CHAPTER TWO

Perception, Attitudes, and Individual Differences

Many of the theories discussed in this book attempt to explain general behavioral tendencies. While these concepts provide us with a broad understanding of such behavior, they do not necessarily give us insight into the behavior of a particular individual. By understanding and building on these general theories, however, we can begin to move closer to an understanding of why a specific person may behave the way she or he does.

One of the major determinants of how and why an individual initiates and sustains certain behaviors is based on the concepts of sensation and perception. Sensation refers to the physical stimulation of the senses—our ability to see, hear, smell, taste, and touch. Although knowledge of these different sensations helps to explain some of the whys and hows of behavior, we also need to understand how an individual reacts to and organizes these sensations. This process is referred to as perception and refers to the way in which we interpret messages from our senses to provide some order and meaning to our environment. The key to this definition is the term interpret. Since different people can view the same situation in disparate ways, the interpretation of the meaning of a particular event determines how these individuals will react to it. Thus, perception can be thought of as an intervening variable that influences behavior.1

This chapter begins with a brief discussion of visual and auditory perception and moves toward social perception. An underlying assumption made by perception theorists is that certain types of mental processes that operate in relatively simple visual and auditory situations similarly occur in more complex interpersonal situations. Thus, the ability to examine more complex forms of perception is based on our understanding of these relatively simple perceptual processes.

There are a number of internal and external factors that influence the way in which we view the world around us. Before proceeding to an examination of these variables, however, it is necessary to identify two basic sources of perceptual variation: physiological limitations and cultural and environmental constraints. We are surrounded by data that are transmitted through our daily interactions with others, the Internet and media, educational experiences, family life and friendships, work experiences, and our socialization processes in general. The physiological aspect of perception defines the
limits of what we can actually see, hear, smell, and so forth of these data. Yet, even given these limitations, the information that is gathered by our senses does not enter our minds as raw or unprocessed data. Rather, people tend to interpret this information in a way that is congruent with their sets of beliefs, values, and attitudes, which are shaped by larger cultural and environmental experiences. Thus, perception is determined by the interaction among these psychological and broader sociocultural factors.

BASIC INTERNAL PERCEPTUAL ORGANIZING PATTERNS

Since people are continually subjected to a barrage of visual and auditory stimulation from the outside world, it is necessary to have an internal process or way in which all these data can be selected and organized into meaningful information. This type of selective process occurs at two basic levels: (1) those data a person is aware of and can recognize fairly readily after selection, and (2) data that may be below the threshold of awareness. Once people select the data to be “processed” or interpreted, the next phase is to order or classify these data in a meaningful way. As suggested earlier, this does not occur in a random or haphazard manner, but instead in a way that is consistent with our beliefs and values.

Gestalt Psychology

According to one school of thought, instead of providing us with a mirror image of the outside world, data enter our minds in already highly abstracted forms, which are referred to as structures or gestalts. Although some information is inevitably lost in the translation of raw data into these gestalts, such structural transformations of real-world, primary data enable us to interpret or understand that world. Thus, when we perceive something, we are essentially attempting to fit that object or event into a preestablished frame of reference or classification scheme.

The basic tenet of gestalt theory is that organization of the data around us is part of the perceptual process and not something that is added after variables are selected. In visual perception, for example, Gestalt psychology explains why we organize the stimuli shown here to “see” groups of dots (e.g., two groups of three, three groups of two), instead of six individual dots:

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In terms of auditory phenomena, Morse code is a series of short and longer sounds. To many people this may seem to be nothing more than random noise. To a listener who has been trained to understand these sounds, however, this “noise” is a form of communication.

Figure-Ground Phenomena

Another visual tendency that influences how we organize our perceptions is the figure-ground relationship. When we observe various phenomena, we tend to organize these
data in such a way as to minimize differences and changes while maintaining unity and wholeness. The basis of this process is our tendency to perceive a figure against its background. Compared to the background, a figure will appear to have shape, object-like dimensions, and substance as well as being nearer and more vivid than it actually may be. This figure-ground phenomenon can influence our tendency to perceive configurations even when the individual elements do not bear any relationship to the composite we “see.” When looking at clouds, for example, we often perceive vivid faces, mosaics, or other “pictures” that are, in reality, nothing more than a mass of condensed water vapor.

At times, however, a given pattern may be organized so that more than one figure-ground relationship may be perceived. In Figure 2-1, for example, you may “see” two faces looking at each other or an ornate goblet. In auditory phenomena, a close analogue to the figure-ground relationship is the signal-to-noise ratio. If a radio signal is weak and the static is strong, we do not hear the radio signal. In social situations, there may also be a number of signals we do not “hear” (e.g., dissatisfaction and complaints from our subordinates) because of the “noise” around us (e.g., pressure to complete a task to please our boss). Even though the signal itself may be quite strong, the noisy background often limits our ability to hear it.

**Closure**

Closure refers to our tendency to perceive incomplete figures as if they were complete. When looking at Figure 2-2, for example, we usually see a triangle instead of three separate lines; we “close” that part of the figure that is left open. Similarly, we often anticipate the end of a song because music usually follows a fairly standard pattern. Thus, even if the last few notes of a song were left out, we could most likely complete the song based on what would sound “right.” In work situations, we can also “close” a conversation with someone when we anticipate what their response is likely to be. As will be discussed in Chapter 4, this tendency can readily lead to breakdowns in communication.

![Figure 2-1](image-url) Figure 2-1  Figure-Ground Relationships: Which Is the Figure and Which Is the Ground?
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In summary, these internal tendencies are some of the factors that influence what we see and hear of the world around us. As indicated earlier, these tendencies are shaped by our cultural and social experiences. Indeed, as research has shown, due to the influence of past experiences and socialization, similar events are perceived quite differently by people from different cultural environments.5

EXTERNAL FACTORS IN PERCEPTION

Although what we see and hear is significantly influenced by our internal processes, the way in which various stimuli are presented to us also influences our perception of them. In contrast to the discussion earlier, these factors relate more to the nature of the stimulus itself than to the human mechanisms used to “pick up” the stimulus.

Intensity or relative strength of an object, noise, or occurrence can significantly influence our perception of it. In our brief allusion to the signal-to-noise ratio earlier, we noted that a radio transmission is more likely to be heard only if it is louder than the background noise. Similarly a pungent smell is more likely to be noticed than a subtle one; witness our awareness of the smell of a skunk as opposed to the scent of a rose.

Contrast refers to the extent something stands out in relation to its background. A bright light tends to be more noticeable than a dim one (intensity), but a particularly bright light is less likely to be noticed in a theater district because it is surrounded by other bright lights. Similarly, certain behaviors that tend to be unrecognized in one context will stand out in different social situations. A child's playful behavior, for example, is much more noticeable among adults than among other children.

