

2200
PERCEPTIONS

LESSON OBJECTIVES	LEVEL	MEASURE
A. Identify the perception process	Knowledge	Written
B. Explain perceptual shortcuts	Comprehension	Written
C. Explain factors effecting perception process	Comprehension	Written
D. Describe stereotypes and their interrelationship to perception	Comprehension	Written
E. Describe the Self-fulfilling Prophecy	Comprehension	Written
F. Discuss strategies to correct inaccurate perceptions	Comprehension	Written
G. Participate in perception process exercise	Application	ISDE

SUPPORT MATERIAL AND GUIDANCE

Lesson Focus

Gain understanding of the perception process and relate its importance to the EO program. Be able to discuss how perceptual shortcuts play into factors affecting the perception process and how it stifles development. Understand the link between the perception process, stereotyping and the self-fulfilling prophecy. Identify strategies to correct inaccurate perceptions. Finally, be able to relate the importance of understanding the perception process to the roles of the Equal Opportunity Advisor.

Student Contributions

Take notes and ask questions to clarify material discussed in the lecture. Demonstrate an understanding of the perception process, stereotyping and the self-fulfilling prophecy through participation in small group discussions and exercises.

Student Instructional Material

Notetaking Guide

Instructional Method

Lecture (2 Hours)

Practical Exercise (4 Hours)

SUPPORT MATERIAL AND GUIDANCE

References

1. Allport, Gordon W. The Nature of Prejudice. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, Co., 1954.
2. Jones, Edward E. and Harold B. Gerald. Foundations of Social Psychology. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1967.
3. Jussim, Lee J., Clark R. McCauley and Lee Yeuh-Ting. Stereotype Accuracy: Toward Appreciating Group Differences. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 1995.
4. MaCrae, C. Neil., Charles Stangor and Miles Hewstone. Stereotypes & Stereotyping. New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 1996.
5. Patrillo, Vincent N. Strangers to These Shores: Race and Ethnic Relations in the United States. 5th ed. Needham Heights, Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon, 1997.
6. Tauber, Robert T. Self-fulfilling Prophecy. A Practical Guide to Its Use in Education. New York, NY: Praeger Publishers, 1997.

Additional Resources

1. Hamilton, David L. Cognitive Process in Stereotyping and Intergroup Behavior. Hillsdale, NJ: The Bobbs Merrill Co., 1981.
2. Hochberg, Julian E. Perception: Foundations of Modern Psychology. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1978.
3. Hollander, Edwin. Principles and Methods of Social Psychology. 4th ed. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1981.
4. Miller, Arthur G. In the Eye of the Beholder. New York, NY: Praeger Publishing Co., 1982.
5. Nisbett, Richard E. and Lee Ross. Human Inference: Strategies and Shortcomings of Social Judgement. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1980.
6. Power, R.P., S. Hausfeld and A. Gorta. Workshops in Perception. Routledge, London and Boston, 1981.
7. Segall, M.H., D.T. Campbell and M.J. Herskovits. The Influence of Culture on Visual Perception. New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1966.

NOTETAKING GUIDE

A. THE PERCEPTION PROCESS

1. **Definition of the Perception Process** - The action of making sense out of an experience by giving meaning to the experience.
2. **Elements Of the Perception Process:**
 - a. Raw Data - The raw data is the experience.
 - b. Mental Process - The mental process, which is unseen, is affected by motive and driven by bias. It catalogs experience derived from culture, socialization, experience, etc.
 - c. Product - The product is the perception, the sensing, or the interpretation of what is seen or experienced.

B. PERCEPTUAL SHORTCUTS

1. First Impression

In this process, we make one major judgment when we first encounter a person or situation. We carry that impression forward into subsequent interactions. Further information is often modified about these people/situations according to that first impression.

2. Viewing People as Constant

This is directly related to first impressions and involves a belief that people will not, or can not, change their behavior.

3. Blaming the Victim

This involves seeing people as the origin of action rather than seeing the contribution of circumstances to the situation.

4. Halo Effect

This occurs when we know something good about a person, we are likely to perceive them as having other good characteristics. But, if we know something unfavorable, we are likely to see other unfavorable things.

C. FACTORS AFFECTING THE PERCEPTION PROCESS

1. Biological Factors

Biological factors are important because they effect how we interact with the environment and how we take in or do not take in information.

