

Attitudes, Persuasion, Conformity, and Obedience

Objectives

- 1. Attributions and attribution process**
- 2. Each part of the 3-component model of attitudes**
- 3. Development of attitudes**
- 4. Measurement of attitudes**
- 5. Attitudes and behavior OR behavior and attitudes? – Bem**
- 6. Source, message, channel, & receiver factors associated with attitude change (includes use of fear)**
- 7. Latitude of acceptance and attitude change**
- 8. Conformity, obedience, and situations**
 - A. Asch's "Line Judging" Study (Conformity; see text)**
 - B. Milgram's "Shock" Study (Obedience)**
 - C. Zimbardo "Prison" Study (Power of Situation & Roles; see text)**

Attribution Processes: Explaining Behavior

- **Attributions** – Inferences that people draw about the causes of events, others' behavior, and their own behavior
- Individuals make attributions because they have a strong need to understand their experiences.

Internal Versus External Attributions

- **Internal attributions** – Explanations that ascribe the causes of behavior to personal dispositions, traits, abilities, and feelings
- **External attributions** – Explanations that ascribe the causes of behavior to situational demands and environmental constraints
- Internal and external attributions can have a tremendous impact on everyday interpersonal interactions.

(Cengage, 2019)

Bias in Attribution

Actor-Observer Bias

- **Fundamental attribution error** – Observers' bias in favor of internal attributions in explaining others' behavior
- Actors favor external attributions for their behavior.

Self-Serving Bias

- **Self-serving bias** – The tendency to attribute one's successes to personal factors and one's failures to situational factors
- In failure, the usual actor-observer biases are apparent.
- In success, the usual actor-observer differences are reversed to some degree.

(Cengage, 2019)

Culture and Attributions

- **Individualism** – Putting personal goals ahead of group goals and defining one's identity in terms of personal attributes rather than group memberships
- **Collectivism** – Putting group goals ahead of personal goals and defining one's identity in terms of the groups one belongs to
- Compared to individualist societies, collectivist societies are less susceptible to:
 - Fundamental attribution errors
 - Self-serving bias

Attitudes

- A **learned** tendency to respond to people, objects, or institutions in a positive or negative way
 - Summarizes your evaluation of objects

Attitudes may include a(n):

Cognitive component

Thoughts, beliefs, or opinions about or associated with object

Affective component

Direction and intensity of feeling(s) or emotional response regarding object

Behavioral component

PREDISPOSITION TO RESPOND or tendency to act in a given manner in relation to object

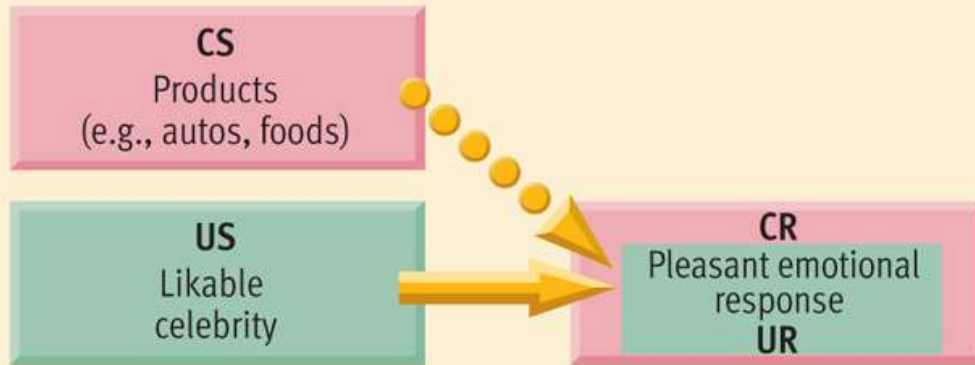
WARNING!!! THIS IS NOT THE BEHAVIOR ITSELF; ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOR ARE NOT THE SAME THING!!!

Development of Attitudes

Key assumption is that attitudes are mostly LEARNED (however, genetics may play role through its influence on temperament, personality, etc.)

- A. Classical conditioning**
- B. Operant conditioning**
- C. Social learning theory**

Classical Conditioning of Attitudes



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(Adapted from Wadsworth/Cengage Learning, 2011)

Attitude Development – Other Influences

- **Direct Contact:** Personal experience with object of attitude
- **Interaction with Others:** Influence of discussions with people holding a particular attitude
- **Child Rearing:** Influence of parental values, beliefs, and practices
- **Group Membership:** Social influences from others
- **Mass Media:** All media that reach large audience
- **“Mean” Worldview:** View world & others as dangerous/threatening

Attitudes and Behavior

Assumption:

If know someone's attitude about something, then should be able to predict or influence behavior

Reality:

Correlations between attitudes and behavior often "modest" at best (e.g., .15 - .25 range; 0 = no association)

Note: This still gives an edge compared to random guessing!

