

# Social Beliefs and Judgments

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## Chapter 3 Social Psychology David G. Myers



# Social Beliefs and Judgments

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- Perceiving our social worlds
  - Judging our social worlds
  - Explaining our social worlds
  - Expectations of our social worlds
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# Perceiving our Social World

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- **Social Beliefs** - our assumptions and prejudices affect our perceptions, judgments, and memory
  - Our expectations can influence the behaviors of ourselves, others, and events

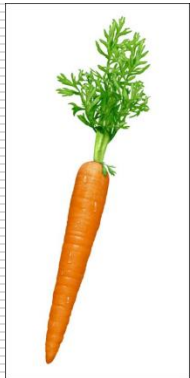


# Perceiving our Social World

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- **Priming** – the spreading activation of associated thoughts and memories

- Roast, Roast, Roast
- What do you put in a toaster?
- White, White, White
- What do Cows drink?
- Pots, Pots, Pots,
- What do you do at a green light?
- Six, Six, Six
- Think of a Vegetable?



# Perceiving and Interpreting Events

- ❑ **Constructing Interpretations** - prejudgments affect how we interpret information
- ❑ **Embodied Cognition** – bodily sensations prime cognitions and affect attitudes

Stephen L. Franzoi, *Social Psychology*. Copyright © 1996. The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

## Evaluations when Expecting "Warm"/"Cold" Person

### Evaluations of the Guest Speaker by Students Expecting Either a "Warm" or "Cold" Person

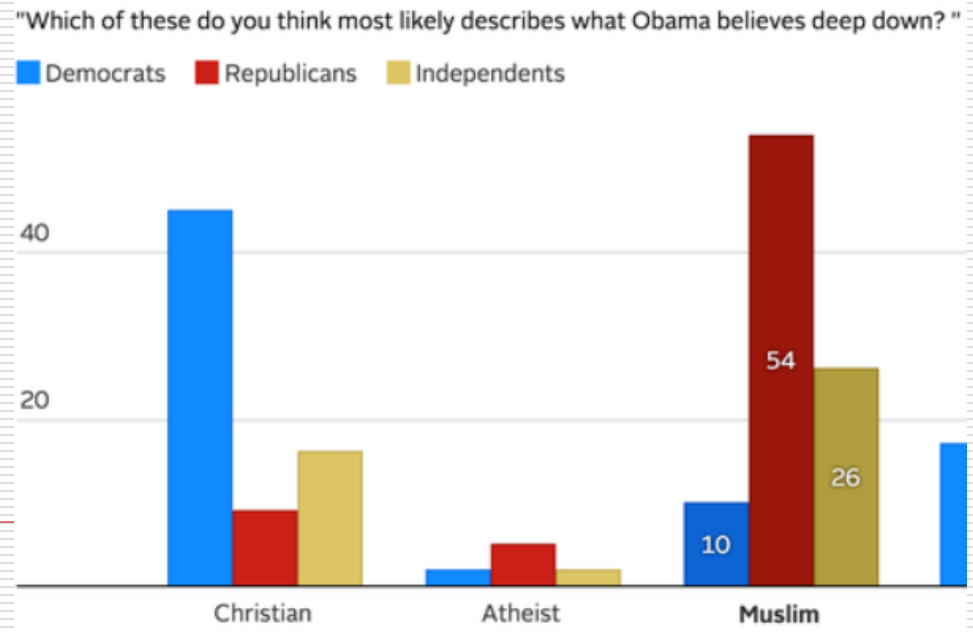
Average Evaluations  
(Note: 1 = most positive)

Trait	Warm	Cold
Knowledgeable	3.5	4.6
Considerate	6.3	9.6
Informal	6.3	9.6
Sociable	5.6	10.4
Intelligent	4.8	5.1
Popular	4.0	7.4
Humorous	8.3	11.7
Humane	8.6	11.0

Source: Data from Kelley, 1950.

