

# Making sense of people

What we think we know of ourselves  
and others



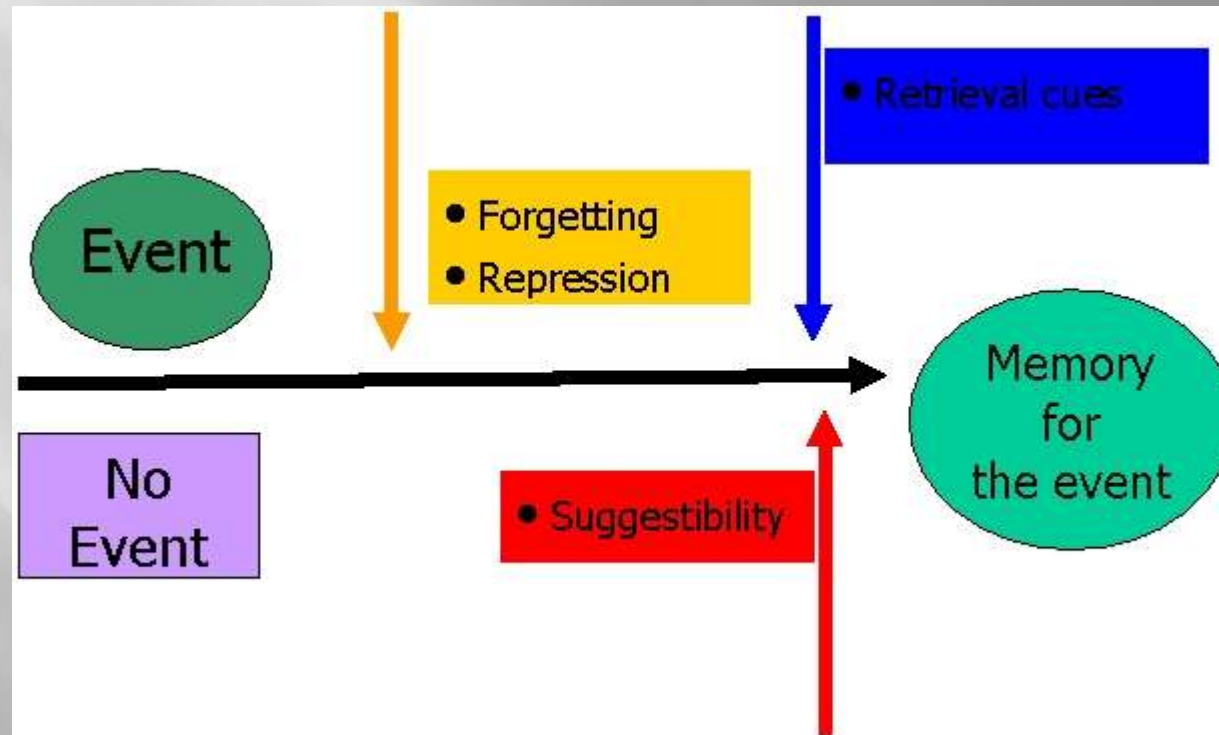
**What do we know about  
ourselves?**

**What do we know about  
ourselves?**

**Do we know what happened  
to us in the past?**

# If I remember correctly...

- ▣ Constructive nature of human memory



**What about our past  
predictions of the present...?**

# “Ah! I knew it all along!”



Fischhoff, B. (1975). *Hindsight ≠ foresight: The effect of outcome knowledge on judgment under uncertainty*. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance*, 1, 288–299.

## Ratings of probability of ending: *Historical event (war)*

GROUP:	Probab. of Ending 1	Probab. of Ending 2	Probab. of Ending 3	Probab. of Ending 4
Ending not stated	33.8	21.3	32.3	13.4
Ending 1	57.2	14.3	15.3	10.5
Ending 2	30.3	38.4	20.4	10.5
Ending 3	25.7	17.0	48.0	9.9
Ending 4	33.0	15.8	24.3	27.0

# “Ah! I knew it all along!”



Fischhoff, B. (1975). *Hindsight ≠ foresight: The effect of outcome knowledge on judgment under uncertainty*. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance*, 1, 288–299.

## Ratings of probability of ending: *Historical event (riot)*

GROUP:	Probab. of Ending 1	Probab. of Ending 2	Probab. of Ending 3	Probab. of Ending 4
Ending not stated	11.2	30.8	43.8	14.2
Ending 1	30.6	25.8	23.3	20.3
Ending 2	5.5	51.8	24.3	18.5
Ending 3	3.9	23.9	50.8	21.4
Ending 4	16.7	31.9	23.4	27.9

# “Ah! I knew it all along!”



Fischhoff, B. (1975). *Hindsight ≠ foresight: The effect of outcome knowledge on judgment under uncertainty*. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance*, 1, 288–299.