Size also influences our visual perception. Quite simply, large objects are more noticeable than smaller ones. Since they stand out more fully in relation to their background (contrast), larger objects have a greater probability of being selected into our perception.

Proximity is another factor that can influence what we see. Things that are physically close tend to be viewed as “belonging to” each other more than similar things that are farther away. For instance, in the example shown here, you are likely to see pairs of XOs rather than a number of Xs and Os:

XO XO XO XO XO XO
Social and Interpersonal Perception

Similarity of things, however, does tend to influence our perception when objects are in relatively the same proximity to one another. Things that are similar tend to be seen as belonging together more than to other equally close but less similar things. In the example here, there is a tendency to see columns of Xs and Os rather than rows of alternating letters X O X O X O:

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X O X O X O
X O X O X O
X O X O X O
X O X O X O
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Repetition or frequency is another external factor that influences what we notice. Things that are repeated or occur frequently are “seen” more readily than those events or objects that are infrequent or not repeated. This is part of the rationale in political and advertising campaigns, where a candidate or product is given repeated exposure.

Motion also influences our ability to select various stimuli, since we tend to notice things that move against a relatively still background. This can also apply to auditory stimulation when we track sounds—such as a police or fire siren—as they move toward or away from us.

Novel and very familiar perceptual settings are more readily selected than situations that are neither very novel nor very familiar. For instance, new products that are sufficiently different can attract quite a bit of attention (novelty). At the same time, we seem to take more notice if “our” street is shown in the media (familiarity).

The discussion thus far has focused on some of the relatively simple external factors that influence perception. In summary, we have a tendency to select various external objects, sounds, or events that are more intense, larger in nature, in contrast to their background, close in proximity, repetitive, in motion, and either novel or very familiar. The chapter now turns to an examination of some of the ways in which these influences interact with more complex internal tendencies to affect social and interpersonal perception.

SOCIAL AND INTERPERSONAL PERCEPTION

Just as our perception of different visual and auditory phenomena is influenced by a number of internal and external factors, the perception of other people and social situations is also a dynamic process. To “understand” or make sense of the complex behavior of other people, we often make inferences or assumptions about their motivations, intentions, personalities, emotions, and so forth. Such inferences or impressions subsequently become a significant determinant of our behavior toward and interaction with these individuals.

Schemas and Scripts

People often use schemas, cognitive frameworks that systematize our “knowledge” about gender differences, other people, situations, objects, and ideas that we generate through experience, to effectively organize information about these phenomena. These schemas can reflect ourselves, characteristics of others we interact with, the roles we play, and events we experience.
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Self-schemas capture generalizations we make about our own behaviors that are shaped by past experience and current situations. Organizational members, for instance, often exhibit self-schemas of competence or decisiveness when confronted with particular tasks they are familiar with.

Person schemas reflect ideal characteristics of others that we sort into different categories. When organizations refer to “role models,” for example, they are typically referring to individuals who reflect those qualities (hard work, dedication, innovation, etc.) that the organization is striving for. As will be discussed later, stereotyping, which can be both positive and negative, is based on person (and/or group) schemas.

Event schemas, often referred to as scripts, capture a mental picture of a series of events that often guides our behavior. In large-scale organizational change efforts, managers often use scripts to try to shape or influence the way in which people react or respond to the changes that are taking place around them.

Role schemas, sometimes referred to as “person-in-situation” schemas, combine self-schemas, person schemas, and event schemas in ways that frame what we expect from people based on the role(s) that we play. Our perception of the student–teacher role set, for example, readily creates expectations about how the individuals in question should act in those roles.

Perceptual Distortion

Similar to our perception of different objects or sounds, our perception of other people is subject to a number of distortions and illusions. We often “see” people in a way that may be quite different from how they are actually or objectively presented to us. Just as we use internal devices to reduce (select) the amount of visual and auditory data around us into manageable portions, we also have a number of devices—perceptual sets—that influence how we interpret or “understand” behavior and social interaction. Although some of these perceptual tendencies have greater empirical research support than others, they are all readily observable in everyday situations.

Stereotyping

Stereotyping is the process of using a standardized impression of a group of people to influence our perception of a particular individual. It is a way of forming consistent impressions about other people by assuming that they all have certain common characteristics by virtue of their membership (whether ascribed or achieved) in some group or category, such as race, gender, occupation, or social class. There are three basic aspects to stereotyping:

1. Some category of people is identified (e.g., IT technicians, racial or ethnic groups, OB professors).
2. An assumption is made that individuals in this category have certain traits (e.g., nerdy, lazy, sensitive).
3. Finally, the general perception is formed that everyone in the category possesses those traits (e.g., all IT technicians are geeks, all members of a certain ethnic group are lazy, all OB professors are “touchy-feely”).
Thus, we create images of people based on characterizations we make about a particular group of people rather than the individual.

To a large extent, people depend on stereotypes to reduce their information-processing demands. Unfortunately, this dependence can create a multitude of problems for organizations and their members. With respect to OB, occupational, gender, race, and age stereotypes are especially relevant. As we will see in Chapter 6, occupational stereotypes (e.g., people in finance are cold and calculating) are often the basis underlying intergroup conflict. Moreover, negative stereotypes, which are resistant to change, can readily contribute to inefficient and uneconomical decisions, and those that focus on a particular gender, race, age, or physical ability can create significant barriers and severely limit the access of minority status individuals to higher-level organizational roles and positions.10

Not all stereotypes, however, are necessarily inaccurate or harmful, and they can be useful in helping us to process information fairly quickly. We often use “ideal types” (a form of stereotyping) to make comparisons between extremes—such as capitalism and socialism, or mechanistic and organic environments—as the basis for further investigation. The danger lies in using stereotypes to develop our perceptions about specific people or situations.

**Stereotype Content and Out-Groups**

The stereotype content model (SCM) recognizes the potential for individuals to hold multiple and mixed stereotypes about out-groups.11 Perceived warmth and competence comprise two primary dimensions of group stereotypes. Warmth is associated with beliefs about the out-group's intent toward the in-group. In other words, out-groups tend to be perceived as more (or less) warm to the extent they are perceived to have goals that are consistent (or competitive) with the goals of the in-group. Competence is associated with the extent to which out-groups are perceived as able to successfully pursue their goals. Within this framework, the primary determinant of perceived out-group competence is perceived status, such that high-status groups are construed as having been effective in pursuing key goals, in essence making their status legitimate.

