

Topic 6

Impression Formation and Social Influence

Forming Impressions of Others

Five Key Sources of Information

1. Appearance
2. Verbal behavior
3. Actions
4. Nonverbal messages
5. Situations

Forming Impressions of Others, continued

- **Snap judgments vs. Systematic judgments**

1. Snap judgments about others “are those made quickly and based on only a few bits of information and preconceived notions”.

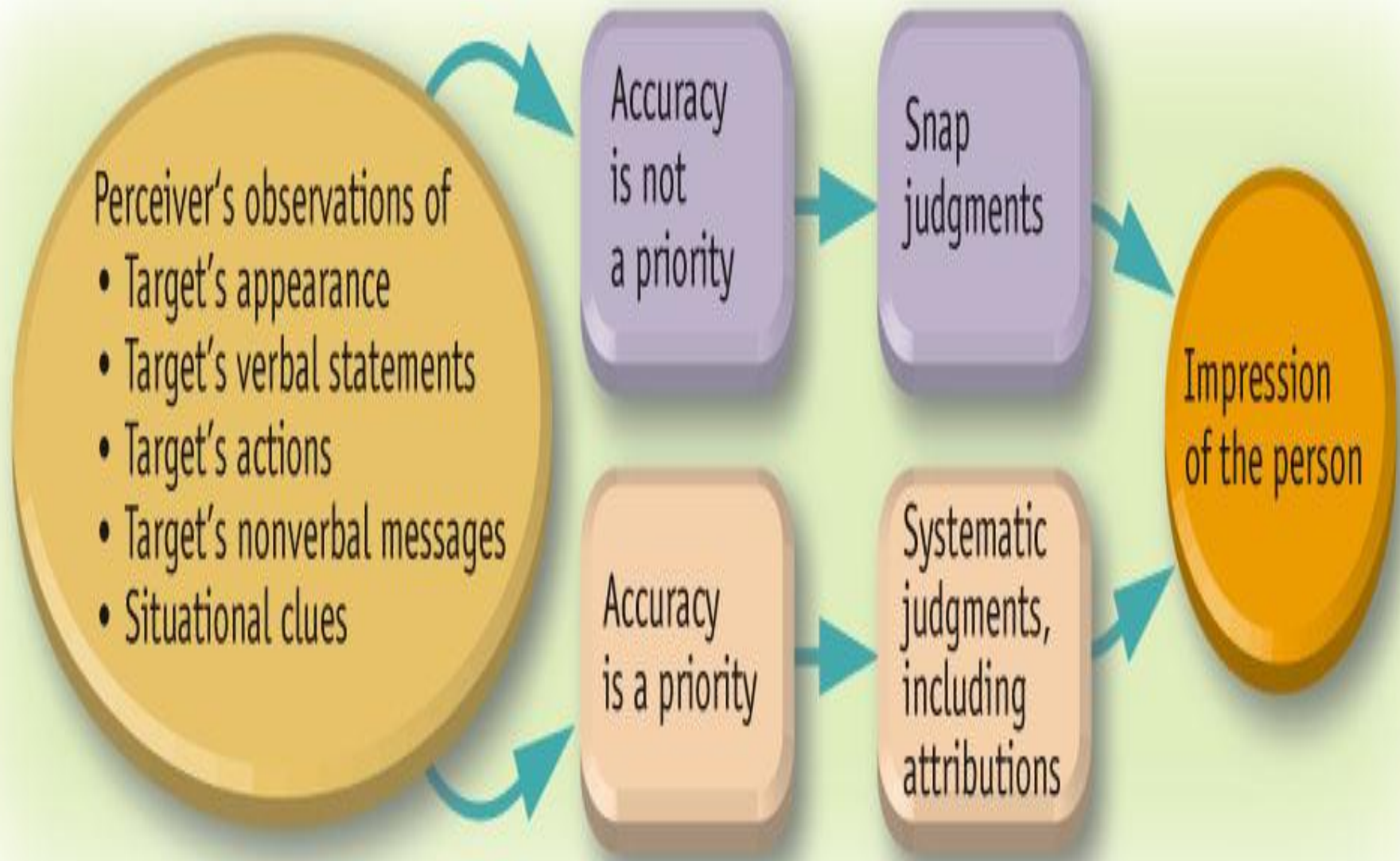
They are “shortcuts” that rely on **automatic processing**, and are used when we are not motivated to form an accurate impression of another person.

