LECTURE #3
# Perception, Attribution and workplace behavior
(PSYC-6223)

What is Perception?

- A process by which individuals organize and interpret their sensory impressions in order to give meaning to their environment.

- People's behavior is based on their perception of what reality is, not on reality itself.

- The world as it is perceived is the world that is behaviorally important.
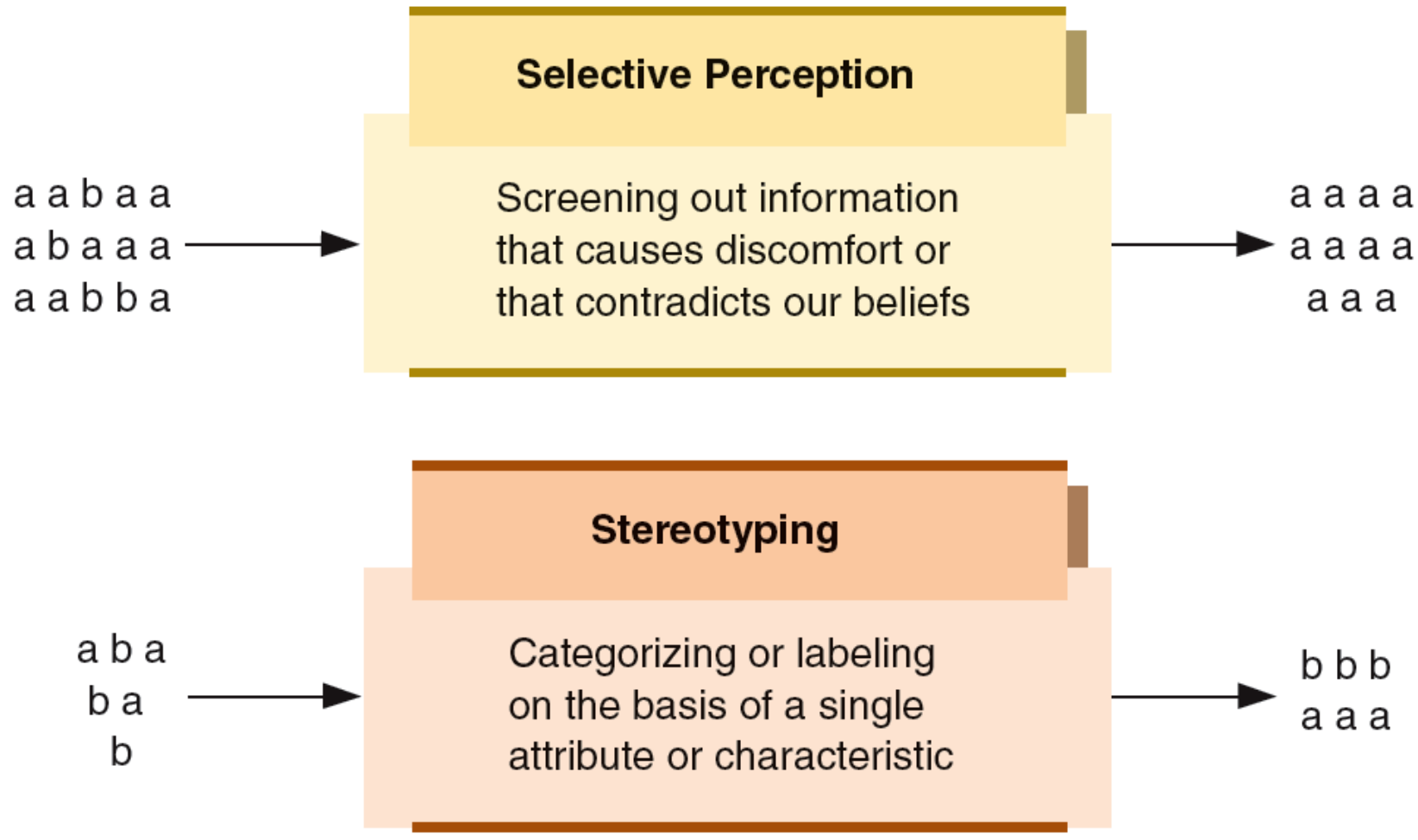
Factors that Influence Perception
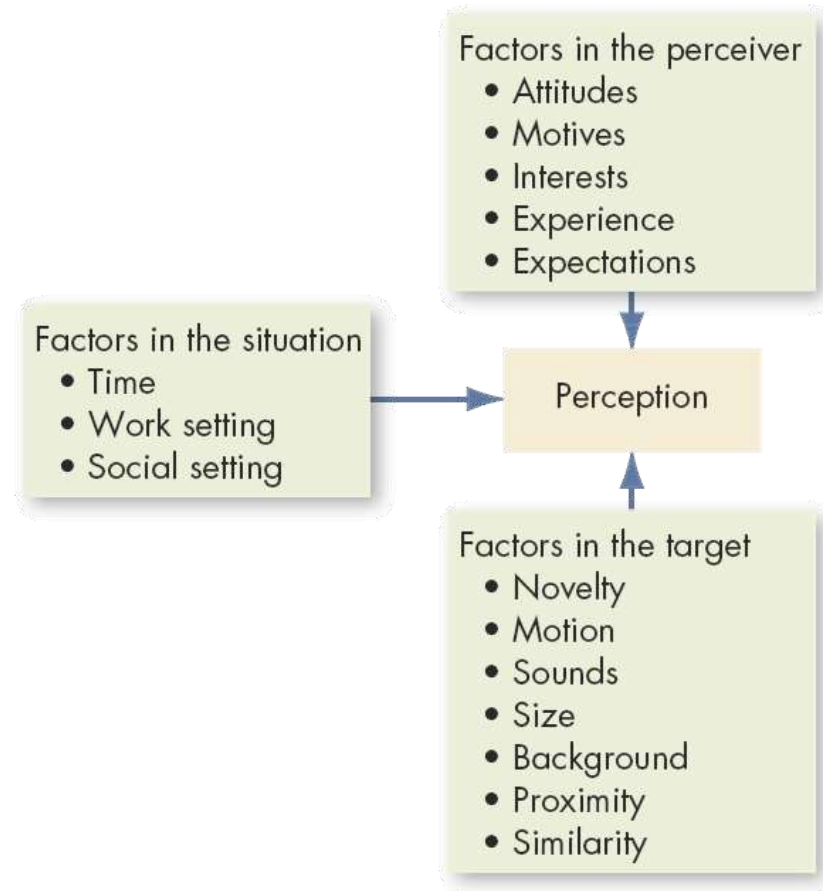
Perception in Organizations

