

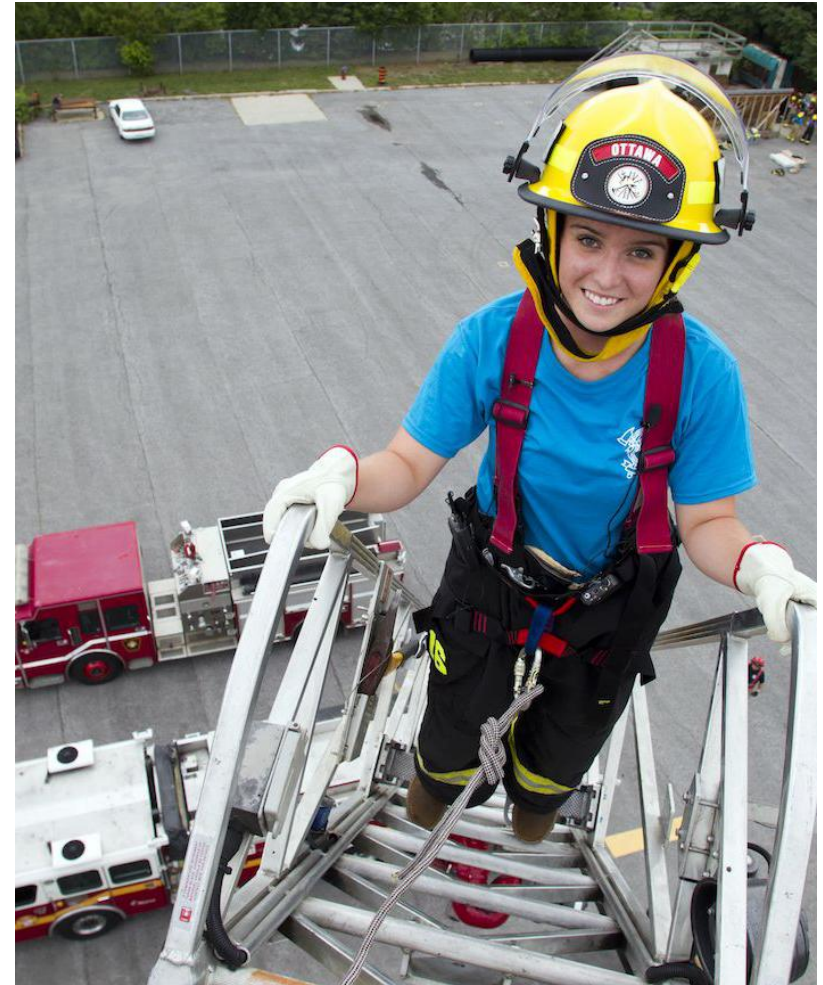



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Perceiving Ourselves and Others in Organizations

Changing Self and Other Perceptions of Female Firefighters

Emily MacDonald attended Camp FFit in Ottawa, Canada, a program that helps teenage girls develop a self-concept as firefighters, develop their self-esteem, and dispel the occupation's macho stereotype.





limbing 70-foot-tall fire truck ladders isn't everyone's idea of a good time, but Emily MacDonald wants to climb them more often. The 17-year-old's father and both grandfathers were firefighters, and she wants to join in that career tradition. "I want to be the first female firefighter in the family," says MacDonald. MacDonald participated in Camp FFit, a week-long program in Ottawa, Canada, where two dozen teenage girls scaled fire truck ladders, hooked up fire hoses, carried 70-pound packs, forced entry into buildings, and learned other firefighting skills.

Camp FFit and similar programs around North America are aimed at helping young women develop their self-concept as firefighters. "We're still battling with the traditional interpretation of what a firefighter is, what that visual image is," explains Cheryl Horvath, Division Chief at the Northwest Fire District in Tucson, Arizona. Horvath co-founded Camp Fury, a program similar to Camp FFit. "We want young girls to see that this is something they can grow up to become," she says.