Forming Impressions of Others, continued

Snap vs. Systematic Judgments, continued

2. *Systematic judgments* require more controlled processing and tend to occur when forming impressions of others that can affect our happiness or welfare.

The process of person perception



Forming Impressions of Others, continued

- **Attributions**
- “inferences that people draw about the causes of behavior”
- There are two types:
 1. **Internal attributions** – when people attribute the cause of others’ behavior to personal dispositions, traits, abilities or feelings.
 2. **External attributions** – when people attribute the cause of others’ behavior to situational demands or environmental constraints.

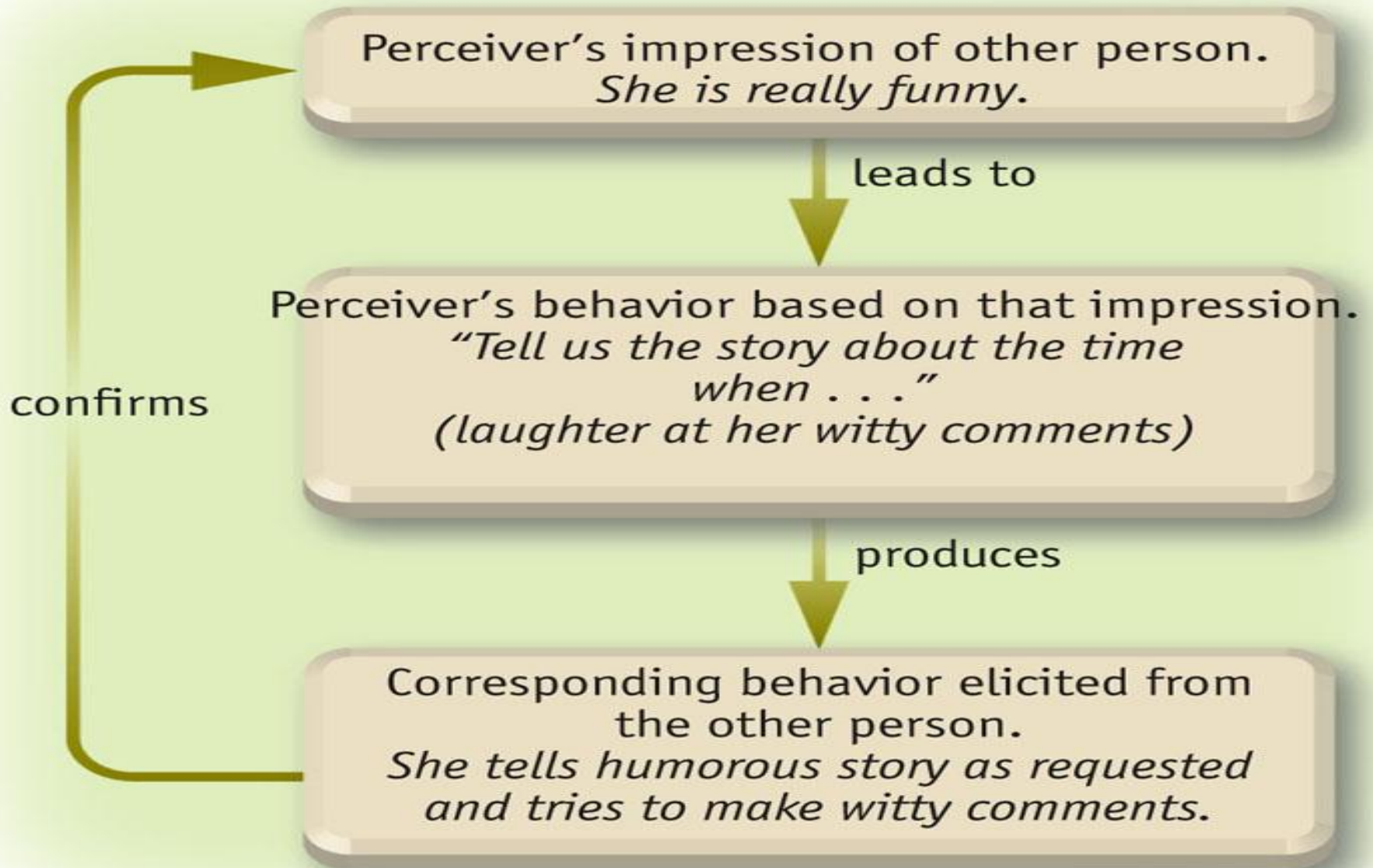
Forming Impressions of Others, continued

