



Social cognition and perceptions

Chapter 2

Learning Objectives

Examine how heuristic strategies are employed to judge complex information

Describe the role of schemas in guiding our thoughts and actions

Evaluate the imperfections of the social cognition process

Assess the interrelation of affect and cognition

Determine how the five basic nonverbal channels of communication help us judge emotional states

Explain how the process of attribution helps our understanding of others' behavior

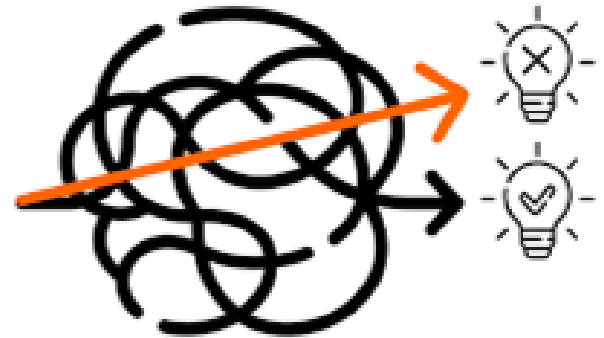
Describe why initial information is important in forming perceptions of others

Before you behave...

Do you have complete information?

Do you have a lot of information?

How do you make choices- automatically or systematically?



Introduction: judge when incomplete info

What are the chances that your bag will be stolen?

Did you have information on this incident to happen?

A social psychological analysis of how people think about risks illuminates the processes we use to make judgments, even when we have incomplete information about the risk likelihood.



Introduction: decide when complex info

Which job would you choose?

Do we give up hope of making the “correct” decision and just blindly make a selection?

Having lots of options can have a paralyzing effect that results in nonoptimal choices.

Social psychology of human judgment can help us make better sense of large amounts of information. It turns out, when people receive information in a way that highlights the crucial data in an accessible style, the process can be made easier and the choices people actually make for themselves can be improved.



Introduction: how do you make choices

Do you attempt to decide “rationally,” by systematically weighing all the pros and cons?

Do you make a choice based on some simple strategy?



Introduction: how do you make choices

Our thinking about the social world often operates on “automatic”—it occurs quickly and without lots of careful reasoning.

We do sometimes stop and think much more carefully and logically about some issues—controlled way of thinking.



Heuristics: what is it

Several rules of thumb we often use to quickly draw inferences about situations we face

How these simple rules operate

The mental frameworks that we use to organize large amounts of information in an efficient manner



Heuristics: what is it

Techniques we use to deal quickly with large amounts of information, especially under conditions of uncertainty where the “correct” answer is difficult to know or would take a great deal of effort to determine.

While many strategies exist for making sense of complex information, one of the most useful tactics involve **heuristics—simple rules for making complex decisions or drawing inferences in a rapid and efficient manner.**

- Representativeness: Judging by Resemblance
- Availability: “If I Can Recall Many Instances, They Must Be Frequent?”
- Anchoring and Adjustment: Where You Begin Makes a Difference
- Status Quo Heuristic: “What Is, Is Good”

Heuristics: Representativeness: Judging by Resemblance

- **You make your judgment on the basis of a relatively simple rule: The more an individual seems to resemble or match a given group, the more likely she or he is to belong to that group.**
- Often such judgements are correct- People's behavior and style are influenced by the groups they belong to, and at the same time, people tend to join groups that match their own traits.
- But sometimes, judgments based on representativeness are wrong- because decisions or judgments made on the basis of this rule tend to ignore base rates—the frequency with which given events or categories occur in the total population.
- Representativeness heuristics are used when people are asked to judge the likelihood that a particular effect (e.g., either many or a few people die of a disease) was produced by a particular cause (e.g., an unusually infectious bacteria or a standard strain), they are likely to expect the strength of the cause to match its effect.

Heuristics: Representativeness: Judging by Resemblance

What could be his profession-
librarian/physician/teacher/business/dancer?

If you compare him with a prototype—a list of attributes commonly possessed by members of each of these occupations

He is likely to be a librarian; his traits seem closer to those associated with this profession than they do to the traits associated with physicians, dancers, or business executives.



