

Perception



**WHAT IS? HOW IT WORKS? EFFECT IN
INTERPERSONAL INTERACTION**

Perception



- Process by which individuals organise and interpret sensation in order to shape and give meaning to the environment surrounding us
- peoples' behaviors are based on their perception of what reality is, not on reality itself

- (in Mitchell e Larson, 1987, p.78)

Perception

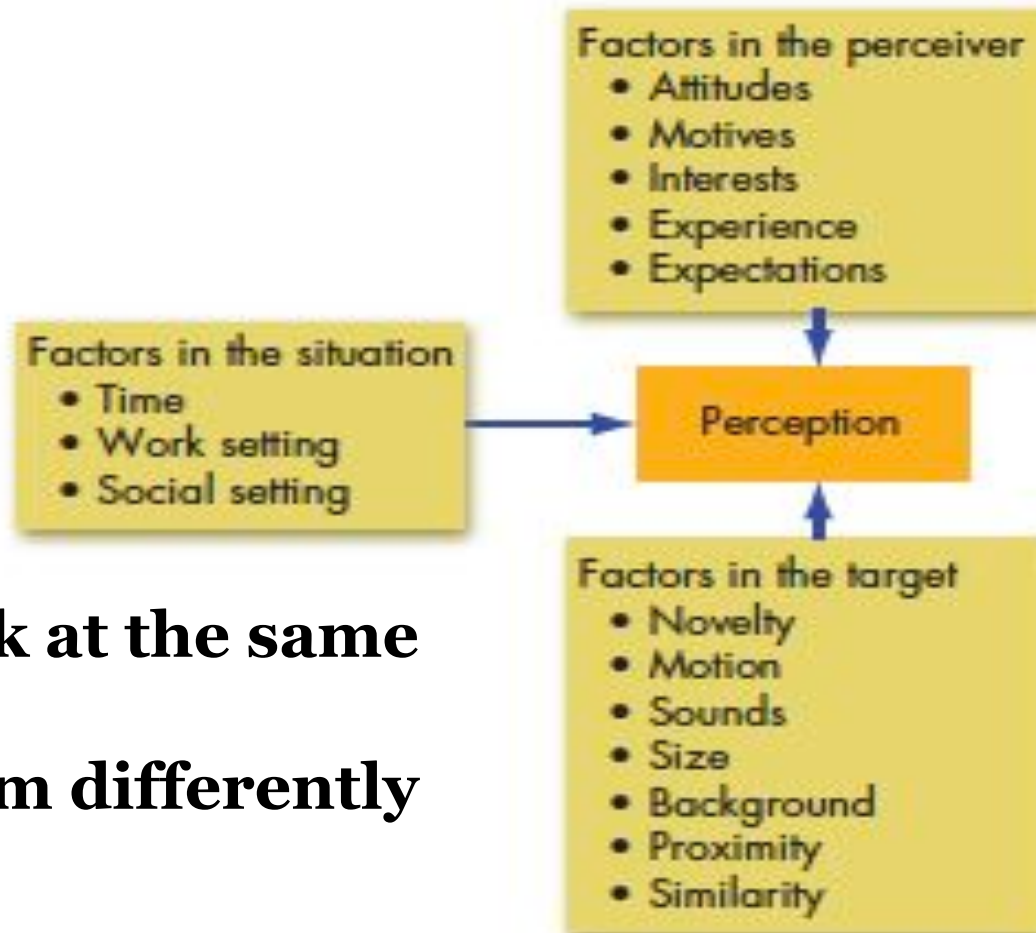


- How other perceive us – e.g. credibility, status , affection
 - will have an influence on how our messages will be received and decodified
- If our perceptions are wrong – which is common especially in intercultural contexts - we interact inappropriately → potential conflict
- Examples Situations in which perception is important:
 - Job interviews
 - Deciding on promotions
 - Negotiations, etc