Measurement

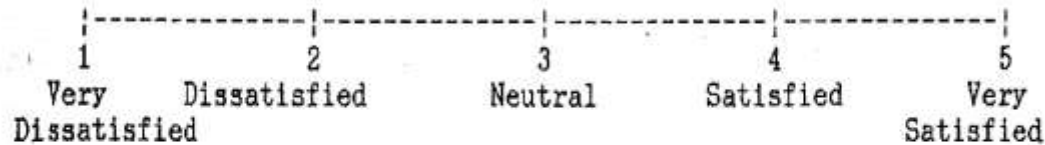
Typically measured using questions on paper-and-pencil or telephone surveys (self-report)

Example: Employee Satisfaction Questionnaires

Example: Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire

(Weiss, Dawis, England, & Lofquist, 1967)

INSTRUCTIONS: Answer the following items using the scale presented below. Write the number representing the level of your agreement or disagreement in the space provided to the left of each item.



Job Satisfaction (Scale: Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire, Short Form, Weiss, Dawis, England, & Lofquist, 1967)

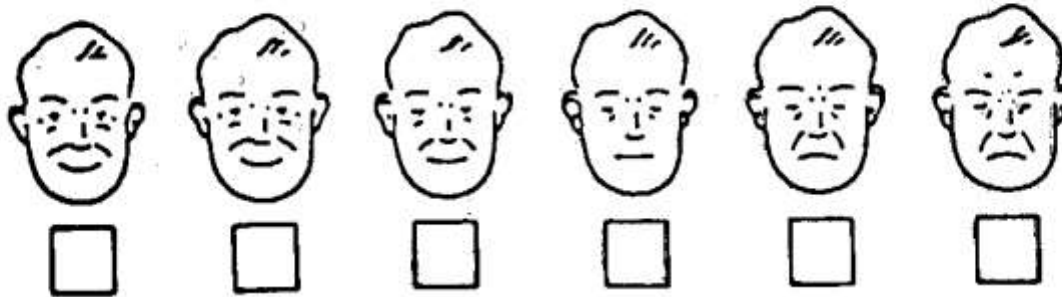
On my present job, this is how I feel about:

- _____ 1. Being able to keep busy all the time.
- _____ 2. The chance to work alone on the job.
- _____ 3. The chance to do different things from time to time.
- _____ 4. The chance to be "somebody" in the community.
- _____ 5. The way my boss handles his/her people.
- _____ 6. The competence of my supervisor in making decisions.
- _____ 7. Being able to do things that don't go against my conscience.
- _____ 8. The way my job provides for steady employment.
- _____ 9. The chance to do things for other people.
- _____ 10. The chance to tell people what to do.

Example 2: “Faces” Scales

The Original

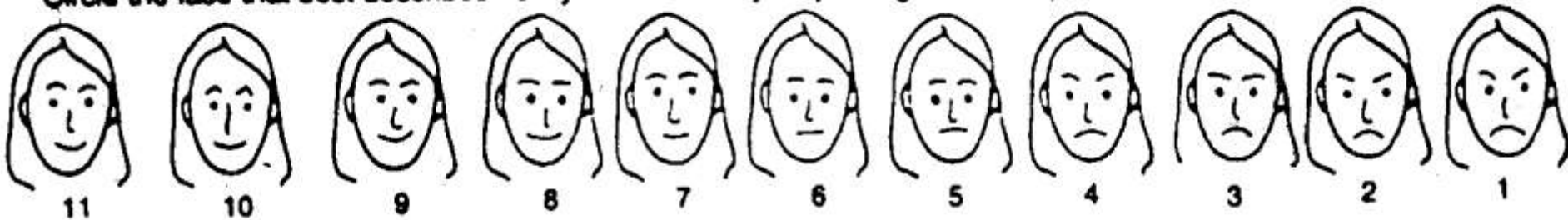
Put a check under the face that expresses how you feel about your job in general, including the work, the pay, the supervision, the opportunities for promotion and the people you work with.



(Kunin, 1955)

The Female Version

Circle the face that best describes how you feel about your job in general.