- **Perceiver Expectations**

How we expect others to behave can influence our actual perceptions of them.

1. Confirmation bias – “seeking information that supports one’s beliefs while not pursuing disconfirming information”.

2. Self-fulfilling prophecies – occur when “expectations about a person cause the person to behave in ways that confirm the expectations”



The three steps of the self-fulfilling prophecy.

Forming Impressions of Others, continued

- **Cognitive Distortions**

1. ***Social categorizations***

are cognitive “shortcuts” in which we categorize people on the basis of nationality, race, gender, etc.

- People perceive similar individuals to be members of their **ingroup (us)** and dissimilar people to be members of the **outgroup (them)**.

Forming Impressions of Others, continued

Cognitive Distortions, cont.

- **2. Stereotypes**

- “widely held beliefs that people have certain characteristics because of their membership in a particular group”.

- **Stereotypes persist because of:**

1. **Simplicity.**

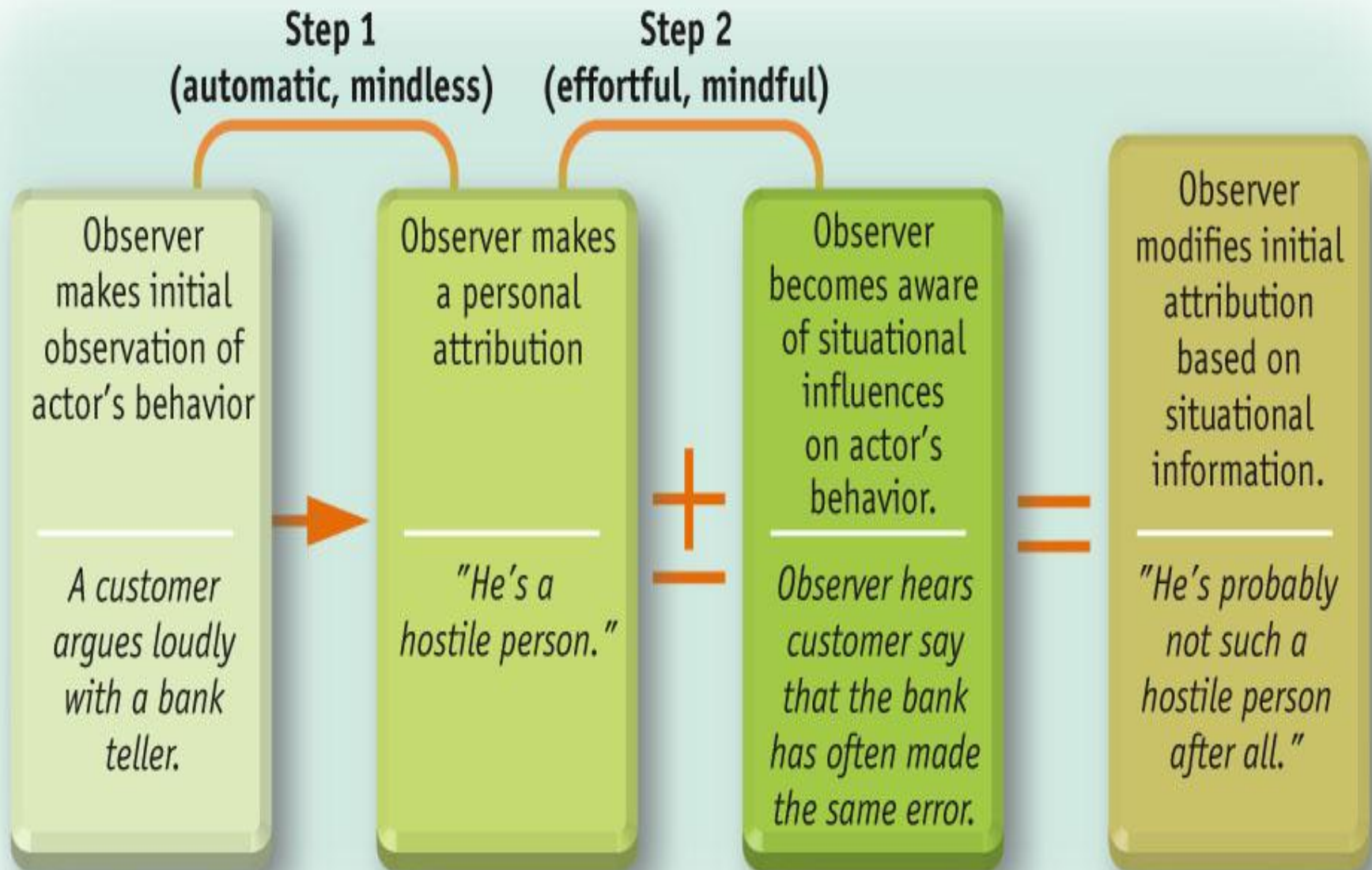
2. **Confirmation bias**

3. **Self-fulfilling prophecy**

Cognitive Distortions, cont.

- **3. *The fundamental attribution error***
“the tendency to explain other people’s behavior as the result of personal, rather than situational, factors”.
- **Making attributions requires two steps:**
 1. **Focusing on the person**
 2. **Taking the situation into account**

The second step is more effortful, so we often skip it.



Forming Impressions of Others, continued
Cognitive Distortions, cont.