Perception and

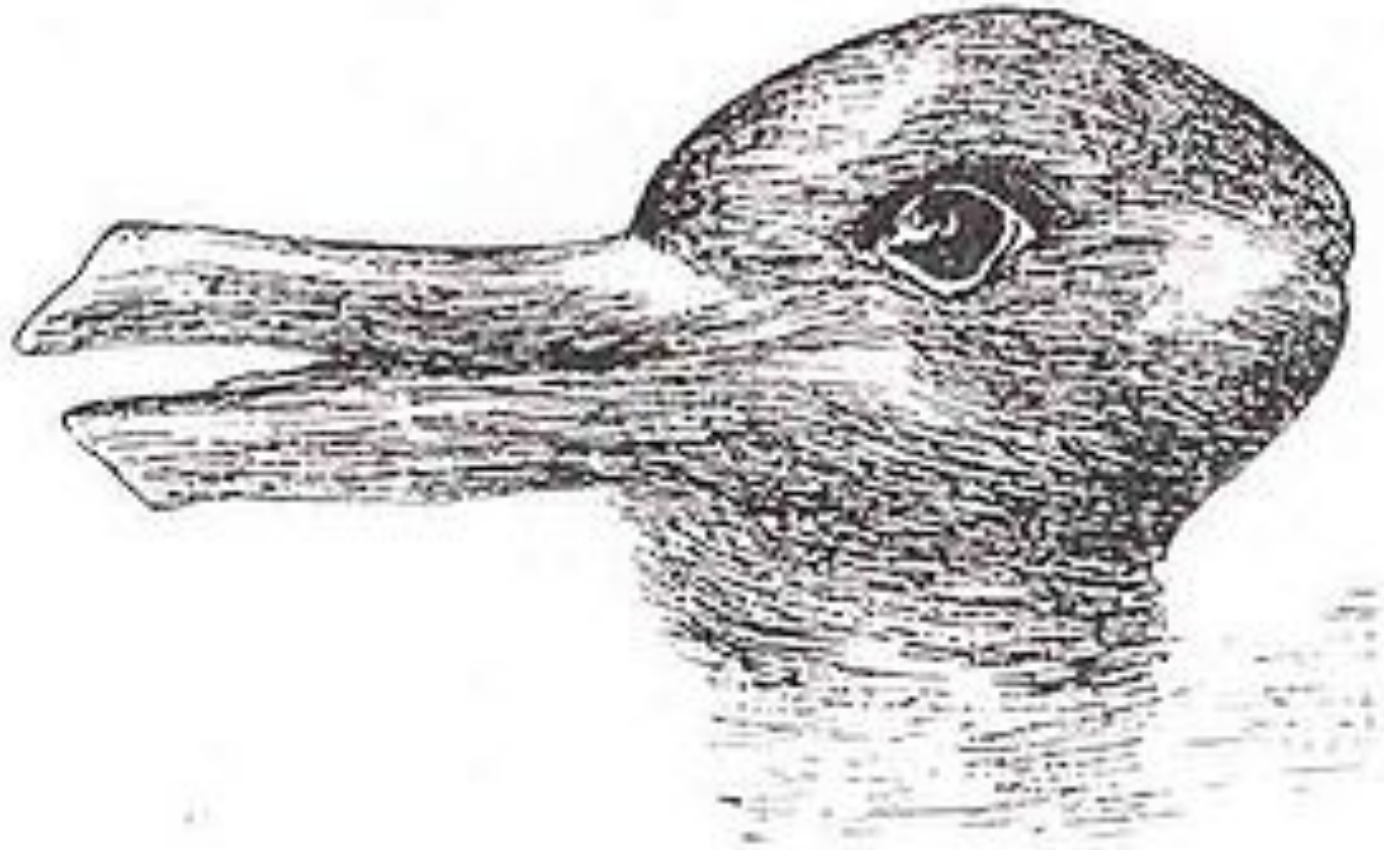
Exhibit 6-1

Factors That Influence Perception



We may look at the same things and perceive them differently





Some aspects of perception one needs to take into account



- In order to perceive something one needs to **learn** its meaning (it is the first step of cognition)
 - A small child/illiterate person would perceive the content of this class differently from you
- One of the goals of perception is to save effort
 - we have a limited rationality , we need to decrease the effort we make to understand the world around (uncertainty reduction theories)
- The perception is our vision of that world (not what the world really is!)

