

Objective 33:

Describe the role that expectation and motivation have in perception.

Expectations and motivation have a crucial role in our perceptions of every day life. Throughout the course of our lives we come to develop expectations of what we are experiencing every single day. We create perceptual sets, or a set of mental tendencies and assumptions that greatly affect what we see. These perceptual sets and expectations come into play when we have had a previous interaction with what we are experiencing; perceptual sets can reach across all sensory areas: taste, hearing, touch, smell. For example, if you touched a stove top and each time it was hot you would soon expect that each time you touch it to be hot. Look

at the picture at the right. If you had just watched a video about a newsman with fancy hair and were shown the far



left picture, you would easily assume that the picture is of a man. But if you had previously just watched a video of a nurturing mother and were shown the picture on the far right you would easily assume that the picture is of woman. Our expectations can easily cloud what we perceive. Based upon our past experiences, we perceive the stove top to be scolding hot, when in fact it may just to be warming up. Perceptual sets, which are based upon our schemas, our pre-existing knowledge in which we conform our new information into, can also be used for gender situations. When we hear the name Kelly, we may create a mental picture of a woman who might be wearing a dress, when in all actuality Kelly is a 300-pound, motor cycle riding, mechanic. Based upon our past experiences, we created a perceptual set that all people named Kelly are girls.

Our motives also play an important role in how we perceive things. If you urgently need to go to the bathroom, a five-minute car ride to the nearest stop may literally feel like 5 hours. That's because our bodies are motivated to expel the waste that is pressing on our bladders: our bodies become energized and our sympathetic nervous systems arouse our bodies, creating an excitement to get rid of the waste products. This excitement helps explain why sitting strapped in a seat while we need to go to the bathroom may feel excruciatingly long.

With our schema formed perceptual sets and emotional and physical motivations, our perceptions may not be as clear as they appear to be.

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I used our book for various definitions and for a few “outlines” for me to recreate my own examples of how expectation and motivation affect perception.

<http://wps.prenhall.com/wps/media/objects/982/1006523/F03.28.gif>

I used this website for the picture I used which exemplifies how depending on which side of the picture you are predisposed to, it can affect your perception of the picture. (If you would to have been shown the right side first, you would easily say it is a woman, but if you were shown the left first, you would easily say it is a man).