Heuristics: Availability: “If I Can Recall Many Instances, They Must Be Frequent?”

- **Another cognitive “rule of thumb” (availability heuristics) suggests that the easier it is to bring information to mind, the greater its impact on subsequent judgments or decisions.**
- The fact that we can bring some types of information to mind quite readily suggests that it may indeed be frequent or important, so it should influence our judgments and decisions.
- But relying on availability in making social judgments can also lead to errors. Specifically, it can lead us to overestimate the likelihood of events that are dramatic but rare, because they are easy to bring to mind.
- Research suggests that our desires can bias our decision making toward greater risk taking while using the availability heuristic.
- Such heuristic depends on the subjective ease with which relevant information comes to mind and the amount of information we can bring to mind.

Heuristics: Availability: “If I Can Recall Many Instances, They Must Be Frequent?”

Do you fear traveling in aeroplanes because of crashes?

If you think chances of accidents are higher in air traveling and that is why you choose trains over aeroplanes



Will you buy lottery tickets when economic condition is poor?

If you take risks in poor economic conditions, which may not be your rational thinking process (as you take high risk in bad economic condition. Need for money is a more dire desire. People tend to overestimate the likelihood that gambling will bring financial success and gambling tends to increase during economic downturns

Heuristics: Anchoring and Adjustment: Where You Begin Makes a Difference

- **Anchoring and adjustment heuristic involves the tendency to deal with uncertainty in many situations by using something we do know as a starting point (the “anchor”) and then making adjustments to it.**
- There are many situations in which our behavior can be subtly affected by an anchor. Now the question is who this anchor is. Anchor source can be i) lenient or harsh, ii) relevant or irrelevant, iii) inexperienced or trained.
- Behavior differs in high-anchor and low-anchor situations.
- People often rely too much on the first piece of information (the anchor) when making judgments, especially if thinking carefully takes too much effort. We tend to stick to the initial anchor because adjusting it requires extra mental work.

Heuristics: Anchoring and Adjustment: Where You Begin Makes a Difference

How much did you pay for oranges?

If the fruit seller tells you a rate and you offer less and after some bargaining, you and the seller reach an agreement and you buy oranges



How much will you eat from a full plate and small portion food?

Portion-size effect: food intake were a whopping 77 percent greater in the high-anchor condition compared to the low-anchor condition. The large portion serves as a high anchor that we typically fail to adjust downward, contributing to the obesity epidemic in Western countries.

Heuristics: Status Quo Heuristic: “What Is, Is Good”

- **In Status Quo heuristic objects and options that are more easily retrieved from memory may be judged in a heuristic fashion as “good.” In fact, these objects and options are often judged as better than ones that are new, are rarely encountered, or represent a change from the status quo.**
- Most studies (experimental) observed that people tend to prefer ‘old’ to ‘new’, out of habit, as old is known or familiar. Thus, “new” receives closer attention, potential flaws seem more obvious. Likewise, since the “status quo” is less closely scrutinized, flaws may be noticed less.
- People do seem to heuristically use the length of time a product or practice has been in existence as a cue to its goodness. Although judgments of all products are unlikely to be biased in favor of age, and occasionally novelty may win, tradition and longevity often do seem to imply heuristically that the “tried and true” is better than the new.

Heuristics: Status Quo Heuristic: “What Is, Is Good”



Which band would you prefer?

If you prefer coldplay, out of habit, as it is an old known band, traditionally you like their song.

Let us practice Heuristics

A shopper sees a new cereal brand packaged in green with leaves on the box. The shopper assumes it must be healthier than other cereals.



Let us practice Heuristics

A government is designing a poverty-alleviation program. Policymakers picture “the typical poor household” as a rural farming family with little education.



Let us practice Heuristics

- If a country recently experienced a major flood, policymakers may overinvest in flood defenses and they may underprepare for equally dangerous risks like droughts or heatwaves that are less salient.
- “Is Mount Fuji in Japan taller or shorter than 10,000 feet?” Because 10,000 is the anchor, many might guess close to it (e.g., 9,500 feet), even though the real height is 12,388 feet.
- If last year’s inflation rate was 10%, policymakers project only slight adjustments (e.g., predicting 8–9%). But structural economic changes point toward inflation actually dropping to 4%.
- Employees are automatically enrolled in a default pension plan. Many stick with it instead of exploring other plans that might offer better returns, simply because “it’s already set up.”
- When governments propose switching to renewable energy, many citizens oppose it — not necessarily because they dislike renewables, but because fossil fuel use feels like the “normal” way of doing things.

