


# Actions of the Mind that Represent Society

Kaori Karasawa

Department of Social Psychology

Faculty of Letters

The figures, photos and moving images with  marks attached belong to their copyright holders. Reusing or reproducing them is prohibited unless permission is obtained directly from such copyright holders.

# Constructing an “Understanding of Society”

- Understanding and judging society
  - Information processing processes⇒ not simply encoding information but actively creating meaning from information.
- Not making a copy of society that exists outside, but “constructing” a schematic design of society in one’s own mind.
  - What are the characteristics of understanding society = what are these constructing processes?
    - Various types of bias are observed in “social judgment and inference” • • • Taking an approach from the perspective of bias.
- Interaction based on “constructed understanding”
  - Miscommunication caused by different degrees of understanding

# Bias in Social Judgment

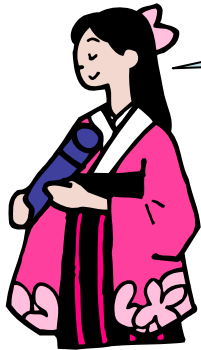
- For example...
- Judging things so that that judgment will match existing knowledge.
- Judging things based on a mere handful of cases.
- Being influenced by extreme and conspicuous information.
- Making self-serving interpretations.
- Considering oneself standard, normal, and in the majority.
- Judging things so that one's judgment and emotions will be consistent.

etc. . . .

# Composing the World by Applying Knowledge

(Karasawa 2002)

- Information about Ms. A → hobbies, recent activities, personality, etc...
- In addition,



Ms. A is 22 years old. She graduated from a women's university this March.

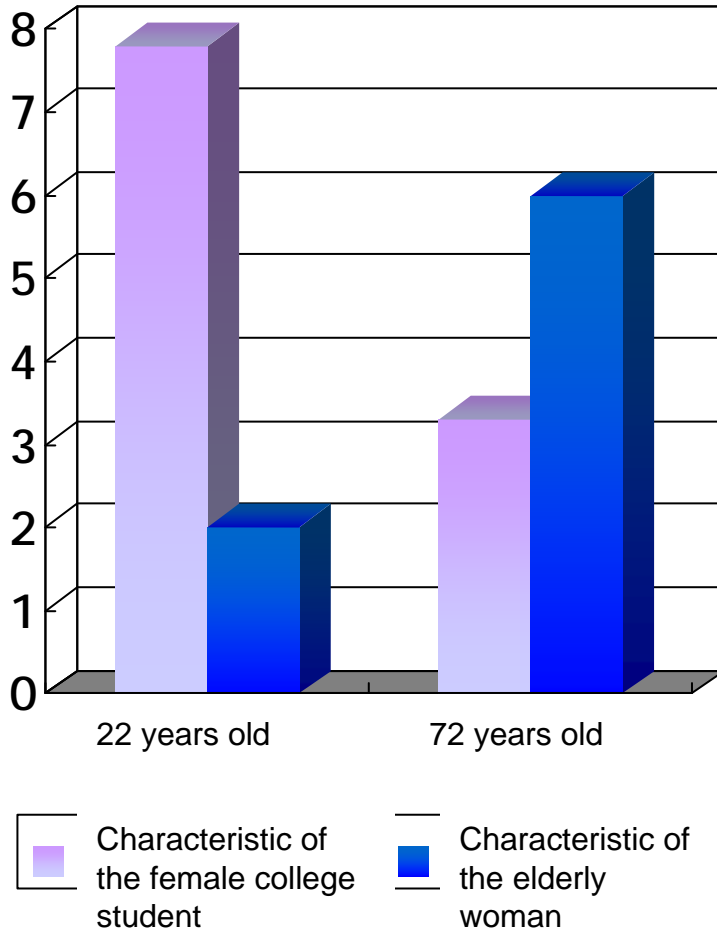
Ms. A is 72 years old. She and her husband celebrated their golden anniversary this March.



- A “memory test” is given two weeks later.

