

## **Role of Construals**

Construal: Interpretation and inference about the stimuli or situation we confront ([page16](#)).

- How do we interpret the world around us?
- What factors influence our interpretation?
- What biases do we have when interpreting the world around us?

Our interpretation of the world around us is automatic and unconscious. This makes it hard to control, hard to change and difficult to understanding the underlying process of thinking.

What we perceive in the world around us may not be occurring. We only see a small slice of reality.

## Role of Construals

Schemas: Generalized knowledge about the physical and social world and how to behave in particular situations and with different kinds of people (page 19).

- How do you behave in church?
- What is associated with used cars?
- How do you order in McDonalds vs a “high class restaurant”



(A)  
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Schemas capture the regularity of life and lead us to have certain expectations we can rely on so that we don't have to invent the world anew all the time (page 19).

## Role of Construals

Your beliefs about the world around you affect how you organize and interpret the world around you.

If you know what you are looking for in the image, you can spot it and interpret it immediately. Beliefs and schemas act in this way.



However, once you interpret the image, it is difficult to arrive at alternative interpretations. This occurs automatically and unconsciously.

## Role of Construals

Your beliefs about the world around you affect how you organize and interpret the world around you.

If you know what you are looking for in a person, you can spot it and interpret it immediately. Beliefs and schemas act in this way.



However, once you interpret the person's behavior, it is difficult to arrive at alternative interpretations. This occurs automatically and unconsciously.

## Role of Construals

Generally, beliefs about the world around you affect your thinking unconsciously and automatically.



**AP Associated Press** AP - Tue Aug 30, 11:31 AM ET

A young man walks through chest deep flood water after **looting** a grocery store in New Orleans on Tuesday, Aug. 30, 2005. Flood waters continue to rise in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina did extensive damage when it

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Recommend It Average (138 votes)  
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**AFP** 3:47 AM ET

Two residents wade through chest-deep water after **finding** bread and soda from a local grocery store after Hurricane Katrina came through the area in New Orleans, Louisiana. (AFP/Getty Images/Chris Graythen)

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It is easier to notice these apparent differences are side by side will we notice them. Very rarely will these differences occur side by side and close together in time.

## Role of Construals

# GENDER BIAS



**assertive**



*bitch*



**articulate**



*chatty*



**stud**



*slut*



**leader**



*nag*

## Role of Construals: Schemas and Stereotypes

In the following demonstration people looked at this picture and later asked to recall what went on in the picture.

What do you see in this picture?



**Figure 6.11**

Psychologist Gordon Allport showed subjects this picture for a very brief period of time to test the accuracy of their "eyewitness" testimony in a situation in which racial prejudice might influence their perception.

From "Eyewitness Testimony" by Robert Buckhout. Copyright © 1974 by Scientific American, Inc. All rights reserved.

What do you remember about this picture?

## **Role of Construals: Schemas and Stereotypes**

Like schemas, your beliefs can make you forget things that inconsistent with your beliefs and remember things that are consistent with that belief—regardless of the reality.

This experiment was done when stereotypes of black people were quite negative (e.g. people had a stereotype that black people are more likely to rob a person). With this stereotype, people remembered the following that were not true:





- The black man was more aggressive.
- The white person was more passive.
- The passengers were afraid.
- The razor was in the black man's hand.

Schemas and stereotypes can have an affect on memory, and has the potential to affect our behavior, attitudes, or decisions, by not giving blacks the benefit of doubt or opportunities. If you have a negative stereotype of minorities, members of groups you consider “outcast” or deviant, you are more likely to interpret behavior as being criminal and notice more “criminal behavior” in minorities and ignore “criminal behavior” in non-minorities .



## Role of Construals: Schemas and Stereotypes



	White Skin	Black Skin
Holding a gun	 16 bullet hole icons	 16 bullet hole icons
Holding a Camera	 2 bullet hole icons	 3 bullet hole icons



## **Role of Construals: Schemas and Stereotypes**

While schemas, stereotypes and prior beliefs help us organize information and allows us to make reasonable inferences, the same processes can make prejudicial attitudes more likely, interpret reality in a way that is consistent with our prior beliefs.

Prior beliefs are difficult to change once they are established—even if the foundation of the original belief is later discredited (this is called belief perseverance).

Again, these processes are automatic and unconscious which makes it difficult to change and say that they are influencing us.

## Automatic Versus Controlled Processes

The following are examples where our interpretation of the world around us is automatic and we understand that context is influencing us.