It is important to note that positive stereotypes on one dimension do not necessarily indicate the absence of prejudice. In fact, positive stereotypes on one dimension are often functionally consistent with derogatory stereotypes on the other dimension. For example, socioeconomically successful out-groups, such as Asians, can pose a competitive threat to dominant in-group members, and this success elicits envy. Low-warmth stereotypes justify such attitudes and actions against envied out-groups by casting the groups as being solely concerned with the pursuit of their own goals. Taken together, competent (high-status) but low-warmth (competitive) out-groups may thus be resented and socially excluded. These mixed stereotypes also help to explain the perceived success of the out-group, affirming beliefs that the existing system is just and meritocratic, which serves to maintain the social status quo, benefiting dominant in-groups.

**Halo Effect**

The halo effect refers to the process of allowing one characteristic of an individual or a group to overshadow all other characteristics of that individual or group.12 The salient
characteristic may be positive or negative, thereby creating a general impression that would correspondingly be positive or negative. We often assume, for example, that simply because an individual may do something very well (e.g., act, play sports) he or she is obviously well informed about other things in life (e.g., cars, deodorants). The advertising community places great faith (and money) in the halo effect on the assumption that if we like a particular individual we will also like the product that person is endorsing.

It is particularly important to be aware of the halo effect when conducting performance appraisals, so that one feature does not influence the overall evaluation. There have been cases where a rater who did not like mustaches or long hair allowed those features to sway an entire appraisal, ignoring the “good” qualities or contributions of the employee. In other instances, if a person performs well on the job but is constantly late, the tardiness may overly influence that person’s performance review, causing the rater to devalue the employee’s work efforts. Given the increased diversity in the workplace, it is also important to be aware of the similar-to-me effect: We tend to be favorably disposed to others whom we perceive to be similar to us and tend to be more guarded with those who we think are different.

Expectancy

Another factor that can readily influence social perception concerns our expectations about what we will see (or hear). In many instances, we “see” what we expect to see, rather than what is actually occurring. These expectations subsequently influence our attitudes and behavior toward the person or persons involved and can distort the situation.

Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

If someone expects or perceives that another person will act in a particular way, that other person often lives up to or fulfills that expectation. This tendency is referred to as a self-fulfilling prophecy. When we behave toward others according to the way we expect them to respond (e.g., tightly controlling people who we predict will be lazy), they often will react to us as we expected—because of our behaviors. In effect, our actions have created the situation we expected, thus reinforcing our initial perceptions.

There is ample evidence that people often behave toward others in ways that produce the very behavior they expected. Moreover, self-fulfilling prophecy dynamics often operate automatically or “entirely nonconsciously,” such that the automatic activation of stereotypes encourages individuals to subconsciously act in accordance with their expectations toward others. In essence, their actions influence others to act as expected, with no awareness of the process by either party.

Selective Perception

Another way our expectations can distort a given situation is through selective perception, a process of filtering out some messages and paying more attention to others. Two factors that underlie this process are selective attention (when we listen to or watch for certain messages and ignore others) and selective retention (when we remember certain messages and forget others). For example, when we expect that an individual will behave in a certain way, we tend to concentrate on those (expected) activities and ignore efforts that do not conform to our expectations. We then have a tendency to remember those initially expected behaviors, which influences
our attitudes and behaviors and can lead to the type of self-fulfilling prophecy discussed earlier. We often use this mechanism when we draw unjustified conclusions from unclear or ambiguous situations.

**Projection**

Projection refers to a tendency to place the blame for our own difficulties or problems on others, or to attribute our feelings to other people. In business situations, for example, managers often project power motives to “explain” the behavior of other managers or their subordinates, when the managers who make the observation might be the ones with power-related needs. The same is true of many union-management negotiations, where each party projects its own feelings of mistrust onto the other group. Similarly, an underlying reason why many sexual harassment complaints seem to “fall on deaf ears” is that managers often blame the victim, projecting negative attributes and outcomes on the complaining individual (e.g., “she brought it on herself,” “she shouldn’t have dressed or acted that way”).

**Perceptual Defense**

Once we develop a perception of someone, we have a tendency to cling to that perception by shaping what we see and hear so as to be consistent with our beliefs. Thus, we might refuse to acknowledge a particular stimulus if it does not meet our initial perceptions. We can distort it, deny it, render it meaningless, or even recognize the incongruence, but not allow it to make any real change. In a sense, the various types of perceptual distortions or shortcuts discussed earlier are all kinds of perceptual defenses.

**Attribution Theory**

Attribution theory is concerned with what people identify as the apparent reason or cause for behavior. Since the way in which we view a situation determines how we will attempt to deal with it, this theory holds important implications for managers. For instance, if one of our subordinates is not doing well on the job and we think that the poor performance is due to laziness, we will come up with a very different solution than if we think the poor performance is due to an unclear job description or to the structure of the job itself. Thus, how we think a particular behavior is caused has a direct bearing on the way we approach that situation.

Essentially, attribution theory operates in the following manner: (1) We observe a given behavior and attempt to determine the reason for the behavior (e.g., was accidental or intentional); then (2) if we think the behavior was intentional, we try to assess whether the action was determined by the situation or by the individual (e.g., the person’s personality); and finally (3) we attribute a meaning (cause) to that behavior. For instance, if behavior by the same employee on different jobs is similar when other employees’ behaviors differ from job to job, we would probably attribute that individual’s behavior to personality traits instead of job-related characteristics and react accordingly.

A number of factors help us to determine why a person acted in a particular way. Our methods for making these determinations, however, are not completely rational; they are referred to as attributional biases. For instance, while both personal and situational factors might have influenced the individual’s behavior in the previous
example, we often attempt to simplify the judgment-forming process by focusing on one set of these factors. Thus, some individuals will tend to perceive internal or personal causes as being responsible for behavior (such as intelligence, motivation, personality), while others will rely more heavily on environmental or situational factors (such as organizational rules, the structure of the job). Some individuals, of course, perceive causation in terms of an additive combination of both internal and external factors. The key to attribution theory, however, is not what actually determines or causes the behavior, but what we perceive to be the underlying cause.

A common error individuals engage in when making attributions about their own outcomes is to internally attribute favorable outcomes, and to externally attribute negative outcomes. This is called the self-serving bias. Conversely, when drawing attributions about others' outcomes, individuals tend to over attribute favorable outcomes to external factors, discounting possible internal explanations, and to over attribute negative outcomes to internal factors. This tendency is referred to as the fundamental attribution error.