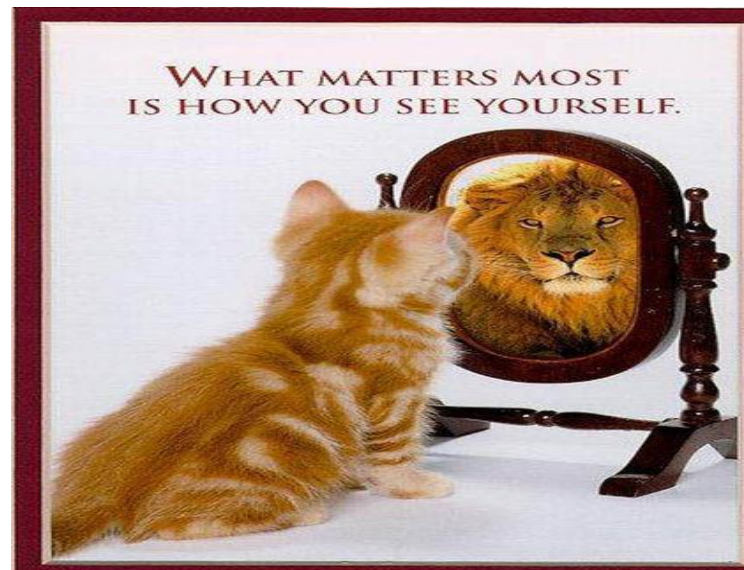
These programs also help young women strengthen their self-esteem and self-efficacy, no matter what job they choose. "We want all of the girls to walk away with a sense that they can do anything they put their minds to, regardless of what the job is," says Horvath. Alexandra Gaudes, who attended Ottawa's Camp FFit a few years ago, recalls how a male retorted, "but you are a girl," after she expressed her desire to be a firefighter. "I just smiled and asked which century he was from," says Gaudes. "Standing up for myself to him was when I knew that this camp had really changed me."

Unfortunately, many female firefighters still experience bias and discrimination on the job. Consider this recent example: A fire captain in Calgary, Canada, was temporarily assigned to another fire station, which employed three of the city's 30 female firefighters. (Calgary employs about 1,300 firefighters at 40 fire stations.) While riding in one of the trucks, the captain asked: "How did you guys get stuck with so many (expletives) at your hall?" He then repeated the obscenity against women when asked to clarify. Discovering that a female firefighter was on board, the captain awkwardly apologized: "I'm sorry, I didn't realize you were on the truck." Initially fired for the remark, the captain was reinstated with a brief demotion

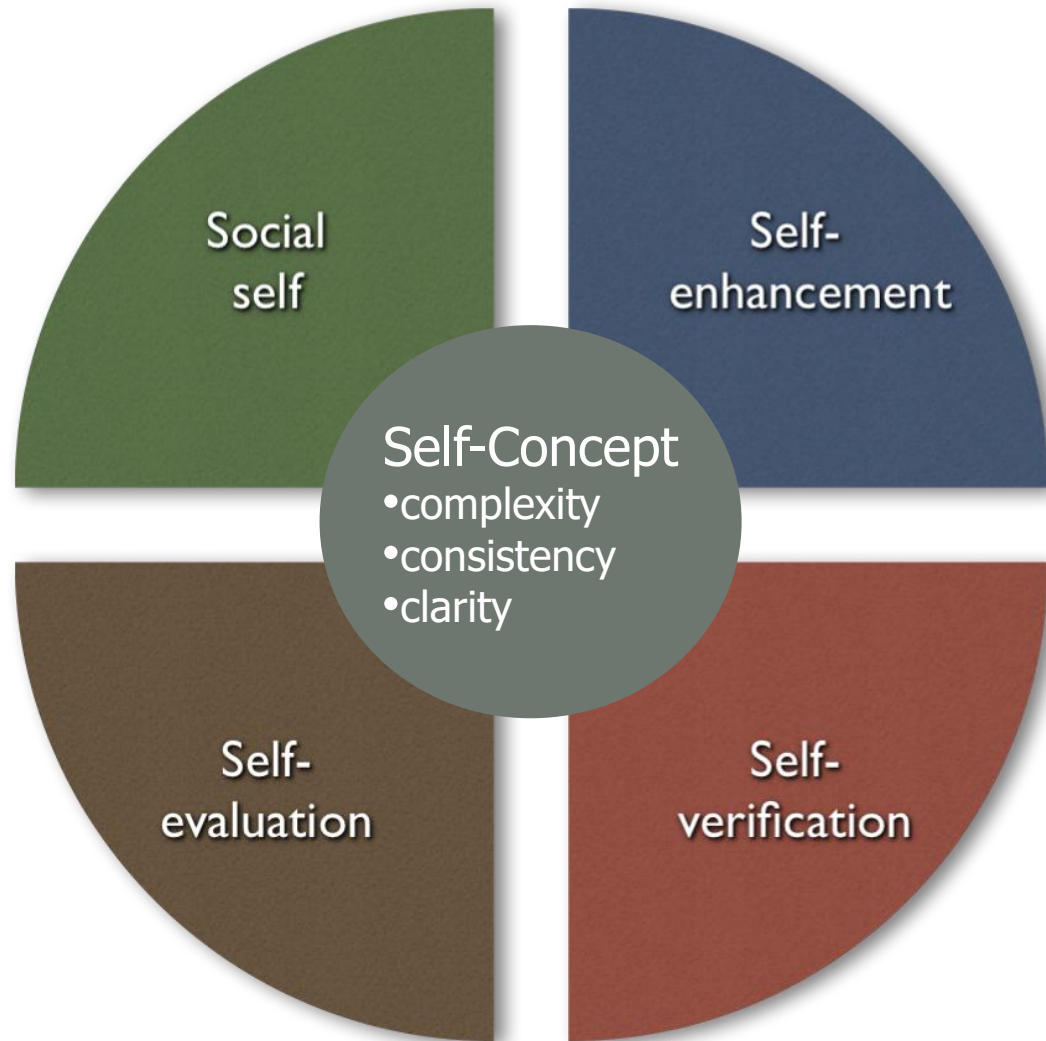
and suspension. However, all three female firefighters experienced such a backlash over the captain's discipline that one went on stress leave, another took unpaid leave, and the third requested permanent transfer to another type of work.