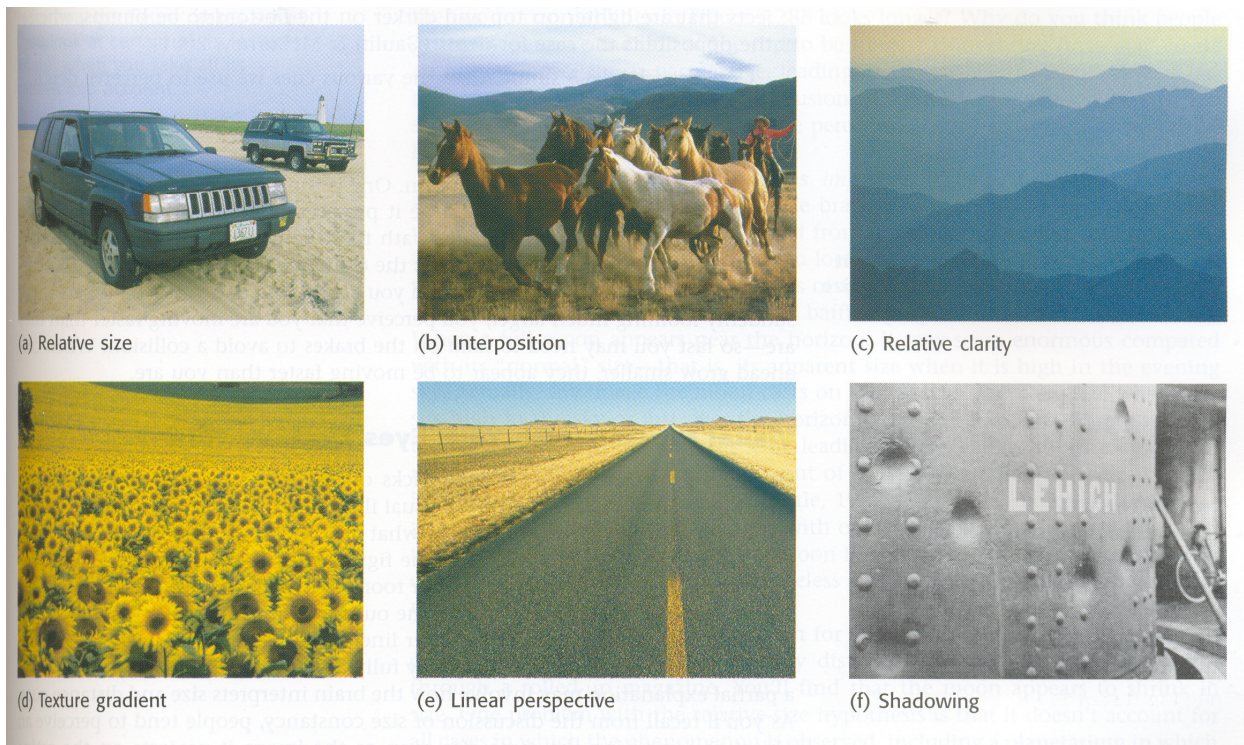


Image source (Nevid)

However, with some of the examples I just illustrated, it is more difficult to see how it influences us. With regards to social perception and social influence, there are a lot of automatic processes that occur without our knowledge and are not as obvious.

Automatic processes are faster and can operate in parallel with conscious processes and allow us to function “normally” in the real world.

## **Automatic Versus Controlled Processes**

The mind processes information in two different ways when you encounter a social situation

- (1) it is automatic and unconscious, often based on emotional factors,
- (2) the other is conscious and systematic and more likely to be controlled by careful thought (page 21).

Often our emotional reactions to people occur before conscious thought takes over. Thus your fearful reaction to the person with the backpack might automatically kick in without any special thought on your part. But when you start thinking systematically, you might realize that he might have just come in from the summer heat and that he might be agitated because he is late for his plane (page 21).

Because of a lot of judgments and factors that influence people automatically and without their awareness, psychologists need indirect ways of tapping into the unconscious processes. This is why some of the experiments are designed as they are.

Understanding automatic processes is important so that we can understand the nature of the problem in front of us (why people are aggressive, make bad decisions, have prejudicial attitudes), make the changes in our lives and control them (instead of letting them happen or have

someone else control them). However, taking this responsibility means accepting responsibility for your life.

## **Evolution and Human Behavior: How we are the same**

The evolutionary perspective of psychology asserts that certain traits have developed, maintained or dropped because of their adaptive value. This also suggests that there are certain universal principles that occur across cultures.

Cooperation tends to be something that facilitates survival in humans. That trait was passed on. Those who cooperated are more likely to survive and have larger families. Those that did not cooperate had smaller families and less likely to survive.

Although there are certain tendencies, it is considered an error in thinking (the naturalistic fallacy) that the way things ARE is the way things SHOULD be.

For example, if men are more physically aggressive, we should just accept that it is okay for men to be more aggressive.

