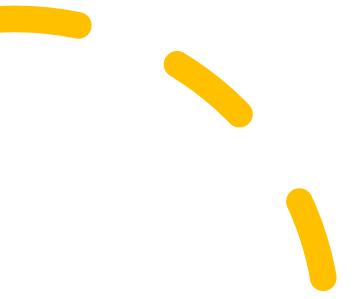


Social Cognition & Attitudes

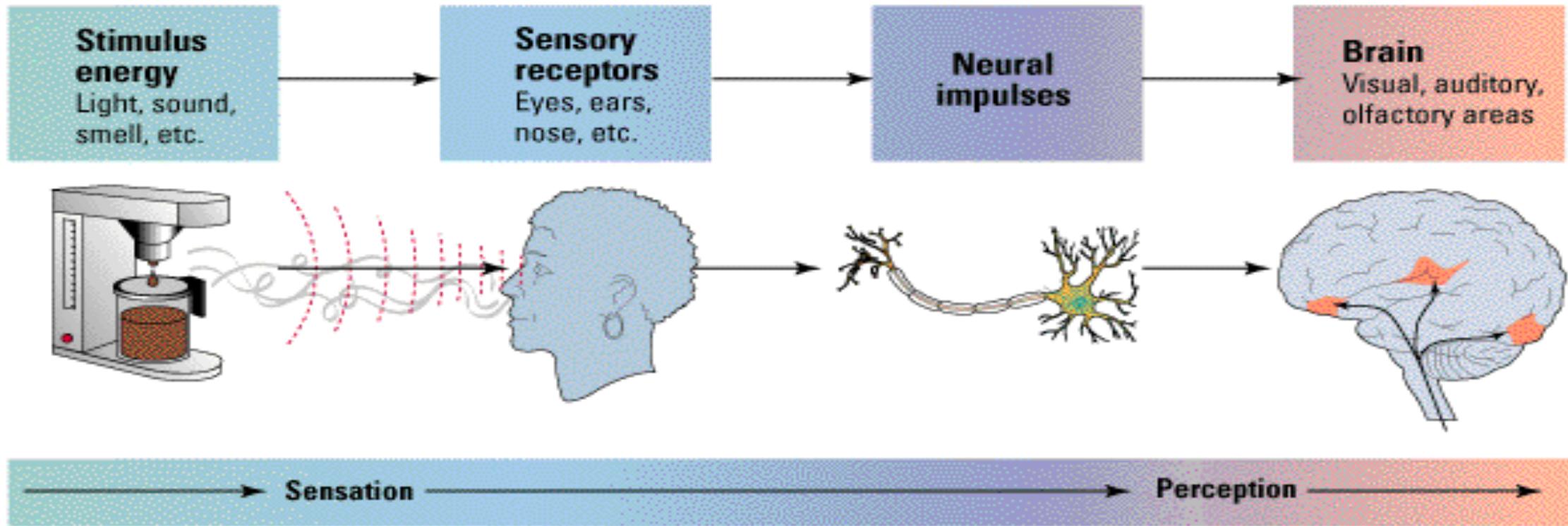
Dr. Yashpal Jogdand



Overview

- Social Cognition
- Schema
- Heuristics
- Potential Sources of Error in Social Cognition
- Attribution
- Attitudes

Sensation & Perception Processes



Sensation  Perception



I
LOVE
PARIS IN THE
SPRINGTIME

Ca- yo- re-d t-is -en-en-e, w-ic- ha- ev-ry -hi-d l-tt-r
m-ss-ng?

