

Perception and Attitudes

15.301 Managerial Psychology

Fall, 2006

Can You Read This?

According to research at an English university, it doesn't matter in what order the letters in a word are, only that the first and last letters are at the right places. The rest can be a total mess and you can still read it without a problem. This is because we do not read every letter by itself, but the word as a whole.

Perception (and Memory) is Constructed

(Loftus & Palmer)

- Watch film that includes multi-car crash. Asked how fast were the cars going when they:

“Smashed” 40.8 mph

“Collided” 39.3 mph

“Hit” 34.0 mph

“Contacted” 31.8 mph

- One week later, Did you see any broken glass?

“Smashed” 32% yes

“Hit” 14% yes

Shanley case goes to the jury

Closing arguments spotlight accuser

By Joanna Weiss, Globe Staff | February 4, 2005

CAMBRIDGE -- Paul R. Shanley's accuser is a victim overwhelmed with true memories of abuse by his parish priest, or he's a suggestible man who believes vivid stories that were planted in his mind...

The alleged victim, a 27-year-old firefighter, accuses Shanley of molesting him during Sunday school hours from ages 6 to 11, in the pews, rectory, confessional, and boys' room of St. Jean Church in Newton. ***The accuser says he forgot about the abuse, but remembered it in 2002, when he learned of Boston Globe stories about Shanley and a Sunday school classmate.*** Last year, he was awarded \$500,000 in a civil settlement with the Catholic Archdiocese of Boston...

The defense earlier called ***Elizabeth Loftus***, a professor at the University of California at Irvine, to challenge the alleged victim's so-called repressed memories. Loftus said ***scientific experiments have proven that people can be manipulated into remembering things that never happened.***

"I don't believe there is any credible scientific evidence for the idea that years of brutalization can be massively repressed," she said.

But under cross-examination, Loftus said she agrees that people can forget traumatic events and remember them later.

Stereotypes of Americans

<u>1933</u>	<u>1969</u>	<u>2001</u>
1. Industrious	Materialistic	Materialistic
2. Intelligent	Ambitious	Lazy
3. Materialistic	Pleasure loving	Individualistic
4. Ambitious	Industrious	Pleasure loving
5. Progressive	Intelligent	Industrious

- 1933 Princeton undergraduates wrote down attributes to characterize each of 10 groups, e.g., Americans, Germans, Italians, and checked the most typical 5
- Repeated in 1951 and 1969 and recently at another university

Women in Science

- Harvard President Lawrence Summers generated a media storm when he appeared to imply at a conference on diversifying the science and engineering workforce that **women and men may differ in innate aptitude.**
- “Nancy Hopkins, a professor of biology at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology who once led an investigation of sex discrimination there that led to changes in hiring and promotion, walked out midway through Dr. Summers' remarks.

‘When he started talking about innate differences in aptitude between men and women, I just couldn't breathe because this kind of bias makes me physically ill,’ Dr. Hopkins said. ‘Let's not forget that people used to say that women couldn't drive an automobile.’”

Sam Dillon, [NYTimes](#), 1/18/05

Causal Theories

- We organize our perceptions in cause-effect relationships: answer “why?”
- Why did Lawrence Summers make his remarks: Is he prejudiced? Is he bold? Is he careless?
- Why was the reaction so severe: Was he unfairly quoted by the press? Attacked by the PC police?
- Take an easier situation: Why did Lee get an A on the quiz?

Commonsense Theories

- Consistency (over time) – how did Lee do on the first quiz in the course?
- Distinctiveness – how does Lee do on quizzes in other courses?
- Consensus – how did other students do?

It's about Lee: consistent, not distinctive, atypical

It's the quiz: inconsistent, distinctive, typical

It's the course: consistent, distinctive, typical

It's the fit: consistent, distinctive, atypical

It's just luck: inconsistent, distinctive, atypical

Fundamental Attribution Error

- Over-attribute events to dispositional rather than situational qualities
- We tend to see people as bundles of traits
- This is related to stereotypes – we often explain skills and abilities as arising from traits that are part of an entire group of people, such as gender, ethnicity, nationality

Fundamental or Cultural?