While both managers and subordinates often attempt to determine the extent to which a particular behavior varies across different entities, contexts, or people, due to time constraints or insufficient motivation, these same individuals may simply adopt their own assumptions that “explain” the behavior. As suggested above, these patterns of assumptions, referred to as causal schemes, are heavily influenced by the attributional biases held by the person, which can vary widely among people. Thus, in many instances, what could be a healthy and productive interaction between a manager and his or her subordinates may be undermined by conflicting attributional biases held by each party. In fact, many theorists argue that much of the conflict that occurs between managers and their subordinates is a result of leaders acting on their own causal schemes (i.e., interpretations of the situation), which are quite different from those of their subordinates. Research also suggests that when individuals perceive ambiguous actions by others as stemming from malicious intentions, they are much more likely to become angry and to retaliate than when they perceive the same actions as stemming from other motives.

As a way of creating more productive employee relations, therefore, researchers suggest attempts to reduce divergent perceptions and perspectives between the parties (e.g., increased interpersonal interaction, open communication channels, workshops devoted to reducing attributional errors) and to place greater attention on the differences that exist among individuals. The popularity of 360-degree feedback, where individual employees complete the same structured evaluation process that managers, direct reports, team members, peers, and even customers use to evaluate their performance, reflects these concerns.

**Locus of Control**

A corollary to this discussion is the concept of locus of control, the general way in which people view causation in their own lives. Some individuals view their behaviors and outcomes as internally controlled, and thus believe that they are in control of their lives. Others, however, feel that their behaviors and outcomes are externally controlled, believing that their lives are influenced by other circumstances rather than their own efforts. If an individual perceives that he or she is in control of a situation, the outcome is likely to be quite different than if the person feels that external forces are in
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control. Research has indicated, for example, that employees with a perceived internal locus of control have higher levels of job satisfaction and are more comfortable with a participative style of management than individuals with an external locus of control. These internally oriented employees enjoy participating in work-related decisions as a way of exerting control over their environment. Similarly, an internal locus of control has been found to be related to entrepreneurial activity and a tendency to start new businesses.

Attribution Theory and Motivation

As we will explore in the next chapter, there are different sets of assumptions about why individuals behave the way they do that influence how we attempt to motivate people. A manager who thinks that people are economically oriented might tinker with wage and salary schemes to influence and reinforce good work performance. A manager who thinks that social concerns are more important might concentrate efforts on improving the climate of the work group by making the organization a “happier” place to work. The manager who assumes that people are influenced by opportunities for personal growth and development, in contrast, might try to make jobs as challenging as possible. Finally, the manager who thinks that people are more complex might try to find out “what turns workers on” and develop individually tailored motivational schemes.

In an objective sense, each of these managers might be correct (or incorrect) about what motivates any given person. However, the fact that the manager perceives that one thing or another motivates the worker ultimately determines the manager’s policies and behavior; and the manager’s policies and behavior have a direct influence on the worker’s behavior. Since each of these assumptions will tend to influence the individuals involved quite differently, the key is how motivation is perceived in terms of what motivates people rather than the accuracy of the motivational model per se. This is an important basis of attribution theory—a person’s beliefs about his or her future activities and interpretations of past activities influence that person’s actions in the present.

PERCEPTION AND INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

As discussed earlier, there are a number of internal and external factors as well as perceptual tendencies that influence what each of us sees and hears of the world around us. Thus, different individuals organize their perceptions of reality in a distinctive if not unique manner. Within the context of a diverse workplace, these differences can readily moderate the ways in which people respond to a variety of organizational and managerial practices. Different individuals, for example, will vary in terms of how much importance they attach to intrinsic job-related rewards, the style of leadership they prefer, their need for interpersonal contact and interaction, and their tolerance and acceptance of job responsibility.

Within organizational behavior (OB), the concept of individual differences implies that personal characteristics influence the way in which people perform on the job and in the workplace. This section briefly examines how an individual’s personality and self-concept can influence perception and work-related behaviors, and the implications for management decision making.
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Personality

While many factors influence perception, one of the most influential determinants is an individual’s personality. Psychologists use the concept in a neutral, universal sense in terms of what characterizes an individual. Although there are a variety of definitions of personality, an underlying theme is consistency, the similarity of responses a person makes in different situations. In fact, research evidence is accumulating that suggests virtually all personality measures can be condensed into five key traits, referred to as the “Big Five.”

1. Conscientiousness is the degree to which a person is dependable, responsible, organized, and a planner (forward looking).
2. Extroversion is the degree to which a person is sociable, talkative, assertive, active, and ambitious, and is able and willing to openly express feelings and emotions.
3. Openness to experience is the extent to which an individual is imaginative, broad minded, and curious with a tendency to seek new experiences.
4. Emotional stability (neuroticism) is the degree to which an individual is anxious, depressed, angry, and generally emotionally insecure.
5. Agreeableness is the extent to which a person is courteous, good-natured, flexible, trusting, and liked by others.

Although it is not completely clear how these traits and individuals’ personalities develop, there appear to be three major influences: (1) our physical traits and biological makeup, which limit the ways we are able to adapt to our environment; (2) our socialization and the culture of our group and society; and (3) the various life events, sensations, and other situational factors we experience. These influences, which both form and interact with our interpretations of these influences, establish the uniqueness of individuals and are responsible for those behaviors and manifestations that we refer to as personality. Research, for example, suggests that various traits interact to form different personality types, such as: (1) the authoritarian personality, which is characterized by rigidity, obedience, submission to authority, and a tendency to stereotype; (2) the Machiavellian personality, which is oriented toward manipulation and control, with a low sensitivity to the needs of others; and (3) the existential personality, which tends to place a high value on choice, attempts to maintain an accurate perception of reality, and tries to understand other people. In essence, our personality acts as a kind of perceptual filter or frame of reference that influences our view of the world.

One personality dichotomy that has enjoyed prominence in the OB literature is the “Type A–Type B” personality. Type A personalities are hard-driving, competitive individuals who are prompt but always feel rushed. Characteristic Type A behavior includes a tendency toward impatience, hurriedness, competitiveness, and hostility, especially when the individual is experiencing stress or challenge. Type B personalities, in contrast, are reflective, more relaxed, and easier-going individuals who feel more free to express their feelings. Assessments of these two personality types are often associated with stress and health risks (e.g., heart attacks) for Type A individuals. There are also parallels between the needs for achievement and power and Type A personalities, and the need for affiliation and Type B personalities.
Another commonly used personality dimension in work-related research is Jung's extroversion and introversion typology. As noted earlier, the extroverted personality is oriented toward the external, objective world, while the introverted personality is focused on the inner, subjective world. Beyond these two attitudes or orientations, personality also has implications for our thinking, feeling, sensing, and intuiting. Thinking involves our comprehension of the world and our place in it. Feeling reflects our subjective affective experiences, such as pleasure or pain, anger, joy, and love. Sensing is defined as our perceptual or reality function in that it encompasses concrete facts or representations of the individual's world. Finally, intuiting refers to perception through unconscious processes or subliminal means. According to Jung, the intuitive individual goes beyond facts, feelings, and ideas to construct more elaborate models of reality.