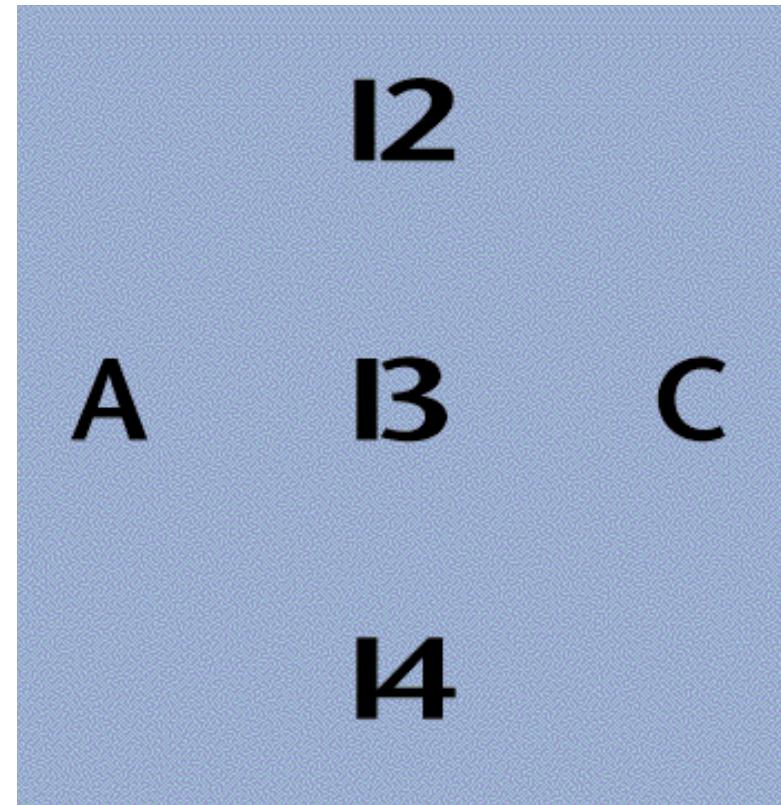
Perception is an active, constructive process.

Top-Down and Bottom-Up Processing

- Top-Down Processing
 - Perception is guided by higher-level knowledge, experience, expectations, and motivations
- Bottom-Up Processing
 - Consists of the progression of recognizing and processing information from individual components of a stimulus and moving to the perception of the whole

Context Effects

- The same physical stimulus can be interpreted differently
- We use other cues in the situation to resolve ambiguities
- Is this the letter B or the number 13?



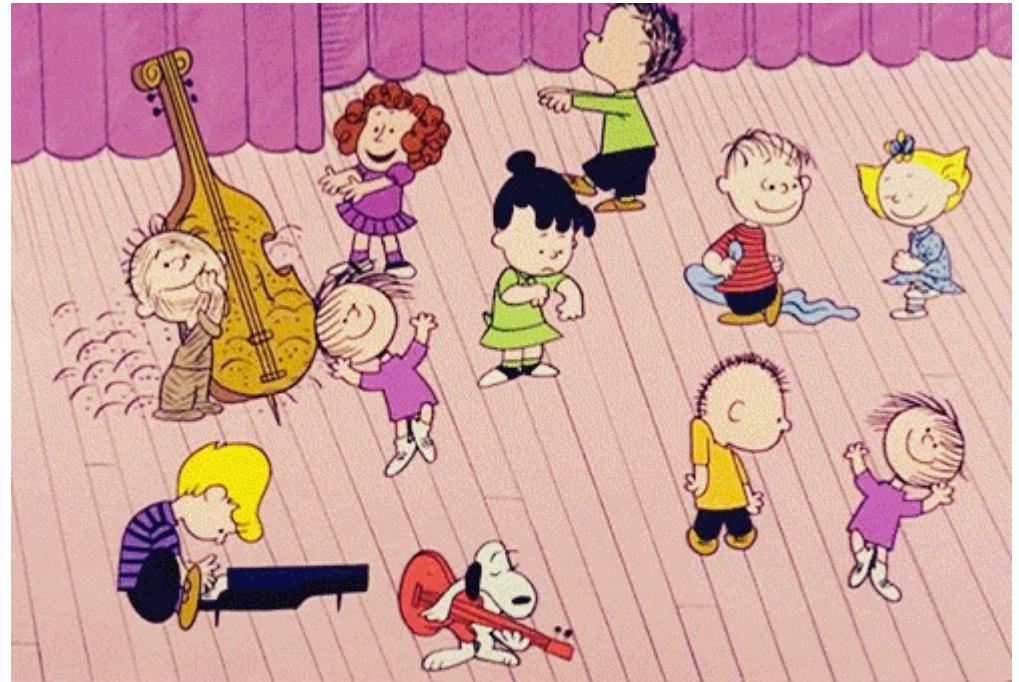
The power of context



Top-down and bottom-up processing occur simultaneously, and interact with each other, in our perception of the world around us. Bottom-up processing permits us to process the fundamental characteristics of stimuli, whereas top-down processing allows us to bring our experience to bear on perception.