# Memory seems Consistent with the Perception of Age

The number of incorrect answers



- Original statements are memorized in a way consistent with the perception of a person.
- E.g.: She pays attention to people in unique clothes / She watches her diet because she is concerned about her health.
- Female college student → She pays attention to people in fashionable clothes/ She watches her diet because she is concerned about her body shape.
- Elderly woman → She pays attention to people in untidy clothes/ She watches her diet because she is concerned about her blood pressure.

# Categorical Information and Interpreting Behavior

- The impact of categorical information (stereotypes)
- A child taking an eraser from another child (Sagar et al., 80)
  - A black child → Aggressive
  - A white child → Assertive
- Ordinary daily behavior (Langer et al, 74)
  - An ordinary person → Normal
  - A patient with mental illness → Maladjusted

## Yahoo! News Photo

More Slideshows: [Select Category](#) ▼AFP/Getty Images - Tue Aug 30,  
3:47 AM ET

Two residents waded through chest-deep water after finding bread and soda from a local grocery store after Hurricane Katrina came through the area in New Orleans, Louisiana. (AFP/Getty Images/Chris Graythen)

[Email Photo](#) [Print Photo](#)**RECOMMEND THIS PHOTO** » [Recommended Photos](#)

Recommend It:



Average (210 votes)

**RELATED**

- [Katrina's Effects, at a Glance](#) AP - Tue Aug 30, 1:26 PM ET

[Hurricanes & Tropical Storms](#)**ADD SLIDESHOW TO MY YAHOO! OR RSS READER**

(About My Yahoo! and RSS)



YAHOO! GAMES

[▶ DOWNLOAD NOW](#)

## Hurricanes &amp; Tropical Storms

More Slideshows: [Select Category](#) ▼Speed: [Manual](#) ▼[REPLAY](#)

Photo 326 of 545

[Single Photo](#) | [Multiple Photos](#)**AP** Associated Press AP - Tue Aug 30, 11:31 AM ET

A young man walks through chest deep flood water after looting a grocery store in New Orleans on Tuesday, Aug. 30, 2005. Flood waters continue to rise in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina did extensive damage when it

[Email Photo](#) [Print Photo](#)**RECOMMEND THIS PHOTO** » [Recommended Photos](#)

Recommend It:



Average (136 votes)

**RELATED**

- [Looting Takes Place in View of La. Police](#) AP - Tue Aug 30, 5:10 PM ET

[Hurricanes & Tropical Storms](#)**ADD SLIDESHOW TO MY YAHOO! OR RSS READER**[\(About My Yahoo! and RSS\)](#)**YAHOO! GAMES**[▶ PLAY NOW](#)



## For the record...this IS the 'United States of White America'...

🖨️ [Printer-friendly format](#)

✉️ [Email this thread to a friend](#)

🔖 [Bookmark this thread](#)

**This topic is archived.**

[First thread](#) | [Last thread](#)

[Home](#) » [Discuss](#) » [General Discussion: Presidential](#)

1/1/11

**Elrond Hubbard** ⭐ (1000+ posts) 📁 📄 🗨️ 🗨️ 🗨️

Sun Mar-16-08 08:31 AM

Original message

### For the record...this IS the 'United States of White America'...



and anyone who says otherwise is kidding themselves.

Advertisements [2]

We've made a lot of progress over the years, but racism is still alive and well...it's just gotten smarter, more subtle.

What's the truth? The truth is that America is run by rich white men, who are primarily interested in protecting the interests of other rich white people. White people have TONS of privilege in this country that they can NEVER TRULY APPRECIATE because they've never experienced the other side.

Remember Hurricane Katrina? Remember this? It's 'finding' for a white person, 'looting' for a black person.



**AP ASSAULT PUNK** AP - Tue Aug 06, 11:01 AM ET

A young man wades through chest-deep flood water after a grocery store in New Orleans on Tuesday, Aug. 30, 2005. Flood waters continue to rise in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina did extensive damage when it struck the Gulf Coast.

[Email Photo](#) [Print Photo](#)

**RECOMMEND THIS PHOTO** - Recommended Photo  
Average (135 votes)  
★★★★★



**AFP** 3:47 AM ET

Two residents wade through chest-deep water after a grocery store in New Orleans on Tuesday, Aug. 30, 2005. Flood waters continue to rise in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina did extensive damage when it struck the Gulf Coast.