Key aspects in the perception process : the **attention**



- AS our rationality is limited we focus our attention selectively
- Attention :
 - selective openness to a small portion of sensorial phenomena
 - We are just attentive to stimulus that make sense to us and disconnect from others

Key aspects in the perception process : the **attention** and the **organisation of stimulus**



- Our attention depends on the
 - Characteristics of stimulus (novelty, intensity, dimension, contrast...)
 - ✦ There are many stimulus we are not attentive to (we focus on a few like when taking a photo)
 - Type of context
 - ✦ Home, public place, school , bar
 - personal traits (objectives and subjective)
 - e.g professional skills, competence, intelligence, sensibility , education

Key aspects in the perception process : the **attention** and the **organisation of stimulus**



Organisation of stimulus :

- The act of perceiving / forming an impression about someone involves categorising it ; we integrate in a category that is pertinent to us
 - there is a mental pre processing of information before it reaches our consciousness
 - We organise stimulus based on our knowledge, experience, socialisation, needs, interests
 - We tend to simplify the diversity of stimulus , e.g stereotyping
 - ✦ To avoid overload of stimulus whose disconnection makes it hard to give meaning to life/the world around us

Perceiving others



- The impression about others is rapidly created based on others behaviour (verbal or non verbal) and indirect information (opinions, narratives, gossip ...).
- The first impression : imprecision but durability
- Physical appearance : strong effect on our perception
- A number of other characteristics of that person will construct the perception of her
 - ✦ Name and surname, car, clothings, what does he/she eat, nationality, football club, etc, etc, etc

Person perception – judging others or Attribution theory



- Attribution theory suggests that when we observe an individual's behavior, we attempt to determine whether it was internally or externally caused (especially if it had a strong effect on us).
- And we judge him/her based on the cause we attribute to his/behavior
- These judgment are frequently simplistic and biased,
- but they are also systematic and predictable



Person perception – judging others or Attribution theory



- The attribution is done in 3 steps :
 - 1st the behavior is observed
 - 2nd we determine the behavior's intention (on purpose vs accidental)
 - 3rd we determine if it was
 - ✦ Internally caused - those that are believed to be under the personal control of the individual.
 - ✦ Externally caused - resulting from outside causes.

Person perception – judging others or Attribution theory



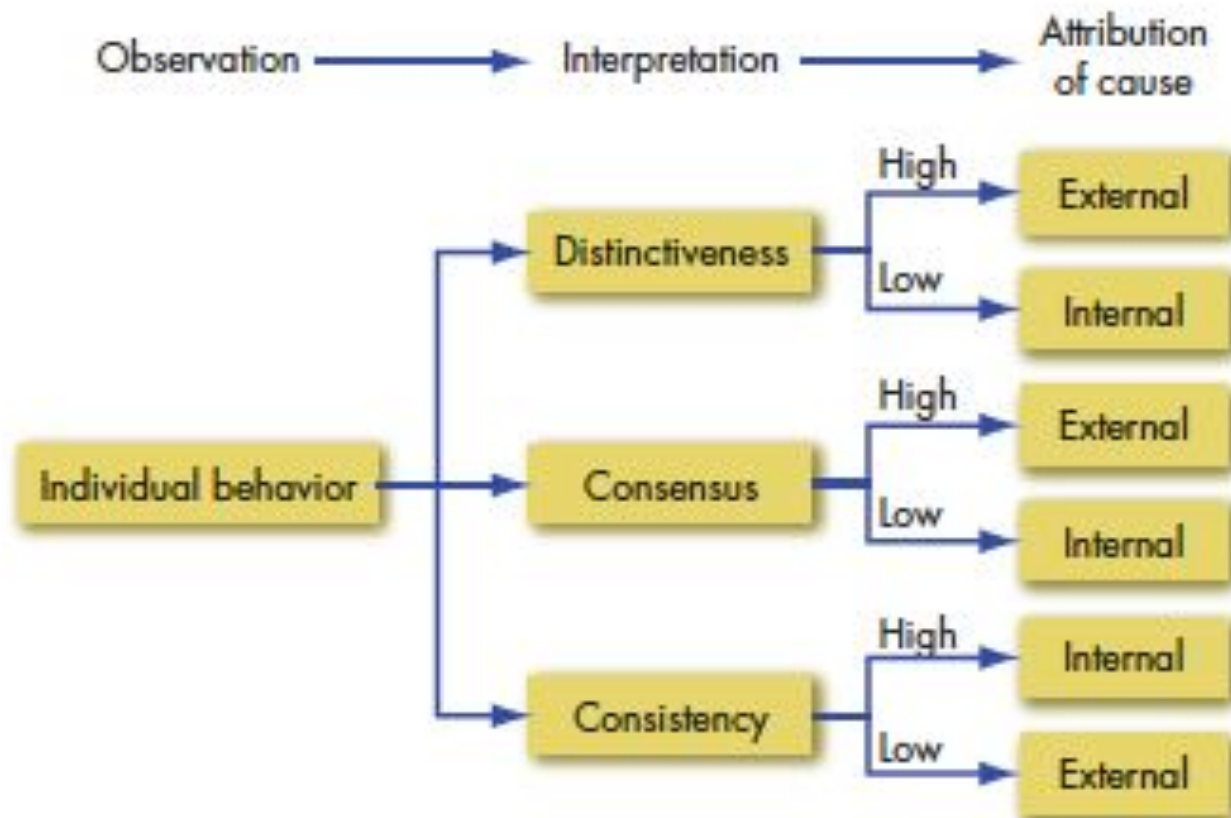
- Determination of cause depends on three factors:
 - Distinctiveness: how unusual is this behaviour if one is considering different situations ?
 - Consensus : did others behave the same way?
 - Consistency : is the behaviour consistent through out the time and in different situations?
- Ex: classmate that does not comply with his/her commitment (skips a meeting, does not deliver its share of work , etc.
- What caused it ? Is the cause internal or external?

