

**LESSON NUMBER:** 9

**TASK:** Perceptions Process and Stereotypes

**CONDITION:** Classroom environment.

**STANDARD:**

1. Define the perception process.
2. Describe perceptual shortcuts.
3. Describe factors affecting the perception process.
4. Describe stereotypes.
5. Define self-fulfilling prophecy.
6. Describe strategies to correct inaccurate perceptions.

**TYPE OF INSTRUCTION:** Conference

**TIME OF INSTRUCTION:** 2 Hours

**MEDIA:** Viewgraph #9-1 through #9-8, Practical Exercises #9-1 and #9-2

**LEAD IN:** During this period we will be discussing perceptions and the perception process. This lesson continues the learning about individual and group behavior by discussing the perception process. Sometimes what we see or hear is not necessarily what we actually see or hear. There is an old saying, "Believe half of what you see and nothing of what you hear." It is important as a leader you not form opinions of others or groups based on your past experiences, whether they were good or bad experiences. When gathering information for your commander, ensure you deal with facts, not opinions, and make sure your facts are accurate.

## **PART I. DEFINITION OF THE PERCEPTION PROCESS**

**QUESTION:** Ask the students to define the word "perception."

**SHOW VIEWGRAPH #9-1**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>PERCEPTION</b></p> <p><b>The procedures by which we try and interpret information about the environment that surrounds us.</b></p>
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1. Perception can be defined as the procedures by which we try and interpret information about the environment that surrounds us.

**SHOW VIEWGRAPH #9-2**

### THE PERCEPTION PROCESS

- **Feedback about ourselves and others**
- **Not always based on true picture of reality**
- **We behave as though our perceptions are real**

2. The perception process is the procedure by which we try to gather and interpret information about the environment that surrounds us. Our perceptions explain reality from an individual point of view. Webster defines perception as an "awareness of the elements of our environment through physical sensations;" sight, touch, hearing, smelling, and taste. Our perceptions reinforce or enhance our socialization and also defines our interactions with others who are different or similar to ourselves. Another important aspect of perception is that the process of physical interpretation and our capacity to comprehend new information is based on our past experiences.

**NOTE:** Conduct Practical Exercise #9-1, Count the F's

### SHOW VIEWGRAPH #9-3

#### ATTRIBUTES TO PERCEPTION

- **Raw data, the information that we experience**
- **Mental process, which is unseen but affected by things**
- **Our perception, sensing or interpretation of our experience**

3. **Attributes to perception.** There are three attributes or elements to our perception process.

a. Raw data, the information that we experienced (the picture).

b. The mental process, which is unseen but affected by such things as individual perceptions, e.g., race, color, religion, gender, or other past cultural experiences (where have we seen this before?).

c. The third attribute is the end product; our perception, sensing or interpretation of our experience. When raw data is incomplete or insufficient, the brain automatically fills in the missing pieces and locks-in on past experiences (the perception).

### SHOW VIEWGRAPH #9-4

#### ECONOMIZING PHENOMENON

- **First Impression**
- **Self-Fulfilling Prophecy**
- **Just Like Me**
- **Blaming the Victim**
- **Halo Effect**

4. **Economizing Phenomenon.** Economizing Phenomenon is the mind's ability to take in new information, combine it with old information, and formulate new ideas through quick deduction. This is sort of a "quick fix" that occurs when we don't have time to fully analyze the new information. When you hear the word "fire," you don't sit and wonder where it is, where the smoke is coming from, or is the fire alarm working. Instead you run outside. Let's take a look at some examples of the economizing phenomenon.

**NOTE:** When appropriate add examples all students can relate to from current events.

a. **First Impression.** This perceptual shortcut is one we are all familiar with and probably have personally experienced at one time or another. During this situation we make a major decision or judgment call based on our first encounter with an individual, group, or event. We learn from an early age about how important it is to make a good first impression and apply this philosophy on a daily basis. However, we also understand the consequences of a wrong "first impression." We are reminded as we hear people comment that "he or she was not what I expected" or "that wasn't as bad as I thought it would be." Some of us may also know how it feels when someone has made an incorrect "first impression" about ourselves. We are surprised and even become angry when people make decisions about us without really knowing who we are.

