max Bazerman and Dolly Chugh coined the phrase “bounded awareness” in a 2005 article entitled Bounded Awareness: Focusing Failures in Negotiations. Here, they define bounded awareness as “the phenomenon by which individuals do not “see” and use accessible and perceivable information during the decision-making process, while “seeing” and using other equally accessible and perceivable information.” As such, it prevents individuals from focusing on all of the available information when making a decision — by placing limits or “boundaries” on our ability to gather or capture all available information.

According to the article, bounded awareness leads to “focusing failures” which result from “a misalignment between the information needed for a good decision and the information included in the decision-making process.” As Bazerman and Moore point out, that individuals make choices based on what they will pay attention to and what they will ultimately ignore and that bounded awareness “often leads people to ignore accessible, perceivable, and important information, while paying attention to other equally accessible but irrelevant information.” Bazerman and Moore go on to outline three sets of behavior that form the basis for bounded awareness – inattentional blindness, change blindness, and focalism. Not discussed in your textbook but just as important to decision making is the phenomenon known as groupthink. Groupthink, as described by Irving Janis in 1972, occurs when a highly cohesive group is so concerned with maintaining agreement that they fail to evaluate all their alternatives and options. It is caused by the pressure placed on the individuals to conform within a group that interferes with that group’s consideration of a problem. Poor
decisions can be the product of groupthink. See http://www.pysr.org/about/pubs_resources/groupthink%20overview.htm for a list of symptoms of groupthink and those things that groups can do to avoid groupthink.

Although the term “inattentional blindness” was coined by Arien Mack and Irvin Rock in 1998, the phenomenon was first described by Ulric Neisser in 1979. The authors discuss the video that Neisser used to illustrate what became “inattentional blindness.” Webquest - Use your favorite video-share website and search for a video about inattentional blindness.

Inattentional blindness can be described as the inability or failure to see a fully-visible, but unexpected, object because an individual was focusing on another task, event, or object. Change blindness also finds its roots in the field of visual perception and can be described as a phenomenon in which seemingly large changes within a scene are not detected by the viewer. An example of change blindness might be where a legal contract that had been reviewed by an individual is changed and then the person is asked to read it once again before signing. The changed material may not be detected by the signer and this may put the individual in some form of legal jeopardy. Bazerman and Moore speak of potential unethical behavior that may arise from such activities. Finally, the authors discuss focalism that they describe as “the common tendency to focus too much on a particular event and too little on other events that are likely to occur concurrently.” Allied to focalism is “focusing illusion.” First described by David Schkade and Daniel Kahneman focusing illusion is “the tendency of people to make judgments based on their attention to only a subset of available information, to overweight that information, and to underweight unattended information.”

Groups tasked with making decisions have a series of advantages over individual decision makers, in the degree that collectively they can “see” more available information and, through discussion, can make others “see.” As a result, bounded awareness in groups may be greatly reduced, since multiple perceptions may help a group to consider much more information when making a decision. The chapter culminates with a discussion of the various applications and examples of bounded awareness.