Social cognition

Social cognition refers to the processes by which people perceive, interpret, and respond to the social world around them.



Social cognition: Schema



Schemas: Mental Frameworks for Organizing Social Information

Through past experience, you have built up a mental framework (schemas) containing the essential features of a particular situation.

You have formed other mental frameworks related to doctor's appointments, eating at restaurants, getting a haircut, shopping for groceries, going to the movies, or boarding an airplane.

Social psychologists term these mental frameworks schemas: They help us to organize social information, guide our actions, and process information relevant to particular contexts. Your personal experience in such situations is probably similar to that of others in your culture, everyone in a given society tends to share many basic schemas.

Once schemas are formed, they play a role in determining what we notice about the social world, what information we remember, and how we use and interpret such information. We rely on our schemas because they help us process information efficiently.

Schemas: Mental Frameworks for Organizing Social Information



A schema for haircut

- Entering the salon/barbershop
- Explaining the style
- The process
- Social interaction – small talk with the barber/stylist (many expect this).
- Finishing up – checking the mirror, maybe asking for adjustments.
- Payment & tip

Schemas: Mental Frameworks for Organizing Social Information



A schema for a teacher

- Knowledgeable
- Guide and educate students
- Authoritative
- Give grades

Schemas: Mental Frameworks for Organizing Social Information



- A shopper's **scarcity schema** gets activated:
 - "If I don't buy now, I'll miss out."
 - "Others will grab it before me."
- People under scarcity often make **short-sighted economic choices** (like payday loans, hoarding, panic buying).

Schemas: How do schemas influence social thought?

Schemas influence three basic processes of social cognition: attention, encoding, and retrieval.

Attention refers to the information we notice. Information consistent with them is more likely to be noticed and to enter our consciousness.

Encoding is the process of storing information in memory. We remember things better when we pay attention to them. Information that fits our schemas is easily stored, while unexpected or inconsistent information often stands out, grabs our attention, and gets stored with a special mental tag.

Retrieval is the process of bringing stored information back to mind. People usually recall information that fits their schemas more easily, even though inconsistent information may also be stored just as strongly.

Schemas: How do schemas influence social thought?



Schema for classroom (attention, encoding): You expect professors to come to class, to lecture, to answer questions, to give and grade exams. This is **consistent** information.



Inconsistency (retrieval): One of your professors comes to class and performs magic tricks instead of lecturing. When you retrieve schema for classroom, will you remember information that is consistent or inconsistent with your schema?

Schemas: Priming: Which Schema Guides Our Thought?



How do you like the phone cases?

Schemas: Priming: Which Schema Guides Our Thought?



If you want ice-creams after indulging in fun-loving phone cases, that is priming (effect of phone cases).

Schemas: Priming: Which Schema Guides Our Thought?

The stronger and better-developed schemas are, the more likely they will influence our thinking, and especially our memory for social information.

Priming—temporary increases (activated by experience, stimulus or event) in the accessibility of specific schemas, a recent experience activates a schema, which in turn, exerts an effect on our current thinking.



Schemas: Priming: Which Schema Guides Our Thought?

The stronger and better-developed schemas are, the more likely they will influence our thinking, and especially our memory for social information.

Unpriming- when schema is expressed in terms of regular or permanent behavior or thoughts.



Schemas: Persistence: Why Even Discredited Schemas Can Influence Thought and Behavior

Schemas are often resistant to change. They show a strong perseverance effect, remaining unchanged even in the face of contradictory information.

Schemas can sometimes be self-fulfilling: They influence our responses to the social world in ways that make our expectations come true, consistent with the schemas.

Schema: I do not understand economics.

Initial behavior: you avoid understanding theory or practicing exercises, thinking you won't succeed anyway.

Reinforcement of belief: Because of less practice and effort, you perform poorly on tests.