b. **Self-Fulfilling Prophecy.** The concept of the self-fulfilling prophecy is a phenomenon that occurs when an individual or group has a high expectation that someone will succeed or fail in a given situation based on his or her perceptions. This can also be applied to things and events. The concept is normally characterized by prejudgments and biases that have nothing to do with such things as motivation, capability or desire. The prophecy is fulfilling-filled by the conscious or unconscious actions of participants and, or spectators, leading to the expected outcome. Self-fulfilling prophecy is a complex, complicated process, but at an early age we could understand both negative and positive results when the right forces are put into motion.

c. **Just-Like-Me.** This is another form of the perceptual shortcut in which people see themselves or others as being constant or consistent. With this assumption we need not take a lot of time to get to know others or ourselves. An excuse that is often

heard is "isn't that just like me" or "isn't that just like them", or "people will never change."

d. **Blaming The Victim.** Blaming the victim is a special perceptual shortcut. The concept involves seeing individuals or groups as the origin or cause of a particular action or problem rather than the circumstances or other relevant factors in a given situation. Examples of this concept are prevalent throughout our history and are just as relevant in our society today. "He or she is an alcoholic because of low moral character; a women who stays with an abusive husband deserves what she gets; homeless people wouldn't be homeless if they wanted to work," is some of the language used when blaming the victim. Sociologists believe that this behavior is also part of our ego defense mechanism which protects us from feelings of guilt or uncontrolled remorse. However, if not challenged and evaluated, the consequences are that we will never discover the real cause of problems or accept any responsibility for our personal development or resolution.

e. **Halo effect.** According to this effect, if we know something good about a person, we are likely to perceive him/her as having other good characteristics. But, if we know something unfavorable, we are likely to see other unfavorable things.

**NOTE:** Ask the students what other factors may affect our perception? There answers should include some of the following factors.

5. Our perceptions are also influenced by biological and sociological culture factors. Some examples of these factors are:

a. Biological factors that affect the perception process are: sight, touch, taste, hearing and smell.

b. Sociological culture factors include: Social norms, customary behaviors, language and symbols. Some additional sociological cultural factors include: Ethnocentrism (believing one group is better than another or superior), proxemics (close, or distance from a person), color consciousness, values, beliefs, and attitudes.

**NOTE:** Conduct Practical Exercise #9-2, Old Lady/Young Lady.

## **PART II. STEREOTYPES**

**QUESTION:** Ask the students to define "stereotypes."

**SHOW VIEWGRAPH #9-5**

## STEREOTYPES

**An exaggerated belief associated with a category.**

1. Whether favorable or unfavorable, a stereotype is an exaggerated belief associated with a category. Its function is to justify our conduct in relation to that category. We all have stereotypes. Once you have them, they are yours for life. There are soldiers and leaders in the Army that stereotype individuals into a category. An example of stereotypes may be: "Women are not good drivers" or "White men can't play basketball". There are both men and women who are bad drivers and anybody can play basketball. What we want you as leaders to learn is you must not make decisions affecting others based on stereotypes. In Gordon W. Allport's "Nature of Prejudice, he states that "whether favorable or unfavorable, a stereotype is an exaggerated belief associated with a category. Its function is to justify (rationalize) our conduct in relation to that category."

### SHOW VIEWGRAPH #9-6

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF STEREOTYPES

- **Fixed, rigid ideas**
- **Associated with a group or category of people**
- **Not supported by evidence**
- **Can be favorable or unfavorable**
- **Driven by motive**

2. There are several characteristics that can be identified with stereotypes. Stereotypes are fixed, rigid ideas; usually associated with a group or category of people; they are not supported by evidence; can be favorable or unfavorable, and driven by motive.

**NOTE:** Ask the students to identify some examples of each of the characteristics. They may include the following:

a. **Stereotypes are fixed, rigid ideas.** An example may be all minorities are not educated, lazy, and poor.

b. **Associated with a group or category of people.** This is based on outward features such as skin color.

c. **Not supported by evidence.** It may be supported by some evidence. For example: The supply sergeant at my last unit was crooked. Does this mean all supply sergeants are crooked? No, not all supply sergeant are crooked.

