Perceiving and Understanding

Chapter Three
Focus Questions

• What processes are involved in perceiving?

• What factors influence our perceptions?

• How does the self-serving bias affect the accuracy of our perceptions?
Focus Questions

• Does mind reading help or hinder communication?

• How can we use language to enhance skill in perceiving?
The Perception Process

• Selection
  – What you define as important in a moment
  – External phenomena
    • Things that stand out
  – Change
The Perception Process

- **Organization**
  - We organize our perceptions

- **Constructivism**
  - Theory of how we organize & interpret our experiences by applying cognitive schemata
Cognitive Schemata

- Prototypes
- Personal Constructs
- Stereotypes
- Scripts

**Figure 3.2  COGNITIVE SCHEMATA**
Interpretation

• The subjective process of creating explanations
  – Observation
  – Experience

• All ages are interested in this process
## Attributions

- The act of explaining why:
  - Something happens
  - A person acts a particular way

### Figure 3.3  The Dimensions of Attribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Locus</th>
<th>Internal</th>
<th>External</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Locus</td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>External</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Stability</td>
<td>Stable</td>
<td>Unstable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Specificity</td>
<td>Specific</td>
<td>Global</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Responsibility</td>
<td>Within personal control</td>
<td>Beyond personal control</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Self-Serving Bias

• We tend to construct attributions that serve our personal interests

• How we perceive ourselves determines how we react to situations
Influences on Perception

- Physiological factors

- Expectations
  - Expectancy Violation Theory
Cognitive Abilities

• Cognitive complexity

• Person-centeredness
  – Empathy

• Social roles
Membership in Cultures & Social Communities

• Culture consists of:
  – beliefs
  – values
  – understandings
  – practices
  – ways of interpreting experience
Guidelines for Improving Skill in Perceiving

- Avoid mind reading
- Check perceptions with others
- Distinguish facts from inferences & judgments
- Monitor the self-serving bias
Summary

- The Perception Process
- Cognitive Schemata
- Interpretation
- Attributions
- The Self-Serving Bias
- Influences on Perception
- Cognitive Abilities
- Membership in Cultures & Social Communities
- Improving Skill in Perceiving