- Perception
  - The set of processes by which an individual becomes aware of and interprets information about the environment
    - Selective perception
    - Stereotyping
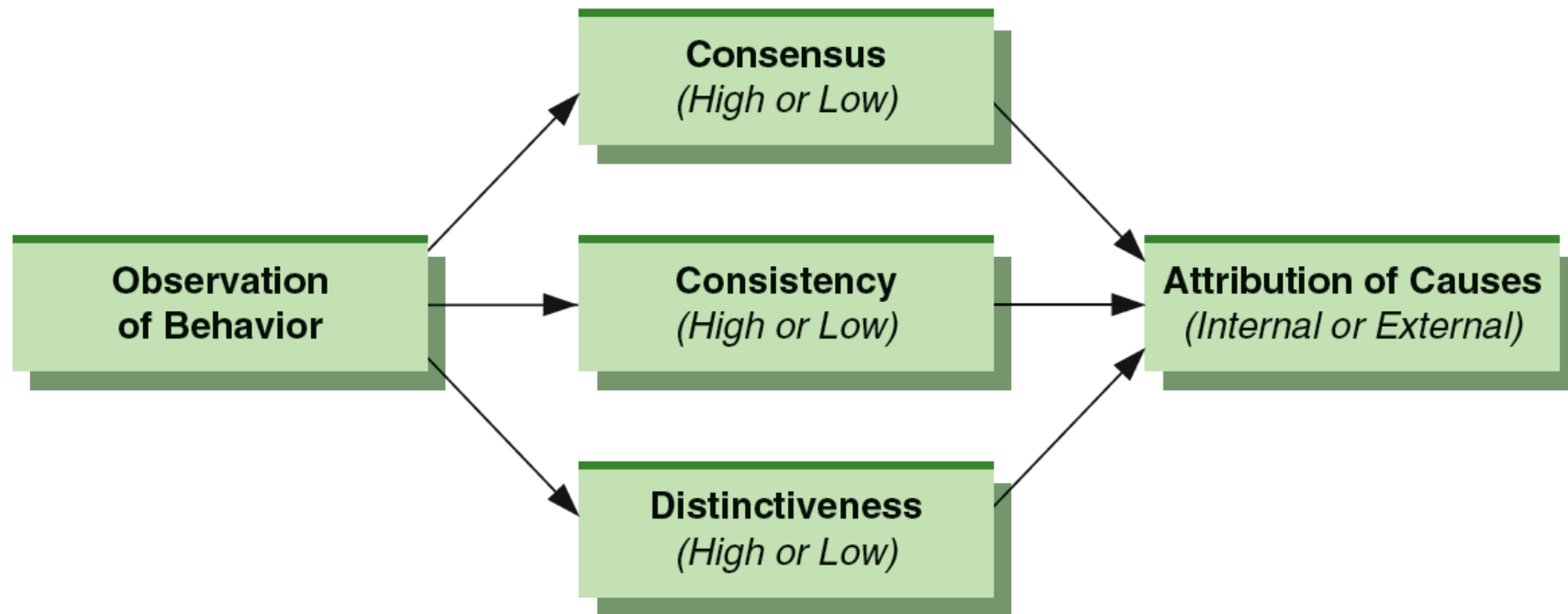- Attribution Theory
  - We attribute causes to behavior based on our observations of certain characteristics of that behavior
    - Consensus
    - Consistency
    - Distinctiveness