One of the currently most popular means of assessing Jungian personality types is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. This typology reformulates Jung's model into four dichotomies: (1) extroversion-introversion (EI), (2) sensing-intuiting (SN), (3) thinking-feeling (TF), and (4) judgment-perception (JP). Individuals are "typed" on each of these four dimensions and are given a pattern—for instance, ENFP, ISTJ, or ESTP—which has been found to have some, though limited, predictive validity. Research, for example, has indicated that some people are more open to new information from others (P: high on perception) while others tend to be more closed to new information (J: high on judgment). Individuals high on the high-judgment dimension have a preference to make their own decisions, develop plans, and reach conclusions instead of continuing to collect data or to keep considering alternatives. Those high on the perception dimension, in contrast, tend to be more open and adaptable, and willing to receive new information.

Although some theories suggest that our personalities are largely formed by the time we are six years old, other views of personality development argue that there are critical periods throughout early to late or mature adulthood. Thus, it seems that although our personalities may be initially shaped during our early years, they continue to be altered as we encounter different life experiences. In terms of OB, the implications of such "age-linkages" in personality development are reflected in research indicating that not only do general life experiences affect our adjustment to work, but experiences on the job may actually have a greater impact on our psychological adjustments than the reverse.

In summary, personality develops over the course of an individual's life and influences that person's perception of reality and behavior in organizations. Since organizations can only be as creative and adaptive as the people they employ, these findings reflect some of the main reasons for career development initiatives and employee assistance programs (EAPs).

**Organizational Application**

Perhaps the most significant illustration of the effect of personality in organizational life is reflected in parallels between common neurotic styles of behavior and typical modes of organizational failure. "Stagnant bureaucracies," for example, are exemplified by organizations that do not have clear goals, lack initiative, react sluggishly to environmental change, and are pervaded by managerial apathy, frustration, and inaction. On an individual level, the depressive personality style exhibits very similar
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features. This relationship is especially significant in the context of studies indicating that the strategy, culture, and even structure of an organization can be significantly influenced by the personality of the top executive. Since we all possess certain patterns of dealing with our environment, which are deeply embedded, pervasive, and likely to continue, the personality of those at the top of an organization can shape the way in which the firm adapts to its environment.

In organizations where power is broadly distributed, strategy, culture, and structure are typically influenced by many managers, and the relationship between the excessive use of one neurotic style and organizational pathology is more tenuous. In those organizations where power is highly concentrated, in contrast, a neurotic style at the top of the organization can have an impact at all levels. Suspicious top executives, who often expect to find trickery and deception in the behavior of others and seek out “facts” to confirm their worst expectations, gradually create cultures that are permeated with distrust, suspicion, fear, and a preoccupation with “enemies.” Employee morale typically suffers a great deal under these conditions, as people at all levels withhold their contributions and focus on protecting themselves from exploitation. In some instances, entire organizations can experience the dysfunctional effects of these dynamics, resulting in what have been referred to as “depressed organizations.” These organizations are characterized by (1) a general feeling of lethargy, (2) little creativity or innovation, (3) marginally acceptable productivity, (4) a high rate of absenteeism and tardiness, (5) restricted communication within and between departments, (6) lengthy decision making, and (7) little joy or enthusiasm expressed by employees.41

A related area of concern focuses on executives in personal crisis; senior-level managers with problems that go beyond those associated with work overload, stress, and related adjustment difficulties. Such crises can involve alcoholism, drug abuse, depression, and mania—problems that can require hospitalization.42 While a growing number of organizations are improving their ability to work with lower-level, supervisory, and even mid-level management personnel with such problems through EAPs, there are a number of reasons why these problems often go undetected with higher-level executives: (1) a usual lack of close, day-to-day supervision of senior executives by their superiors; (2) the difficulty in connecting a developing mental health problem with declining performance, especially in the early stages; (3) the desire of subordinates to “cover” for their boss; and (4) a lack of senior colleagues who are aware of the impaired executive’s problems and who have sufficient status, knowledge, and desire to confront and work with the individual in question.43 It has even been suggested that the personality and mental health of top-level managers are related to overall organizational effectiveness and the ability to adapt to change.44

Self-Concept

Closely related to the notion of personality is the self-concept, the way in which we see ourselves.45 Whether we realize it or not, each of us has a self-image that influences everything that we say, do, or perceive about the world. This image acts as a filter that screens out certain things and provides an idiosyncratic flavor to our behavior. Much of what was referred to in the discussion of selective perception is influenced by our self-concept.
According to one conceptualization, our self-concept is composed of four interacting factors:

1. **Values** form the foundation of a person’s character, reflecting those things that are really important in life and basic to one as an individual.
2. **Beliefs** are ideas people have about the world and how it operates.
3. **Competencies** are the areas of knowledge, ability, and skill that increase an individual’s effectiveness in dealing with the world.
4. **Personal goals** are those objects or events in the future that we strive for in order to fulfill our basic needs.

The self-concept reflects each individual’s unique way of organizing personal goals, competencies, beliefs, and values. A related construct to the idea of personal competence is **self-efficacy**, the belief that we have in our own capability to perform a specific task. As research has indicated, self-efficacy is strongly related to task performance and openness to new experiences. Those with high self-efficacy expectations tend to be successful in a broad array of mental and physical tasks, while low self-efficacy is related to lower success rates.

Overall, our natural tendency is to maintain our self-concept. In other words, people strive to maintain their images of themselves by engaging in behaviors that are consistent with their values, beliefs, competencies, and goals as they see them. While some people might behave in ways that go against personal goals and competencies, most tend to react quite defensively when their beliefs and values are threatened. Such threat often leads to the use of the perceptual defenses discussed earlier. Thus, while we may perceive an individual’s behavior as illogical or even self-defeating, it usually makes sense to that particular individual since people generally make choices that are consistent with their self-concepts.

**Perception, Individual Differences, and Decision Making**

As indicated by the preceding discussion, perception refers to the process by which individuals receive, organize, and interpret information from their environment. In terms of making effective decisions, managers must first obtain information from their organizations (peers, subordinates, their managers) and environments (such as customers, suppliers, and other critical stakeholders), and then accurately interpret those data through the perception process. Although many discussions of managerial decision making suggest that it should be a conscious, rational, and systematic process, with a number of precise steps (including defining and diagnosing the problem, specifying decision objectives, developing and appraising alternative solutions, and then choosing and implementing the best course of action), individuals with different personalities and self-concepts differ in the ways in which they approach such decision making.