## Ratings of probability of ending: *Therapy outcome 1*

GROUP:	Probab. of Ending 1	Probab. of Ending 2	Probab. of Ending 3	Probab. of Ending 4
Ending not stated	26.6	15.8	23.4	34.4
Ending 1	43.1	13.9	17.3	25.8
Ending 2	26.5	23.3	13.4	36.9
Ending 3	30.6	14.1	34.1	21.3
Ending 4	21.2	10.2	22.6	46.1



# “Ah! I knew it all along!”



Fischhoff, B. (1975). *Hindsight ≠ foresight: The effect of outcome knowledge on judgment under uncertainty*. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance*, 1, 288–299.

## Ratings of probability of ending: *Therapy outcome 2*

GROUP:	Probab. of Ending 1	Probab. of Ending 2	Probab. of Ending 3	Probab. of Ending 4
Ending not stated	27.4	26.9	39.4	6.3
Ending 1	33.6	20.8	37.8	8.0
Ending 2	22.4	41.8	28.9	7.1
Ending 3	20.5	22.3	50.0	7.3
Ending 4	30.6	19.5	37.7	12.3

**I KNEW YOU WERE TROUBLE WHEN YOU  
WALKED IN...**

**NOPE. HINDSIGHT  
BIAS**



# “Ah! I knew it all along!”

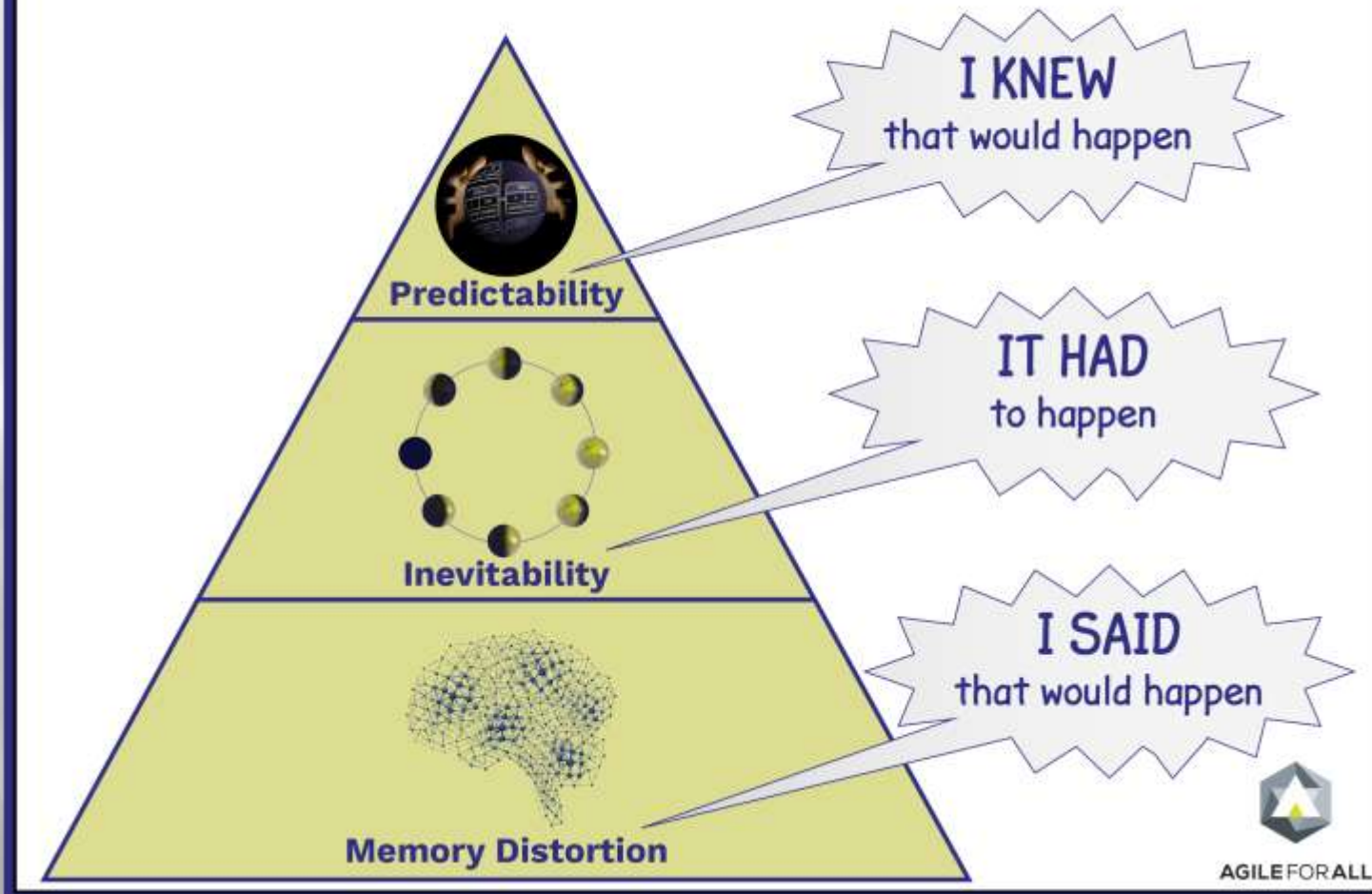


**Fischhoff also found that:**

- ▣ *The bias persisted when participants were told to ignore the actual ending or guess the estimate of a person who did not know the actual ending*
- ▣ **HINDSIGHT BIAS** = *tendency to perceive the already-known outcomes of an event as much more predictable than they really were + feeling that we have actually known it all along (or at least “had a hunch”)*

