

APPLYING SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

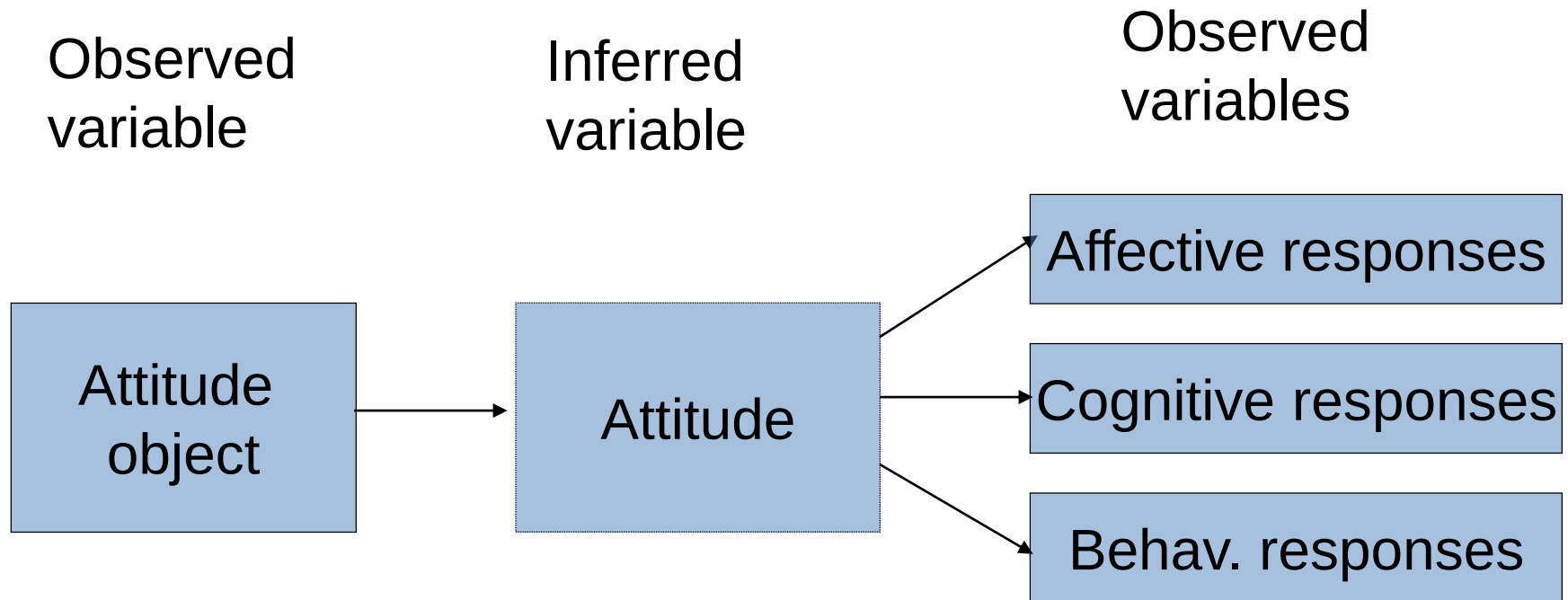
Attitudes and Attitude Change

Dr. Paul Hutchings

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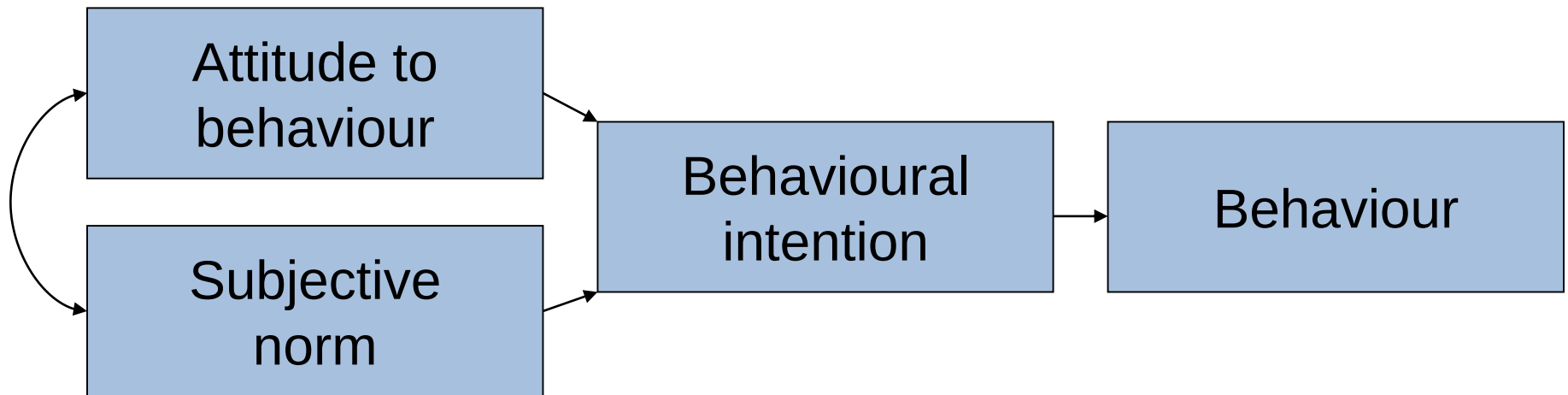
- Initial theories = attitude as a simple positive or negative evaluation of an object (e.g., Katz, 1960)
- More modern theories = attitudes contain both positivity and negativity (e.g., Cacioppo & Berntson, 1994; Maio & Olson, 2000)
 - “Tendencies to evaluate an entity with some degree of favor or disfavor, ordinarily expressed in cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses” (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, p. 155)
 - Our overall evaluations of objects (Haddock & Maio, 2004)