What is Social Cognition?

- The area of social psychology that focuses on how people think about others and about the social world is called social cognition.
- Researchers of social cognition study how people make sense of themselves and others to make judgments, form attitudes, and make predictions about the future.



Warm-up Activity

- How do you act...
- When your parents are around?
- Studying in the library?
- Around a new roommate?
- With a stranger on a train/bus?
- At a marketplace?
- How do you know how to act?

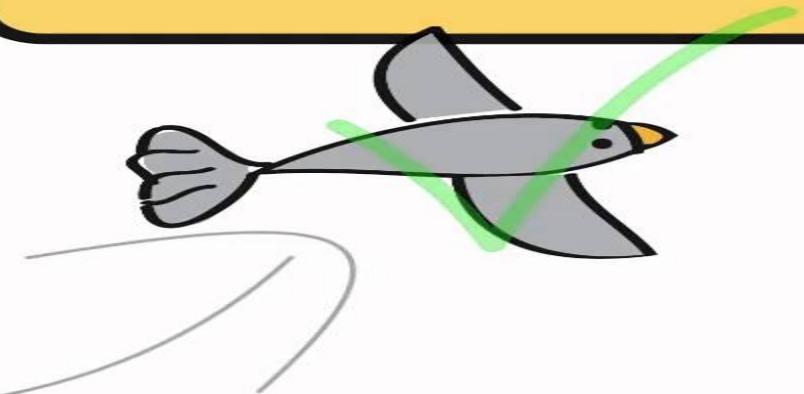


BIRDS

schema



actual object



- **Schemas** are mental structures that help organize knowledge about the social world and guide the selection, interpretation, and recall of information.
- Our schemas greatly reduce the amount of cognitive work we need to do and allow us to “go beyond the information given” (Bruner, 1957).

We can hold schemas about almost anything—individual people (person schemas), ourselves (self-schemas), and recurring events (event schemas, or scripts).



We have *scripts* or *event schemas* about what to do in a restaurant, how to reach a destination using Metro.



Schemas

- Schemas have stronger effects on social cognition when they are strong and cognitive load is high.
- Schemas can result in distortions in how the social world is understood.
- Schemas are resistant to change.
 - ***Perseverance Effect***—*the tendency for beliefs and schemas to remain unchanged even in the face of contradictory information*

Schemas can be self-fulfilling.

Self-fulfilling Prophecy—*predictions that, in a sense, make themselves come true.*

Therefore, schemas help make sense of the social world, but they can result in inaccurate processing of information.

Cognitive capacity and Information Overload

- At any given time, we are capable of handling a certain amount of information.
- Additional input beyond this puts us into a state of information overload where the demands on our cognitive system are greater than its capacity.
- In addition, our processing capacity can be depleted by high levels of stress or other demands (e.g., Chajut & Algom, 2003).
- people adopt various **strategies** designed to “stretch” their cognitive resources

Heuristics

Heuristics: educated guess based on prior experiences that helps narrow down the possible solutions for a problem; also known as a “rule of thumb”

'Keeping the tigers away'

Nasrudin was throwing handfuls of crumbs around his house.

'What are you doing?' someone asked him.

'Keeping the tigers away.'

'But there are no tigers in these parts.'

'That's right. Effective, isn't it?'

Representativeness Heuristics

- Representativeness Heuristic:
 - Judge likelihood by the extent it resembles the typical case
 - i.e. comparing with existing prototype and then making an inference.

Availability Heuristics

- Availability Heuristic
 - Judge likelihood by ease with which relevant instances come to mind.
 - “If I Can Retrieve Instances, They Must Be Frequent”



Availability Heuristic Use: Images Like These Come Readily

People believe they are safer and less likely to get into an accident with a larger SUV than a smaller car—in part, because images like these come readily to mind. But, actually, SUVs are involved in more accidents than smaller cars.