# Possible components and explanations

## Three Levels of Hindsight Bias



**What are the positive and negative consequences of hindsight bias?**

**What do we know about  
ourselves?**

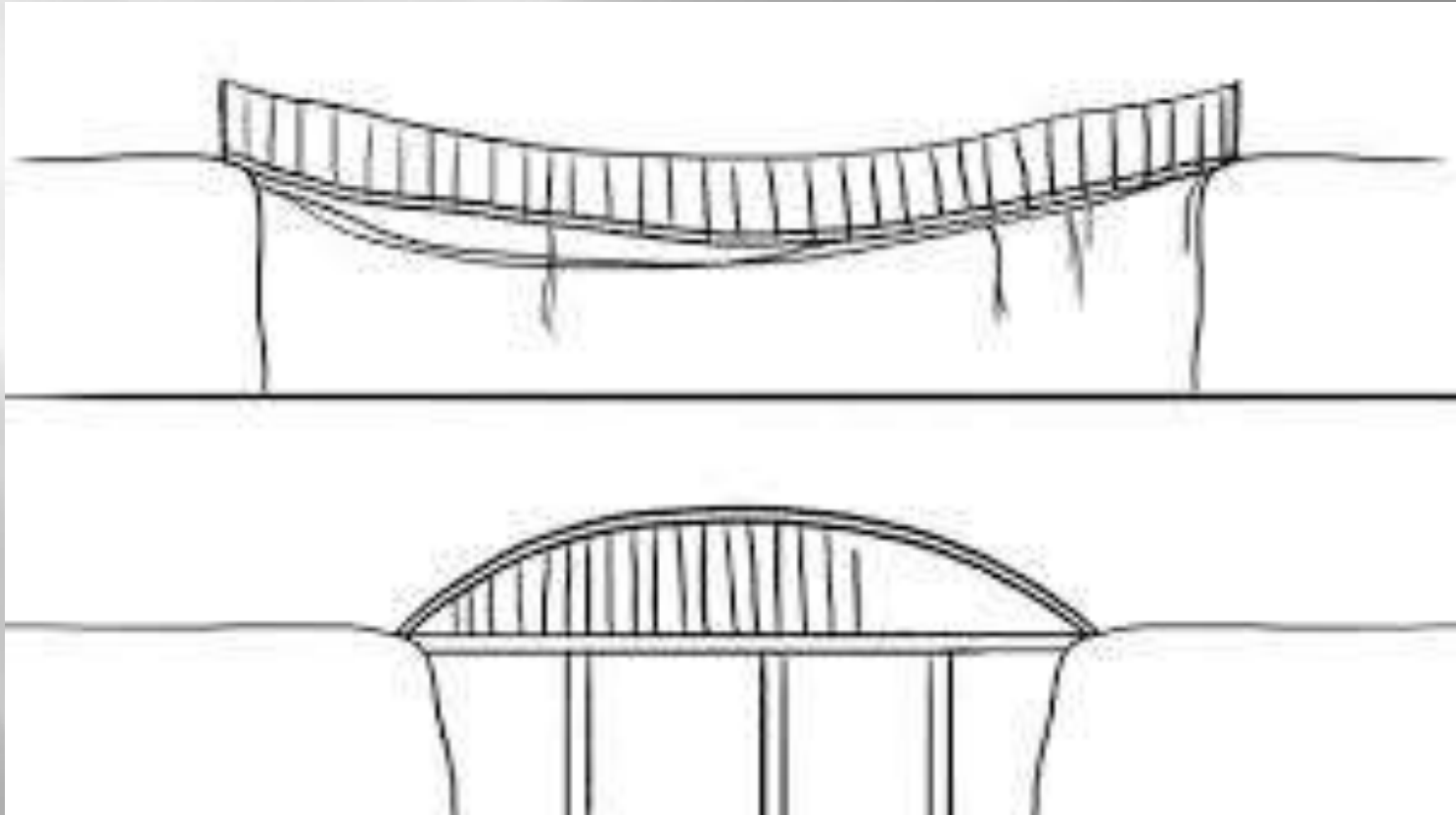
**Do we know what we feel?**





# Falling off or falling for...?

*Dutton, D. G., & Aron, A. P. (1974). Some evidence for heightened sexual attraction under conditions of high anxiety. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 30(4), 510-517.*





# Falling off or falling for...?

Dutton, D. G., & Aron, A. P. (1974). *Some evidence for heightened sexual attraction under conditions of high anxiety. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 30(4), 510-517.*

**Asked to respond to pictures by an experimenter:**

	Filled the questionnaire	Accepted the number
Wobbly bridge ♀	22/33	78.3%
Stable bridge ♀	23/33	72.7%
Wobbly bridge ♂	22/42	27.3%
Stable bridge ♂	23/51	30.4%

# Falling off or falling for...?

Dutton, D. G., & Aron, A. P. (1974). *Some evidence for heightened sexual attraction under conditions of high anxiety. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 30(4), 510-517.*

