Person Perception
Note: There are several class demonstrations so be sure to get the notes if you missed this lecture

• Every day, we encounter “strange people” (literally, strangers)
• How do we size them up? Predict their actions? Judge their personalities?

Heuristics
• To do this, we often rely on “rules of thumb” (heuristics)
  – Appearance
  – Nonverbal behavior
  – Verbal behavior
• These can be effective
• But they can also be misleading

Cognitive Heuristics
• __________ “rules of thumbs” for person perception
  __________ effects
• “What is beautiful is good” is a heuristic that often gets us into trouble
• Assuming that attractive people are also more honest and intelligent is an example of a “____ effect”

Attractive people are
• Less likely to be convicted of crimes
  – And when they are, they get lighter sentences
• More likely to be viewed as __________
• Thought to be happier, more satisfied with life

Is it true?
• Are attractive people, in fact, more honest, smarter, or even happier than unattractive people? Yes/No

• They do tend to be more __________, and as a result tend to have more
Implicit personality theories (IPTs)
• Halo effects are a type of IPT
• Everyone has IPTs
  – working models in our heads for what traits “___ ____________”

Class Demonstration of IPT

1. _______  2. ____________ 3. ________________  4. ______________ 5.__________

Using IPTs
• Every day, we have to make judgments about others based on very little data – to “go beyond the information given”
• The problem is, we tend to be _____________ about these judgments

“Going beyond IPTs”
• Besides IPTs and halo effects, people make judgments using other kinds of cognitive heuristics

• Let’s see if you can answer the following (circle your answer)

Which causes more deaths in U.S.?
• Decide between each of the two available choices
  – Homicides vs. Diabetes
  – Floods vs. Infectious Hepatitis
  – Asthma vs. Tornados
  – Colon Cancer vs. Car Accidents
  – Appendicitis vs. Lightning Strikes

Crime statistics
• What percent of crimes in the U.S. are classified by the FBI as violent?
  A. 40%  B. 25%  C. 13%  D. 80%
• What percent of accused felons plead guilty by reason of insanity?
  A. 1%  B. 22%  C. 30%  D. 11%
• What percent of felony convictions are obtained through trial instead of plea bargaining?
  A. 50%  B. 10%  C. 20%  D. 33%
The _______________ bias

Relying on information that is ___________ in memory

- The media plays a big role in this by overexposing us to some events, and underexposing us to others
- Thus, we don’t have good information to base our opinions on
- For example, we typically fear the wrong things
  - Plane crashes > car accidents
  - AIDS > most other diseases
  - Nuclear energy > coal-based energy
  - Strangers > People we know
  - Lung cancer > colon cancer

How to fight this?
- We should keep in mind that there are reasons for “over-exposure” to some (versus other) events that have nothing to do with their frequency
  - ____________ events are more newsworthy
  - Activists call attention to some causes more than others
- Confirmation bias - another cognitive heuristic that gets us into trouble

The card game (D, B, 3, 7)
“If there’s a D on one side, there’s a 3 on the other”

What order would you want to flip them? 1. ___ 2. ___ 3. ____ 4. ____

Confirmation Bias
- The bias to confirm rather than falsify our beliefs
- It can cause us to pay attention to different information, depending on the question asked

Example:
- Imagine you are the judge in a child custody case, involving a single child following a messy divorce
- Your information about each parent boils down to the following

Class Demonstration
• Why the contradiction?
• When asked who should be awarded custody, people look for _______ information
• When asked who should be denied custody, they look for _______ information
  Again, the point is that people are biased to look for information that is consistent with the conclusion

Stereotyping and confirmation bias
• People often seek out information that confirms their stereotypes
  – Professors and Asian students
  – Employers and “mommy-tracked” female applicants
• Errors of commission (what we do)
• Errors of omission (what we don’t do)

Avoiding stereotyped targets
• Subjects were asked to interview three male job applicants for a high pressure job – one slightly stuttered
• The stereotype is that people who stutter can’t handle pressure
• Subjects were given a list of questions to choose from
• Some Q’s were about pressure (“Have you ever blown an exam when you realized you were running out of time?”)
• Other Q’s were about casual topics (“Do you like to read?”)