Three-component view of attitude



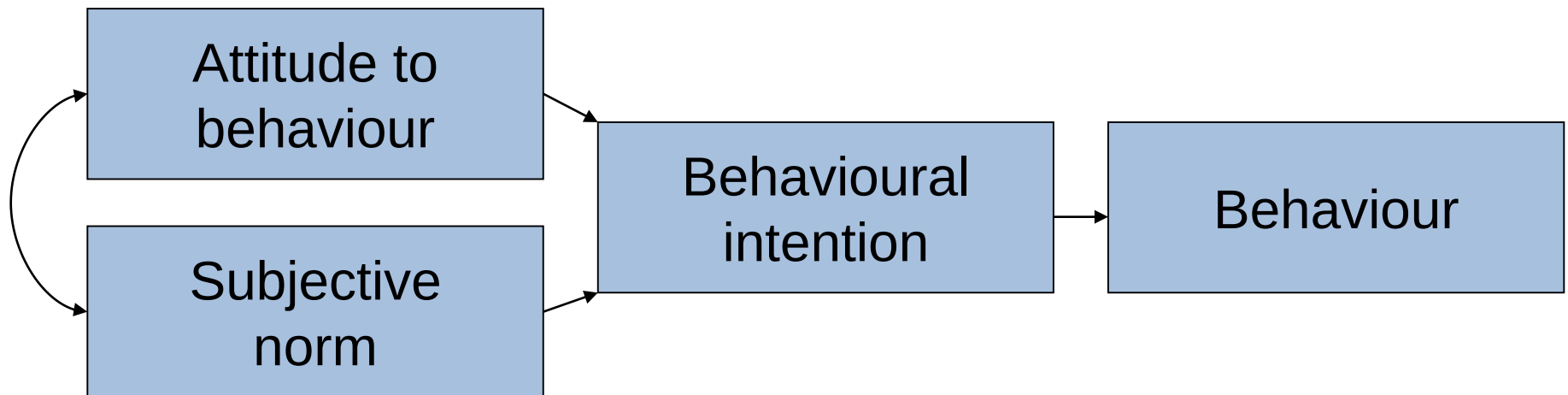
- Our *overall* evaluations of objects (Haddock & Maio, 2004)
 - E.g., ice-cream
 - Tastes nice but expensive and hurts my teeth
 - E.g., condom use
 - Positives
 - Reduces risk of STDs
 - Reduces risk of unwanted pregnancy
 - Peers approve of safe sex
 - Partner favours safe sex
 - Negatives
 - Awkward to use
 - Reduces sexual enjoyment
 - Awkward to purchase

Theory of Reasoned Action



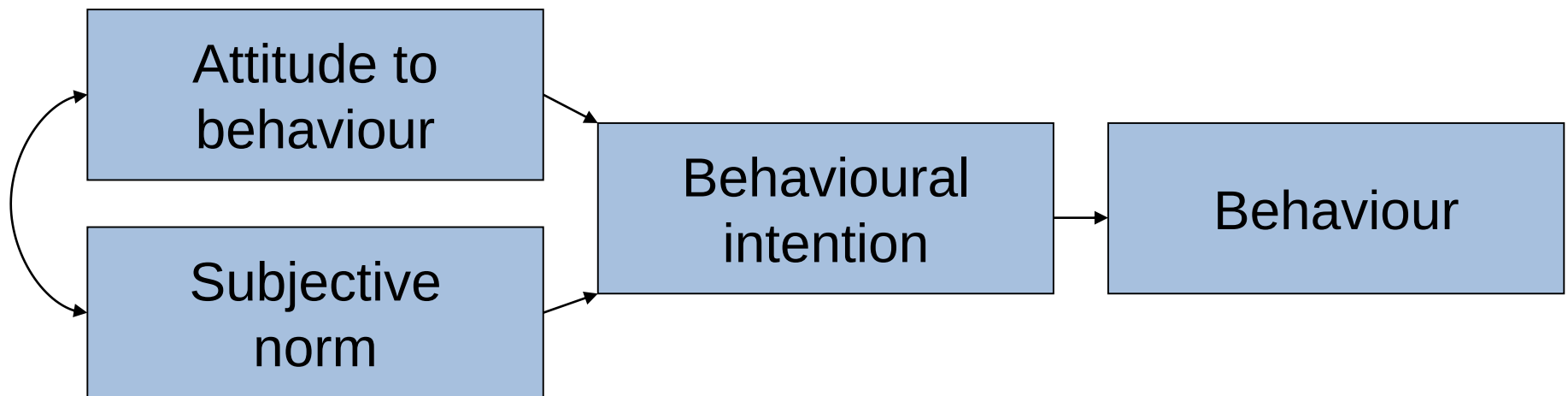
Fishbein and Ajzen (1975)