- Young children attribute behavior to situations, so dispositional attributions are learned
- Comparison of US and Japanese newspaper accounts of Western and Japanese business scandals showed NYT refers to the individual (e.g. “Salomon’s errant cowboy” who “attacked his work as aggressively as he hit tennis balls”) but Asahi Shimbun refers to the firm (e.g., Daiwa “is embarrassed that its internal controls and procedures were not sufficient”) (Menon et al, JPSP, 1999)

Attitudes, Beliefs, Behaviors

- **Attitudes** are evaluative judgments of liking and disliking, i.e., they are emotions
- **Beliefs** are propositions about the world, e.g., oranges are round, 15.301 is fun
- Attitudes are related to predispositions to behave: do **attitudes cause behavior**?
- Studies of people with selective brain damage who can think rationally but have no “feelings” show they cannot decide!

Sources of Attitudes

- **Familiarity:** more liking for faces seen more frequently. People like mirror prints of their faces more than regular print, but friends like regular print better (Mita et al, 1977)
- **Association/Role Models:** ads with nice places, attractive people; task in crowded/nice setting → dis/liking for a stranger
- **Training:** parental praise and toys vs. withdrawal of attention. Phone interview study asking Harvard students about Harvard, say “good” after + or – statements → attitude one week later
- **Beliefs:** Smoking causes cancer, cancer causes death, I dislike death, therefore I dislike smoking

Measuring Attitudes

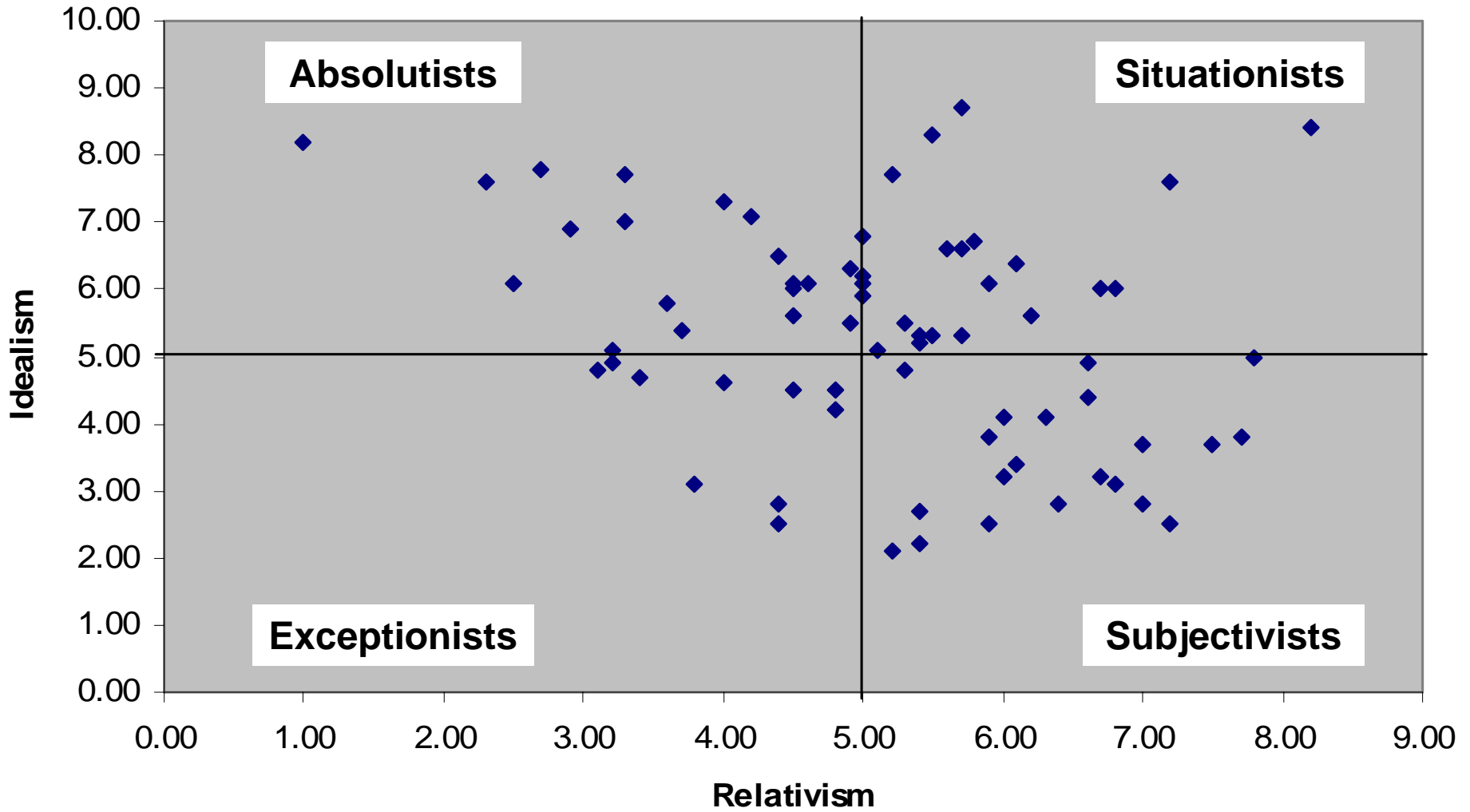
- Approach/Avoidance behaviors
 - E.g., purchases, proximity
- Non-verbal emotion indicators
 - E.g., facial expressions, pupil dilation
- Self-report
 - E.g., like-dislike, good-bad rating scales
 - Like very much...Like a little...Dislike a little...Dislike very much
 - Agree strongly.....Agree.....Disagree.....Disagree strongly