Self-Concept Defined

- An individual's self-beliefs and self-evaluations
 - “Who am I?” and “How do I feel about myself?”
- Compare perceived job with our perceived and ideal selves.
- Includes three self-concept characteristics and four “selves” processes



Self-Concept Model: Three C's and Four Selves



Self-Concept Characteristics (3 C's)



- Complexity
 - We perceive multiple self-views
 - High complexity: several identities with little overlap
- Consistency
 - Multiple selves require compatible personality, values
- Clarity
 - Self-concept is clear, confidently described, internally consistent, and stable across time.
- People have better well-being with:
 - multiple selves (complexity)
 - well established selves (clarity)
 - selves are similar and compatible with traits (consistency)

Four “Selves” of Self-Concept



- Self-enhancement
 - Promoting and protecting our positive self-view
- Self-verification
 - Affirming and maintaining our existing self-concept
- Self-evaluation
 - Evaluating ourselves through self-esteem, self-efficacy, and locus of control
- Social self
 - Defining ourselves by our group membership

Self-Concept: Self-Enhancement



- Drive to promote/protect a positive self-view
 - competent, attractive, lucky, ethical, valued
- Self-enhancement outcomes:
 - better personal adjustment and mental/physical health
 - Higher “can-do” attitude
 - Inflates perceived personal causation and chances of success

Self-Concept: Self-Verification



- Motivation to verify/maintain our self-concept
- Stabilizes our self-concept
- Prefer feedback consistent with self-concept
- Self-verification outcomes:
 - More likely to remember information consistent with our self-concept
 - Less likely to accept feedback that differs from our self-concept
 - Motivated to be with those who affirm/reflect our self-concept

Self-Concept: Self-Evaluation



- Self-esteem

- High self-esteem: less influenced by others, more persistent, more logical thinking