(Dunham & Herman, 1975)

Measurement

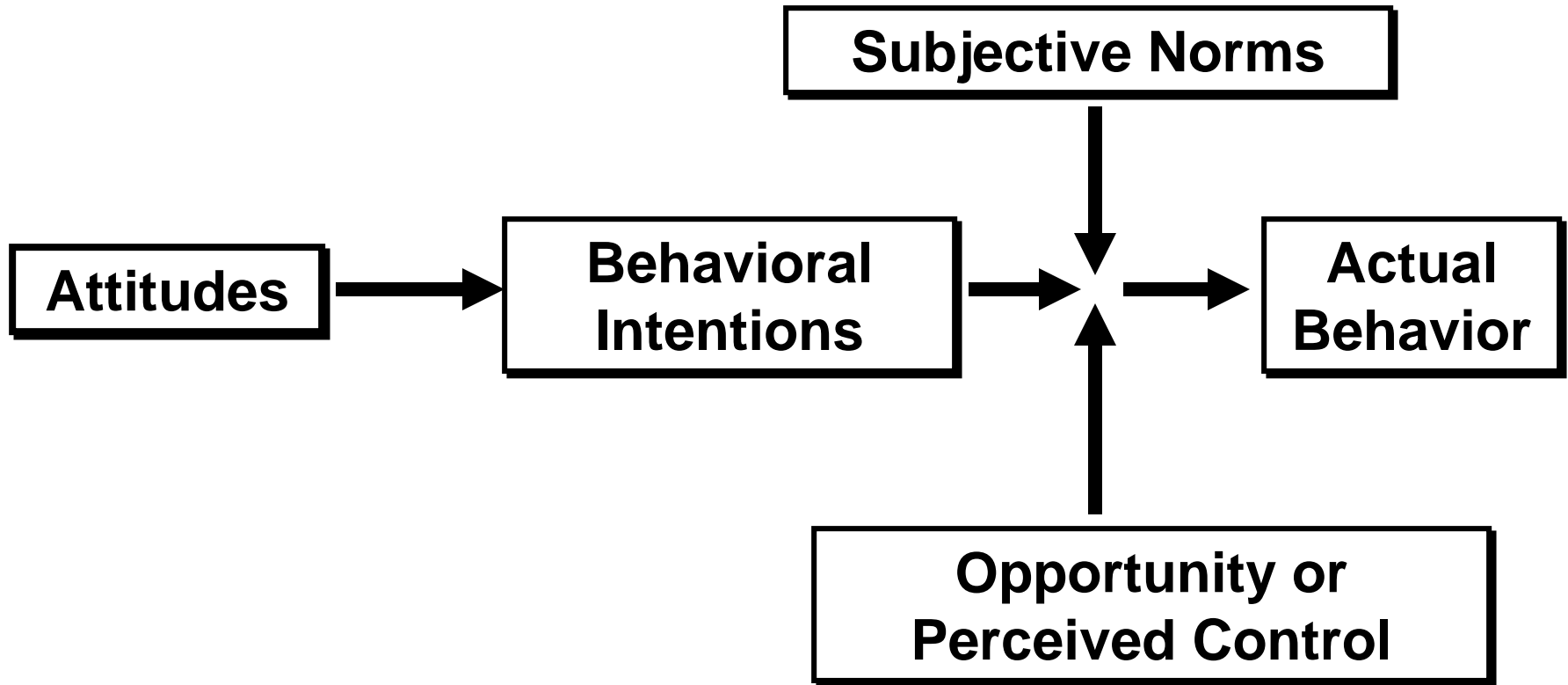
Other approaches include observation (inferences from ...) and facial electromyograph (Facial EMG)

All measures are subject to error and "faking"

Reasons for Low Associations

- **Situational norms**
- **Levels of specificity**
- **Opportunity (or lack of)**
- **Low base rate events (e.g., turnover)**

Ajzen & Fishbein Model (1977)



The “Sears Snow Storm Study”

Correlations between job satisfaction levels and attendance levels on individual days for the Chicago and New York groups

Scale	Chicago*
Supervision54
Amount of work36
Kind of work37
Financial rewards46
Career future60
Company identification42

