

# What is perception in interpersonal communication essay sample

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Perception is a fundamental process in all interpersonal communication encounters. This essay will describe perception and the role it has in interpersonal communication. It will focus on the perceptual process of stereotyping and I will explore some of my experiences with stereotyping.

The process through which individuals receive and interpret information from the external world is called perception. Perception acts as a filter via which information passes before it impacts on one's communication. An individual's background, life experience, values and roles may vary the results of this filter process and influence individual perceptions. Therefore, each individual can perceive the same object or situation very differently and behave according to their perceptions. (DeVito, 2004; Lewis & Slade, 1994).

Wood (2007 p. 73) explains that perception occurs through three blended stages. The first stage is where we select certain information or qualities from stimuli. Secondly, the information is organised according to a cognitive constructs. The third stage involves interpreting and evaluating the information and applying attributions.

There are a range of perceptual processes that influence one's interpersonal perception. These processes aid in making the information easier to understand and classify, however, these processes are often inaccurate and may act as barriers (DeVito, 2004). The perceptual process this essay focuses on is stereotyping.

Stereotyping is common in our society. From the moment you sight someone, you may stereotype them on the basis of their culture, social status or gender. Weiten (1995, p. 642) classes stereotyping as a normal

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cognitive process that save [us] energy by simplifying our social world. 📄

Hogg and Vaughan (2002, p. 39) concur and explain that stereotyping helps to avoid cognitive overload by letting individuals place mental images or stimuli into categories, thus helping interpret our diverse society. According to Davis, Fanning and McKay (1995, p. 170) stereotyping is a perceivers set of beliefs or knowledge about individuals who are members of a particular group. Stereotyping is normally defined as being negative due to oversimplification or distortions of accuracy. Extreme forms of stereotyping may lead to prejudice and discrimination.

Weiten (1995, p, 642) explains that stereotyping can produce broad over-generalisations 📄 of a social or cultural group, which may not acknowledge qualities or diversity within it. I am guilty of this sort of stereotyping at my school. We have a portion of Asian students that study at the Eastern Institute of Technology. I perceive them to be studious, competitive, hard-working, intelligent individuals who prefer to group with other Asian students and do not speak English when they are together. I have no basis for this to be accurate. Hogg and Vaughan (2002, p. 39) propose that my stereotype may not be inaccurate, rather it may serve to make sense of particular inter-group relations 📄.

When I see a an individual from Maori descent, wearing predominately blue or red clothing, I make an assumption or stereotype them into the gang affiliated category. This comes from my personal socialisation process and subjective information the media has given me on gangs. Lewis and Slade (1994, p. 106) suggest I am applying an interpersonal stereotype 📄 – a rigid

perception I have about the gang group. Lewis and Slade (1994, p. 106) along with DeVito (2004), explain that this type of stereotyping stops me from viewing the person as an individual and only allows me to see them as a member of a group.

As this essay has shown, perception is a process where one becomes aware of events, objects and people in the environment surrounding them.

Perception can be affected by stereotyping, a shortcut that most people are guilty of it, and most have been subjected to it sometime in their life.

Fortunately, one can increase their accuracy in perception by perceiving critically and checking their perceptions.

## References

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