Anchoring and Adjustment Heuristics

- This heuristic involves the tendency to deal with uncertainty in many situations by using something we do know as a starting point, and then making adjustments to it.
- “sale pricing” and highly visible “reductions” in retail stores—the original starting point sets the comparison so shoppers feel like they are then getting a bargain.



Potential Sources of Error in Social Cognition

Why Total Rationality Is Rarer Than You Think

 Our thinking is not simply based on rational self-interest as economists have long assumed (Akerlof & Shiller, 2009)



While we can *imagine* being able to reason in a perfectly logical way, we know from our own experience that often we fall short of this goal.

In our efforts to understand others and make sense out of the social world, we are subject to a wide range of tendencies that, together, can lead us into serious error.



We now consider several of these “tilts” in social cognition



Keep in mind that these “tilts” are not always problematic, or reflect a certain defect, but they can be adaptive just like heuristics



Our Powerful Tendency to Be Overly Optimistic

- Most people tend to “see the world through rose colored glasses,” which is known as the optimistic bias—a powerful predisposition to overlook risks and expect things to turn out well.
- Most people believe that they are more likely than others to experience positive events, and less likely to experience negative events (Shepperd, Carroll, & Sweeny, 2008).
- Our strong leaning toward optimism can be seen in many specific judgments—most people believe that they are more likely than others to get a good job, have a happy marriage, and live to a ripe old age, but less likely to experience negative outcomes such as being fired, getting seriously ill, or getting divorced (Kruger & Burrus, 2004; Schwarzer, 1994).



Our Powerful Tendency to Be Overly Confident

- Similarly, we often have greater confidence in our beliefs or judgments than is justified—an effect known as the overconfidence barrier.
- In one study, students were asked to indicate early in the academic year whether they would perform a number of actions (e.g., drop a course, move on or off campus) and also to indicate how confident they were in their predictions (Vallone, Griffin, Lin, & Ross, 1990).
- The students were wrong a substantial proportion of the time, and even when they were 100 percent confident in their predictions they were wrong 15 percent of the time! This study illustrates illustrated how overconfident people can be in their predictions about themselves.



"You asked for a loan of \$50 million so you could open 800 pizza restaurants. How about you start with one and build from there?"

FIGURE 2.10 Overconfidence in Action: Believing You'll Score Big Before You Have Started

As research findings (Baron & Shane, 2007) indicate, business entrepreneurs frequently express greater confidence in their likelihood of succeeding than the objective odds would warrant.

