

Complete the self-assessment to better understand your management style and strengths.

SELF-ASSESSMENT 4.1

WHAT STEREOTYPES DO YOU HOLD?

All of us have stereotypes of various groups. The stereotypes we hold depend on our culture, where we grew up, and many other influences from our family, friends, and personal experiences. The following self-assessment is designed to help you explore the stereotypes you hold, their sources, and their consequences.

1. Identify Your Stereotypes

Using the following table, identify several stereotypes that you hold about different groups; for each one, write down what you believe to be its source and any possible personal experience you have had that you think directly supports the stereotype. You should target stereotypes that you would like to change. One example is provided. Remember that this is a self-assessment, not to be shared with the class or your instructor; there are no right or wrong answers. The more honest you are, the more you will benefit from the exercise.

Stereotype	Source	Personal Experience
Example: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Asians are team members, not leaders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">My grandfather always said thatI've learned about Asian cultures being community orientedThe business press always says they work well in groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">My Chinese team member last semester was very quietAsian students rarely talk in class or try to take over team meetingsMy friend's roommate is Asian and very quiet
<ul style="list-style-type: none">	<ul style="list-style-type: none">	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
<ul style="list-style-type: none">	<ul style="list-style-type: none">	<ul style="list-style-type: none">

How easy was it for you to remember your stereotypes? How easy is it to remember their source? How about the personal experiences?

2. Looking for Disconfirmation

For each of the stereotypes you listed in step 1, consider events or evidence that you have directly or indirectly experienced that contradict your stereotype. You may have to work hard at this step, as you are not likely to remember contradictory examples easily. Again an example is provided.

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Stereotype

Disconfirmation

Example

- Asians are team members, not leaders
- The Chinese are leading the world in many areas of business
- Asians are leaders and entrepreneurs in the high tech industry
- The Japanese are courageous military leaders
- Japan is one of the leading economies in the world

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How easy was it to come up with disconfirming examples? Why is it so hard to remember disconfirming evidence and information? What can you do to start changing the stereotypes you hold?



Perception

Perception: the mental process we use to pay attention selectively to some stimuli and cues and not to others

Social perception: the process of gathering, selecting, and interpreting information about how we view ourselves and others

Closure: the process of filling in missing information to understand a stimulus

What Is Perception?

Perception is the mental process that we use to understand our environment, while **social perception** is the process of gathering, selecting, and interpreting information about how we view ourselves and others. Whereas perceiving the physical environment is relatively objective and testable, information about people is often subjective and open to interpretation. This makes social perception a subjective rather than objective process.¹⁰ When we interact with others, there are many cues and signals that beg for our attention. We consider the way people dress; their facial and other physical characteristics; their tone of voice and accent; nonverbal behaviors; their eye contact with others; how often they smile; and the message they communicate. We cannot pay attention to everything at once, so we pick and choose what is important. A key part of a manager's job is to assess social situations, to pick and choose what is important and what is not, to evaluate people, and to act on that evaluation. The perception process is an essential part of managing people.

Perception Process

Because the perception process requires us to select, interpret, and use stimuli and cues, the process is subject to considerable error, a serious drawback. Take a few minutes to exam-

ine the images in Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2. The drawings in the first figure are classical tests of physical perception. Did you make the same errors as most people? Even though we can measure the images objectively, and we know we are making errors in our perception, we are still not able to perceive the images accurately. In Figure 4.2, the corporate logos have hidden cues; but once you see them, you won't miss them again. What we see is subject to perception and therefore to error.

Another example that highlights the power of perception is shown in Figure 4.3. The figure demonstrates **closure**, which refers to how we fill in missing information to understand a stimulus. We know that the figures are a rectangle and a

What Do You Think?

► Some people argue that giving many people in the organization impressive sounding titles helps them gain “presence” in their interactions with others and thus improves the work. Others say that only applies to certain industries. Others say it makes no difference anywhere. What do you think?