- ***4. Defensive attribution***
- “the tendency to blame victims for their misfortune, so that one feels less likely to be victimized in a similar way”.

Forming Impressions of Others, continued

- **Key themes in person perception:**

1. Efficiency – when forming impressions of others, we default to automatic processing.

2. Selectivity – we “see what we expect to see” by focusing on aspects of the person that confirm our expectations.

3. Consistency – *First impressions do matter!* Once a perceiver has formed an impression of someone, he or she tunes out subsequent information. This is called the ***primacy effect***.

The Problem of Prejudice

- ***Prejudice*** – “a negative attitude toward members of a group”.
- ***Discrimination*** – “involves behaving differently, usually unfairly, toward the members of a group”.
- Prejudice and discrimination often go together, but this is not always the case.

Prejudice, continued

- ***Modern discrimination*** occurs when “people privately harbor negative attitudes toward minority groups, but express them only when they feel such views are justified, or that it’s safe to do so”

Prejudice, continued

- **Causes of prejudice**
 1. The ***authoritarian personality***, a “personality type characterized by prejudice toward any group perceived to be different from oneself”.
 2. **Cognitive distortions and expectations**

Prejudice, continued

Causes of prejudice, cont.

3. Competition between groups

perceived threats to one's group, such as conflict over scarce resources, causes prejudice against outgroup members.