In one sense, individuals are constraints in the decision-making process. The decisions that managers make are strongly affected by their values, beliefs, competencies, goals, and personalities. Thus, to understand why certain decisions emerge from a group or organization, it is important to examine the premises of the individuals involved in making those decisions. Organizational members, for example, differ in terms
of the value they place on the system’s goals, their own ideals, their perceptions of the discrepancies between the desired and current state of affairs, the amount of risk they are willing to assume, and so forth. While some of these tendencies are explicit and discussed openly, in many instances they operate on an implicit, unconscious level. Goals are often selected, problems identified, and alternatives framed and chosen on the basis of these implicit values and beliefs, which are not always clear to the decision maker. Therefore, it should not be surprising that recent research suggests that half the decisions made in organizations result in failure.

The models that outline how managers should make decisions are largely based on classical decision theory, which views the managerial world as certain and stable. The underlying premise is that managers, facing a clearly defined problem, will know all the alternatives for action and their consequences, and be able to select the option providing the best or “optimum” course of action. Behavioral decision theory, by contrast, argues that individuals have cognitive limitations and act only in terms of what they perceive about a particular situation. Moreover, due to the complexity of the world, such perceptions are frequently imperfect. Thus, rather than operating in a world of certainty, managers are viewed as acting under uncertainty with limited, ambiguous, and in many instances, irrelevant information.

The main differences between the classical and behavioral decision models are the degrees of certainty and stability surrounding the decision-making process and the presence of cognitive limitations and their influence on our perceptions. People, however, differ in their cognitive structures (i.e., the way they organize their perceptions). Some individuals tend toward complexity, while others have a tendency to be more simplistic in their decision-making process. For instance, people with simple cognitive structures tend to immediately categorize and stereotype, generate few alternatives, and think in “either/or” terms. More complex decision makers, by contrast, spend more time processing information, generating a greater number of interpretations (“and/also”), considering the alternative implications of the information, and thinking through the ethical ramifications of their decisions. Differences in personality also influence the way in which we prefer to approach the decision-making process. Authoritarian personalities, for example, tend to be more directive oriented in their decisions, while more egalitarian personality types tend to prefer to involve others in the process of making decisions.

Decision Making and Knowledge Management

Given the increased complexity of the global marketplace and the explosion of information that is literally available through a keyboard stroke or mouse click, significant attention is being placed on how organizations share and process information and use that information to make decisions. One of the challenges underlying this dynamic focuses on managing the knowledge creation process itself—understanding what it is and how to create, transfer, and use it more effectively. Knowledge can be thought of as information combined with experience, context, interpretation, and reflection.

While explicit knowledge can be easily expressed in words and numbers and easily communicated (e.g., hard data, codified procedures, scientific formulae), tacit knowledge is much more difficult to formalize, communicate, and share with others. While tacit knowledge involves the expertise (“know-how”) an individual has
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developed over time, it also has an important cognitive dimension consisting of mental models, conceptual maps, beliefs, and perceptions so ingrained that we typically take them for granted. Since tacit knowledge is highly personalized (e.g., intuitions, hunches), it is often described as “fuzzy” and linked closely to the person who holds it. As such, a growing body of research is focusing on how such tacit knowledge can be captured and transferred from the individual to a repository available to the organization.

The concept of knowledge management will be explored more fully in Chapter 4. It is important to note, however, that although intuitive decision making has garnered a bad reputation in the past, we are beginning to place much more emphasis on how our values, beliefs, emotions, and subconscious mental processing shape and influence the decisions we make.

ATTITUDES AND ATTITUDE FORMATION

In the workplace, a person’s attitudes are an important determinant of performance-related behaviors—the quantity and quality of output, organizational commitment, absenteeism, turnover, and a host of other important outcomes. On a general level, a person’s attitudes influence that individual to act in a particular way. Of course, whether an attitude actually produces a particular behavior depends on a number of factors such as family and peer pressures, past and present work experiences, and group norms (standards of behavior). For instance, people may dislike their jobs or the firm they work for, but may choose to continue working there because alternative positions that pay as well are not available. Similarly, people may like what they are doing but hold back their effort because of a lack of perceived rewards or pressure from co-workers.

Attitudes can be defined as a predisposition to respond to a stimulus (something in a person’s environment such as an event, thing, place, or another person) in a positive or negative way. For example, when we speak of a positive job attitude (or job satisfaction) we mean that the people involved tend to have pleasant internal feelings when they think about their jobs. Attitudes have three basic components: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. An attitude’s cognitive component includes beliefs and knowledge about and evaluations of the stimulus. The affective component refers to our feelings, the emotional part of the attitude. Finally, an attitude’s behavioral component is the inclination to behave in a certain way as a response to one’s feelings and cognitions.

Attitudes also have four basic characteristics: direction, intensity, salience, and differentiation. An attitude’s direction is either favorable, unfavorable, or neutral (no direction). We may like, dislike, or be neutral about certain aspects of our job, the organization we work for, our boss, and so forth. The intensity of an attitude refers to the strength of the affective component. Even though we may dislike certain aspects of our job, the force of our dislike may range from weak to strong. In general, the more intense an attitude, the more it will tend to generate consistent behaviors. Salience refers to the perceived importance of the attitude. An artist’s dislike for computers, for example, might not be perceived to be as important as a similar attitude held by a business student, where familiarity with information technology is increasingly playing a significant role in career success. Finally, attitudes do not exist in a vacuum. They are
part of an interrelated mix of beliefs, values, and other attitudes. Attitudes with a large number of supporting beliefs, values, and other attitudes are high in differentiation; those based on few beliefs, values, and other attitudes are low in differentiation.

### Attitude Formation

There are several general processes through which attitudes are learned: (1) the outcomes of our own experiences (trial-and-error); (2) our perceptual tendencies and biases; (3) our observations of another person’s responses to a particular situation; (4) our observation of the outcomes of another person’s experiences; and (5) verbal instruction about appropriate responses to and characteristics of a particular stimulus. While some attitudes are adopted early in life (i.e., learned from our family or cultural environment), most are developed gradually over time through life experiences and observations.

Recent models of attitude formation suggest people can hold dual attitudes. One type of attitude is implicit, and is similar to an enduring predisposition insofar as we are generally unaware of when or how implicit attitudes are formed. Implicit attitudes are presumably difficult to change because they are automatic and routinized, meaning they are accessed subconsciously when individuals encounter relevant stimuli. Conversely, explicit attitudes are the result of conscious, reflective, and motivated cognitive processing, displaying flexibility and responsiveness to context-specific assessments. These are attitudes individuals prefer and espouse when given time to reflect or consider the relevant situation/stimuli.