Ethical Ideologies

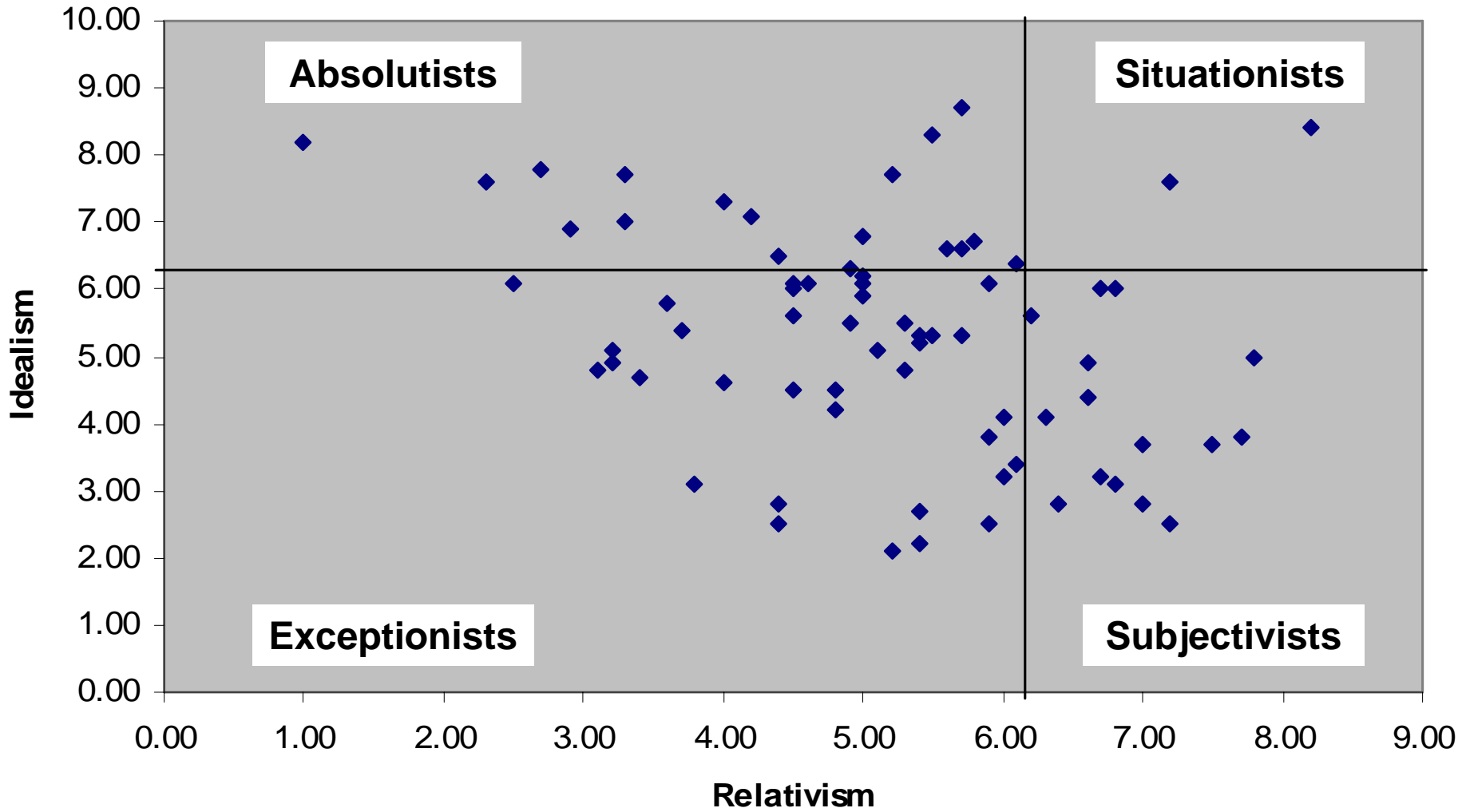
	Relativism	
Idealism	<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>High</i>	<p>Absolutists</p> <p>Feel actions are moral provided they yield positive consequences through conformity to moral rules.</p>	<p>Situationists</p> <p>Reject moral rules; ask if the action yielded the best possible outcome in the given situation.</p>
<i>Low</i>	<p>Exceptionists</p> <p>Feel conformity to moral rules is desirable, but exceptions to these rules is often permissible for utilitarian reasons.</p>	<p>Subjectivists</p> <p>Reject moral rules; base moral judgments on personal feelings about the action and the setting.</p>

