Perception and Personality in Organizations

CHAPTER SIX
Toronto’s Police Service

Toronto’s police service is fighting to correct racial bias and the perception of this bias. The service is increasing the cultural diversity of its workforce, and officers must attend diversity awareness seminars.

R. Madonik, Toronto Star
Perceptual Process Model

Environmental Stimuli

Feeling    Hearing    Seeing    Smelling    Tasting

Selective Attention

Organization and Interpretation

Attitudes and Behaviours
Selective Attention

- Characteristics of the object
  - size, intensity, motion, repetition, novelty

- Perceptual context

- Characteristics of the perceiver
  - attitudes
  - perceptual defense
  - expectations -- condition us to expect events
Splatter Vision Perception

Fighter pilots, police detectives, and bird watchers use splatter vision -- scanning everything and focusing on nothing. This reduces the chance of screening out potentially important information.
Social Identity Theory

An Individual’s Social Identity

- ACME Widget Employee
- Live in Canada
- Univ. of New Brunswick Graduate

- Employees at other firms
- People living in other countries
- Graduates from other schools
Social Identity Theory Features

- Comparative process
  - define ourselves by differences with others

- Homogenization process
  - similar traits within a group; different traits across groups

- Contrasting process
  - develop less favourable images of people in groups other than our own
People are surprised to learn that Charlotte St. Germain is a refinery process operator. They stereotype operators as rugged men, not a fifty-something grandmother!
The Stereotyping Process

1. Develop categories and assign traits
2. Assign person to category based on observable info
3. Assign category’s traits to the person

Professors are absent-minded

Our instructor is a professor

Our instructor is absent-minded
How Accurate are Stereotypes?

• Some accuracy, but also distortion and error
  – rarely accurate for everyone in the group
  – we screen out inconsistent information

• Stereotypes are less accurate when:
  – little interaction with people in that group
  – in conflict with members of that group
  – stereotypes enhance our own social identity
Attribution Process

• External Attribution
  – Perception that outcomes are due to situation or fate rather than the person

• Internal Attribution
  – Perception that outcomes are due to motivation/ability rather than situation or fate
Rules of Attribution

Internal Attribution

- Frequently Consistent with past
- Seldom

- Frequently Distinctive from other situations
- Seldom

- Seldom Consensus (Other people are similar)
- Frequently

External Attribution
Attribution Errors

• Fundamental Attribution Error
  – attributing own actions to external factors and other’s actions to internal factors

• Self-Serving Bias
  – attributing our successes to internal factors and our failures to external factors
Self-Fulfilling Prophecy Cycle

1. Supervisor forms expectations
2. Expectations affect supervisor’s behaviour
3. Supervisor’s behaviour affects employee
4. Employee’s behaviour matches expectations
Other Perceptual Errors

• Primacy
  – first impressions

• Recency
  – most recent information dominates perceptions

• Halo
  – one trait forms a general impression

• Projection
  – believing other people are similar to you
Diversity Management Programs

• Focuses on awareness, understanding, and appreciation
• Sensitizes people about stereotypes and prejudices
• Dispels myths about people from different backgrounds
• Doesn’t try to correct deep-rooted prejudice
Improving Perceptual Accuracy

- Diversity Management
- Know Yourself
- Empathize With Others
- Compare Perceptions With Others
- Postpone Impression Formation
Know Yourself (Johari Window)

- **Known to Self**
  - Open Area
  - Hidden Area
- **Unknown to Self**
  - Blind Area
- **Known to Others**
  - Unknown Area
- **Unknown to Others**
  - Feedback

Disclosure
Defining Personality

Relatively stable pattern of behaviours and consistent internal states that explain a person's behavioural tendencies
Big Five Personality Dimensions

Conscientiousness: Caring, dependable
Emotional Stability: Poised, secure
Openness to Experience: Sensitive, flexible
Agreeableness: Courteous, empathic
Extroversion: Outgoing, talkative
During their retreat in Maine, employees at Thompson Doyle Hennessey & Everest completed the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and learned how their personalities can help them understand each other more effectively.
Myers-Briggs Type Indicator

- Extroversion versus introversion
- Sensing versus intuition
- Thinking versus feeling
- Judging versus perceiving
Locus of Control and Self-Monitoring

• Locus of control
  – Internals believe in their effort and ability
  – Externals believe events are mainly due to external causes

• Self-monitoring personality
  – Sensitivity to situational cues, and ability to adapt your behaviour to that situation
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