According to dual attitude theory, it is possible for people to hold conflicting or incongruent attitudes toward the same object. For example, a person may hold a negative implicit, yet a positive explicit, attitude toward the same group of people (e.g., immigrants) or social policy (maternity leave). The difference between them is that less cognitive effort is required to retrieve the negative implicit attitude because it is often activated at a preconscious level. Furthermore, in many instances the negative implicit attitude guides judgment and behavior, especially if the positive explicit attitude is not accessed. In this instance, the implicit attitude overrides the explicit attitude. One of the novel theoretical premises of dual attitude theory is based on the notion that implicit attitudes, once formed, are never completely extinguished or “replaced.” Instead, attitudes become compartmentalized as opposed to integrated, such that either implicit or explicit attitudes may be accessed to guide judgments and behavior.

### Attitude Change

Managers are often faced with the challenge of changing someone’s attitude—a subordinate, boss, supplier, customer, and so forth. While a particular manager’s status in the group or organization and leadership capabilities can be influential aspects of this process, the extent to which a specific attitude can be changed is dependent on the attitude’s direction, intensity, salience, and degree of differentiation. Those attitudes that are not deeply held and low in differentiation are often relatively easy to change through education, training, and communication efforts. When our attitudes are so deeply ingrained that we are hardly aware of them (a high degree of
intensity, salience, and differentiation), however, they are quite difficult to change.
In fact, a significant body of social science research indicates that one of the most
effective ways of changing deeply held attitudes is to first change corresponding
behaviors.64

**Attitudes and Behavior**
Managers attempting to introduce major change in an organization often begin by
assessing and then trying to change employee attitudes.65 This approach is consistent
with the conventional wisdom that attitudes influence behavior. In general, beliefs and
values precede attitudes, which then influence behavior. The link between attitudes
and behavior, however, is tentative. While an attitude may lead to an *intent to behave* in
a certain way, the intention may or may not be carried out depending on the situation or
circumstances. At the same time, while attitudes do influence behavior, it is important
to emphasize that behavior also influences attitudes.

As a significant body of social science research underscores, one of the most effec-
tive ways of changing beliefs and values is to begin with changes in related behaviors.66
Individual values and attitudes, especially those that are deeply held, are notoriously
difficult to directly change because people's values tend to be part of an interrelated
system in which each value is tied to and reinforced by other values. Thus, managers
must realize that it is virtually impossible to change a particular value in isolation from
an individual's other values. By focusing on relevant behaviors and interactions, in
contrast, managers can begin to shape the outcomes they desire by setting explicit
expectations and performance standards, rewarding appropriate behaviors, and pro-
viding channels through which people can contribute to goals and objectives. Changes
in organizational behaviors in and of themselves, however, do not necessarily translate
into attitude change. In fact, changes in a person's attitudes may lag behavioral changes
for a considerable period of time or in some instances may never occur. Especially
when a firm relies solely on extrinsic motivators (see Chapter 3), organizational mem-
bers can easily rationalize why they “accepted” the change, leaving present attitudes
and orientations intact. If organizational members can see the inherent value of the
change, however, they are much more likely to accept and identify with what the
organization is attempting to accomplish.

Thus, if attitude change is to take place, managers must support relevant be-
havioral changes with intrinsic motivators (see Chapter 3) that link the change with
other valued attitudes and behaviors.67 As part of this process, explanations for and
justifications of the change must be made to organizational members, reinforcing the
behavioral change by articulating and communicating the desired set of beliefs and
values.

**Cognitive Dissonance**
A significant area within the realm of attitude change involves the concept of *cognitive
consistency*. Essentially, people strive to achieve a sense of balance between their be-
liefs, attitudes, and behaviors. If you hold liberal political views, for example, it would
be unlikely for you to vote for a highly conservative candidate. There are times, how-
ever, when you might be forced into a position or unwittingly do something that does
not “fit” with your beliefs and attitudes. This situation creates cognitive inconsistency
or imbalance. Since the resulting psychological imbalance is unpleasant or uncomfortable, we try to reduce that imbalance to attain cognitive consistency once again. One of the ways we reduce such imbalance is to modify our attitudes or rationalize our behavior in a way that creates a sense of balance.68

The theory of **cognitive dissonance** attempts to explain how people attempt to reduce internal conflicts when they experience a clash between their thoughts and their actions.69 For instance, if you think it is important to support the American automobile industry but believe that Japanese or German cars are of better quality than U.S. cars, you might experience some dissonance after buying an American car. One of the ways to reduce this imbalance is to alter your beliefs about comparative quality—for example, that U.S. cars are just as good if not better than Japanese cars. If you purchased a Japanese car, you might attempt to reduce the dissonance by thinking that the only way the U.S. automobile industry is going to improve its quality is to lose sales to the Japanese—that the competition will lead to improvements in the quality of U.S.-built cars. In each instance, beliefs and attitudes are modified to support the behavior.

Other sources of cognitive dissonance can be found in situations:

- **Where a choice or decision has negative consequences**: If you vote for a particular candidate who subsequently wins the election but later is perceived to do a poor job in office, you might look for positive aspects of the choice. You might attempt to reduce the dissonance by rationalizing that the candidate was not as bad as he or she could have been, that the opponent would have been much worse, or that conditions had sufficiently changed so that no one would have been able to do a good job.

- **When expectations are unfulfilled or disconfirmed**: Following a merger between two savings banks we studied, a substantial number of organizational members were “let go” due to overlapping job responsibilities. Although the chief executive officer of one of the banks expected that the friendly merger would lead to expanded opportunities for employees rather than the reduction in force, he eventually argued that “due to volatile economic conditions in the industry the bank would have had to fire a number of people even if the merger had not taken place.”70 Thus, when his expectations that the merger would have a favorable impact on the bank’s employees were unfulfilled, he rationalized his feelings by arguing that the situation would have been just as bad without the merger.

- **Under forced compliance or insufficient justification**: If we are forced into doing something that is boring, trivial, or difficult without any extrinsic compensation, we often try to think of certain aspects of the task that were interesting in order to rationalize the time spent.71 Extrinsic rewards, however, can sufficiently reduce dissonance, such as when a task might be boring but we “did it for the money,” so that rationalization is unnecessary.