Confirmation of schema/schema persistence: The poor performance strengthens the belief, *"See, I knew I did not understand economics."*

Automatic and Controlled Processing in Social Thought

Social thought can occur in two distinctly different ways: in a **systematic, logical, and highly effortful** manner known as **controlled processing**, or in a **fast, relatively effortless, and intuitive** manner known as **automatic processing**.

Automatic and controlled processing may often occur together, especially in situations that involve some uncertainty. Sometimes automatic processing may be superior to careful, conscious thought in terms of making excellent decisions.

Automatic processing can be more beneficial/quicker/more efficient, because:

- Conscious thought has strict limits in terms of the amount of information it can handle. Unconscious, automatic thought has much greater capacity. Example: **At first, driving requires intense conscious focus on every detail, but with practice it becomes automatic, allowing the unconscious mind to handle complex tasks while conscious thought focuses elsewhere.**
- When we think about decisions consciously, we may fail to weigh various dimensions or elements accurately or get confused about which ones are the most important. Example: **When buying a new phone, someone might consciously focus only on price, overlooking other important factors like storage, battery life, or camera quality. Because they get stuck comparing a few obvious features, they may end up choosing a cheaper phone that doesn't actually meet their needs.**

Sources of Error in Social Cognition

Our thinking is not simply based on rational self-interest as economists have long assumed. The judgments people make systematically deviate in a number of ways from perfect rationality.

This is true for critical decisions such as choosing a career path or whom to marry, as well as making financial decisions about investment stocks or credit card use. **Our actions often reflect overconfidence and optimism.** In our efforts to make sense of the social world, we are subject to a wide range of tendencies that, together, can lead us into **serious error**.

Different ways in which our social thought departs from rationality:

- **Our Powerful Tendency to Be Overly Optimistic**
- **Situation-Specific Sources of Error in Social Cognition: Counterfactual Thinking and Magical Thinking**



Sources of Error in Social Cognition



Our Powerful Tendency to Be Overly Optimistic

- **Optimistic bias**—a powerful predisposition to overlook risks and expect things to turn out well.
- Most people believe they are more likely than others to experience positive events, and less likely to experience negative events.
- Bias seems to occur not just for specific tasks or situations, but for projections of our entire future as well.
- Since our thinking is dominated by these positive thoughts, we make highly optimistic predictions about the future.

Sources of Error in Social Cognition



Our Powerful Tendency to Be Overly Optimistic

- **Overconfidence bias**-greater confidence in our beliefs or judgments than is justified.
- People who are least competent in a domain are often the most likely to be overconfident of their judgments in that domain.
- One critical reason that we may be overly confident of our judgments and actions in all these cases is **because we often lack essential information and relevant feedback**. Overconfidence often stems from errors of omission.

Sources of Error in Social Cognition

When Optimism Affects Our Ability to Plan Effectively

Optimism at work is the **planning fallacy**—our tendency to believe that we can get more done in a given period of time than we actually can, or that a given job will take less time than it really will. **Why do we (repeatedly) fall prey to this particular kind of optimism?**

1. **People focus primarily on the future and how they will perform the task. This prevents them from looking backward in time and remembering how long similar tasks took them in the past.** One important “reality check” that might help them avoid being overly optimistic is removed.
1. **Motivation to complete a task, when predicting, individuals often guess that what will happen is what they want to happen.** In cases where they are strongly motivated to complete a task, people make overly optimistic predictions about when they will attain this desired state of affairs.
1. Both powerful and powerless people seriously underestimated how long it would take them to complete a complex word processing task, Those who thought of themselves in a **powerful position underestimated how long it would take them to complete the task more than those thinking of themselves as powerless.**

Sources of Error in Social Cognition

Is optimism good? (Case study: Sweeny and Shepperd, 2010)

1. Study Overview

- **Objective:** Investigate the impact of optimism on emotions before and after receiving exam grades.
- **Participants:** Psychology students estimating their exam grades.
- **Emotional State Measurement:** Conducted before and after receiving actual grades.

2. Findings Before Receiving Grades

- **Optimism's Effect:** Optimistic students reported more positive emotions before learning their grades.