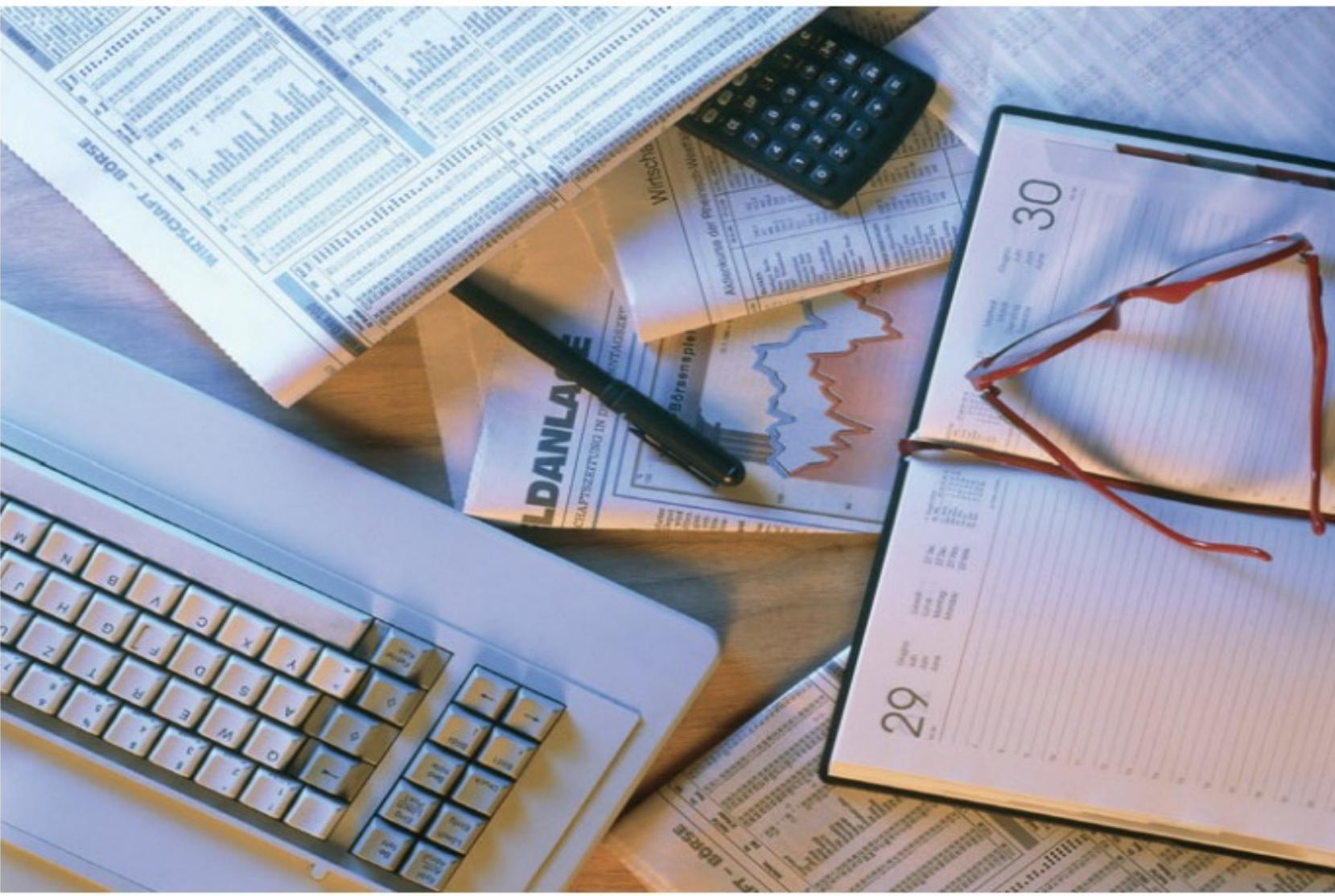


FIGURE 2.11 The Planning Fallacy

The tendency to believe that the plans we construct are doable, that we can accomplish more than we actually can in a given period of time, or that nothing will interfere with the achievement of our goals reflects the planning fallacy in action. Few projects are actually completed as originally planned, or on schedule!

Attribution “the reasons we give”

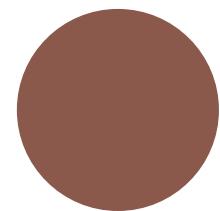
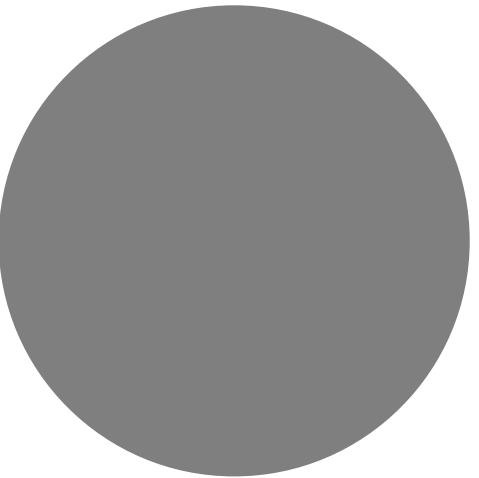


PEANUTS; drawings by Charles Schulz; 1989 United Features Syndicate, Inc. Reprinted by permission of UFS, Inc.

Attribution

Attributions - are the reasons we give for our own and other's behaviors.

- People are motivated to understand the causes of behavior.
- Attribution theory seeks to explain how and why people make these causal attributions.



Why is this baby
smiling? |

- Fritz Heider argued that there are two general types of attributions that people make:

- Personal attributions
- Situational attributions

Personal attributions

- Explanations in terms of personal characteristics. For example:
 - “The baby must be a happy baby.”
- Other examples:
 - “He scored well on the exam because he is smart.”
 - “She tripped because she is clumsy.”

