

# Teams: Session 3

**ABBY BERENSON**

*Senior Associate Director, MIT Leadership Center*

# A Story of Different

## Part 1: Reflect and Write (5 min)

**Part 1:** Reflect and write ways you experience being different from those around you.

Your *Story of Different* can be told through many lenses (physical, cultural, ideological, social, cognitive, etc.).

Consider:

1. Where in your life (current and past) have you felt most different and/or consistently different?
2. Which aspects of these differences have been primarily defined by others and which have been primarily defined by you?
3. Do any of these differences enable or empower you? Do any of these difference hinder or disempower you? How?
4. Are there certain differences that tend to show up more for you in team settings? How do they impact your ability to lead and overall impact on teams?



## From earlier...

- Leadership is...
- Teams are Humans Connecting: Personization and Psych Safety
- Hackman & Team Framework

## Perspective Taking & Perspective Getting

- We Are Our Differences

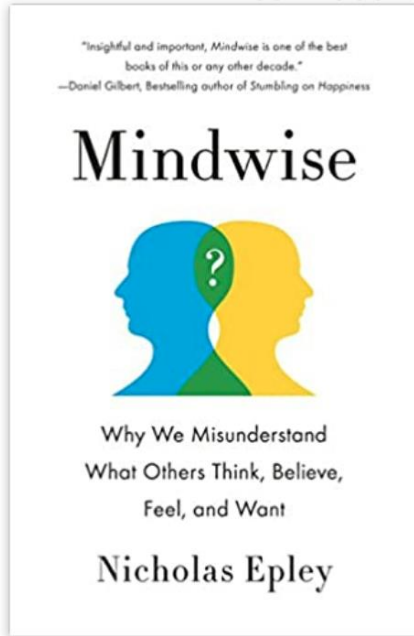
# AGENDA



# Naïve Realism

- **The belief that the world is exactly as our cognitive processes construct it**
- The human tendency to believe that we see the world around us objectively, and that people who disagree with us must be uninformed, irrational, or biased.

# Can we really get to know each other?



Published 2014



- Psychologist at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business
- "Our species has conquered the Earth because of our ability to understand the minds of others, not because of our opposable thumbs or handiness with tools."

# Perspective Taking – Relies on "Sixth Sense"

- D. Carnegie, *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (1936) >> Imagine the world through someone else's point of view. Put yourself "in their shoes"
- Tailor responses/feedback/interactions from this perspective
- Own self-knowledge + stereotypes about the world
  - *Maximizes the use of "known" information*

## Limitations

- Issues of accuracy
- Could increase misunderstandings
- Couples Experiment

"We've now looked many times for evidence that perspective taking— actively trying to imagine being in another person's circumstances— systematically increases mind reading and have yet to find any supportive evidence."

- N. Epley, *Mindwise*



# Familiarity Doesn't Help

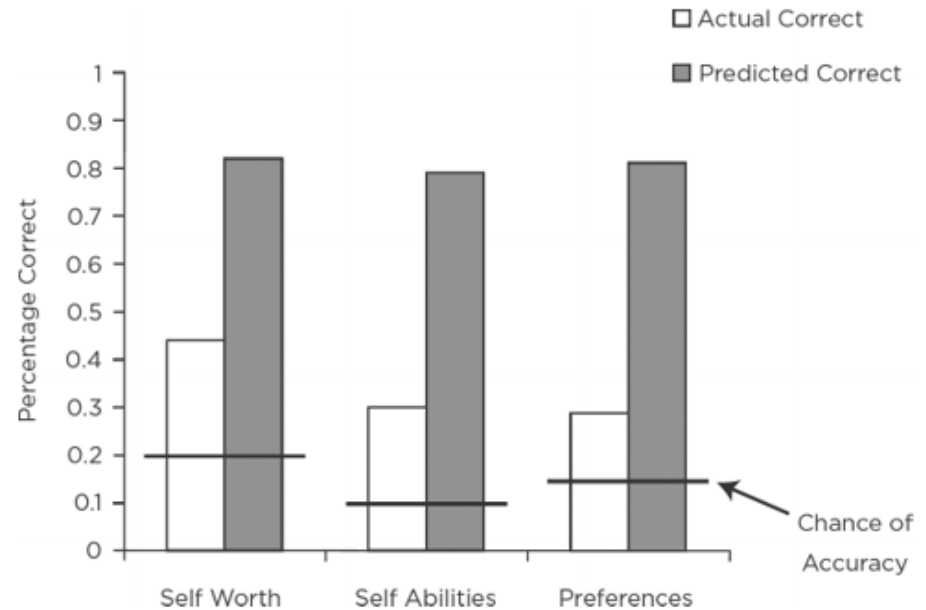
(Epley, and others)