4. Threats to social identity – when the collective self-esteem of a group is threatened.

Prejudice, continued

- **Reducing prejudice**
 1. **Cognitive strategies** – make an effort to override stereotypes by using controlled processing.
 2. **Intergroup contact**
 - ***Superordinate goals*** – “goals that require two or more groups to work together to achieve mutual ends” can reduce intergroup hostility.

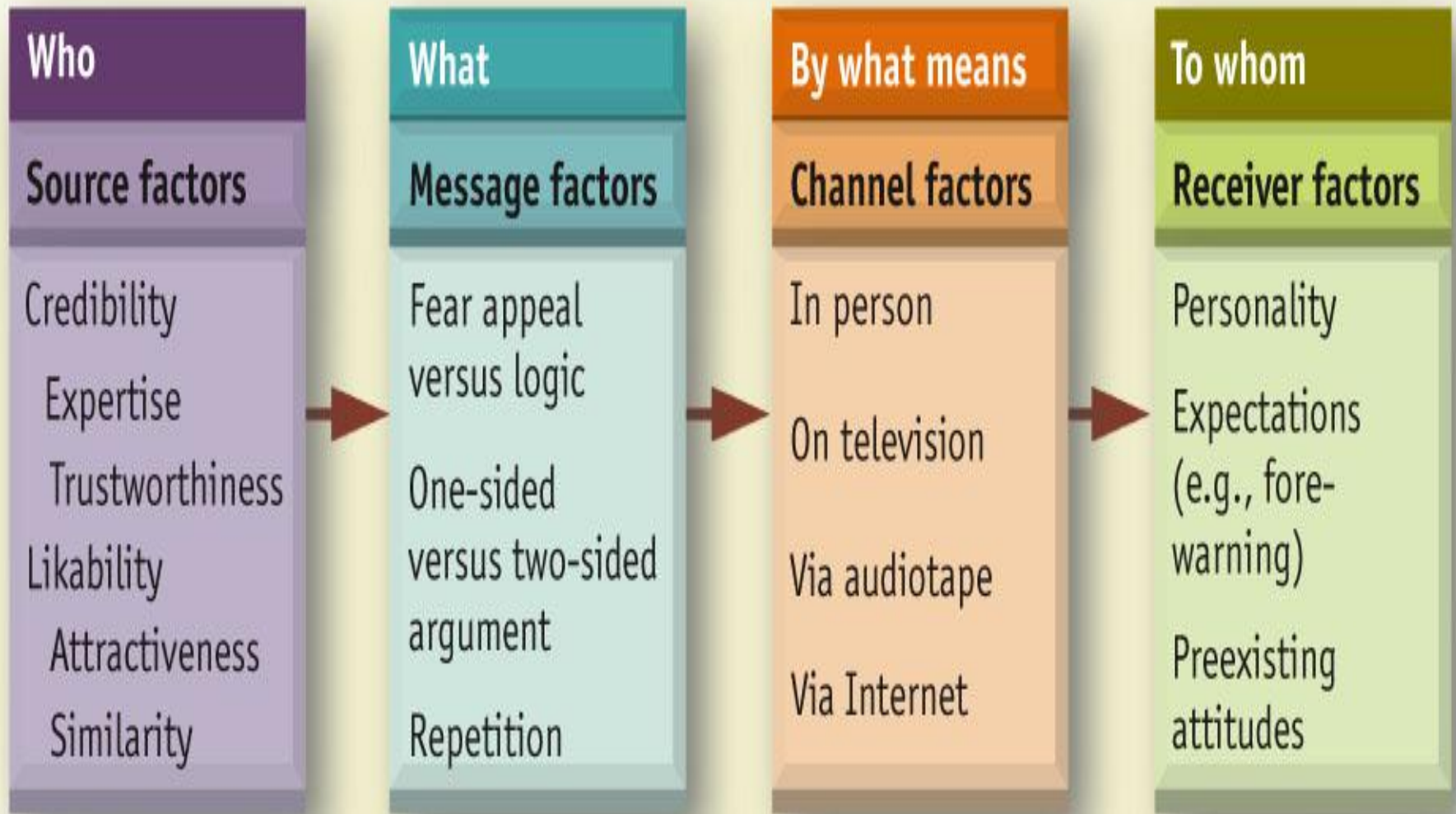
The Power of Persuasion

- ***Persuasion***
- “involves the communication of arguments and information intended to change another person’s attitudes”.