As these brief illustrations indicate, the theory of cognitive dissonance helps to explain why people engage in various behaviors or adopt certain attitudes that would ordinarily be difficult to explain.
EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Traditionally, our capabilities and potential in the workplace were measured by our expertise in a given area; in essence our training, background, and experience. Given the broad changes that have taken place in the rapidly changing, global business environment, however, we are increasingly being judged by other criteria, especially how well we handle ourselves in different situations and how well we interact with others.\textsuperscript{72} As a growing body of work indicates, cognitive abilities in and of themselves are largely irrelevant to these new criteria. Instead, emotional intelligence, often referred to as \textit{EQ} (emotional intelligence quotient), reflects a different way of being smart. Emotional intelligence is “the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships.”\textsuperscript{73} These abilities are distinct from, but complementary to, one’s academic intelligence, the cognitive capabilities measured by IQ. As research suggests, EQ is a critical success factor in both careers and organizations in such varied activities as decision making, leadership, developing trusting relationships and teamwork, achieving open and honest communication, capturing creativity and innovation, and developing customer loyalty.

As reflected in Figure 2-3, a recent conceptualization of EQ is based on four basic personal and social competencies:\textsuperscript{74}

1. \textit{Self-awareness}: Knowing what we are feeling in the moment, using those preferences to guide our decision making, and having a realistic, well-grounded sense of our own abilities. Specific competencies include emotional awareness, accurate self-assessment, and self-confidence.

2. \textit{Self-management}: Handling our emotions so that they facilitate rather than interfere with the task at hand; being open and honest in one’s pursuit of goals; and being flexible in overcoming obstacles or adapting to changing situations. Specific competencies include emotional self-control, transparency (displaying honesty and integrity), adaptability, achievement, initiative, and optimism.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{emotional_intelligence_domains.png}
\caption{Emotional Intelligence Domains}
\end{figure}

3. **Social awareness:** Sensing what other people are feeling, being able to take their perspective, and cultivating rapport and attunement with a broad diversity of people. Specific competencies include empathy, organizational awareness (recognizing events, decision networks, and organizational politics), and service (recognizing and meeting follower, client, or customer needs).

4. **Relationship management:** Handling emotions in relationships well and accurately reading social situations and networks; interacting smoothly; using these skills to persuade and lead, to negotiate and lead, and for cooperation and teamwork. Critical skills include inspirational leadership, the ability to exert influence and develop others, conflict management, being a change catalyst, building bonds in terms of cultivating and maintaining a web of relationships, and teamwork and collaboration.

While the concept of emotional intelligence is still relatively new, its importance is reflected in the types of skills and capabilities that companies are looking for in job applicants. Even for entry-level positions, these include: ability to work in an unstructured, team environment; interpersonal competence and diversity-related skills; excellent negotiating and influencing skills; exceptional verbal and written communication skills; ability to consistently deliver high performance, especially under pressure; ethical awareness; and change agent skills and leadership capabilities. As we continue to explore and research the dynamics associated with emotional intelligence, the area promises to enhance our understanding of differences across individuals, including the various roles that leaders play in their organizations (see Chapter 7).

**CONCLUSION: THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF JUDGMENT AND CHOICE**

As this chapter has underscored, much of the research on perception and judgment is based on a micro-oriented, psychological view of cognitive processes. Indeed, a large proportion of the work in cognitive psychology is grounded in laboratory studies where strict controls are used to probe a person’s thought processes and to examine how perceptions and decisions are made. These studies have made an important contribution to our understanding of cognition and related processes; however, they cannot fully predict judgment or choice behavior outside of the laboratory because of the myriad social realities that can readily influence our decisions. As critics have emphasized, decision making under laboratory conditions differs from actual decision making due to the lack of social pressures that are common in our everyday lives. Thus, concerns have emerged about how to link our understanding of cognitive processes based on laboratory studies to our judgments and behaviors in daily life.

As part of organizational problem-solving and decision-making processes, it is important that managers understand perception, the various perceptual distortions that affect this process, the social context of the decision, and how individual differences influence what we perceive and subsequently use as the basis for making our decisions. Since much of the information managers rely on is gathered through interactions with people inside and outside their organizations, the way in which that information is
perceived and processed frames not only the alternatives considered but the decision itself. The key is to actively question and test these perceptions to ensure, as much as possible, both the accuracy and interpretation of information we use in making decisions.

When attempting to explain and predict various phenomena, events, or behaviors, it is important to remember that what is perceived to be true is more important than what actually exists since people’s responses are based on their perceptions. While we often assume that individuals perceive reality clearly, research indicates that there are a number of internal and external factors that can create distortions in what we see.

Realistic perceptions of our surroundings are the foundation for effective problem solving, communication, and other managerial activities and working relationships. If, however, behavior is perceived by other individuals differently from the way it was intended, the likelihood of achieving effective working relationships is going to be limited. As research on management perceptions of employee needs has indicated, managers tend to misunderstand what employees actually want from their jobs and why they act in certain ways. Since these perceptions influence the ways in which managers interact with their employees, they are among the underlying reasons why employees are expressing declining levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and a general sense of disenchantment with their organizations. Thus, it is important to be aware of the different ways in which we distort and bias information about people, events, and objects so that we can be more effective in our dealings with others. As the noted sociologist, W.I. Thomas, has argued, situations that are perceived to be real are real in their consequences.

NOTES

3. Gestalt theory is based on the work of psychologists from the Berlin school—Max Wertheimer, Kurt Koffka, Wolfgang Kohler, and later Kurt Lewin. For a good synthesis of this work see F.L. Ruch and P.G. Zimbardo, Psychology and Life (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, 1971), pp. 293–294.
6. The discussion in this section was drawn from Ruch and Zimbardo, Psychology and Life, pp. 286–290; and D. Coon, Introduction to Psychology: Exploration and Application (St. Paul, MN: West, 1977).
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30. The following discussion was adapted from D.D. White and H.W. Vroman, Action in Organizations (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1982), pp. 23–33.

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42. This discussion is adapted from J.L. Speller, Executives in Crisis: Recognizing and Managing the Alcoholic, Drug-Addicted, or Mentally Ill Executive (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1989).


44. See, for example, J.C. Quick, J.H. Gavin, G.L. Cooper, and J.D. Quick, “Executive Health: Building Strength, Managing Risks,” Academy of Management Executive 14, no. 2 (2000): 34–44.


49. B.M. Bass, Organizational Decision Making (Homewood, IL: Irwin, 1983), Chapter 7. The following discussion is drawn from this work, especially pp. 140–150.


61. The following discussion is drawn from R.L. Weaver, *Understanding Interpersonal Communication* (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, 1987), pp. 204–206.


73. Goleman, Working with Emotional Intelligence, p. 317.