## Couples separated in two rooms

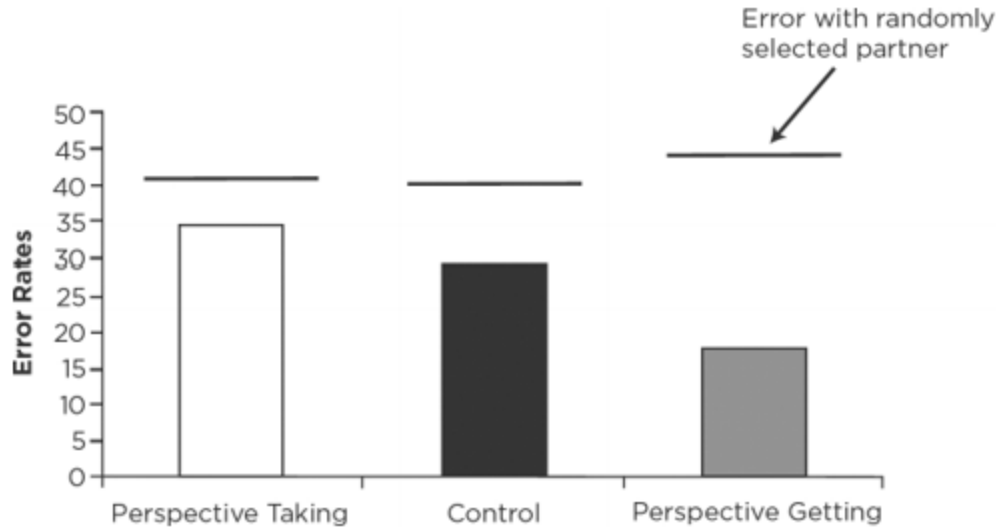
- One is asked a series of questions
- The other is asked to predict their partner's attitude

**Encouraging perspective taking increased error and reduced accuracy.**

Overconfidence in the ability to infer someone else's thoughts *grows* with the length of the relationship!



# One thing did help though...



**Accuracy improves when couples simply discussed the survey questions in advance.**

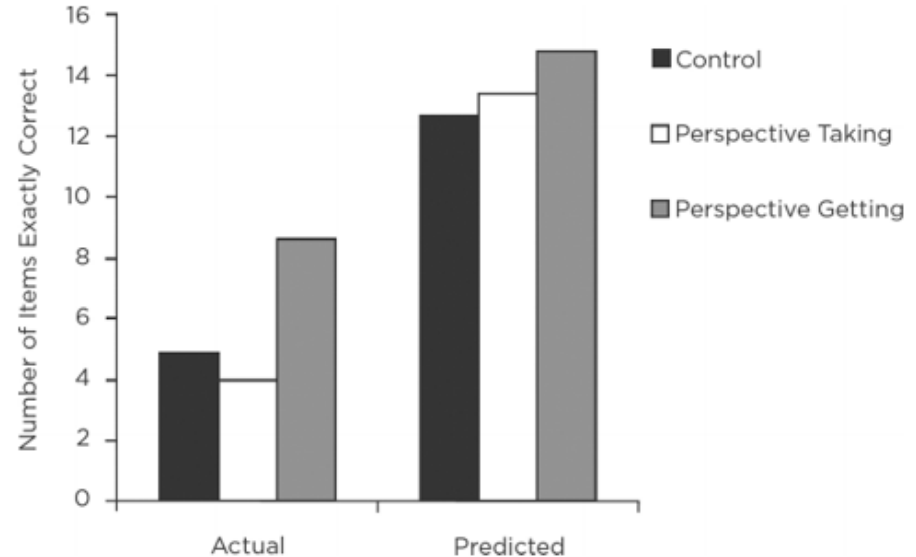


# Perspective *Getting*

"If you want to know, ask rather than guess." - Epley

## Ask, then Listen

- *Don't ask don't tell* (1993) repeal (2010)
- "If we want to understand what's on the mind of another, the best our mortal senses can do may be to rely on our ears more than our inferences."
- "The relatively slow work of *getting* a person's perspective is the way you understand them accurately, and the way you solve their problems most effectively."



**Reduces Error**

**Reduce Overconfidence**

# Perspective *Getting*

## Perspective getting has its own challenges:

- People don't often know what they want or will do (especially in the future)
- People are prone to telling us what we want to hear
- We are prone to hearing what we want

## Strategies

- Strive to make it “no fault” environment (remember psychological safety and growth mindset)
- Ask people what they are thinking rather than why
- Repeat what has just been said to test comprehension



# A Story of Different

## Part 2: Practicing Perspective Getting

### Guidance on Story Sharing

- Take no more than 5 mins to speak to what you wrote (highlights).
- Try to address all four questions.
  1. *Where in your life (current and past) have you felt most different and/or consistently different?*
  2. *Which aspects of these differences have been primarily defined by others and which have been primarily defined by you?*
  3. *Do any of these differences enable or empower you? Do any of these difference hinder or disempower you? How?*
  4. *Are there certain differences that tend to show up more for you in team settings? How do they impact your ability to lead and overall impact on teams?*
- Focus on speaking to what you want to say not what you think others want to hear.

### Guidance on Perspective Getting

1. Listen.
2. Ask questions, with sense of curiosity.
3. Pay attention to what resonates for you.
4. Repeat back to the sharer about what you heard.