- Attitude + pressures of social norms in society will influence behaviour
- But the 'behavioural intention' is important
 - Intention to carry out the act



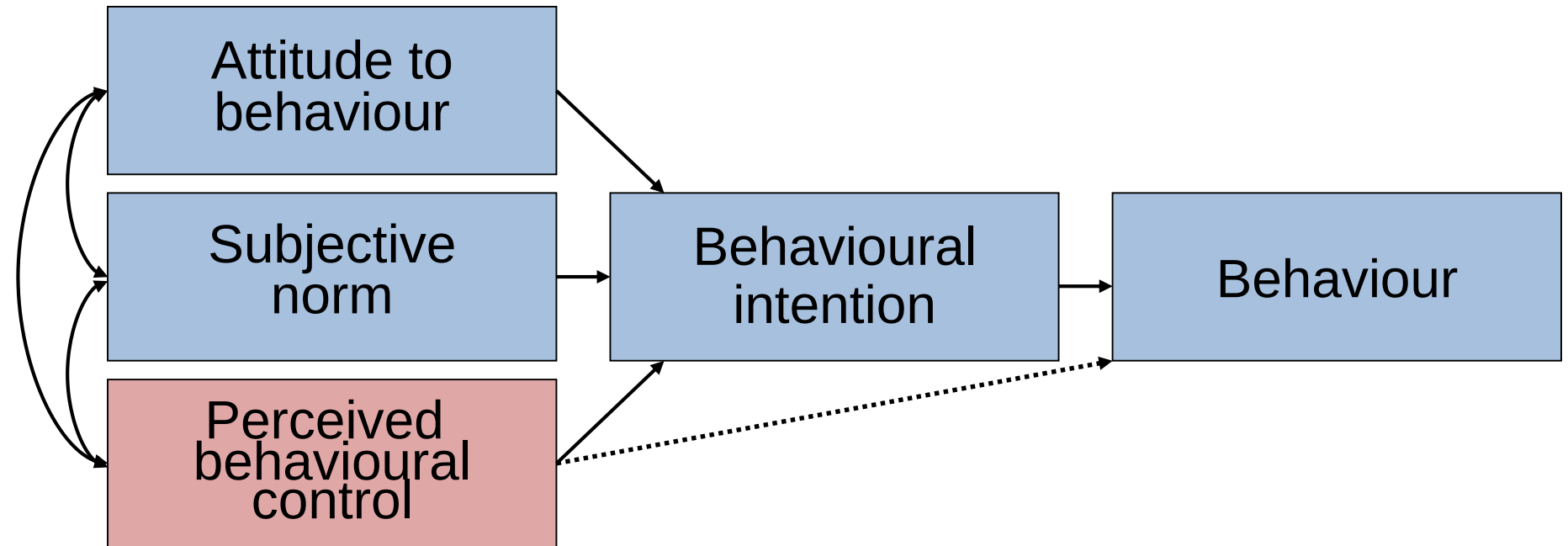
Fishbein and Ajzen (1975)

- Problems with the TRA
 - Predicting behaviours that require resources, cooperation, and skills (i.e., behaviours that are not completely under ‘volitional control’)



Fishbein and Ajzen (1975)

Theory of Planned Behaviour



Ajzen (1985)

- Indirect (intention)
 - You do not generally form intentions without taking some account of how much control you have over the behaviour
- Direct
 - Sometimes your intention to behave in a certain way does not result in the behaviour
 - Often the reason for this is a lack of control over the behaviour
 - If PBC is accurate and reflects this lack of control, it will help to predict behaviour

Attitude Change: Overview

- An issue of great practical and theoretical significance
 - politics, marketing, health education ...
- Many different approaches to studying attitude change
- Focus here will be on two contrasting approaches
 - Cognitive dissonance theory
 - Elaboration likelihood model

Cognitive Dissonance Theory

- Proposed by Festinger (1957)
- Fundamental principle - the relationships between cognitions
 - Relationship between cognitions can be
 - *Consonant*
 - *Dissonant*
 - *Irrelevant*