2. Sociological/Cultural Factors

Culture is the sum total of the learned behaviors of a group of people. These behaviors are generally considered to be the *tradition* of that group and are transmitted from generation to generation. Cultural factors that can affect perception include:

- a. Social norms/customary behaviors
- b. Language/symbols
- c. Nonverbal cultural norms
- d. Ethnocentrism – A tendency to develop a standard for one’s own group which is used to apply as criteria for judging other groups
- e. Proxemics – Personal space and territory
- f. Color consciousness – Many cultures believe skin color or racial differences contribute to the measure of importance, status, or value of an individual, and hence, dictate how that individual is treated
- g. Values
- h. Beliefs
- i. Attitudes

3. How Two Groups Affect These Factors

People seek to understand or make sense of their environment. They respond to information that is important to them. They categorize that information, generate expectations, guide their behavior based on the expectations, and assign characteristics to the category, which allows them to look at people as a group. This generally leads to two groups.

In-GroupMost Like Me
Out-GroupMost Different From Me

We tend to categorize or stereotype people in the Out-Group.

D. STEREOTYPES AND THEIR INTERRELATIONSHIP TO PERCEPTIONS

1. Definition of Stereotype

In Gordon W. Allport's, Nature of Prejudice, he states that "Whether favorable or unfavorable, a stereotype is an exaggerated belief associated with a category. Its function is to justify (rationalize) our conduct in relation to that category."

2. Characteristics of Stereotypes

- a. Stereotypes are fixed, rigid ideas.
- b. Stereotypes are over-generalizations or over-simplification about a category.
- c. Stereotypes are not supported by reasonable/factual evidence.
- d. Stereotypes are driven by motives such as fear, rationalization and/or prejudice.

3. Factors that Support Stereotypes

There are a number of sources that support and perpetuate stereotypes (ex: family, friends, media). There is very little chance of anyone not being exposed to these factors during everyday living and our socialization process.

4. Interrelationship of Perceptions and Stereotypes

The stereotyping process has an impact on the perception process. Since we can't analyze or respond to all the information we receive, we tend to narrow our focus on some subset of that information. We will usually select the subset(s) that we believe to be important; that is, we use selective perception. We then categorize this information, which serves several useful functions. Categorization simplifies our environment. It enables us to generate expectations and guide our behavior towards a person or an object based on our expectations.

E. THE SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY (SFP)

1. Definition of the Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

A person influencing the behavior of another person by actions related to his/her expectations.

2. Concept of the Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

The concept of the self-fulfilling prophecy is a phenomenon that occurs when an individual holds the expectation that some event will occur and it does. By believing that the expectation is correct, individuals engage in a course of action that can cause the event to happen, hence "proving" their expectation as accurate.

3. The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy Cycle

- a. The self-fulfilling prophecy (SFP) cycle begins with a perception or stereotype of another person.
- b. Next, the person with the perception behaves toward the other person as though the perception is true. The behavior can be positive or negative depending on what the person does.
- c. The expectation is then reinforced by the results of the situation that other person has been placed in.
- d. The SFP is generally an unconscious process. People may not be aware of how their behavior influences the behavior and performance of people they interact with.

4. Key Elements of the Self-fulfilling Prophecy

- a. Socialization – Our life education process
- b. Perceptions – Trying to make sense out of a situation
- c. Stereotypes – Rigid over-generalizations
- d. Prejudice – the judgements you make and beliefs you hold about people and situations based on your socialization
- e. Power – formal or informal

5. Implication of the Self-fulfilling Prophecy for the Equal Opportunity Program

The most important implication of the SFP is that we can alter the performance of a person simply by our expectations of and actions toward them. Unaware of the role our own behavior has played in bringing about a certain result...we, in fact, may create a reality that didn't originally exist.

F. STRATEGIES TO CORRECT INACCURATE PERCEPTIONS

- 1. Acceptance of Differences** – Disagreement is okay, but try to understand the speaker
- 2. Active Listening** - Listening for understanding
- 3. Take Ownership for Feelings and Behaviors**
- 4. Accept Feedback** – Don't defend or rationalize your behavior
- 5. Provide Feedback** – be behavior specific

- 6. Be Willing to Interact on Different Levels**
- 7. Use Inclusionary Language** – avoid all isms and use language in such a way to leave the perception that both women or men are included, unless they aren't
- 8. Avoid Stereotypes**
 - a. Thinking in terms of categories is normal human functioning
 - b. People consciously and unconsciously hold stereotypes as a result of social conditioning
 - c. Distinguish between factual evidence and over-generalizations