The Power of Persuasion, cont.

The Elements of the Persuasion Process

1. The **source** is “the person who sends a communication”.
2. The **receiver** is “the person to whom the message is sent”.
3. The **message** is “the information transmitted by the source”.
4. The **channel** is “the medium through which the message is sent”.



Overview of the persuasion process.

The Power of Persuasion, continued

The Elements of the Persuasion Process, cont.

- **1. Source factors:**

Persuasion is more effective when:

1. The source has high **credibility**.
2. The source is **likable**. Likability is **increased when** the source is **attractive, and/or similar** to the receiver.

The Power of Persuasion, continued

The Elements of the Persuasion Process, cont.

- **2. Message factors**

Messages are most effective when:

1. **Two-sided arguments** are used.
This also increases credibility.
2. Persuaders use **emotional appeals** to shift attitudes.
3. They create **positive feelings** in the receiver.

The Power of Persuasion, continued

The Elements of the Persuasion Process, cont.

- **3. Receiver factors**

1. Mood

2. The receiver's ***need for cognition***.

3. **Forewarning**, which reduces the impact of arguments on receivers.

4. Receivers are harder to persuade when the **message content is incompatible with existing beliefs**.

The Power of Persuasion, continued

- The Whys of Persuasion
- Why do people change their attitudes in response to persuasive messages?

According to the ***elaboration likelihood model***, our *thoughts* about a persuasive message are most important in determining whether attitudes will change.

- Messages can be perceived either through a ***peripheral route*** (not mindful processing) or ***central route*** (mindful processing).

Central route

Persuasion based on content and logic of the message

High elaboration:
Careful processing of the information

Persuasion is more durable, more difficult to change, more predictive of behavior

Peripheral route

Persuasion based on nonmessage factors such as attractiveness, credibility, emotion

Low elaboration:
Minimal processing of the information

Persuasion is more temporary, easier to change, less predictive of behavior

The peripheral and central routes to attitude change.

The Power of Social Pressure

- **Conformity and Compliance Pressures**

Conformity- “occurs when people yield to real or imagined social pressure.”