# Perceiving our Social World

- **Belief Perseverance** - persistence of our beliefs despite disconfirming information
  - Explaining or imagining the opposite side of an issue reduces this tendency



# Constructing Memories

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- **Constructing Memories** - memories are re-constructed at the time of retrieval
- **Memory Storage** - cognitively our memories are stored as interconnected nodes
  - **Misinformation effect** – adding incorrect information into your memory of an event via priming



# Reconstructing Attitudes and Behaviors

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- ❑ **Reconstructing Attitudes** - difficult to accurately remember past attitudes
  - ❑ **Rosy retrospection** – we recall mildly pleasant events as being more favorable than they actually were
  - ❑ **Relationships** - memories change as our relationships change
- **Reconstructing Behaviors** - we often reconstruct past behaviors and experiences





# Judging Our Social World

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- **Intuitive Judgments**- our cognitive shortcuts often lead to misjudgments
    - **Controlled Processing (explicit)**- deliberate consciously controlled thinking
    - **Automatic Processing (implicit)** - effortless, habitual thinking
      - Practical joke
      - Chess
      - Automatic Processing is limited and error prone
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# Judging Overconfidence

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- **Overconfidence Phenomenon** -- tendency to overestimate the accuracy of your beliefs
    - **Confirmatory bias** – seek information that confirms our beliefs
      - Immediate feedback will reduce the overconfidence phenomenon
    - **Disconfirming information**- imagining why you may be wrong reduces overconfidence
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# Judgment Errors: Heuristics

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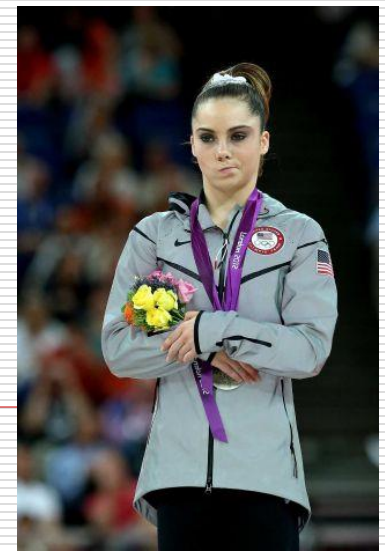
- **Heuristics** - mental shortcuts or implicit rules of thumb
    - In a terrible car accident, a man is killed and his son is rushed to the hospital for surgery. As the boy is wheeled into the operating room, the surgeon looks at the patient and says, 'I cannot operate on this child. He is my son.' **How is this possible?**
    - **Representativeness Heuristic** – judging likelihood of something by how well it matches our prototypes
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# Heuristics

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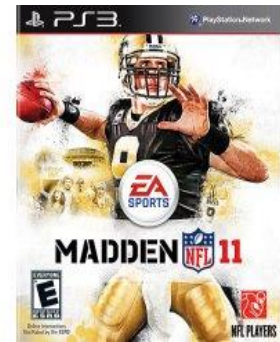
- **Availability Heuristic** – things that we easily remember, we assume are commonplace
  - Statistics tend to be overshadowed by vivid events and anecdotes
- **Counterfactual Thinking** – easily imagining alternative scenarios influence our emotional experiences