**Asked to respond to pictures by an experimenter:**

	Sexual / romantic content in stories	Called the experimenter
Wobbly bridge ♀	<b>49.4%</b>	<b>9/18 50.0%</b>
Stable bridge ♀	<b>28.2%</b>	<b>2/16 12.5%</b>
Wobbly bridge ♂	<b>12.2%</b>	<b>1/6 16.7%</b>
Stable bridge ♂	<b>16.0%</b>	<b>2/7 28.6%</b>

# Misattribution of arousal

Schachter, S., & Singer, J. (1962). *Cognitive, social, and physiological determinants of emotional state*. *Psychological Review*, 69(5), 379-399.

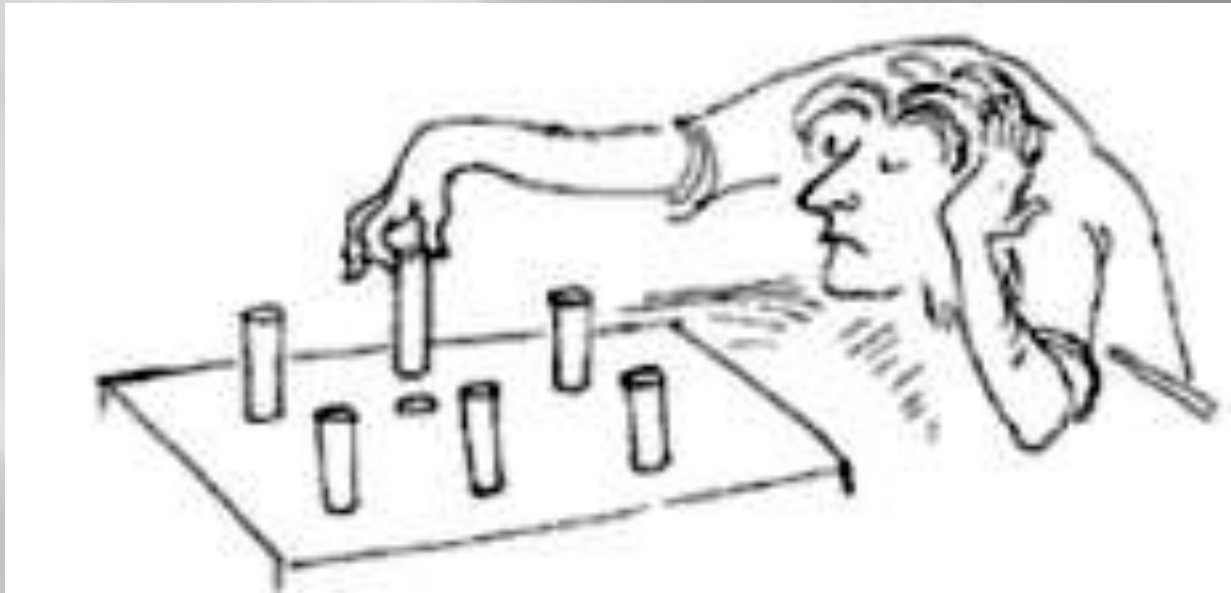
- Emotional experience has two components: **physiological changes (arousal)** and **cognitive interpretation** of the situation
- If a person experiences arousal, s/he will attribute this arousal to the most “meaningful” interpretation available at the moment = risk of **misattribution of arousal**
- Later research – also works with false feedback (i.e. being provided false information about one’s actual physiological state)