Source: Forsyth, D.R.(1980)

Ethical Ideologies



Ethical Ideologies



Attitudes Have To Be Accessible

- Important attitudes have more impact on behavior
- Attitudes based on actual experience tend to be more accessible
- Attitudes have more impact if they are salient or activated
 - Describe photo of young vs. old woman and later answer “unrelated” study, e.g. “I think that more money should be given to health care”
 - Priming with “elderly” category activated attitudes consistent with elderly attitudes (Kawakami et al, Psychological Science, 2003)

Behavior Shapes Attitudes

- Forced Compliance studies (Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959)
 - Do a boring/unpleasant task
 - Tell another student it is interesting for \$1 or
 - Tell another student it is interesting for \$20 or
 - No request to tell another student
 - What would you predict on ratings of the task (gathered in a supposedly independent second study down the hall)?
- Dissonance Theory
 - Contradictory cognitions create an unpleasant state of tension that motivates a reduction in dissonance
 - Dissonance can be reduced by avoidance, adding supportive cognitions, or changing some cognitions

Foot In The Door

(Freedman & Fraser, 1966)

- Experimenters went house to house with small requests (put small sign in window or sign petition, safe driving or environment). Control group not contacted.
- Two weeks later, different experimenters returned and asked them to put large signs about safe driving in their front yard
- One contact group = 17% yes
- Different task or issue = 47-48% yes
- Same task and issue = 76% yes

Summary

- Seeing or perceiving is not like a tape recorder: we select and construct based on our pre-existing “mental models” of the world (based on experience)
- We make sense of the world by forming categories and cause-effect linkages, and these perceptions influence behavior
- Attitudes are an evaluative judgment linking cognition, emotion, and action
- Any attitude is linked to many beliefs and behaviors
- Attitudes affect behaviors, and are also affected by behaviors, depending on situational cues that induce people to interpret their behavior in particular ways