Situational attributions

- Explanations in terms of situational factors. For example:
 - “Someone must have just played with the baby”
 -
- Other examples:
 - “He scored well because it was an easy test.”
 - “She tripped because a squirrel ran in front of her.”

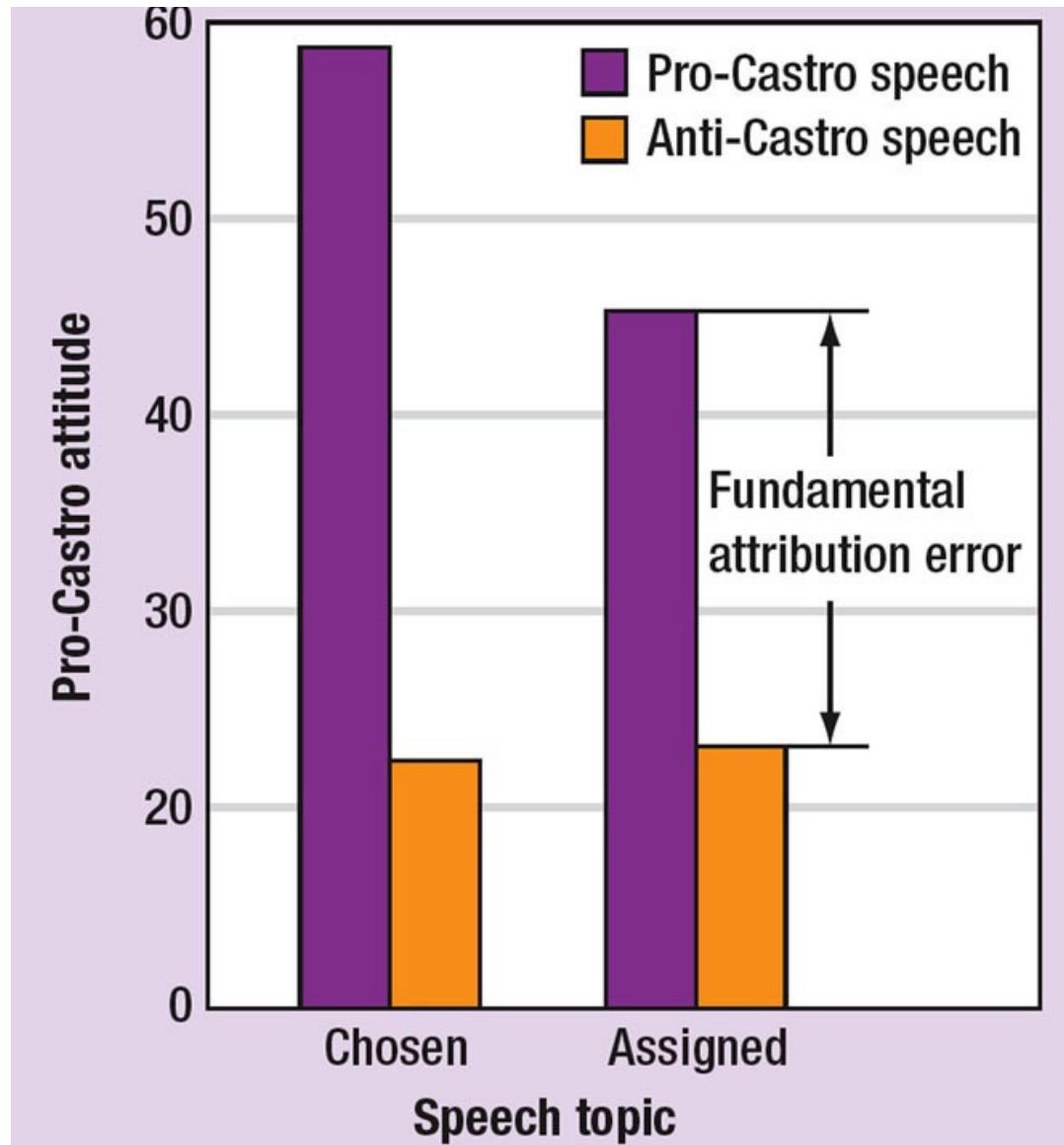
The Fundamental Attribution Error

(also known as correspondence bias or over-attribution effect)