**What do we know about  
ourselves?**

**Do we know what motivates  
our actions?**

# How much is your frustration worth?

- ▣ **Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959**



# How much is your frustration worth?

*Festinger, L., & Carlsmith, J. M. (1959). Cognitive consequences of forced compliance. The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 58(2), 203-210.*

## Group A:

- ▣ *Asked to do a tedious task for more than 1 h*
- ▣ *Asked to do a „favour“ for the experimenter:*
- ▣ *Persuade next participant that the task was interesting*
- ▣ **Paid \$ 20**




## Group B:

- ▣ *Asked to do a tedious task for more than 1 h*
- ▣ *Asked to do a „favour“ for the experimenter:*
- ▣ *Persuade next participant that the task was interesting*
- ▣ **Paid \$ 1**

# How much is your frustration worth?

*Festinger, L., & Carlsmith, J. M. (1959). Cognitive consequences of forced compliance. The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 58(2), 203-210.*

## Ratings of task after payment:

	Enjoyable? Again?
Control Group	
\$ 20	
\$ 1	

# How much is your frustration worth?

- ▣ Aronson & Mills, 1959





# How much is your frustration worth?

- ▣ Aronson & Mills, 1959



# How much is your frustration worth?

Aronson, E., & Mills, J. (1959). *The effect of severity of initiation on liking for a group*. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 59(2), 177-181.

## Group A:

- ▣ *Ready to join a discussion group*
- ▣ *Initiation: Reading sex-related text*
- ▣ *Asked to rate conversation of the group they joined*




## Group B:

- ▣ *Ready to join a discussion group*
- ▣ *Initiation: Reading **embarrassing pornographic** text*
- ▣ *Asked to rate conversation of the group they joined*

# How much is your frustration worth?

Aronson, E., & Mills, J. (1959). *The effect of severity of initiation on liking for a group. The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 59(2), 177-181.*

## Ratings of recorded (boring) conversation:

	Interesting discussion?
Control Group	
Low embarrassment	
High embarrassment	

# Cognitive dissonance

- ▣ When our actions are in conflict (dissonance) with our beliefs, values, or primary motives we are inclined to change **either the belief or the behaviour**
- ▣ Which of these changes depends on **which one is easier to change** (e.g. we cannot change our past actions → we tend to change our belief)
- ▣ Other behaviours are difficult to change: bad habits, impulsive behaviour, conforming to group behaviour...

**What do we know about  
ourselves?**

**Do we know who we are?**

## IS THIS YOU?

- ▣ *You have a great need for other people to like and admire you.*
- ▣ *You have a tendency to be critical of yourself.*
- ▣ *You have a great deal of unused capacity which you have not turned to your advantage.*
- ▣ *While you have some personality weaknesses, you are generally able to compensate for them.*
- ▣ *Your sexual adjustment has presented problems for you.*
- ▣ *Disciplined and self-controlled outside, you tend to be worrisome and insecure inside.*
- ▣ *At times you have serious doubts as to whether you have made the right decision or done the right thing.*