# Evolution and Human Behavior: How we are the same

There will be a lot of discussion about how culture affects thinking and behavior. The major culture difference psychologists look at is independence versus interdependent (individualistic versus collectivist cultures)

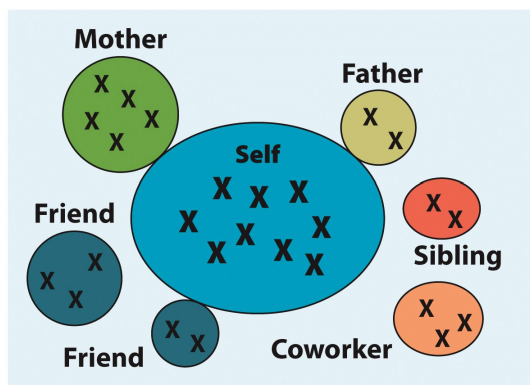
**TABLE 1.2 Independent versus Interdependent Societies**

People in independent (individualistic) cultures have different characteristics than people in interdependent (collectivistic) cultures, as shown by the difference in emphasis on the individual and on the group.

Independent Societies	Interdependent Societies
Conception of the self as distinct from others, with attributes that are constant	Conception of the self as inextricably linked to others, with attributes depending on the situation
Insistence on ability to act on one's own	Preference for collective action
Need for individual distinctiveness	Desire for harmonious relations within group
Preference for egalitarianism and achieved status based on accomplishments	Acceptance of hierarchy and ascribed status based on age, group membership, and other statuses
Conviction that rules governing behavior should apply to everyone	Preference for rules that take context and particular relationships into account

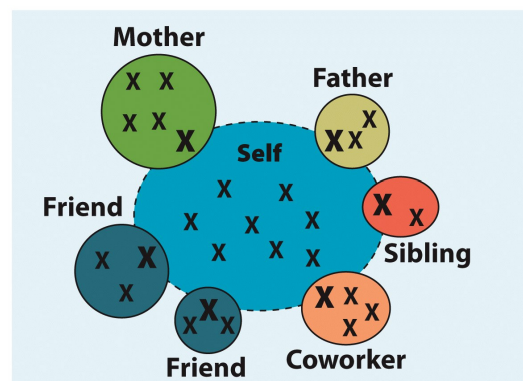
*Social Psychology, 2/e* Table 1.2  
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## Independent view of self



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## Interdependent view of self



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# Evolution and Human Behavior: How we are the same

**TABLE 1.3 Values and Beliefs of Independent and Interdependent Cultures**

People in independent (individualistic) and interdependent (collectivistic) cultures tend to have different values and beliefs, as can be seen below in what people in independent cultures tend to want and believe and what people in interdependent cultures tend to want and believe.

## Independent Cultures

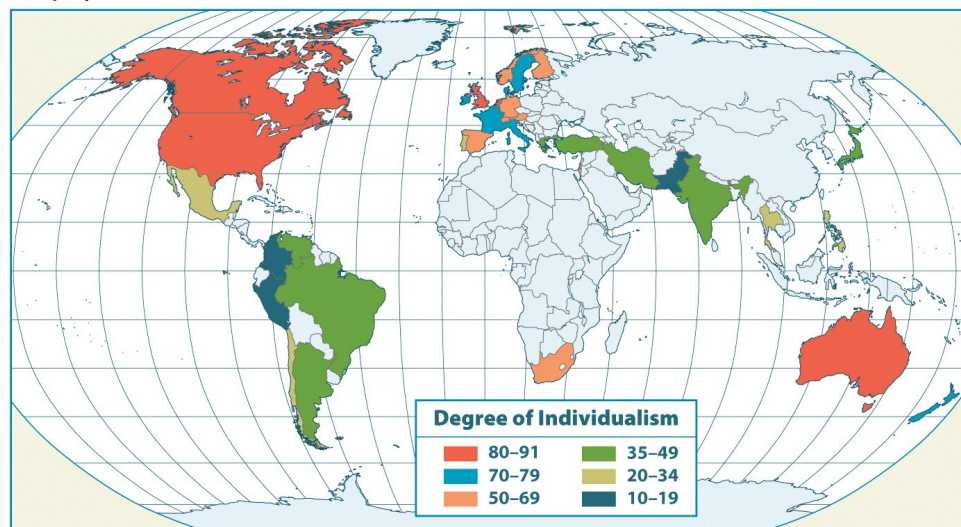
- Want to get the recognition they deserve when they do a good job
- Want to have considerable freedom to adopt their own approach to the job
- Want to fully use their skills and abilities on the job
- Want to work in a department that is run efficiently
- Believe that decisions made by individuals are better than those made by groups

## Interdependent Cultures

- Want the employer to have a major responsibility for their health and welfare
- Want to work in a congenial and friendly atmosphere
- Want to be completely loyal to their company
- Believe that knowing influential people is more important than ability
- Believe that the better managers are those who have been with the company the longest time

Source: Hofstede, 1980.

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