[Email Photo](#) [Print Photo](#)

**RECOMMEND THIS PHOTO** - Recommended Photo  
Average (211 votes)  
★★★★★

**RELATED**

- Katrina's Effects, at a Glance AP - Tue Aug 30, 1:26 PM ET

[Hurricanes & Tropical Storms](#)

I remember during Katrina all of the hostility and resentment directed against black people, the racism coming to the surface across the nation, barely even bothering to disguise itself. I'd say most of us at DU, and most people in this country, were better than that... but there was far too much of it out there.

As a white male, I was born into privileges I never deserved. Wright is RIGHT, at least in this case, especially about white arrogance. When our privilege gets challenged and pointed out, a hell of a lot of nasty defensiveness comes out.

Racism is real. It still exists. It hasn't gone away. It's been an undercurrent on DU, and isn't going away anytime soon...the same thing is true of sexism.

This is the United States of White America...or more accurately...white MALE America. It's up to US to do something to change that... to make it an America for everybody.



[Printer Friendly](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Top](#)

#### Replies to this thread

<a href="#">Self-kicking.</a>	Elrond Hubbard	Mar-16-08 08:37 AM	#1
<a href="#">Yep.</a>	AirmensMom	Mar-16-08 08:46 AM	#2
<a href="#">Spot on</a>	shadowknows69	Mar-16-08 08:47 AM	#3
<a href="#">It is out there for all people to see.</a>	arundhatiroyfan	Mar-16-08 08:50 AM	#5
<a href="#">K#5</a>	shadowknows69	Mar-16-08 08:48 AM	#4

- Remember Hurricane Katrina? Remember this? It's 'finding' for a white person, 'looting' for a black person. I remember during Katrina all of the hostility and resentment directed against black people, the racism coming to the surface across the nation, barely even bothering to disguise itself. . . . . When our privilege gets challenged and pointed out, a hell of a lot of nasty defensiveness comes out. Racism is real. It still exists.

DEMOCRATIC UNDERGROUND.COM

<http://www.democraticunderground.com/>

[http://www.democraticunderground.com/discuss/duboard.php?az=view\\_all&address=132x5105985](http://www.democraticunderground.com/discuss/duboard.php?az=view_all&address=132x5105985)

# Bias : The Argument from an Adaptive Point of View

- Using knowledge  $\Rightarrow$  It's natural in a sense
  - To begin with, knowledge is a result, as well as a means, of “organizing” and understanding the external world.
  - Efficient information processing using knowledge is important.
- Errors and biases are “by-products” of the adaptive mechanisms of our minds.
  - Cognitive economic rationality.
  - However, “errors are errors.” They can have negative effect, or create prejudiced reactions in others.