# “They know all about me!”

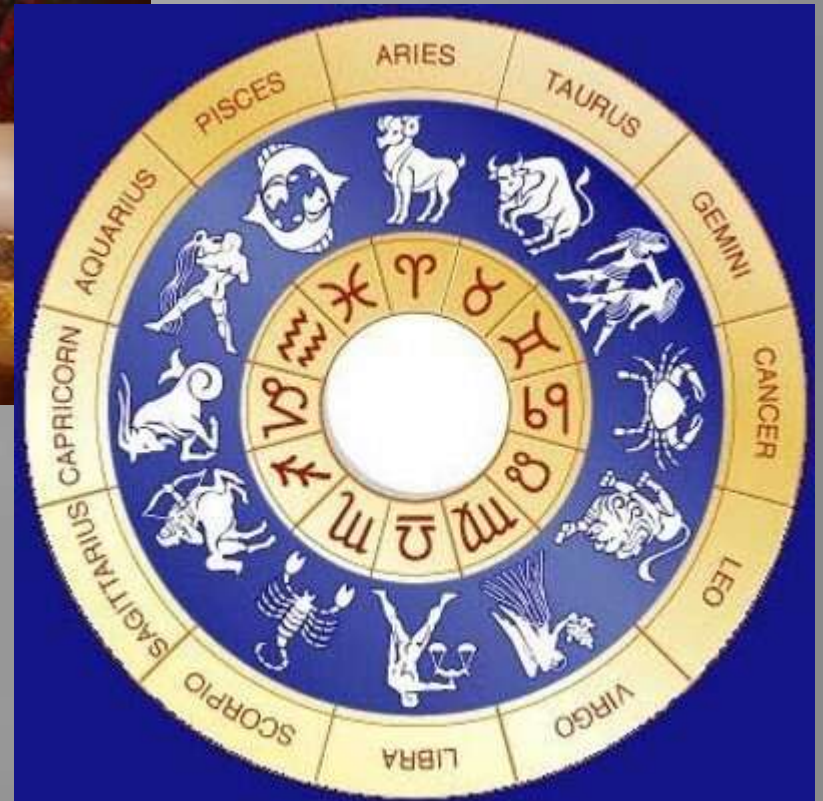
Forer, B. R. (1949). *The fallacy of personal validation: A classroom demonstration of gullibility. The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 44(1), 118-123.*

Rating of profile accuracy	0	1	2	3	4	5
No. of subjects	-	-	1	4	18	16

- ▣ **The Forer effect / Barnum effect / personal validation fallacy** = *tendency to see highly universal statements that are true of most people as highly accurate and personalized descriptions of one's own personality*



# The Forer / Barnum Effect





# The Forer / Barnum Effect

## HOW DOES IT WORK?

- ▣ **Generality of interpretation** – *true of almost all people but allow “projection” of many different experiences that are unique*
- ▣ **Interpretation presented as personalized** – *people fail to think about the generality of statements when these are presented as personal descriptions of their personality*
- ▣ **Favourability** – *statements suggesting positive characteristics (care for others, sensitivity, “rich” and strong personality...) are more likely to be seen as accurate descriptions (generally accepted attributes of a good person)*
- ▣ **“Revelations”** – *may point to issues that are common to all people but are considered very private*

**Is using the Barnum effect  
always wrong?**

**What do we know about  
others?**

**Are we always fair judges of  
other people?**

**What are some of the  
common mistakes we make?**

**What do we know about  
others?**

**Do we know what motivates  
their actions?**

# Why do others do what they do?

Jones, E. E., & Harris, V. A. (1967). *The attribution of attitudes*. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 3(1), 1-24.

Ratings of to what extent the author of the essay was himself a “pro-Castro”:



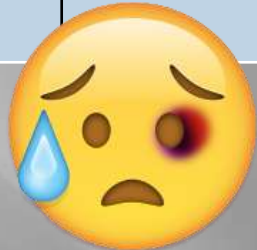

	Pro-Castro essay	Anti-Castro essay
Author could choose viewpoint	59.62	17.38
Author could not choose viewpoint	44.10	22.87

# Fundamental attribution error

- ▣ We tend to overestimate the causal impact of **stable characteristics** when evaluating other people's behaviour
- ▣ **WHY?**
- ▣ **Is this always the case?**

# Attribution error revisited

Later research and meta-analyses revealed a more complex pattern:

	ME	OTHER
Positive behaviours	 Trait	 Situation
Negative behaviours	 Situation	 Trait

**WHY?**



# Self-serving bias

**Self-serving bias** = *tendency to interpret situations in ways that protect or enhance one's self-esteem*



**Other things that bias our  
perception of others...**

# Is first impression important?



# The Halo Effect

= a tendency of our first impression of a person to “frame” our global impression of him/her in the future



# The Halo Effect

*Nisbett, R. E., & Wilson, T. D. (1977). The halo effect: Evidence for unconscious alteration of judgments. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 35(4), 250-256.*

**Students asked to evaluate a new psychology instructor with French accent**

	Physical attractiveness	Mannerisms likeable	Accent likeable
Teacher presented as likeable	70%	60%	50%
Teacher presented as cold	30%	40%	30%

# The Halo Effect

*Nisbett, R. E., & Wilson, T. D. (1977). The halo effect: Evidence for unconscious alteration of judgments. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 35(4), 250-256.*

**“Did the teacher’s behaviour influence your ratings?”**

	Physical attractiveness	Mannerisms	Accent
Teacher presented as likeable	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>
Teacher presented as cold	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>

# The Halo Effect

*Nisbett, R. E., & Wilson, T. D. (1977). The halo effect: Evidence for unconscious alteration of judgments. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 35(4), 250-256.*