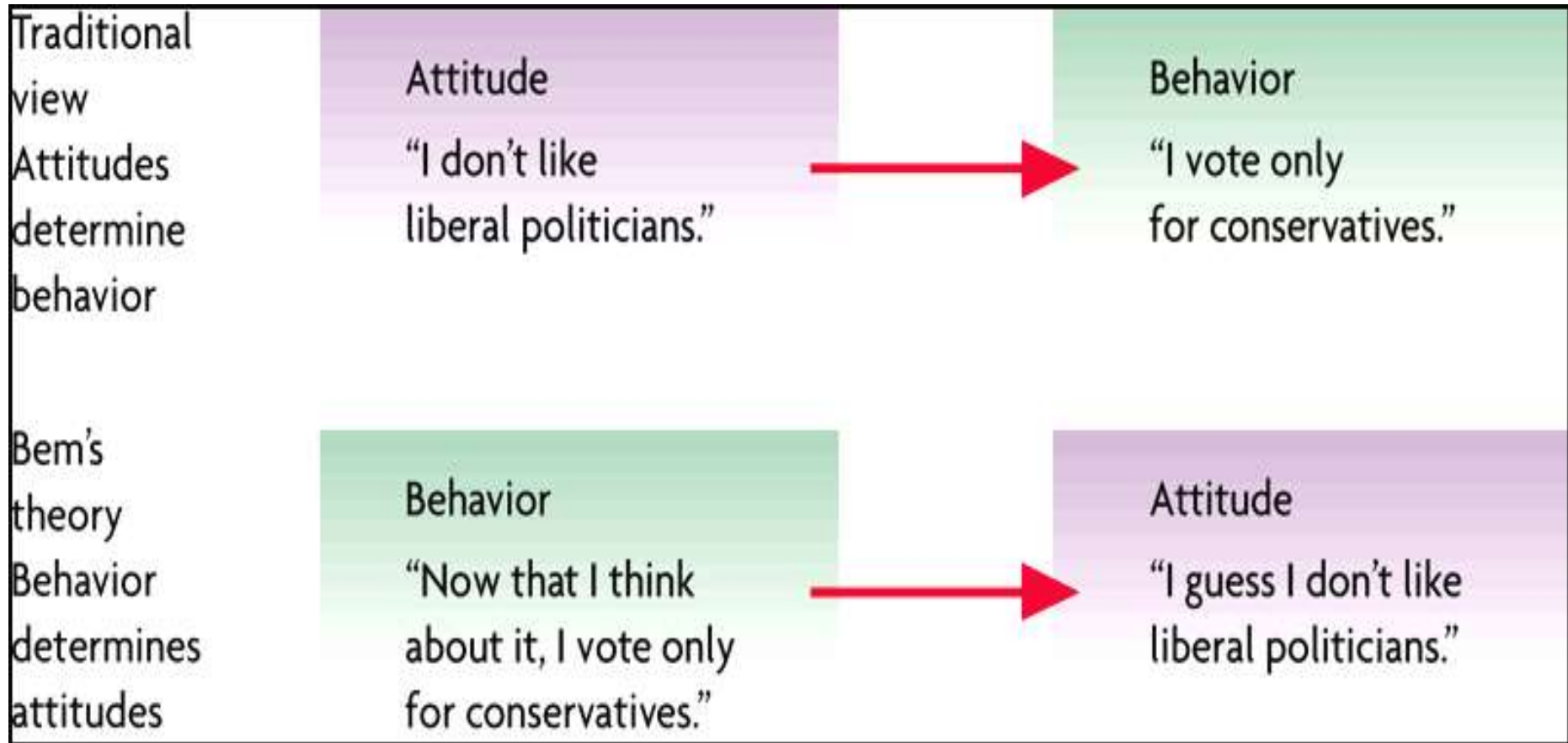
*Group following storm.

†Group following no storm.

SOURCE: F. J. Smith, “Work Attitudes as Predictors of Attendance on a Specific Day,” *Journal of Applied Psychology* 62 (1977), p. 18.

But what if we turn the assumed relation between attitudes and behavior around?

Bem's Self-Perception Theory



Bottom process is used as a way to change attitudes

Implicit Attitudes: Looking Beneath the Surface

- **Explicit attitudes** – Attitudes that one holds consciously and can readily describe
- **Implicit attitudes** – Covert attitudes that are expressed in subtle automatic responses over which one has little conscious control
- Many people express explicit attitudes that condemn prejudice but unknowingly harbor implicit attitudes that reflect subtle forms of prejudice.
- The Implicit Association Test (IAT) has shown that:
 - 80% of respondents show negative implicit attitudes about the elderly.
 - 75% of white respondents exhibit implicit prejudice against blacks.
 - Implicit prejudice against gays, the disabled, and the obese are common.