Figure   *3.3*   Basic Perceptual Processes

a a b a a
a b a a a
a a b b a

Selective Perception

Screening out information
that causes discomfort or
that contradicts our beliefs

a a a a
a a a a
a a a

a b a
b a
b

Stereotyping

Categorizing or labeling
on the basis of a single
attribute or characteristic

b b b
a a a

3–5

Figure *3.4* The Attribution Process

Attribution Theory: Judging Others

▶ Our perception and judgment of others is significantly influenced by our assumptions of the other person's internal state.

   ▶ When individuals observe behavior, they attempt to determine whether it is internally or externally caused.

      ▶ Internal causes are under that person's control

      ▶ External causes are not under the person's control

▶ Causation judged through:

   ▶ Distinctiveness

      ▶ Shows different behaviors in different situations

   ▶ Consensus

      ▶ Response is the same as others to same situation

   ▶ Consistency

      ▶ Responds in the same way over time

Elements of Attribution Theory
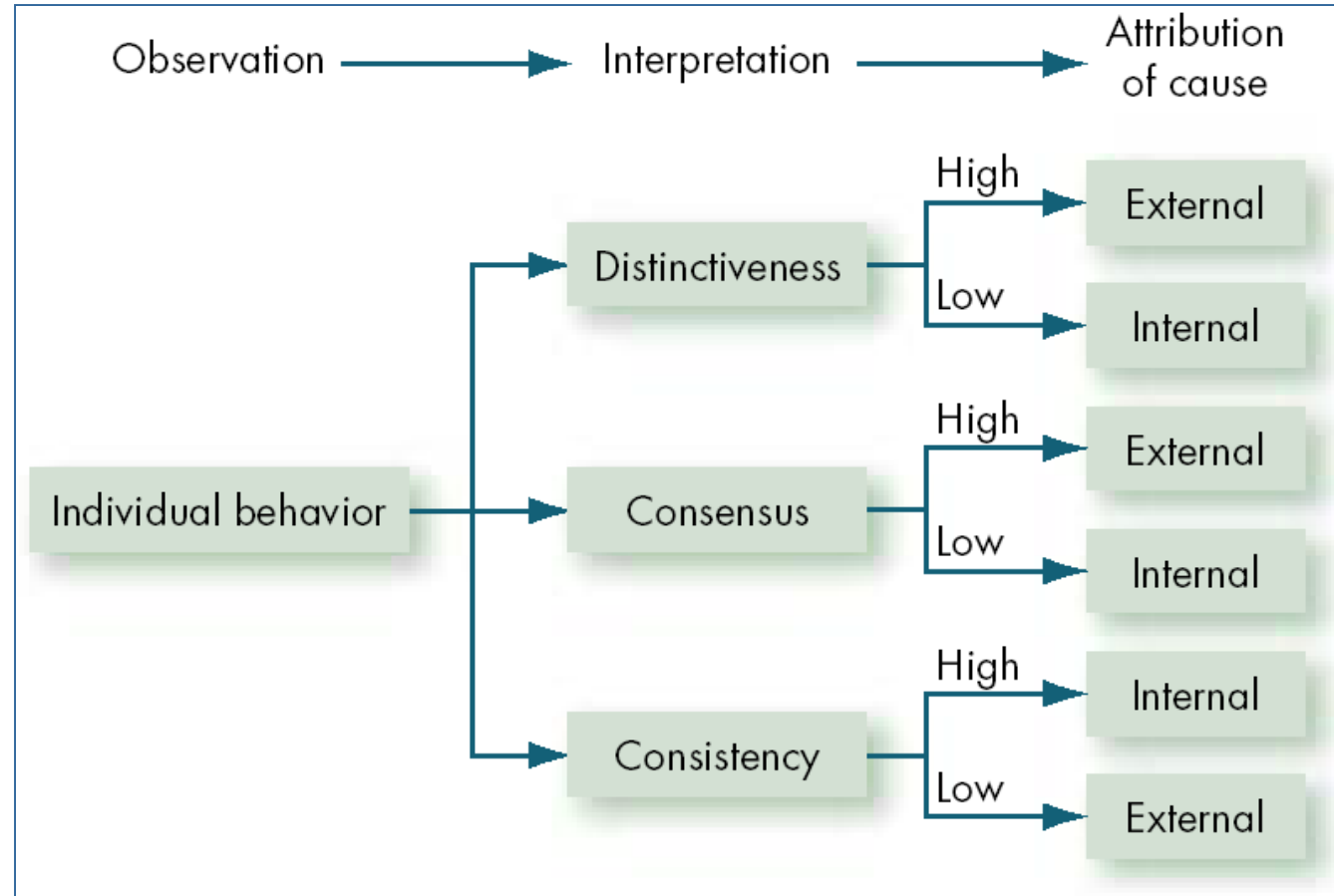
Errors and Biases in Attributions