# Illusory Thinking

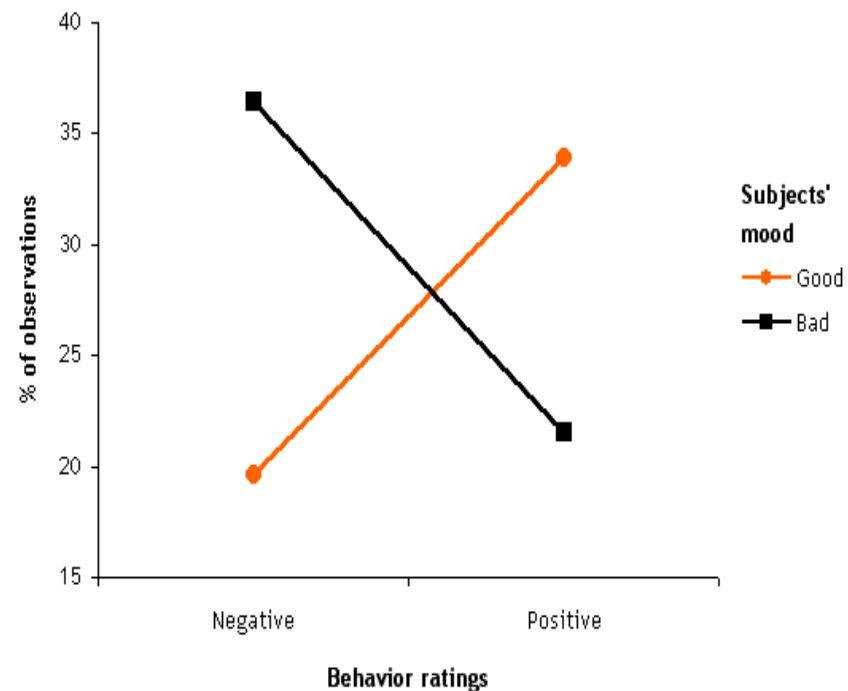
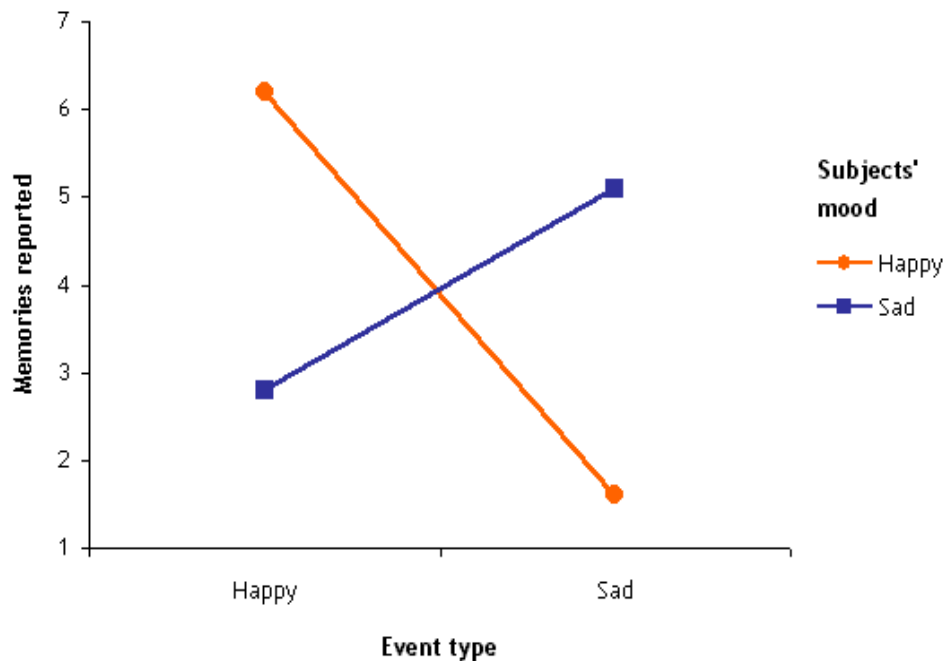
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- **Illusory Thinking** - trying to organize random events leads to error in judgments
  - **Illusory Correlation** – perceiving a relationship where none exists
  - **Illusion of Control** – perception of control over uncontrollable events
    - **Regression towards the Average** – statistical necessity where extreme scores return towards the mean



# Mood and Judgments

- **Mood and Judgments** – moods can influence our perceptions, judgments, and memories



# Explaining Our Social World

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- **Attribution Theory** – theories about how we explain others' behaviors
  - **Dispositional Attribution (Internal)**
  - **Situational Attribution (External)**



# Fundamental Attribution Error (Correspondence Bias)

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- **Fundamental Attribution Error (FAE)** - underestimating situational factors and overestimating internal factors on others' behaviors
  - FAE is strongest when it is self-serving
  - Typically make the FAE when referring to others' behavior





# Expectations of Our Social Worlds

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- **Self-fulfilling Prophecies**- our beliefs and judgments can affect reality
  - **Behavioral Confirmation** –expectations can cause others to act in confirmatory ways
  - Students, Intergroup behaviors, Attractive stereotypes



Illustration by Steve Mandelb

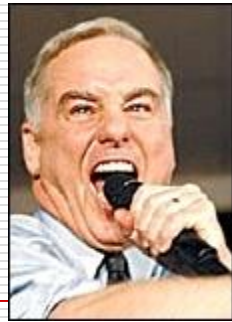
# Summary

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- **Biased Social Beliefs** -errors in beliefs and judgments are products of our cognitive organization strategies
    - These cognitive strategies are beneficial and efficient but they are prone to predictable errors
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# Why Do We Commit the FAE?

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- ❑ **Camera Perspective Bias** – our perspective affects our attributions
  - ❑ **FAE and Time** – our perspectives change over time
  - ❑ **Self-awareness** – increased self-focus leads us to attribute more responsibility to ourselves
  - ❑ **Cultural Differences** - individualistic cultures tend to focus more on dispositional attributions
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