3. Findings After Receiving Grades

- **Impact of Overestimation:**
 - Optimistic students who overestimated their grades felt much worse than realists or pessimists after learning their actual scores.
 - Negative emotions were heightened when optimism was disconfirmed.

Sources of Error in Social Cognition

Is optimism good? (Case study: Sweeny and Shepperd, 2010)

4. Recovery of Emotional State

- **Short-lived Negative Impact:**
 - Negative emotions dissipated within 24 hours.

5. Key Insights

- **Optimism boosts positive emotions about future outcomes.**
- **Disconfirmed optimism can lead to temporary emotional downturns.**
- **Emotional recovery is quick, suggesting optimism has a net positive effect overall.**



Sources of Error in Social Cognition

Situation-Specific Sources of Error

1. **Counterfactual Thinking: Imagining “What Might Have Been”**
1. **Magical Thinking, Terror Management, and Belief in the Supernatural**



Sources of Error in Social Cognition

Situation-Specific Sources of Error

Counterfactual Thinking: Imagining “What Might Have Been”

Scenario 1: A traveler arrives at the airport **two hours** late and misses their flight.

Scenario 2: Another traveler arrives just **five minutes late** and misses the same flight.

Will you feel the same kind of sympathy for both individuals?

Would that make a difference in the sympathy you would feel?

Research indicates the answer is yes—**emotional responses differ depending on how easy it is to mentally undo the circumstances that preceded the event.**



Sources of Error in Social Cognition

Situation-Specific Sources of Error

Counterfactual thoughts seem to occur automatically in many situations.

Belief in free will, which is the opposite of determinism, encourages counterfactual thinking. This suggests that counterfactual thinking can help people learn from mistakes and plan for the future. Believing that people have the power to act differently (i.e., believing in free will) facilitates this form of social thought.

Example:

A shop owner invests heavily in a new product line that fails.

- If they **believe in free will**, they may think: *“If only I had researched the market more carefully, I could have avoided this loss.”* This counterfactual thinking encourages them to **analyze consumer demand better next time** and make wiser investments.
- If they believed outcomes were **fully determined**, they might shrug it off as unavoidable fate and miss the chance to learn and adapt.

Sources of Error in Social Cognition

Situation-Specific Sources of Error

Counterfactual thoughts seem to occur automatically in many situations.

If individuals imagine **upward counterfactuals**—comparing their current outcomes with more favorable ones—the result may be strong feelings of dissatisfaction. If individuals compare their current outcomes with less favorable ones—“it might have been worse”—they may experience positive feelings.

Example:

An investor earns a **5% return** on their stocks.

- If they imagine an **upward counterfactual**, they think: *“I could have earned 15% if I had invested in real estate instead.”* → This comparison makes them feel **dissatisfied**, even though they gained.
- If they imagine a **downward counterfactual**, they think: *“I might have lost money if I had invested in a failing company.”* → This comparison makes them feel **relieved and satisfied** with their 5% return.

Sources of Error in Social Cognition

Situation-Specific Sources of Error

Magical Thinking, Terror Management, and Belief in the Supernatural

Magical thinking assumes that one's thoughts can influence the physical world in a manner not governed by the laws of physics.

Design of the cake has nothing to do with its taste. This aspect of magical thinking illustrates the law of similarity—the perception of the cakes is affected because they have properties resembling other disgusting objects.



Sources of Error in Social Cognition

Situation-Specific Sources of Error

Magical Thinking, Terror Management, and Belief in the Supernatural

Terror management—efforts to come to terms with the certainty of death and its unsettling implications. One kind of thinking that helps with terror management is the belief that supernatural powers outside our understanding and control can influence our lives. Research indicates that **when we are reminded of our own mortality, beliefs in the supernatural are strengthened.**



Nonverbal Communications: An Unspoken Language

Temporary states exert important effects on people's behavior and social thought, recognizing and understanding these conditions is often very useful.

Sometimes, this is a relatively easy task—we ask others how they are feeling or what kind of mood they are in, and they tell us. At other times, however, people are unwilling to reveal their inner feelings.



Which salesman do you think is revealing their inner feeling and showing more liking than they actually feel?