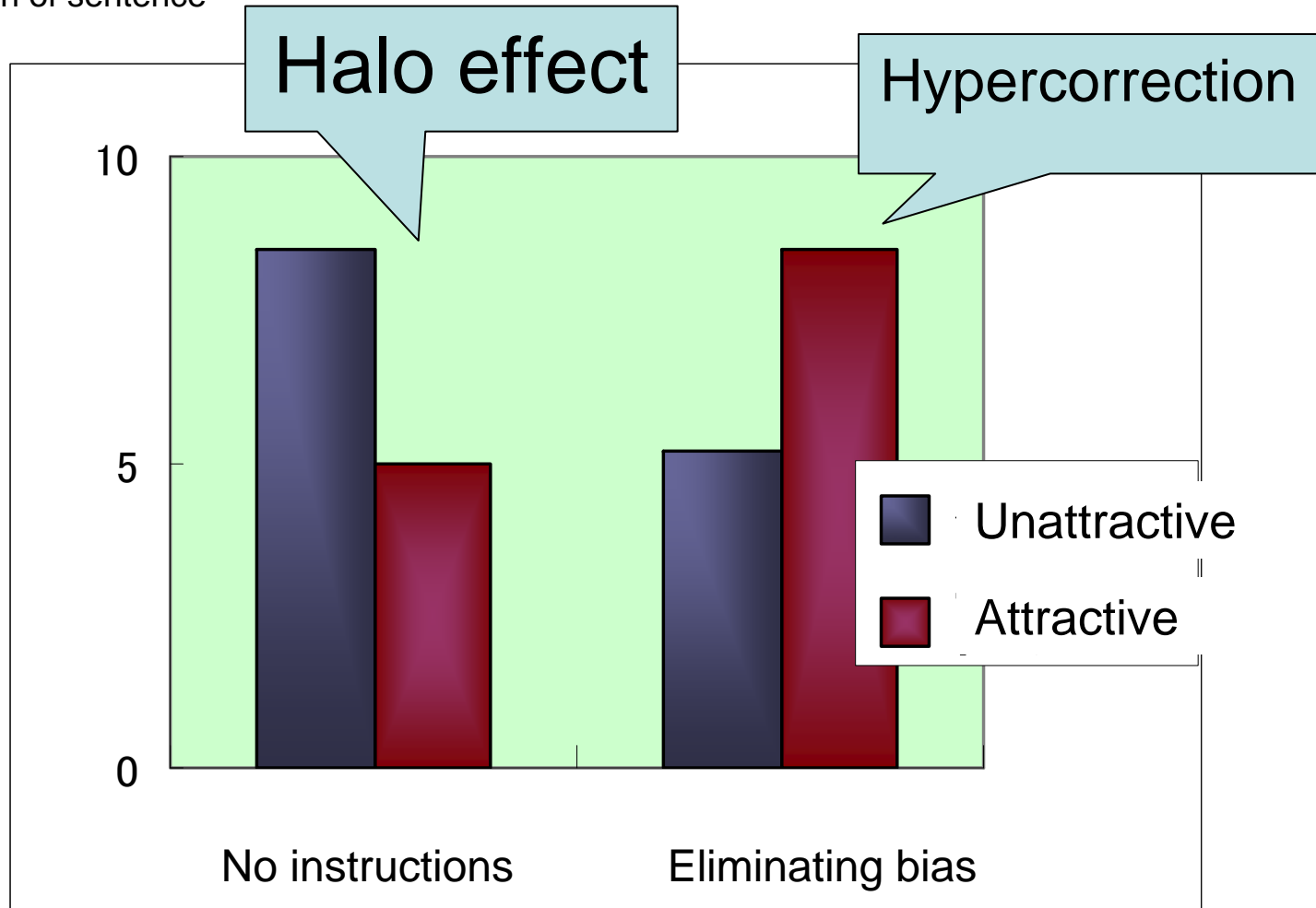
# Effects of Efforts to Eliminate Bias

(Friend & Vinson, 1974)

- A mock trial: A woman caused a car accident that killed a pedestrian → How much punishment does she deserve?
  - Halo effect: Good-looking people are also seen as having good personalities.
- Giving instructions to the juror and manipulating attractiveness of the woman.
  - Instructions: a group without instructions/ a group asked to eliminate bias
    - Having the mock juror judge without giving any instructions.
    - Having the mock juror promise to “eliminate as much bias as possible” and “punish women as harshly as men”.
  - Attractiveness: attractive/ unattractive

# Reverse Bias

Length of sentence



# Can Bias Be Eliminated?

- “Errors” are bad. Prejudiced reactions are bad.
  - Will it work if you make efforts to eliminate bias?
- It certainly is better than doing nothing.
- However, it is also important to understand the difficulty of eliminating bias.
- Knowing the possibilities of problems caused by bias.
- What’s the effect on interaction?

# The Effects of Self-Serving Thinking

- The motive to maintain a positive view of the self  $\Rightarrow$  various self-serving biases  
(e.g., Weinstein, 1980)
- The above average effect
  - Comparing oneself to the average regarding desirable characteristics  $\Rightarrow$  self-evaluation  $>$  average
- Unrealistic optimism
  - Will something good/ bad happen to you more/ less often than the average in the future?
  - Something good  $\rightarrow$  above average, Something bad  $\rightarrow$  below average
- Thinking in a self-serving manner  $\Rightarrow$  Good for mental health? Enabling one to live positively?