Person perception – judging others or

Attribution theory

Exhibit 6-2

Attribution Theory



Attribution theory: errors we generally make

- **Fundamental Attribution Error**
 - We have a tendency to underestimate the influence of external factors (type of work, incentives given, luck ...) and overestimate the influence of internal or personal factors (competence. Motivation, honesty...)
 - Although usually the cause of behaviour can be both personal and situational we normally just pay attention to one of them

Attribution theory : Errors we generally make



- **Self-serving Bias**
 - Individuals attribute their own successes to internal factors, and their lack of success to external factors .

Systematic perception errors or **Shortcuts in making judgments about others**



- **Stereotyping**
 - Judging someone on the basis of our perception of the group to which he or she belongs.
 - This is a means of simplifying a complex world, and it permits us to maintain consistency (theories of balance – Heider)
 - From a perceptual standpoint, if people expect to see these stereotypes, that is what they will perceive.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WDqayC1sR7g&app=desktop>

Systematic perception errors or **Shortcuts in making judgments about others**



- **Halo Effect**

- The halo effect occurs when we draw a general impression on the basis of a single characteristic.
- Classical experiment (by Asch) showed how the evaluation of a person changed when just one trait was changed : “warm” was substituted with “cold” (other traits were for instance as intelligent, skillful, practical, industrious, determined...)
 - ✦ The COLD person was perceived very negatively
- The experiment showed that subjects were allowing a single trait to influence their overall impression of the person being judged

Systematic perception errors or **Shortcuts in making judgments about others**



- **Selective Perception**

- Any characteristic that makes a person, object, or event stand out will increase the probability that it will be perceived.
- Since we can't observe everything going on about us, we engage in selective perception.
- We have a tendency to utilise perceptive defences in order to see only what we want to see and avoid all that can disturb our previous mental scheme (frame of thought) (links to theories of cognitive dissonance)
- It has the effect of perpetuating stereotypes and the halo affect

Systematic perception errors or **Shortcuts in making judgments about others**



- **Projection** – attributing to others characteristics (in general faults) which characterise the subjects
 - It is a self defense mechanism, of protection of one's own identity (blaming others for actions/feelings that are not so honourable in ourselves)

Shortcuts in making judgments about others: Applications of Shortcuts in Organizations



- **Employment Interview**
 - Evidence indicates that interviewers make perceptual judgments that are often inaccurate.
 - Agreement among interviewers is often poor.
- **Performance Evaluation**
 - An employee's performance appraisal is very much dependent on the perceptual process.
 - What the evaluator perceives to be good or bad employee characteristics or behaviors will significantly influence the outcome of the appraisal.

Shortcuts in making judgments about others

Applications of Shortcuts in Organizations



- Performance Expectations
 - Evidence demonstrates that people will attempt to validate their perceptions of reality, even when those perceptions are faulty.
 - Self-fulfilling prophecy characterizes the fact that people's expectations determine their behavior. Expectations become reality.

Biases in the perception of others



- We have the tendency to use ourselves as the frame to perceive and evaluate others
- 1- individuals that accept themselves as they are tend to see others in a more favourable
- 2- the categories we use to describe others are the same we use to describe ourselves
- 3- it is more probable that we like people with similar characteristics to ourselves and reject those who have the characteristics we do not like in ourselves
- 4- we tend to interpret other feelings about us in terms of our feelings toward others (Mitchell e Larson, 87)

Correcting perception errors



- Gathering enough information about the behaviours and attitudes of others
- Verify conclusion taken and to assure its validity
- Differentiate between facts and suppositions
- Identify our own feelings as to understand how they influence the impression we make of others