

진로 영어	[심리학]	Barnum Effect	Class No.	
	배경지식 넓히기		Name	

Barnum Effect

psychology

Barnum Effect, also called Forer Effect, in psychology, the phenomenon that occurs when individuals believe that personality descriptions apply specifically to them (more so than to other people), despite the fact that the description is actually filled with information that applies to everyone. The effect means that people are gullible because they think the information is about them only when in fact the information is generic. The Barnum Effect came from the phrase often attributed (perhaps falsely) to showman P. T. Barnum that a “sucker” is born every minute. Psychics, horoscopes, magicians, palm readers, and crystal ball gazers make use of the Barnum Effect when they convince people that their description of them is highly special and unique and could never apply to anyone else.

The Barnum Effect has been studied or used in psychology in two ways. One way has been to create feedback for participants in psychological experiments, who read it and believe it was created personally for them. When participants complete an intelligence or personality scale, sometimes the experimenter scores it and gives the participant his or her real score. Other times, however, the experimenter gives participants false and generic feedback to create a false sense (e.g., to give the impression they are an exceptionally good person). The reason that the feedback “works” and is seen as a unique descriptor of an individual person is because the information is, in fact, generic and could apply to anyone.

The other way that the Barnum Effect has been studied is with computers that give (true) personality feedback to participants. Personality ratings given by computers have been criticized for being too general and accepted too easily. Some researchers have done experiments to see if people view actually true feedback as being any more accurate than bogus feedback. People do see actually true descriptions of themselves as more accurate than bogus feedback, but there is not much of a difference.

The Barnum Effect works best for statements that are positive. People are much less likely to believe that a statement applies to them when it is a negative statement, such as “I often think of hurting people who do things I don’t like.” Thus, Barnum Effect reports primarily contain statements with mostly positive items, such as the items listed here. Note that the negative phrases are offset by something positive to end the statement.

“You have an intense desire to get people to accept and like you.”

“Sometimes you give too much effort on projects that don’t work out.”

“Although you do have some weaknesses, you try very hard to overcome them and be a better person.”

★	[심리학]	Barnum Effect	Class No.	
	배경지식 넓히기		Name	

[문제] 다음 글의 내용을 한 문장으로 요약하고자 한다. 빈칸 (A), (B)에 들어갈 말로 가장 적절한 것은?

The Barnum Effect is the phenomenon where someone reads or hears something very general but believes that it applies to them. These statements appear to be very personal on the surface but in fact, they are true for many. Human psychology allows us to want to believe things that we can identify with on a personal level and even seek information where it doesn't necessarily exist, filling the blanks with our imagination for the rest. This is the principle that horoscopes rely on, offering data that appears to be personal but probably makes sense to countless people. Since the people reading them want to believe the information so badly, they will search for meaning in their lives that make it true.



Barnum Effect is the phenomenon that occurs when individuals believe that personality descriptions apply specifically to them and want to ____ (A) ____ the information earnestly, despite the fact that description is actually filled with ____ (B) ____ information that applies to everyone.

- | | (A) | | (B) |
|---|-------------|------|------------|
| ① | admit | | specific |
| ② | accept | | particular |
| ③ | forsake | | common |
| ④ | exclude | | universal |
| ⑤ | acknowledge | | generic |

■ Learning Log