Hypotheses
• If subjects had asked the stutterer about pressure, the stereotype would have been disconfirmed
• But we predicted that (a) he would be asked less questions in general; and (b) that the questions would not be about pressure

Summary
• Subjects avoided asking the stutterer questions (especially, about pressure)
• What happened to subjects’ stereotypes about stutterers? (Were they changed or did they remain intact?) _____________

What were the consequences for the stutterer? Was he ever hired? _____________
Schemas
• Stereotypes act as “schemas” or blueprints
  – a working model in our heads of “the way things are”

• Schemas affect information input (what kinds of questions we ask of people)
• They also affect the way we _______ and _______ information (memories)

Class Demonstration

1. _______ 2. _____________ 3. ____________ 4.___________
5. ________ 6. ____________ 7. ____________ 8._____________

What did this demonstrate? ________________ _______________

Information Interpretation
• When we are presented with ____________ information, we interpret it in line with our stereotypes, attitudes, and beliefs (schemas)

• The _____ ________ study was an example of this

  Reality is often ambiguous
• Reasonable people disagree about the same facts because their attitudes and beliefs differ
• O.J. Simpson’s domestic abuse history
  – Evidence he killed Nicole
  – Not pertinent to the homicide charge
• Bill Clinton’s sexual behavior in office
  – Impeachable moral violations
  – Immature but forgivable

• Our attitudes toward these people cause us to interpret the same facts very differently
  – Weigh the evidence differently, pay attention to different facts, and
arrive at different conclusions
• The fact that we cannot view reality “objectively” leads to biased information processing

Self-fulfilling prophecy (SFP)
• Finally, confirmation bias can cause us to ______________________
• SFP (Merton, 1948) – introduced in the film as “The Pygmalion Effect”
  Teacher expectancies led students randomly assigned as “late bloomers” to out-perform other students

How?
• The teachers’ beliefs about “late bloomers” led them to engage in behaviors that made their belief come true
  – Climate
  – Input
  – Response opportunities
  – Feedback
*If you did not jot these down during the film, you have them here

Behavioral Confirmation
• Because the students’ behavior conformed to teachers’ beliefs, this type of SFP is called behavioral confirmation
• Although this example seems “positive,” students who were not so identified suffered

Cognitive Confirmation
• Sometimes we just ______ our belief was confirmed
• How?
  – Selectively remembering information that was consistent with it
  – Fabricating memories that are consistent with it

SFP & Selective Recall
• Math vs. Music Major Study
• Subjects believed they were going to interact with another “subject” (in fact, a confederate)
• Confederate was identified ahead of time as either a music or math major

• When the confederate walked in, he dropped several items, including some music sheets and a slide rule
• After a 10-min interaction, subjects were asked to remember what the confederate had dropped

% of S’s recalling each item

SFP & memory fabrication
• Waitress vs. Librarian Study
• Subjects watched a video about a woman described as either a waitress or librarian
• The video showed a day in her life
• Among other activities, she read a book, went bowling, and went out to dinner with a man to celebrate her birthday

Memory test
• After a 10-minute filler task, subjects were asked to write down everything they could recall about the woman
• In the ________ condition, they more often remembered she went bowling
• In the ________ condition, they more often remembered she had read a book
• Again, this shows stereotype-driven selective recall
Memory fabrication
- But subjects also made up details that were not in the story
- If waitress - they described her drinking _______ while bowling, and going out to dinner with her boyfriend
- If librarian - they described her drinking _______ while having dinner with her husband

Review Slide: Cognitive Heuristics
- Mental “rules of thumbs” for person perception
- Outline of cog heuristics:
  - Halo Effects (Implicit Personality Theory)
  - Availability bias
  - Confirmation bias
  - Schemas & Fabricated Memories
  - Self-fulfilling prophecies (cognitive confirmation, behavioral confirmation)

  Two Types of SFP
- _________ confirmation
- When people pay more attention to (or make up) information that supports their beliefs
- _________ confirmation
- When people act on this information in such a way that the target actually behaves in line with belief

Nonverbal Behavior
- To finish with person perception, let’s see how well we do when we try to answer questions based on minimal information about others
- In the following video, we will watch people interacting and try to answer the question posed by researchers
  Hint
- For the most part, try to rely not on what people are saying, but the way they are saying it
- Also use other nonverbal clues, such as who seems more relaxed, expressiveness, etc.
Person Perception Scene 1
• 1. Who is the child of both adults?
  – (a) only the little boy
  – (b) only the little girl

Person Perception Scene 2
• What is the relationship between the man and the woman?
  – (a) They have been together for 9 months
  – (b) They have been together for 2 years

Person Perception Scene 3
• The two people work together – which one is the boss?
  – (a) the man
  – (b) the woman

Person Perception Scene 4
• You will see the same woman in two separate scenes. Which is the lie, which is the truth?
  – (a) the first is a lie, the second is true
  – (b) the first is true, the second a lie

Person Perception Scene 5
• Who won the game of one-on-one basketball?
  – (a) The man on the left
  – (b) The man on the right (holding ball)

If time, we will do more…

• Read Chapter 4 for next session