

## CHAPTER 4

### Perceiving Others

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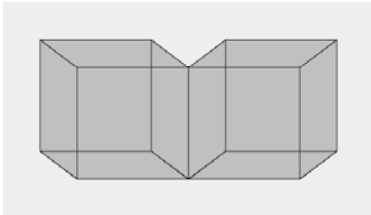
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What do you see?



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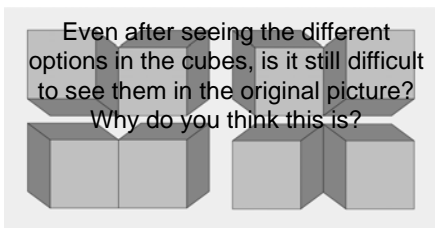
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Which did you see?



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## The Perception Process

- Reality is constructed
  - First-order realities
    - Physically observable qualities of a thing or situation
  - Second order realities
    - Involve our attaching meaning to first-order things or situations.
    - Second order realities don't reside in objects or events, but rather in our minds.



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## The Perception Process

- Example:
  - First-Order Reality:** Your friend calls you a “bonehead.”
  - Your Second-Order Reality:** Your friend is being critical.
  - Friend's Second-Order Reality:** The remark was an affectionate joke
  
- First-Order Reality:** A job interviewer asks whether you are married.
- Your Second-Order Reality:** The question has nothing to do with the job and is inappropriate.
- Friend's Second-Order Reality:** The interviewer is trying to make conversation.

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## Steps in the Perception Process



- Selection
  - We “select” which data we will attend to.
  - How does the following stimuli influence our selections?
    - Intensity
    - Repetition
    - Contrast
    - Motives
    - Emotional state

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## Steps in the Perception Process



- Organization
  - Perceptual Schema
    - Physical constructs
    - Role constructs
    - Interaction constructs
    - Psychological constructs
- How are these constructs used to organize information?

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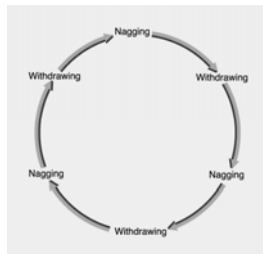
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## Steps in the Perception Process

- Punctuation, defined:
  - Determination of causes and effects in a series of interactions.
- Example:
  - Husband and wife argue
  - Husband perceives wife as a nag
  - Wife complains husband withdraws from her
  - Each partner's "punctuation" affects perception of the dispute.



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## Steps in the Perception Process



- Interpretation: Making sense of our perceptions
  - Considerations:
    - Relational satisfaction
    - Expectations
    - Personal experience
    - Assumptions about human behavior
- How are these constructs used to organize information?

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## Steps in the Perception Process



- **Negotiation:** The process by which communicators influence each other's perceptions through communication.
- **Narratives:** Personal stories created to make sense of our personal world
  - Narratives include "heroes" and "villains"
  - When narratives clash, we:
    - Hang on to our point of view
    - Refuse to consider anyone else's
    - Try to negotiate common ground

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## More about narratives...

- Shared narratives offer the best chance for smooth communication
- Shared narratives don't have to be accurate to be powerful.



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## Influences on Perception

- How we select, organize, interpret and negotiate data is influenced by:
  - Physiological influences
    - The senses
    - Age
    - Health and fatigue
    - Hunger
    - Biological cycles
    - Neurobehavioral challenges



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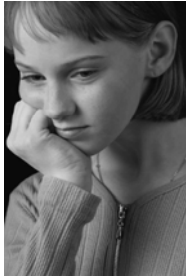
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## Influences on Perception



- How we select, organize, interpret and negotiate data is also influenced by:
  - Psychological influences
    - Mood
    - Self-concept
  - Social influences
    - Sex and gender roles
    - Psychological sex types
      - Masculine
      - Feminine
      - Androgynous
      - Undifferentiated
    - Occupational roles

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## Influences on Perception

- How we select, organize, interpret and negotiate data is also influenced by:
  - Cultural influences
    - Provide an example of a cultural difference influencing perception.
    - How do geographical co-cultures influence perception?
    - What other cultural norms and values (discussed in *Interplay* chapter 2) may influence perceptions?



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## Perceptual Tendencies

- We make snap judgments
- We stereotype others
  - Stereotyping: Exaggerated beliefs associated with a categorizing system
  - Include "primitive categories"
    - Race
    - Sex
    - Age
  - Three characteristics:
    - Categorizing others on the basis of easily recognizable, but not necessarily significant, characteristics
    - Ascribing a set of characteristics to most or all members of a group
    - Applying the generalization to a particular person

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## Consider this...

- The authors state: "By adulthood, we tend to engage in stereotyping frequently, effortlessly, and often unconsciously." Explain your agreement or disagreement with this statement.
- How can reasonable generalizations and stereotypes be distinguished from one another?



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## Perceptual Tendencies



- We cling to first impressions, even if incorrect
  - Halo effect: Tendency to form an overall positive impression of a person on the basis of one positive characteristic.
  - Confirmation bias: We seek out and organize our impressions to support an opinion

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## Perceptual Tendencies



- We judge ourselves more charitably than we do others
  - Self-serving bias
- We are influenced by our expectations.
- We are influenced by the obvious.
- We assume others are like us.

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## Synchronizing Our Perceptions

- Perception-checking in three steps:
  1. Describe the behavior you noticed
  2. Consider at least two possible interpretations of the behavior
  3. Request clarification about how to interpret the behavior
- Perception checking
  - Provides accuracy instead of assuming our first interpretation is correct
  - A cooperative approach to communication
  - Minimizes defensiveness through face-saving
  - Requires both the verbal and nonverbal elements to match

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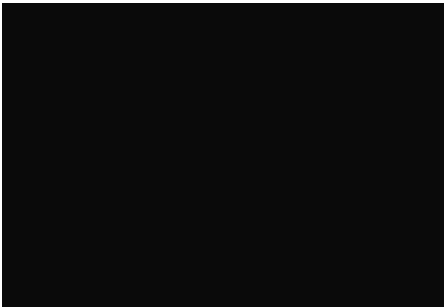
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## Synchronizing Our Perceptions



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## Synchronizing Our Perceptions

- Consider cultural influences:
  - Straightforward approach has the best chance of working in low-context cultures
  - Members of high-context cultures value social harmony over clarity
  - How would each of these cultural norms respond to perception-checking?



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## Synchronizing Our Perceptions

- Building empathy
  - Empathy, defined
    - The ability to re-create another person's perspective, to experience the world from his/her point of view.
  - The three dimensions of empathy:
    - Perspective taking
    - Emotional contagion
    - Genuine concern



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## The Value of Empathy

- Increased self-esteem
- Providing/receiving comfort
- Trust



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## Empathy and Ethics

- Empathy and ethics
- What ethical implications may come into play when you attempt to build empathy with someone or when someone attempts to build empathy with you?



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## Requirements for Empathy

- Open-mindedness
  - People confuse understanding another's position with accepting it
- Imagination
- Commitment



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