**we tend to perceive others as acting
as they do because they are “that kind of person,”
rather than because of the many external factors that
may influence their behavior.**

Empirical Evidence

- Jones and Harris assigned participants to read out loud either a pro-Castro essay or an anti-Castro essay. A group of listeners rated the extent to which the reader held pro-Castro or anti-Castro beliefs.
- Even though the listeners knew that the readers had no choice in which essay to read, the raters judged the pro-Castro readers as being more pro-Castro than the anti-Castro readers.
- The listeners failed to take into account the strong situational factor present (that the readers had no choice about which essay to read).



Critical Evaluation

- Fundamental attribution bias may not be universal across cultures.
- Miller (1984) found that while American children, as they grow older, place increasing reliance upon disposition as an explanation of events observed, the Hindu children of India by contrast based their explanations more on situations.
- This finding is consistent with the theory that some countries, like the U.S., emphasize an individualistic self-concept. Raised in a society that places a premium on individual achievement and uniqueness, Americans seem to develop a tendency to focus on the characteristics of the individual in making attributions (more on this in the chapter on culture)

Why do people make the fundamental attribution error?

- The situation is not salient when people make attributions for the behavior of others, but the situation is salient when making attributions for one's own behavior.
- Thus, people are more inclined to take the situation into account when explaining their own behavior.

Any Questions?

Attitudes

Attitudes

Psychological tendency expressed with some degree of favor or disfavor

our attitudes are our general evaluations of things (i.e., do you regard this thing positively or negatively?) that can bias us toward having a particular response to it.

- The study of attitudes is a major topic within the field of social psychology.
 - They represent a very basic component of social cognition.
 - They often influence behavior, especially when they are strong, accessible, and long-standing.



Attitude Functions

- Attitudes serve many functions.
 - The Identity or Self-Expression Function—attitudes can permit the expression of central values and beliefs and thereby communicate personal identity.
 - This can include group membership and identity.
 - People are more likely to adopt the attitude position of someone with whom they share an important identity.
 - The Self-Esteem Function—holding particular attitudes can help maintain or enhance feelings of self-worth.
 - Attitudes based on moral convictions are good predictors of behavior.

Attitude Functions

- Attitudes serve many functions.
 - The Ego-Defensive Function—claiming particular attitudes can protect people from unwanted or unflattering views of themselves.
 - For example, when prejudiced people state that they are against prejudice and discrimination they protect themselves from seeing that they are actually bigoted.
 - The Impression Motivation Function—people can use attitudes to lead others to have a positive view of themselves. When motivated to do so, the attitudes people express can shift in order to create the desired impression on others.
 - Attitudes that serve an impression motivation function can lead people to formulate arguments that support their views.

Measurement of Attitudes

- Traditionally, attitudes have been measured through explicit attitude measures, in which participants are directly asked to provide their attitudes toward various objects, people, or issues (e.g., a survey).
- Self-presentation concerns or social desirability bias may influence responses
- An implicit attitude is an attitude that a person does not verbally or overtly express.
- the Implicit Association Test (IAT; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998), which does just what the name suggests, measuring how quickly the participant pairs a concept (e.g., cats) with an attribute (e.g., good or bad).

Key Points

- Decades of research on social cognition and attitudes have revealed many of the “tricks” and “tools” we use to efficiently process the limitless amounts of social information we encounter.
- These tools are quite useful for organizing that information to arrive at quick decisions.
- As the research presented in this module demonstrates, we are adept and efficient at making these judgments and predictions, but they are not made in a vacuum.
- Ultimately, our perception of the social world is a subjective experience, and, consequently, our decisions are influenced by our experiences, expectations, emotions, motivations, and current contexts.

What was your biggest takeaway from the class?

- <https://tinyurl.com/hul261oct>

<https://www.mentimeter.com/app/presentation/8b1a4b76d1251c9cdf08bdd432e5b3bd>

End