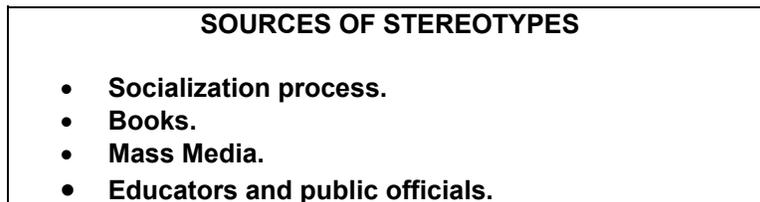
d. **Can be favorable or unfavorable.** An example is a stereotype that all Asians are polite and intelligent, therefore I'll get along well with them.

e. **Driven by motive.** An example of this is say moving out of a neighborhood which suddenly becomes integrated, because the value of my property will decline

3. People respond to information that is important to them, categorize that information, generate expectations, guide their behavior based on the expectation, and assign characteristics to the categories. This leads to the "in-group" (most like me) and the "out-group" (most different from me). The people we tend to categorize or stereotype most are the out-group.

**NOTE:** Ask the students what are some of the sources of stereotypes?

**SHOW VIEWGRAPH #9-7**



4. Stereotypes are obtained from many sources. The most common of these sources are:

- a. Socialization process.
- b. Books.
- c. Mass Media.
- d. Educators and public officials.

**NOTE:** Have students to discuss how the perception process and stereotypes can affect behavior, communication, and mission accomplishment.

**SHOW VIEWGRAPH #9-8**

**STRATEGIES TO CORRECT INACCURATE PERCEPTIONS**

- **Acceptance of differences in people**
- **Active listening**
- **Provide feedback**
- **Own your behaviors/feelings**
- **Receive feedback**
- **Use inclusionary language**
- **Avoid stereotypes**

5. There are several strategies you can use to correct inaccurate perceptions and they are:

a. **Acceptance of differences.** Disagreement is okay. But rather than use statements such as “you’re wrong” or “that’s your perception,” try using, “I differ.” Don’t deny the other person’s experiences. Look at people objectively.

b. **Active listening.** Listen for understanding, not agreement.

c. **Provide feedback.** Be behavior specific. Let others know what impact their behavior has on you. Always address the behavior and not the individual.

d. **Take ownership for feelings and behaviors.** Share with the group where you are, and be willing to explore how you got there.

e. **Receive feedback.** Don’t defend or rationalize your behavior. Accept what others have to say. Remember, agreement is not necessary.

f. **Use inclusionary language.** If its your feeling or behavior, take ownership by saying “I” versus “we” or “they.”

g. **Avoid stereotypes.** Work to learn not to stereotype.

**NOTE:** Ask the students to relate how this lesson will help them in their duties and responsibilities as a leader.

**CLOSING:** During this block of instruction, we have discussed the perception process. As stated earlier, the perception process is the action of making sense out of experience, of giving meaning to experience. How do we do that? Never assume, deal with facts, never exclude anyone, and remember that we are all different, with different values, beliefs and socialization, so do not expect others to fulfill our expectations based our own stereotypes. Summarize lesson objectives.

I would like end this lesson with a quote by author Dennis Kimbro. “One of the most important aspects of achievement is training the eyes to see properly. Sight is an interesting phenomenon. We see things not as they are, but as we are. Our perception is shaped by past experiences, according to faith and consciousness.” In other words, seeing is not believing. Believing is seeing. We can only see in others what lies within ourselves. Summarize lesson objectives.

**PRACTICAL EXERCISE #9-1  
“COUNT THE F’s EXERCISE”  
INSTRUCTOR’S GUIDE**

**Objective:**

To illustrate that people see what they want to see; items of prominence catch our attention while seemingly less important items may pass by.

**Procedure:**

Cut out the Count the F's Exercise and pass out face-down a copy to each student. When everyone is ready, ask them to turn the paper over and simply count how many times the letter "f" appears on their sheet. Allow only a minute, and then ask, "How many of you have the sheet with the three F's?" (Roughly half the group can be expected to so indicate.) "Who has four F's on the sheet?...How about five?...Does anyone have six?" (About 50% of the group will see only three F's, and approximately 10% will see all six F's. The rest will see either four or five on the sheet.)