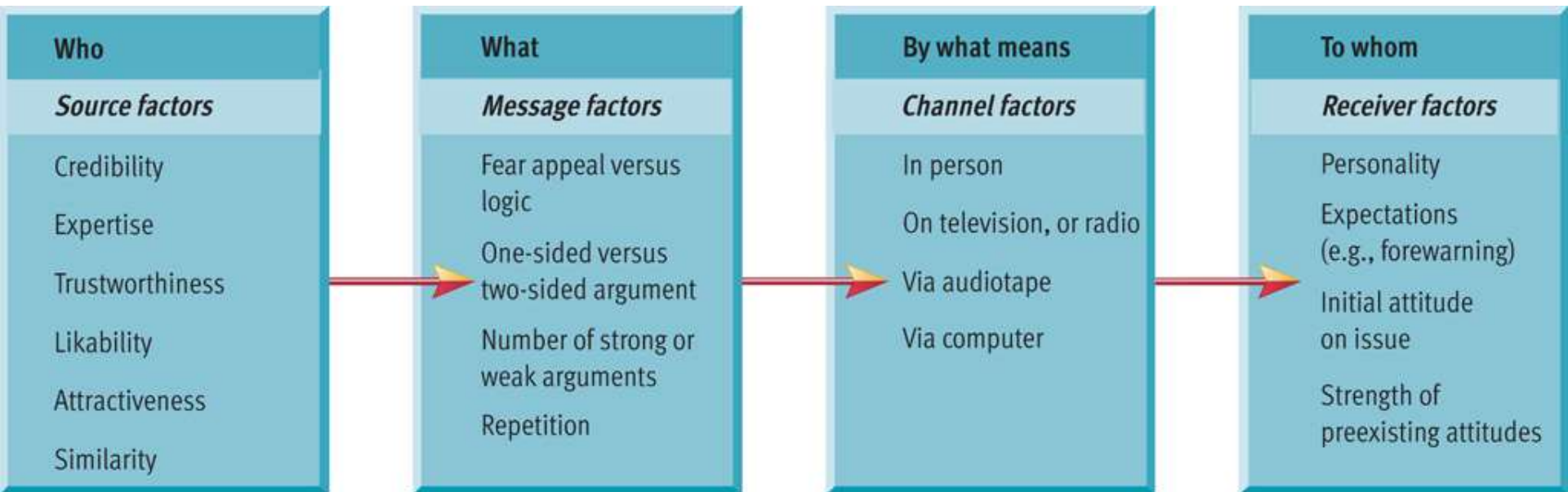
(Cengage, 2019)

Attitude Change

Persuasion:

- Deliberate attempt to change attitudes or beliefs with information and arguments

Persuasion



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Political Persuasion Examples

Daisies (Johnson campaign, 1964)

Context: Barry Goldwater, the Republican nominee, was (rightly or wrongly) reported to have said that the US should "...bomb Vietnam back to the Stone Age." This was part of the Johnson campaign's response. It aired only once.

The Bear in the Woods (Reagan Campaign, 1984)

Context: Five years before the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the Democratic presidential candidate was Walter Mondale, who advocated for a unilateral nuclear freeze and reducing the Defense budget to pay for more social programs

Attitude Change: Information-based Process

Success of this approach also depends on:

- ✓ **Exposure to message**
- ✓ **Attention to message**
- ✓ **Comprehension of message**
- ✓ **Acceptance of new message => new attitude**
- ✓ **Retention of attitude**
- ✓ **Translation of attitude to behavior**

(Zimbardo & Leippe, 1991)

Attitude Change: Information-based Process

So when is a **fear-arousal** approach most likely to work?

- **If message actually induces fear**
- **Consequences of ignoring message are REAL unpleasant**
- **Consequences are perceived as likely to occur**
- **Consequences avoidable if “advice” taken**

Latitude of Acceptance and Attitude Change

Basic idea: There is a "zone" around an existing attitude; persuasion attempts that fall at least initially within the zone are more likely to be effective than those for an attitude outside the zone.

Almost like "shaping" an attitude

Person may be willing to "meet half way" so most desirable for persuasion attempt is attitude toward "edge" of current acceptance zone.