- Self-efficacy

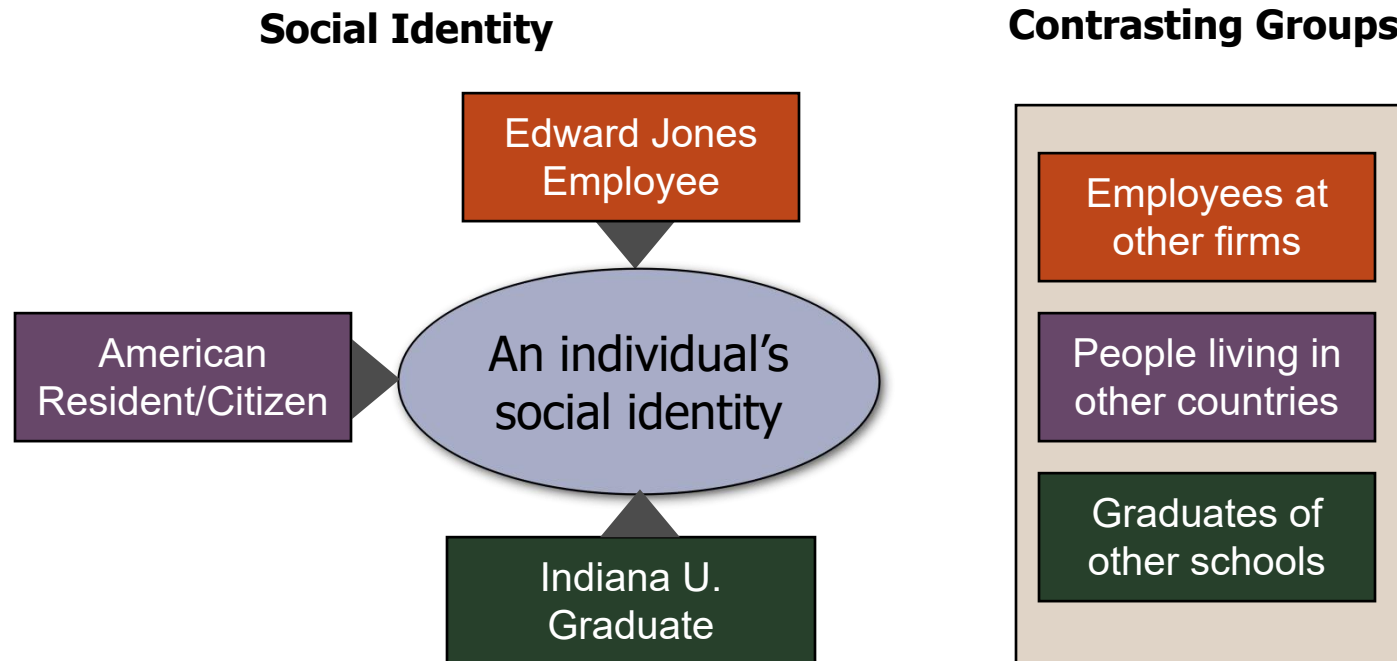
- Belief that we can successfully perform a task
 - Perceived support from MARS model elements
- General self-efficacy – “can-do” belief across situations

- Locus of control

- General belief about personal control over life events
- Higher self-evaluation with internal locus of control