**“Did the teacher’s attractiveness/mannerisms/accent influence your ratings of his behaviour?”**

	Physical attractiveness	Mannerisms	Accent
<b>Teacher presented as likeable</b>	<i>Not too much</i>	<i>Maybe a little, in a positive way</i>	<i>Might have</i>
<b>Teacher presented as cold</b>	<i>Yes, negatively</i>	<i>Yes, negatively</i>	<i>Yes, negatively</i>



# The Halo Effect

= people usually associate with physical attractiveness but it can also be the other way round!!! (*first impression of behaviour influences perceptions of physical attractiveness*)



**What do we know about  
others?**

**Do we know what other  
people think / prefer?**

*Do students prefer to go to sleep before or after midnight?*

# False consensus effect

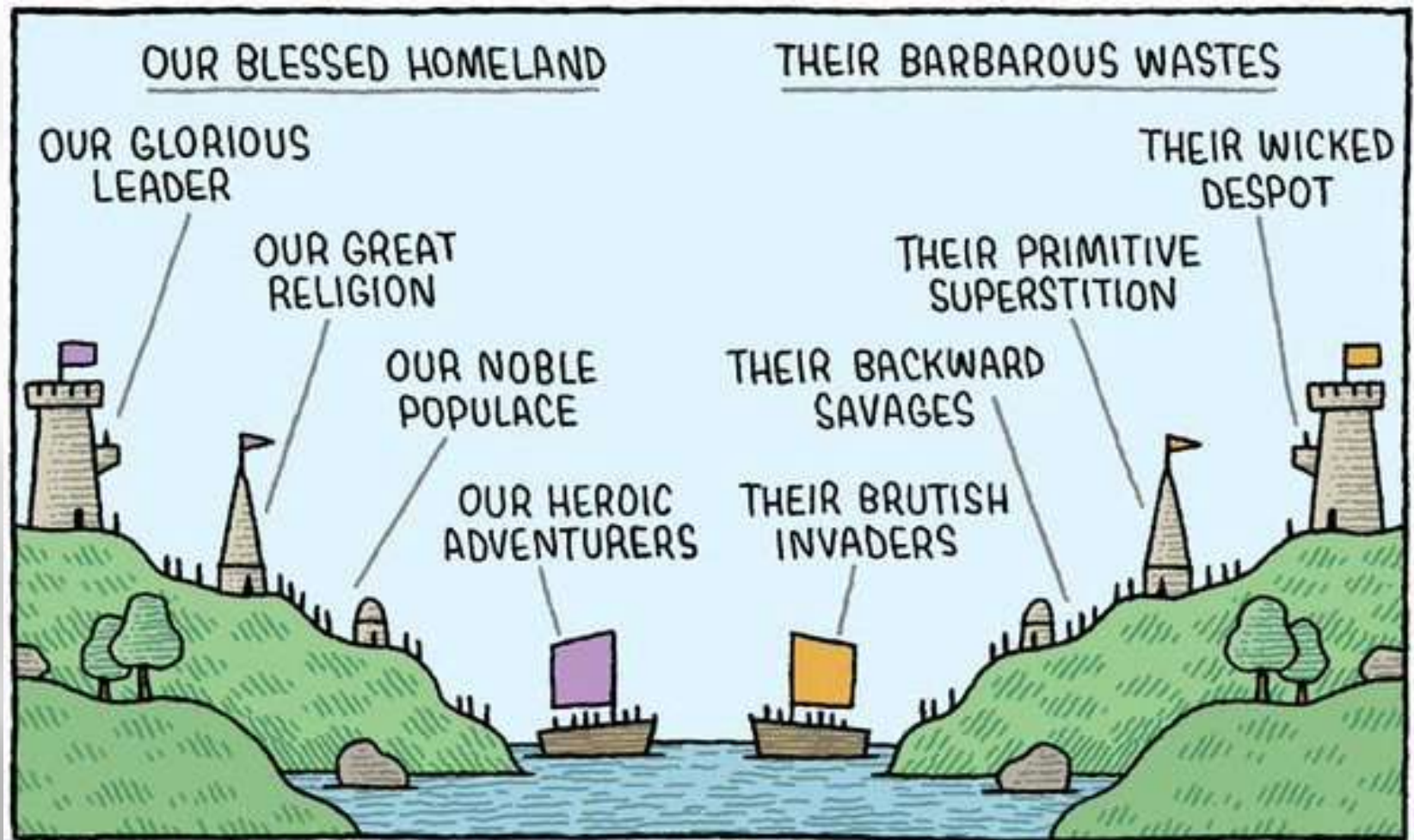
Ross, L., Greene, D., & House, P. (1977). The "false consensus effect": An egocentric bias in social perception and attribution processes. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 13(3), 279-301.