# Positive Illusions

- Holding the “illusion” that you are better than you really are promotes your psychological well-being. (Taylor & Brown, 1988)
- Depression  $\Rightarrow$  inability to hold optimistic views
  - Depressed people think more realistically than non-depressed people (Alloy & Abramson, 1979 )
- If positive illusions are reflected in social interaction, negative consequences may follow.

# Causal Attribution of Behavior and Interpersonal Attitudes

(Karasawa, 1995)

- Differences in interpretation of information between oneself and others⇒
- The gap between attitudes expressed in interaction and attitudes one expects from others
- One's own undesirable behavior vs. others' undesirable behavior . . . . Are there different way of inferring causes?
  - Attributing behavior not to one's own personality but to situational factors
  - Convenient interpretation that implies you are a “good person”
- Causal attribution of negative emotional expression?
- Attribution and interpersonal attitudes?

# The Gap in Human Interaction

- Assuming a situation where something bad happened and you are/ another person is angry/ upset/ depressed
- What's the reason?
- The degree to which others reject you?
- The degree to which you reject the other person?



# A Sample Scenario

- Wife : I had a bad day at the office! I want to be treated kindly, at least at home. (in a bad mood)
- Husband : What a grouchy attitude! You are so gloomy. (turning a cold shoulder to her)
- Wife : Why are you so cold to me! What a nasty man! (getting angrier · · · but now she is angry at her husband)
- Husband : She has such a bad attitude! (thinking that his wife is angry because her personality is bad, and treating her even more coldly)

# Self-fulfilling Stereotypes

- Characteristics of “information processing about others”
- Not only receiving information and forming impressions about others, but also practicing interpersonal behavior based on these impressions
- Our interactive behavior is not independent; it is interdependent.
  - One behaves in response to the behavior of others.
  - One’s behavior changes depending on how the other person behaves.

# Effects of Stereotyping due to Attractiveness

(Snyder et al., 77)

- Male and female students were paired up and had a telephone conversation.
- The male students received “a photo of the female partner” (either an attractive or unattractive photo).
- Other students listened only to the female portion of the recorded conversation and made an assessment.
- The “attractive women” were assessed as kinder, friendlier, more humorous, and more pleasant to talk with than the “unattractive women.”

# Significance of Considering Individual Information-Processing Processes

- Mental processes dealt with by social psychology
  - Intrapersonal processes
    - The nature of social information-processing, such as judgment and attitude formation toward self, others and groups
  - Interpersonal processes
    - The nature of interaction between people, such as interpersonal behavior, interpersonal relationships, and mutual influence processes
  - Group processes
    - The characteristics of behavior and relationships caused by group dynamics, such as intrapersonal behavior and group relationships.
- People who “represent” society ⇔ Society created by behavior based on representation

# References

- Alloy, L.B., & Abramson, L.Y. 1979 Judgments of contingency in depressed and nondepressed students: Sadder but wiser? *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 108, 441-485.
- Friend, R.M., & Vinson, M. 1974 Leaning over backwards: Jurors' responses to defendants' attractiveness. *Journal of Communication*, 24, 124-129.
- Karasawa, K (1995) An attributional analysis of reactions to negative emotions. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 21, 456-467.
- Karasawa, K (2002) Stereotypes and memory (Experimental data, Nagoya University)
- Langer, E.J., & Abelson, R.P. 1974 A Patient by any other name...: Clinician group difference in labeling bias. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 42, 4-9.
- Sager, H.A., & Schofield, J.W. 1980 Racial and behavioral cues in black and white children's perceptions of ambiguously aggressive acts. *Journal of personality and Social Psychology*, 39, 590-598.
- Snyder, M.L., Tanke, E.D., & Berscheid, E. 1977 Social perception and interpersonal behavior: On the self-fulfilling nature of social stereotype. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 35, 656-666.
- Taylor, S.E., & Brown, J.D. 1988 Illusion and well-being: A social psychological perspective on mental health. *Psychological Bulletin*, 103, 192-210.
- Weinstein, N.D. 1980 Unrealistic optimism. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 39, 806-820.