Self-Concept: Social Self

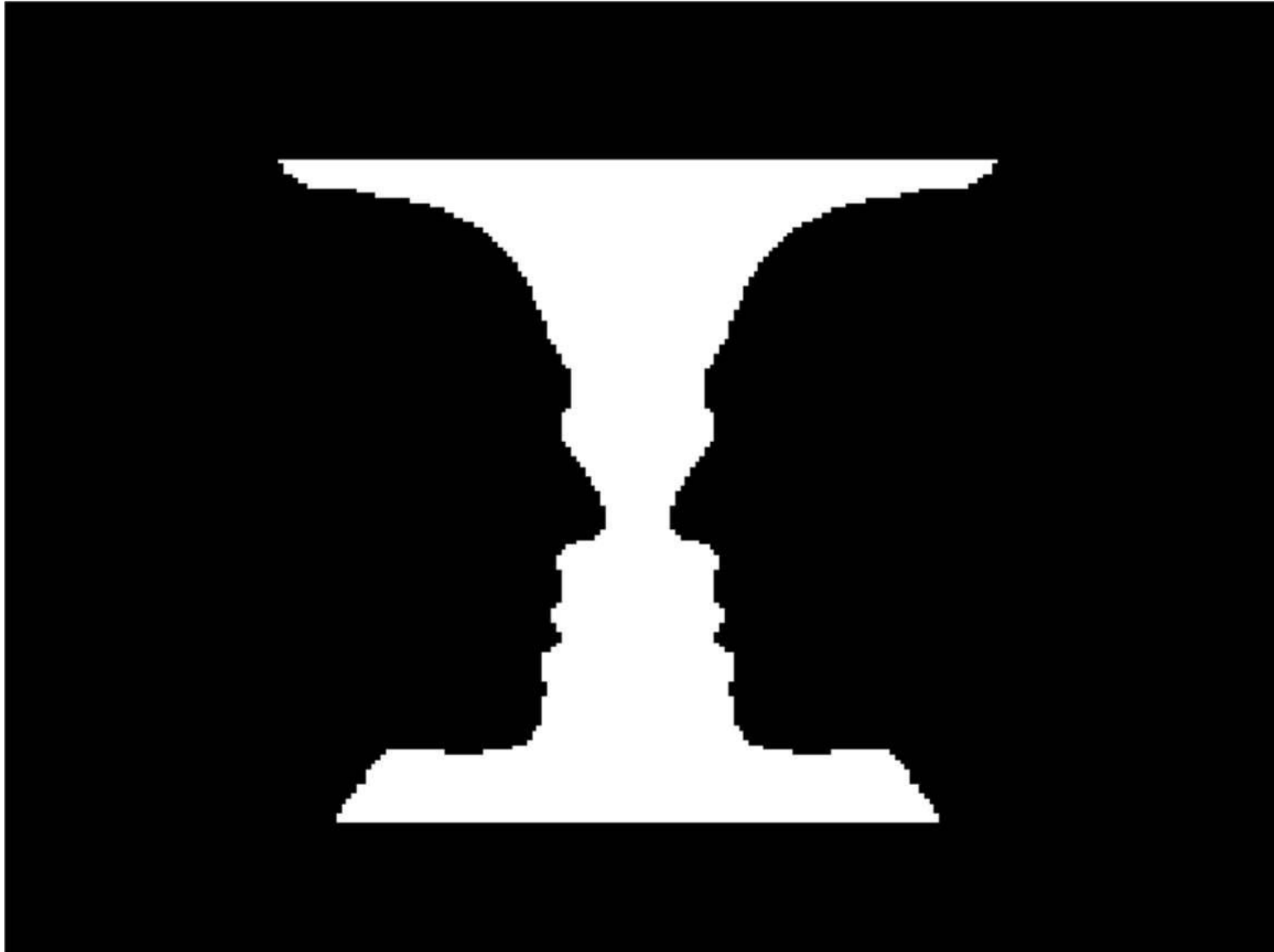
- Social identity -- defining ourselves in terms of groups to which we belong or have an emotional attachment
- Groups selected when easily identified, your membership is the exception, the group has high status



Examples of Perception



Examples of Perception



Examples of Perception



Perception Defined



- The process of receiving information about and making sense of the world around us
 - Determining which information gets noticed
 - Determining how to categorize this information
 - Determining how to interpret information within our existing knowledge

Selective Attention



- Selecting vs ignoring sensory information
- Affected by features of person/object – size, motion
- Affected by the perceiver's characteristics – assumptions, expectations, needs
 - Emotional markers are assigned to selected information
- Confirmation bias
 - Screening out information contrary to our beliefs/values

Perceptual Organization/Interpretation



- Categorical thinking
 - Mostly nonconscious process of organizing people/things (perceptual grouping)
- Perceptual grouping principles
 - Similarity or proximity
 - Closure -- filling in missing pieces
 - Perceiving trends
- Interpreting incoming information
 - Emotional markers automatically evaluate information

Mental Models in Perceptions



- Internal representations of the external world
- Help make sense of situations
 - Fill in missing pieces
 - Help to predict events
- Problem with mental models:
 - May block recognition of new opportunities/perspectives

Stereotyping

- Assigning traits to people based on social category membership
- Why people stereotype:
 - Categorical thinking
 - Innate drive to comprehend and predict others' behavior
 - Supports self-enhancement and social identity



Stereotyping Through Categorization, Homogenization, Differentiation



Social identity and self-enhancement reinforce stereotyping through:

- Categorization process -- Categorize people into groups
- Homogenization process -- Assign similar traits within a group; different traits to other groups
- Differentiation process -- Assign less favorable attributes to other groups

Problems with Stereotyping



- Problems with stereotyping
 - Overgeneralizes – doesn't represent everyone in the category
 - Basis of systemic and intentional discrimination
- Overcoming stereotype biases
 - Difficult to prevent stereotype activation
 - Possible to minimize stereotype application