Conformity

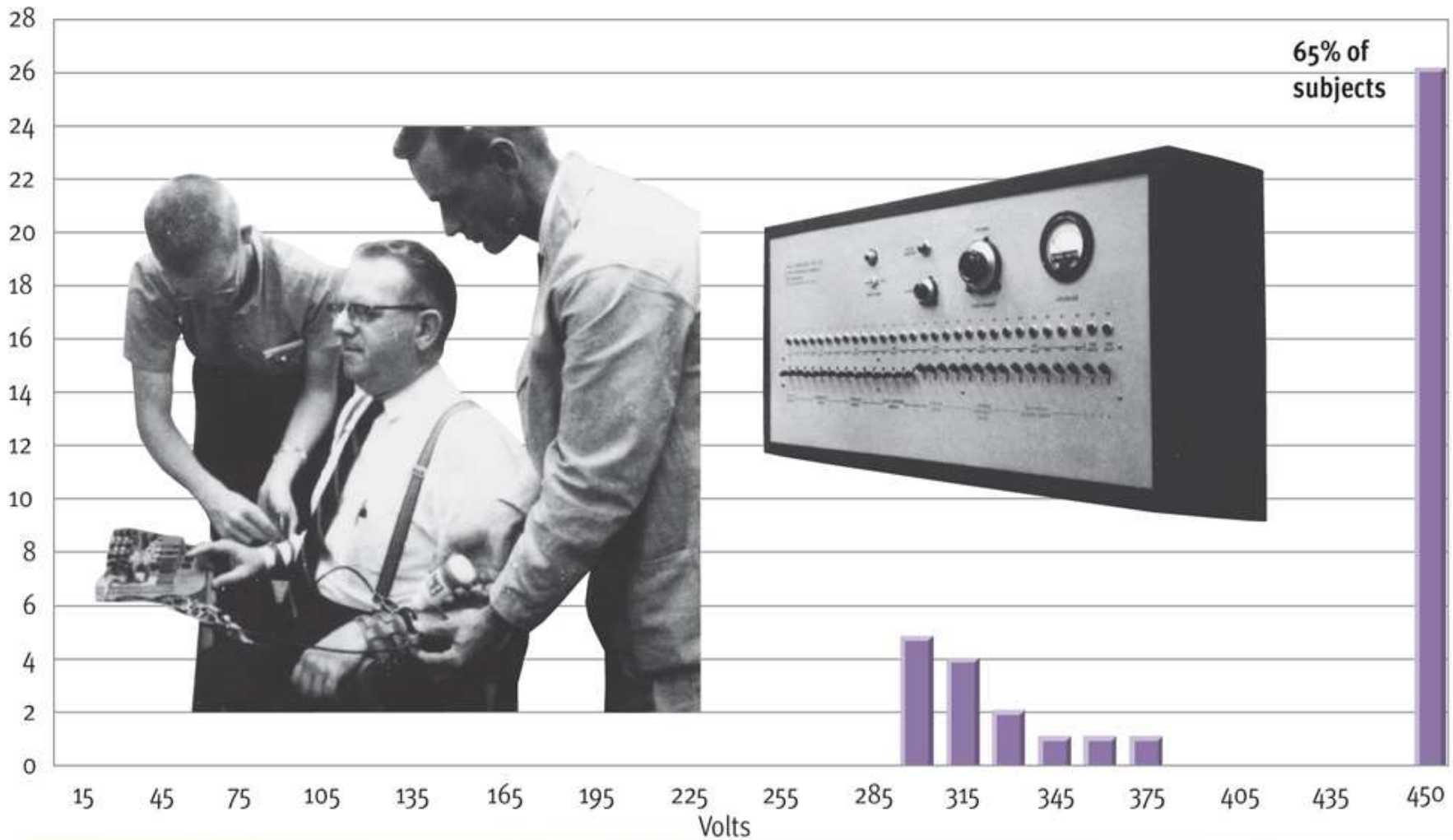
- **Conformity** – The tendency for people to yield to real or imagined social pressure
- Group size and group unanimity are key determinants of conformity.
- **Normative influence** – An effect that promotes conformity to social norms for fear of negative social consequences
- **Informational influence** – An effect that often contributes to conformity in which people look to others for guidance about how to behave in ambiguous situations

Obedience - Milgram

- Conformity/obedience to demands of an authority figure
- Would you shock a man with a “known heart condition” who is screaming and asking to be released?
- “Learner” with “heart condition” was an accomplice; “teacher” was volunteer who was (falsely) told goal was to teach the learner word pairs. No real shocks were used...

(Adapted from Wadsworth/Cengage Learning, 2011)

Number of subjects who stopped giving shock



Slight
shock

Moderate
shock

Strong
shock

Very strong
shock

Intense
shock

Extreme
intensity
shock

Danger:
severe
shock

XXX

Level of shock (as labeled on Milgram's shock machine)

