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PSDS 2115 E

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The Follies of Perception

This is the last reading response of the semester which aims to connect our work with bias, values, beliefs, disagreement, and discomfort by asking you to explore how your perceptions may be impacting your decisions and beliefs

In the Follies of Perception author Ben Carton writes “A well-known psychological phenomenon is *cognitive confirmation bias*. In a confirmation bias, we search for, accept, and analyze evidence in a way that supports our pre-existing beliefs. We favor the evidence confirming the perspective we already hold and disregard evidence that runs contrary to our preconceptions.”

Read the article and summarize its key points.

1. **Cite examples, where what you have seen or experienced, was misunderstood due to your preconceptions.** *This is a difficult question that can be explored through conversations with friends or family who know you well.* Cognitive confirmation bias may also have an impact on your ability to think critically, deliver or accept critique.
2. Explore how cognitive confirmation bias **may have an impact on your ability to collaborate with people** who see the world quite differently than you.

Submit a PDF file named PSDS_2115_E_Perception_LastnameFirstInitial_F18

Response:

The author uses many examples to explain types of perception and the way it manifests in a person's life. First, he talks about how what we know clouds our knowledge of a subject and if we didn't know certain facts, he questions if we would accept those facts in the same way. Then, he describes perception as a filter — as humans, we do not see and be conscious of everything around us. This also leads us to have confirmation bias and a rigid perspective — in the same way we have a filter, we can use it to accept information that validates our opinions. It makes it much more difficult to listen to other people and look at situations from a different point of view. If we admit that we know very little and open our mindsets with humility, we are more aware and can, what Carton calls, “experience reality”.

There is one instance that is very clear to me, which is when a particular friend of mine asked for my continuous advice. This was a person that I have known at that time for two years and have been my neighbor and schoolmate since I was young. I believe that we both know each other extremely well. He was very closed off as a person; when we became best friends, I was curious and inquisitive. I was open about my issues I had in high school and how I was depressed. I was lonely, and I was surrounded by people or things I did not really understand and who did not understand me. Once I figured out that I should not care what people think, that I have to take control of my own life, and pursue whatever I wanted to do. Recently he was in a very similar state to me that I was in, in high school. And, because we were friends, he asked me

for advice. I listened, as I always did, but I equated his problems to mine. However, I was able to give critique — probably the wrong kind of critique. I wanted to see what confirmed the parts of his problems that were the same. I thought that just because I thought I knew him, it allowed me to pass judgement? No, I do not believe I meant to. However, I misunderstood the entirety of his situation. My preconceptions were due to the fact that I was giving biased advice. It seems I was only thinking I was listening to him, instead of actually listening to his point of view. If I admitted I was wrong, or not even wrong but rather projection, it would have led to a more productive conversation and for me to be able to think critically.

Cognitive confirmation bias may have an impact on my ability to collaborate with people who see the world differently than me. The reason for this is because, like bias, critique, and conflict, it clouds judgement. It is harmful to not be able to see other points of view or perspectives and opinions. To understand others and be able to work with others, I believe there needs to be a certain amount of listening skills. This is why I practice debate — I have exposure to arguing both sides of the topic and therefore understand the pros and cons. I think this can lead to empathy, which is key to collaboration.