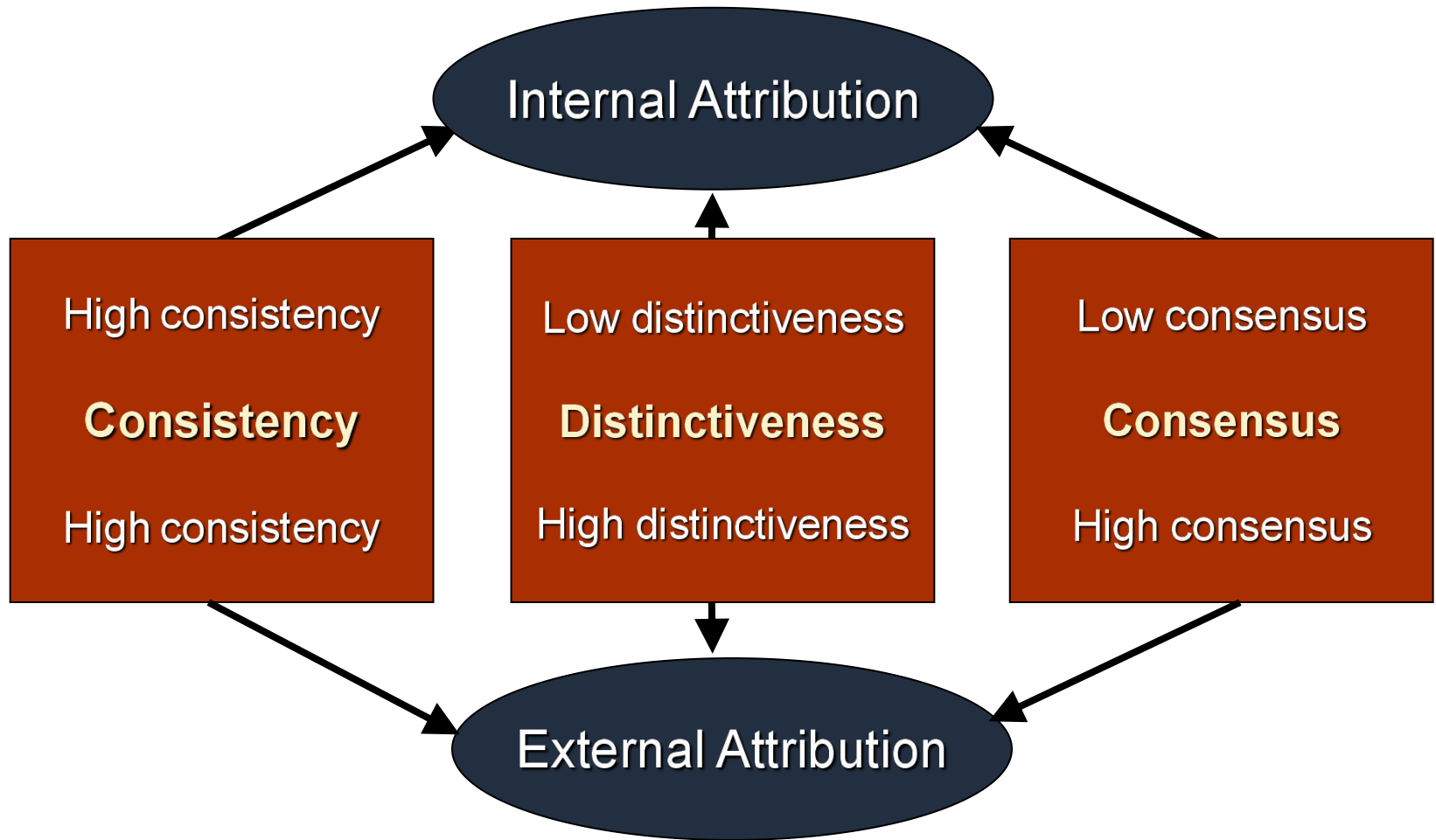
Attribution Process



Perception that behavior is caused by person's own motivation or ability

Perception that behavior is caused by factors beyond person's control (situation, fate, etc.)