- ▣ Participants tended to **overestimate the extent to which other people share their opinions, decisions, habits, preferences, hobbies, fears, characteristics, etc.** (systematic differences in subjects choosing option A vs. option B by ca. 10% on average)
- ▣ The estimate of how much others will share their opinion was in most cases larger than the actual distribution in the group
- ▣ **Is this a problem? When?**

# **Stereotypes**

**Watch the “Class Divided” video in the interactive syllabus**

# “Us & them” thining – how does it work?



TOM GAULD

**Is stereotyping completely unfounded?**

**Are stereotypes unrelated to actual behaviour?**



Whether you think  
**you can,**  
or you think  
**you can't --**  
**YOU'RE RIGHT.**

-Henry Ford


# Self-fulfilling prophecy - self



# Self-fulfilling prophecy - others

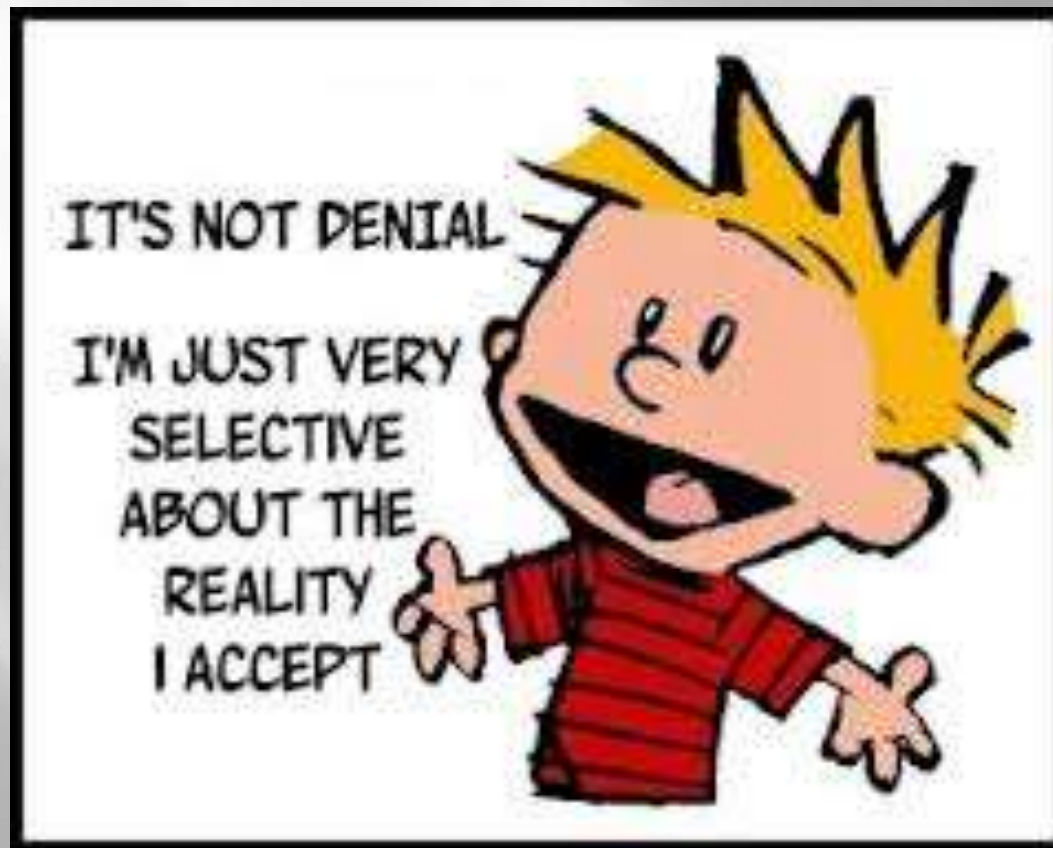


# Organizational information

- ▣ Quiz 6 should be available this night
- ▣ Please watch *Class Divided* before taking Quiz 6
- ▣ What should we do with those who skipped one of the quizzes? 
- ▣ **Colloquium** dates available in the IS – all requirements must be met (quizzes + attendance)
- ▣ Let me know IMMEDIATELY if there are any problems (no sessions available / cannot make it for serious reasons)
- ▣ Instructions on how to get to Building U will be available
- ▣ Colloquium questions will be available today or tomorrow in the final module of the interactive syllabus (depending on how long Quiz 6 will take me to finish...)



# What we think we know of ourselves and others



Thank you!