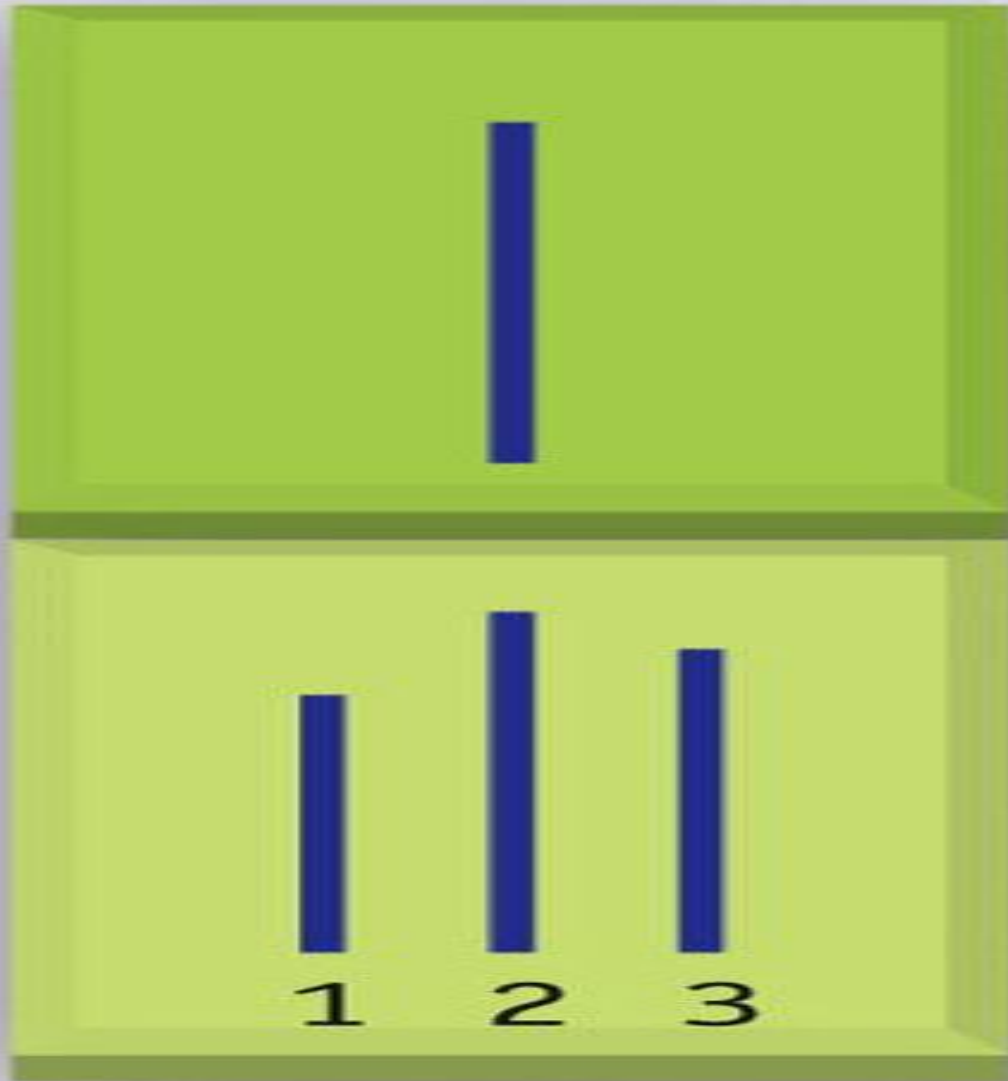
Compliance – “occurs when people yield to social pressure in their public behavior, even though their private beliefs have not changed”.

The Power of Social Pressure

Conformity and Compliance Pressures

The dynamics of conformity

- Solomon **Asch's** (1955) classic study demonstrated that people conformed easily to wrong answers given by others in a mock perception test .
- Conformity also increased, to a point, as group size increased, peaking at seven members.



© Wadsworth, Cengage Learning

Stimuli used in Asch's conformity studies.

The Power of Social Pressure

Conformity and Compliance Pressures

Why do people conform ?

- **1. Normative influence** – “operates when people conform to social norms for fear of negative social consequences”.
- **2. Informational influence** – “operates when people look to others for how to behave in ambiguous situations”.

The Power of Social Pressure

Conformity and Compliance Pressures

Tips for resisting conformity pressures

1. Pay more attention to social forces operating on you.
2. Identify someone in the group whose views match yours.
3. Bring along a friend with similar views if you know that you will confront pressure.