Obedience – Milgram

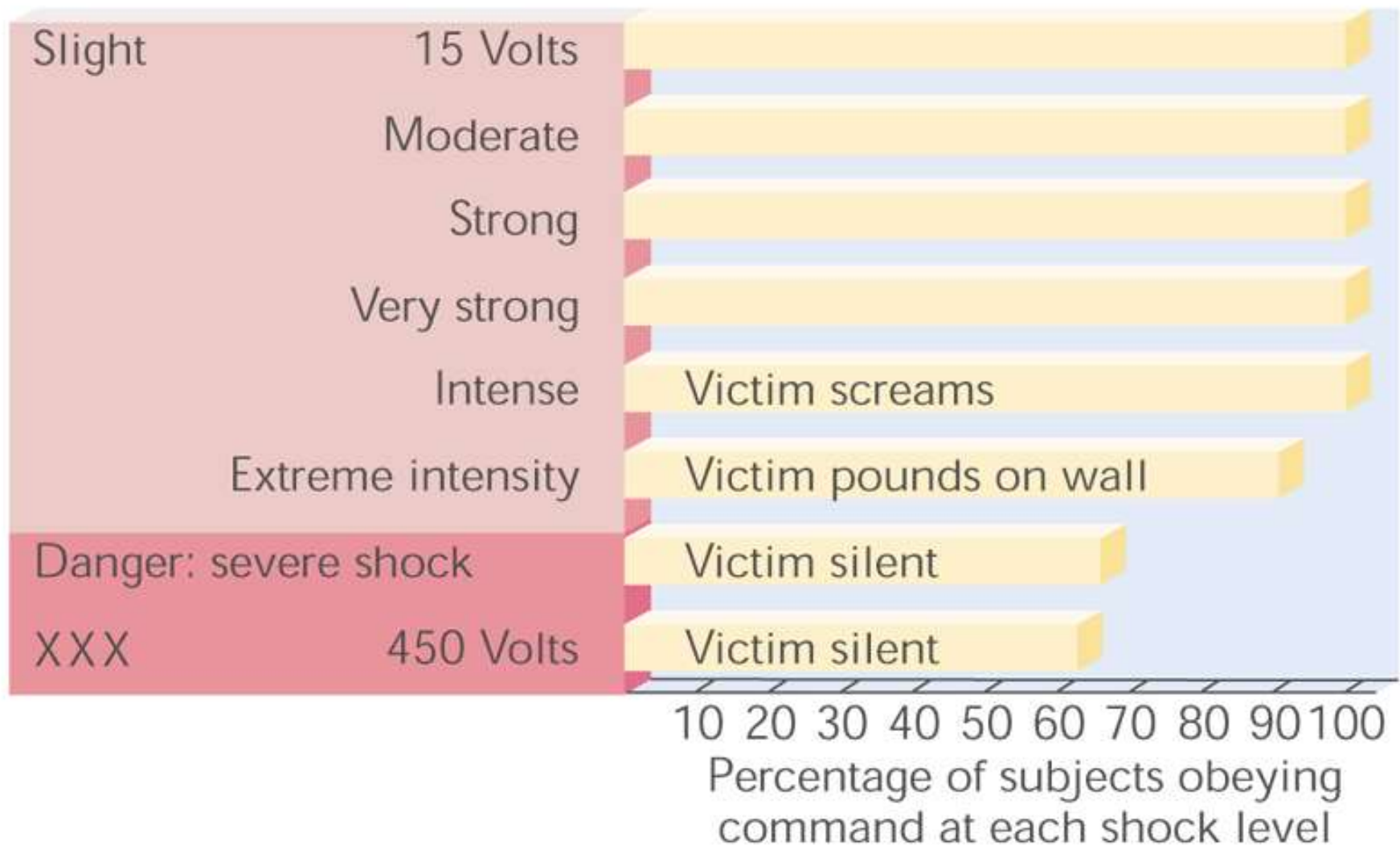
- 65% obeyed by going all the way to 450 volts on the “shock machine” even though the learner eventually could not answer any more questions
- The learner screamed and provided no further answers once 300 volts (“Severe Shock”) was reached

[Original Footage](#)