Nonverbal Communications: An Unspoken Language

In situations when it is inappropriate or impossible to ask others how they are feeling, we can pay careful attention to nonverbal cues provided by changes in their facial expressions, eye contact, posture, body movements, and other expressive actions.

In fact, such behavior is relatively irrepressible—difficult to control—so that even when others try to conceal their inner feelings from us, those emotions often “leak out” in many ways through nonverbal cues.

Information conveyed by cues other than the content of spoken language, as well as our efforts to interpret it, is often described by the term nonverbal communication.

Basic Channels of Nonverbal Communication:

Facial Expressions: Clues to Others' Emotions

Eye Contact as A Nonverbal Cue

Body Language: Gestures, Posture, and Movements

Touching: What it Tells Us About People

Nonverbal Communications: An Unspoken Language

Facial Expressions: Clues to Others' Emotions

From a very early age, five basic emotions are clearly shown on the human face:

Anger, Fear, Happiness, Sadness, Disgust

Emotions can occur in **combinations**, such as: **Joy with sorrow** and **Fear with anger**

Each reaction can vary in **intensity**, making the possible variations on facial expressions immense.

Recognition accuracy across cultures:

- **Happiness** → most accurately recognized
- **Sadness & Disgust** → less accurate, but still above chance
- **Fear** → least accurately recognized, often confused with **surprise**

Cultural factors in recognition:

- People recognize facial expressions **more accurately within their own national group** than in others.
- Cultures may assign slightly different meanings to facial expressions.
- Unlike spoken language, facial expressions do not need extensive **translation**.

Nonverbal Communications: An Unspoken Language

Eye Contact as A Nonverbal Cue

Ancient poets described the eyes as “**windows to the soul.**”

- This reflects how much we can learn about others' feelings from their eyes.

Eye contact interpretations:

- **High level of gazing** → seen as liking or friendliness.
- **Avoiding eye contact** → may suggest unfriendliness, dislike, or shyness.
- **Continuous, unbroken eye contact (staring)** → often interpreted as anger or hostility.



Nonverbal Communications: An Unspoken Language

Body Language: Gestures, Posture, and Movements

Body language = positions, postures, and movements of the body that reflect moods and emotions.

Functions of body language:

- Reveals others' **emotional states**.
- **Many movements** (e.g., touching, rubbing, scratching) → indicate **emotional arousal**.
- **More frequent movements** → higher **arousal or nervousness**.
- **Fidgeting** → often interpreted as a **sign of lying**.

Gestures / emblems = body movements with specific cultural meanings.

- **OK sign:**
 - Japan → “money”
 - France → “zero”
 - Brazil & others → offensive gesture symbolizing a body orifice



Nonverbal Communications: An Unspoken Language

Touching: What it Tells Us About People

Touch as communication:

- Often indicates **friendliness** or **appreciation**.
- But meaning varies depending on several factors.

Factors affecting meaning of touch:

- **Who** does the touching (friend vs. stranger, male vs. female).
- **Nature** of contact (brief vs. prolonged, gentle vs. rough, body part touched).
- **Context** (business vs. social, doctor's office, etc.).

Possible meanings of touch: Friendliness, Affection, Sexual interest, Dominance, Caring, Aggression

General finding:

- When touch is **appropriate**, it usually elicits **positive reactions** in the person being touched.



Attribution

We often want to know:

- **Why** someone says or does certain things.
- **What kind of person** they are (traits, motives, goals).

Reason for this interest (social psychology view):

- Stems from a basic desire to understand **cause-and-effect relationships** in the social world.
- We observe **how others act** (readily visible).
- We also want to know **why they act that way**, which helps:
 - Us understand them better.
 - Us predict their **future actions**.

Attribution:

- The process of seeking information and drawing inferences about the **causes of behavior**.
- Applied not only to **others' behavior** but sometimes to **our own behavior** as well.

Observe Behavior → Ask Why? → Infer Causes (Attribution) → Predict Future Actions

Attribution

Using Others' Behavior as a Guide to Their Lasting Traits:

- First, we are likely to consider behavior as corresponding a person's traits when the **behavior seems freely chosen**. In contrast, if behavior appears to be somehow forced on the person in question, we tend to see it as less indicative of that person's traits.
- Second, we pay careful attention to **actions that show noncommon effects**—conditions that can be caused by one specific factor, but not by others.
- Third, we pay more attention to others' actions that are **low in social desirability**, than to actions that are high on this dimension.