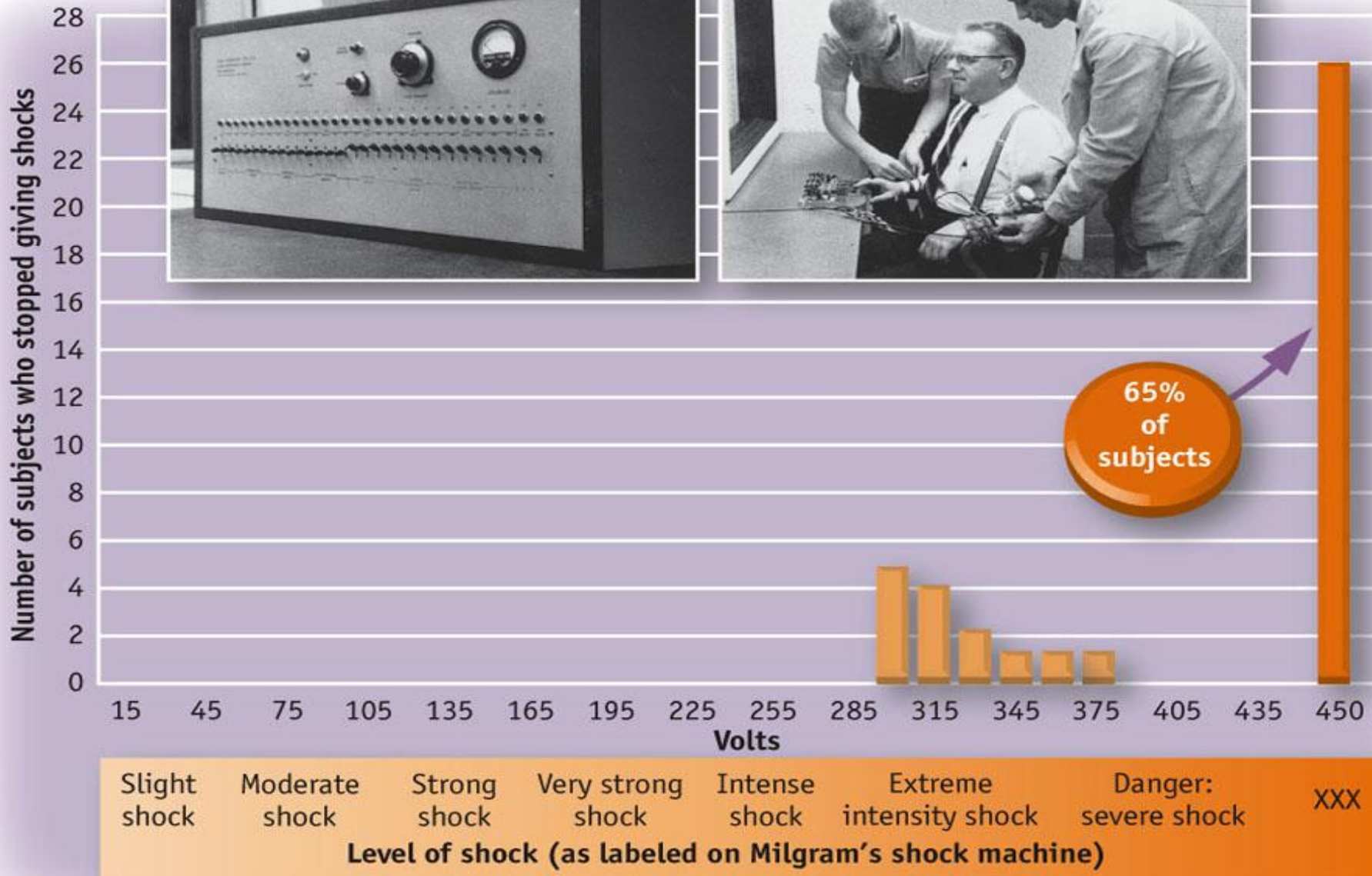
The Power of Social Pressure, continued

Pressure from Authority Figures: Obedience

Obedience

“is a form of compliance that occurs when people follow direct commands, usually from someone in a position of authority”.

Stanley Milgram's classic study (1963) demonstrated that people's tendency to obey is strong, even if they are asked to harm another person.



Milgram's (1963) experiment on obedience.

The Power of Social Pressure

Obedience, continued

Obedience is strongest when:

1. Demands increase gradually
2. Others take responsibility for your actions

We are motivated to meet the authority figure's expectations. Thus, human behavior is determined more by the power of the situation than by the character of the person.

Reading Assignment

- Application:
- Seeing Through Compliance Tactics
pp. 235 – 237.