In 2009, BBC replicated the results using British participants

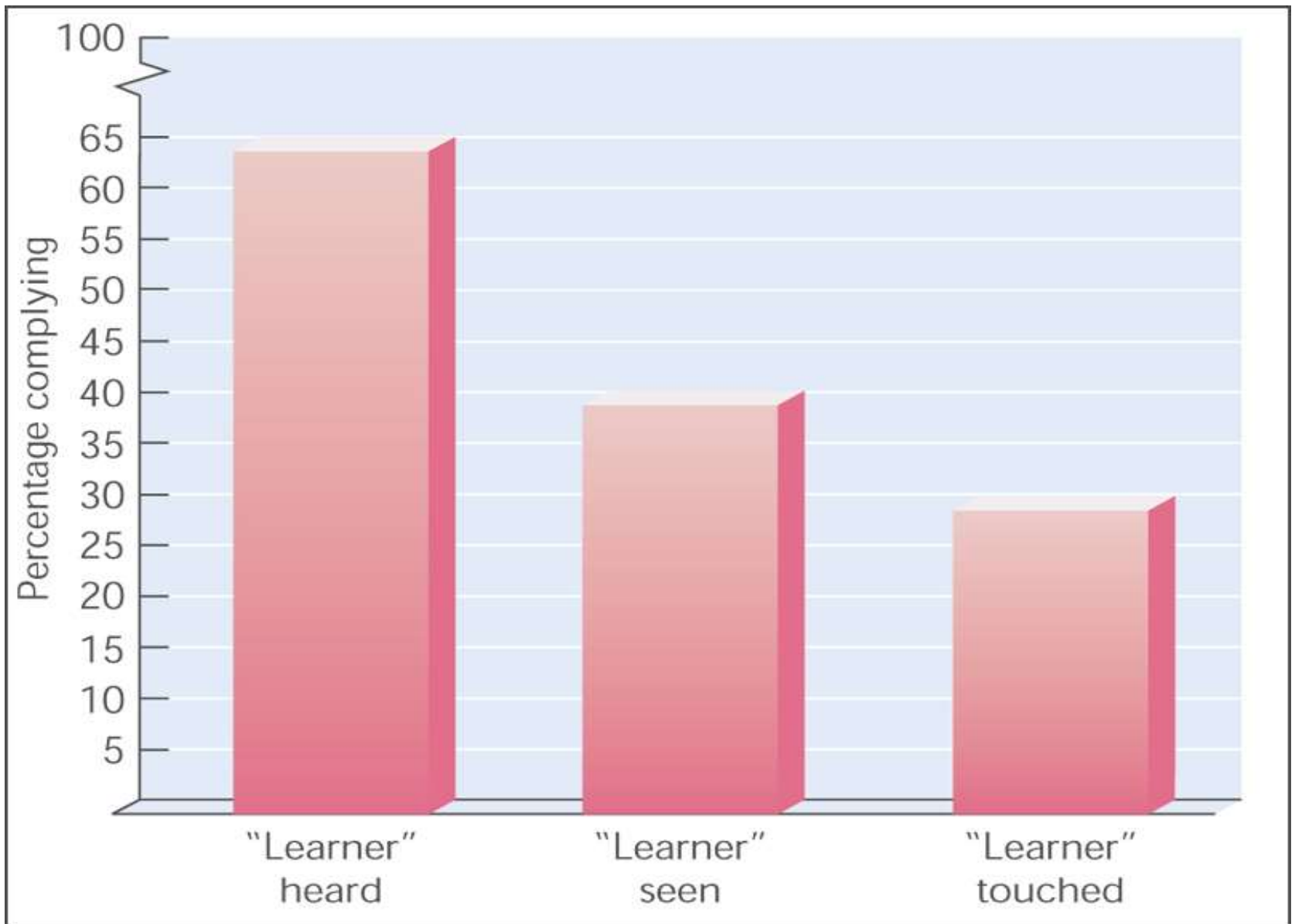
(Adapted from Wadsworth/Cengage Learning, 2011)

Shock level



Results of Milgram's obedience experiment. Only a minority of subjects refused to provide shocks, even at the most extreme intensities. The first substantial drop in obedience occurred at the 300-volt level (Milgram, 1963).

(adapted from Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2001)



Physical distance from "learner" had significant effect on percentage of participants obeying orders.

(adapted from Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2001)

Cultural Variations in Conformity and Obedience

- Conformity and obedience are not unique to American culture.
 - Replications of Milgram's obedience study have reported similar or higher obedience rates in other industrialized nations.
 - Replications of the Asch experiment have found somewhat higher levels of conformity in collectivistic cultures than in individualistic cultures.

Power of the Situation: The Stanford Prison Study

- Zimbardo and his colleagues investigated why prisons tend to become abusive, degrading, violent environments.
- College students became “guards” and “prisoners.”
 - The participants quickly became confrontational.
 - The guards devised cruel strategies to maintain total control over their prisoners.
 - Most of the prisoners became listless, apathetic, and demoralized.
- Participants’ behavior was attributed to:
 - The enormous influence of social roles
 - **Social roles** – Widely shared expectations about how people in certain positions are supposed to behave
 - The compelling power of situational factors

The Power of Roles – [The Zimbardo Prison Study](#)

Read more about the study [here](#).

Zimbardo was later invited to testify in front of a Congressional committee investigating the Abu Ghraib prison scandal during the Iraq II war.