**Alternative:**

Ask those with four, five, or six F's on their sheets to raise their hands and let those with three F's exchange papers so they too can "see" all six F's. Most will still have a difficult time identifying all six of the F's.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Why couldn't all of us initially see all six F's? (The F in the word "of" sounds like a "V".)
2. Have you observed situations where only the important things get attention? Who decides what's important.
3. How can we persuade people to pay more attention to detail? Is it always important?

**Materials Required:**

Sheet of paper with Count the F Exercise.

**PRACTICAL EXERCISE #9-1  
"COUNT THE F's EXERCISE"**

FEATURE FILMS ARE THE RESULT OF YEARS OF SCIENTIFIC STUDY COMBINED WITH THE EXPERIENCE OF YEARS

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**PRACTICAL EXERCISE #9-2  
“OLD LADY “YOUNG LADY”  
INSTRUCTOR’S GUIDE**

**Objective:**

To illustrate the impact of a person’s background or attitudes on their perception of an object or event.

**Procedure:**

Show the group slide #9-5 and tell them it is a picture of (a) a relatively unattractive, poorly dressed elderly woman, or (b) an attractive, wealthy young woman with a fancy hairdo. Based upon direction (a) or (b), ask how many of them clearly recognize the old/young woman. Then proceed to reverse the directions with the same picture for the benefit of those who see the “other” person, explaining that (with apologies) you really brought the other picture instead. Again inquire how many see the old/young woman.

**Alternatives:**

Divide the group into two halves. Show the picture to one half, explaining it to be the old woman. Show the duplicate picture to the other half, explaining it to be the young woman. Ask how many in each group recognize the assigned image. Then reverse the pictures and reverse the questions for each group.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. How does our mental set (attitude) influence our perceptions?
2. What other common attitudes do we have that influence daily activities?
3. What can be done to open up our minds (as trainees) to new learning?

**Materials Required:**

Either a picture large enough to be seen throughout the group, or a transparency.

**Approximate Time:**

5-10 minutes, plus discussion

**PRACTICAL EXERCISE #9-2  
“OLD LADY “YOUNG LADY”**





# PERCEPTION

**THE PROCEDURES BY WHICH WE TRY AND  
INTERPRET INFORMATION ABOUT THE  
ENVIRONMENT THAT SURROUNDS US**



# THE PERCEPTION PROCESS

- **FEEDBACK ABOUT OURSELVES AND OTHERS**
- **NOT ALWAYS BASED ON TRUE PICTURE OF REALITY**
- **WE BEHAVE AS THOUGH OUR PERCEPTIONS ARE REAL**



# ATTRIBUTES OF PERCEPTION

- **RAW DATA, THE INFORMATION THAT WE EXPERIENCE**
- **MENTAL PROCESS, WHICH IS UNSEEN BUT AFFECTED BY THINGS**
- **OUR PERCEPTION, SENSING OR INTERPRETATION OUR EXPERIENCE**



# ECONOMIZING PHENOMENON

- **FIRST IMPRESSION**
- **SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY**
- **JUST LIKE ME**
- **BLAMING THE VICTIM**
- **HALO EFFECT**





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# STEREOTYPES

**AN EXAGGERATED BELIEF ASSOCIATED  
WITH A CATEGORY**



# CHARACTERISTICS OF STEREOTYPES

- **FIXED, RIGID IDEAS**
- **ASSOCIATED WITH A GROUP OR CATEGORY OF PEOPLE**
- **NOT SUPPORTED BY EVIDENCE**
- **CAN BE FAVORABLE OR UNFAVORABLE**
- **DRIVEN BY MOTIVE**



# SOURCES OF STEREOTYPES

- **SOCIALIZATION PROCESS**
- **BOOKS**
- **MASS MEDIA**
- **EDUCATORS AND PUBLIC OFFICIALS**



# STRATEGIES TO CORRECT INACCURATE PERCEPTIONS

- **ACCEPTANCE OF DIFFERENCES IN PEOPLE**
- **ACTIVE LISTENING**
- **PROVIDE FEEDBACK**
- **OWN YOUR BEHAVIORS/FEELINGS**
- **RECEIVE FEEDBACK**
- **USE INCLUSIONARY LANGUAGE**
- **AVOID STEREOTYPES**