Attribution

Using Others' Behavior as a Guide to Their Lasting Traits:

- First, we are likely to consider behavior as corresponding a person's traits when the **behavior seems freely chosen**. In contrast, if behavior appears to be somehow forced on the person in question, we tend to see it as less indicative of that person's traits.

Scenario (freely chosen):

An employee decides to work late hours every evening, even though their boss does not require overtime and other colleagues leave on time.

Freely Chosen Behavior:

The decision to stay late is freely chosen because it is not influenced by external pressures or obligations, such as company policies or managerial expectations.

Attribution Implication:

Observers are likely to attribute the behavior to internal factors, such as the employee's work ethic, ambition, or dedication, rather than external constraints. This is because the action was made voluntarily, reflecting personal motives or characteristics.

Attribution

Using Others' Behavior as a Guide to Their Lasting Traits:

- Second, we pay careful attention to **actions that show noncommon effects**—conditions that can be caused by one specific factor, but not by others.

Scenario (noncommon effect):

You are deciding between two job offers:

1. **Job A:** High salary, long commute, flexible work hours, and a prestigious company.
2. **Job B:** Moderate salary, short commute, fixed work hours, and a lesser-known company.

You choose Job A. What is the noncommon factor?

Explanation in Attribution Theory:

Observers attribute your choice to the noncommon effect—the prestige of the company—because it differentiates Job A from Job B and aligns with your likely values or priorities.

Attribution

Using Others' Behavior as a Guide to Their Lasting Traits:

- Third, we pay more attention to others' actions that are **low in social desirability**, than to actions that are high on this dimension.

Scenario (low social desirability):

A student openly admits in class that they did not prepare for the exam and failed because they spent the entire weekend playing video games.

Low Social Desirability:

The behavior (admitting to procrastination and failure) is low in social desirability because most people would try to present themselves in a positive light, such as making excuses or downplaying their lack of preparation.

Attribution Implication:

Observers are likely to attribute the student's behavior to their internal characteristics (e.g., honesty, lack of motivation, or irresponsibility) rather than external factors (e.g., the difficulty of the exam). This is because low social desirability behaviors are often seen as genuine and not influenced by societal pressure to conform.

Impression and management

Impression formation = how we develop our views of others; a key part of **social perception**.

Key questions about first impressions:

- What are they?
- How are they formed, and how quickly?
- Are they accurate?

Impression formation process:

- Not simply adding up individual traits we notice.
- Traits are seen as **connected** and integrated.
- We form a **complete, dynamic picture** of the person.

Example

You meet a person who is **intelligent**, **confident**, and **arrogant**.

- **Adding Traits Individually:**

If you consider each trait separately, you might think, "They are intelligent, which is a good thing; confident, which is also positive; but arrogant, which is bad."

- **Perceiving Traits as a Whole:**

When you view these traits together, the arrogance might be interpreted as stemming from their confidence and intelligence. Instead of seeing the arrogance as purely negative, you might view it as part of a "strong personality."

This shows how we combine traits into a bigger picture, influencing the overall impression of the person.

Impression and management

Impression management (self-presentation):

- Efforts to create a good impression on others.
- Research shows it can provide **important advantages** when done successfully.

Two main categories of tactics:

1. **Self-enhancement** → efforts to increase one's own appeal.
 - **Physical appearance**: attractiveness, grooming, hygiene.
 - **Professional appearance**: appropriate dress, neatness.
2. **Other-enhancement** → efforts to make others feel good.
 - Flattering others.
 - Expressing agreement.
 - Doing favors.
 - Asking for advice.

Effectiveness of impression management:

- Works **up to a point**, often leading to positive first impressions.
- If seen as **deceptive or excessive**, it can backfire → producing **negative reactions**. **Think of Daraz orders.**

Class task



You have 1 min to choose one environmental poster. Also write heuristic reasons why you make the choice. Make comments (about attribution and impressions) on why your friend would make a different choice.