▶ Fundamental Attribution Error

   ▶ The tendency to underestimate the influence of external factors and overestimate the influence of internal factors when making judgments about the behavior of others

   ▶ *We blame people first, not the situation*

▶ Self-Serving Bias

   ▶ The tendency for individuals to attribute their own successes to internal factors while putting the blame for failures on external factors

   ▶ *It is "our" success but "their" failure*

Frequently Used Shortcuts in Judging Others

- Selective Perception
  - People selectively interpret what they see on the basis of their interests, background, experience, and attitudes
- Halo Effect
  - Drawing a general impression about an individual on the basis of a single characteristic
- Contrast Effects
  - Evaluation of a person's characteristics that are affected by comparisons with other people recently encountered who rank higher or lower on the same characteristics
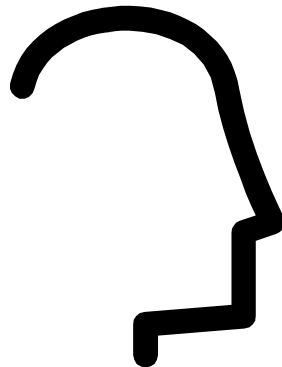
Another Shortcut: Stereotyping

Judging someone on the basis of one's perception of the group to which that person belongs – a prevalent and often useful, if not always accurate, generalization

▶ Profiling

  ▶ A form of stereotyping in which members of a group are singled out for intense scrutiny based on a single, often racial, trait.

Specific Shortcut Applications in Organizations

- Employment Interview
  - Perceptual biases of raters affect the accuracy of interviewers' judgments of applicants
  - Formed in a single glance – 1/10 of a second!
- Performance Expectations
  - Self-fulfilling prophecy (*Pygmalion effect*): The lower or higher performance of employees reflects preconceived leader expectations about employee capabilities

Perceptions and Individual Decision Making

▶ Problem

    ▶ A perceived discrepancy between the current state of affairs and a desired state

▶ Decisions

    ▶ Choices made from among alternatives developed from data

▶ Perception Linkage:

    ▶ All elements of problem identification and the decision-making process are influenced by perception.

        ▶ Problems must be recognized

        ▶ Data must be selected and evaluated

Types of Workplace Behavior

▶ Workplace Behavior

    ▶ A pattern of action by the members of an organization that directly or indirectly influences organizational effectiveness

▶ Performance Behaviors

    ▶ All of the total set of work-related behaviors that the organization expects the individual to display

    ▶ Dysfunctional behavior---are those that detract from organizational performance.

    ▶ Turnover.. Quit for a job

    ▶ Absentesim.. Not show up for a job

Types of Workplace Behavior (cont'd)

- ▶ Dysfunctional Behaviors
  - ▶ Behaviors that detract from organizational performance
    - ▶ Absenteeism: when an individual does not show up for work
    - ▶ Turnover: when people quit their jobs
- ▶ Organizational Citizenship
  - ▶ The extent to which a person's behavior makes a positive overall contribution to the organization

Thanks