Attribution Rules

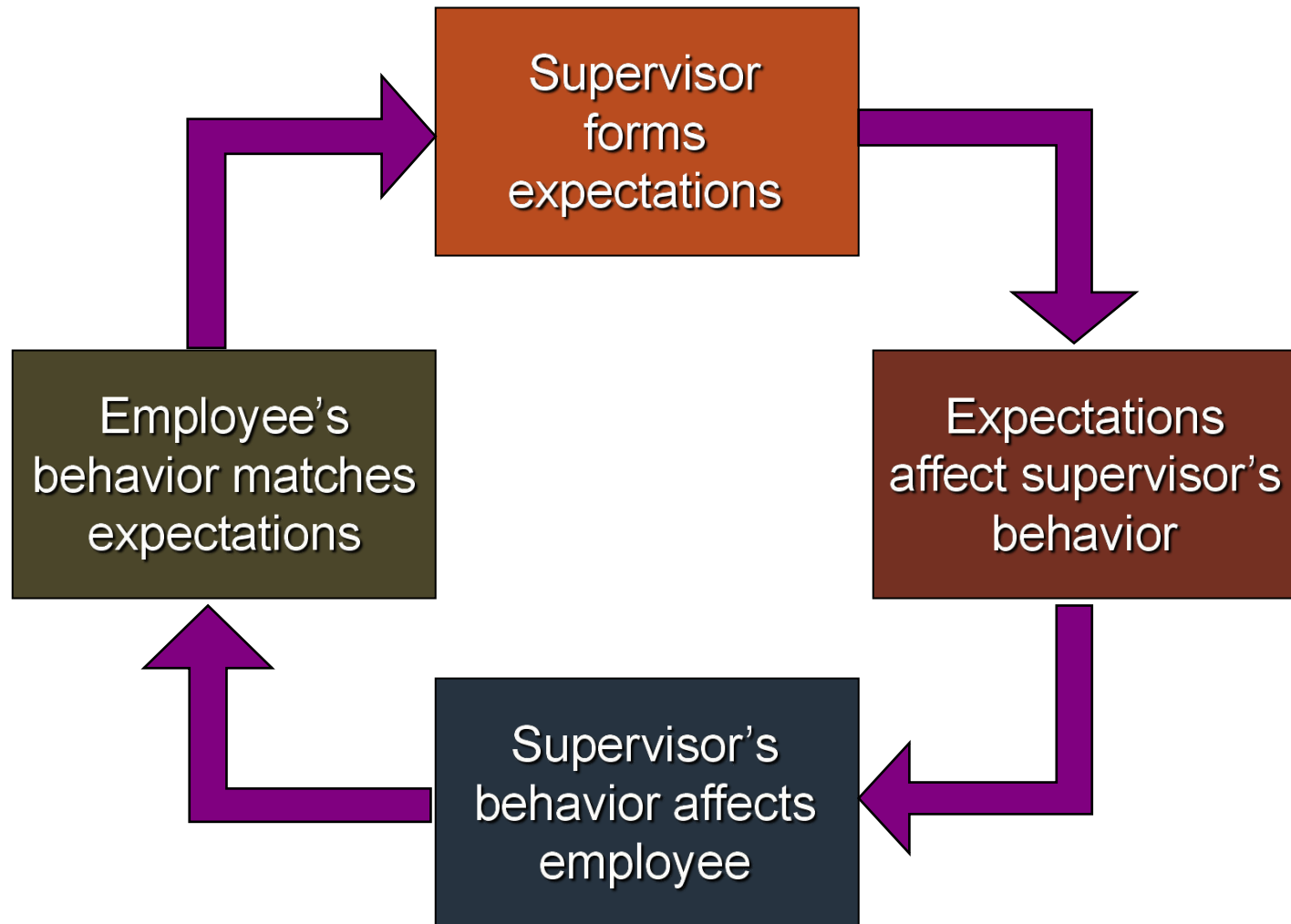


Attribution Errors



- Self-Serving Bias
 - Tendency to attribute our successes to internal factors and our failures to external factors
- Fundamental Attribution Error
 - Tendency to overemphasize internal causes of another person's behavior, whereas we recognize external influences on our own behavior
 - This error is less common than previously thought

Self-Fulfilling Prophecy Cycle



Self-Fulfilling Prophecy Effect is Strongest...



- ...at the beginning of the relationship (e.g. employee joins the team)
- ...when several people have similar expectations about the person
- ...when the employee has low rather than high past achievement

Other Perceptual Effects



- Halo effect
 - One trait affects perception of person's other traits
- False-consensus effect
 - Overestimate how many others have similar beliefs or traits like ours
 - Three causes
- Primacy effect
 - First impressions are difficult to change
- Recency effect
 - Most recent information dominates perceptions

Improving Perceptions



1. Awareness of perceptual biases
2. Improving self-awareness
 - Applying Johari Window
3. Meaningful interaction
 - Based on contact hypothesis
 - Close, frequent interaction toward a shared goal
 - Engaged in a meaningful task
 - Equal status

Know Yourself (Johari Window)

