

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

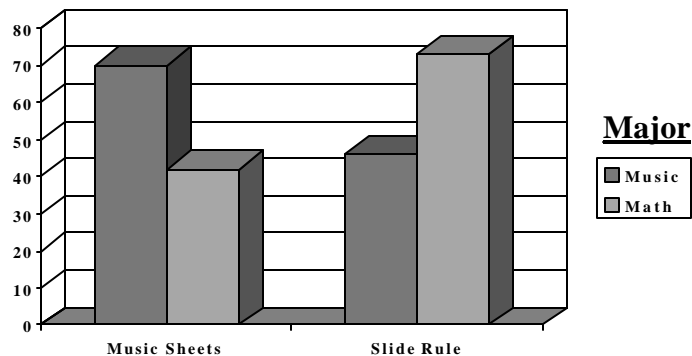
SFP & Selective Recall

- 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