Cognitive Dissonance

- We experience cognitive dissonance whenever we are aware of an incongruent (dissonant) relationship between two or more cognitions
- Cognitive dissonance is an aversive, tension-like state that we are motivated to reduce
- Reduce dissonance by bringing attitudes into line with actions

Dissonant and Consonant Cognitions

Focal cognition

I smoke cigarettes

I decided to buy a Toyota

I said the expt. was fun

Amount of diss. associated with focal cognition

Dissonant cognition

Smoking is a health hazard

I prefer the looks of the Honda

I found the task boring

N **dissonant** cogs x importance

N **consonant** cogs x importance

Consonant cognition

Smoking helps me to relax

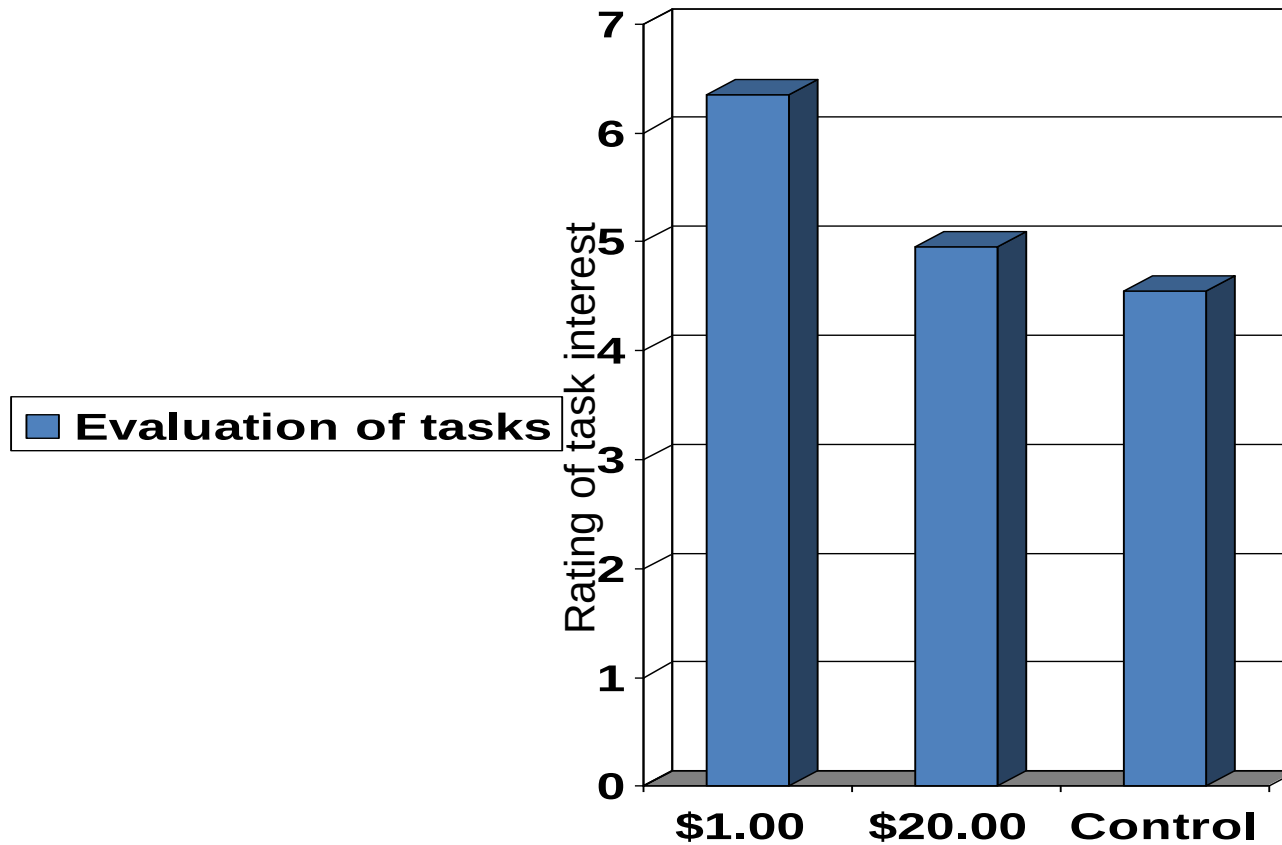
The Toyota is cheaper

I was paid to say the task was fun

Festinger and Carlsmith (1959)

- Participants performed boring experimental tasks
- Those in experimental conditions were then invited to help by telling the 'next participant' that tasks were interesting
- Manipulation: offered \$1 or \$20 for giving this help
 - Participants in the control condition did not have to 'lie' and were offered no money
- All participants later asked to evaluate the experimental tasks

Festinger and Carlsmith (1959) Results



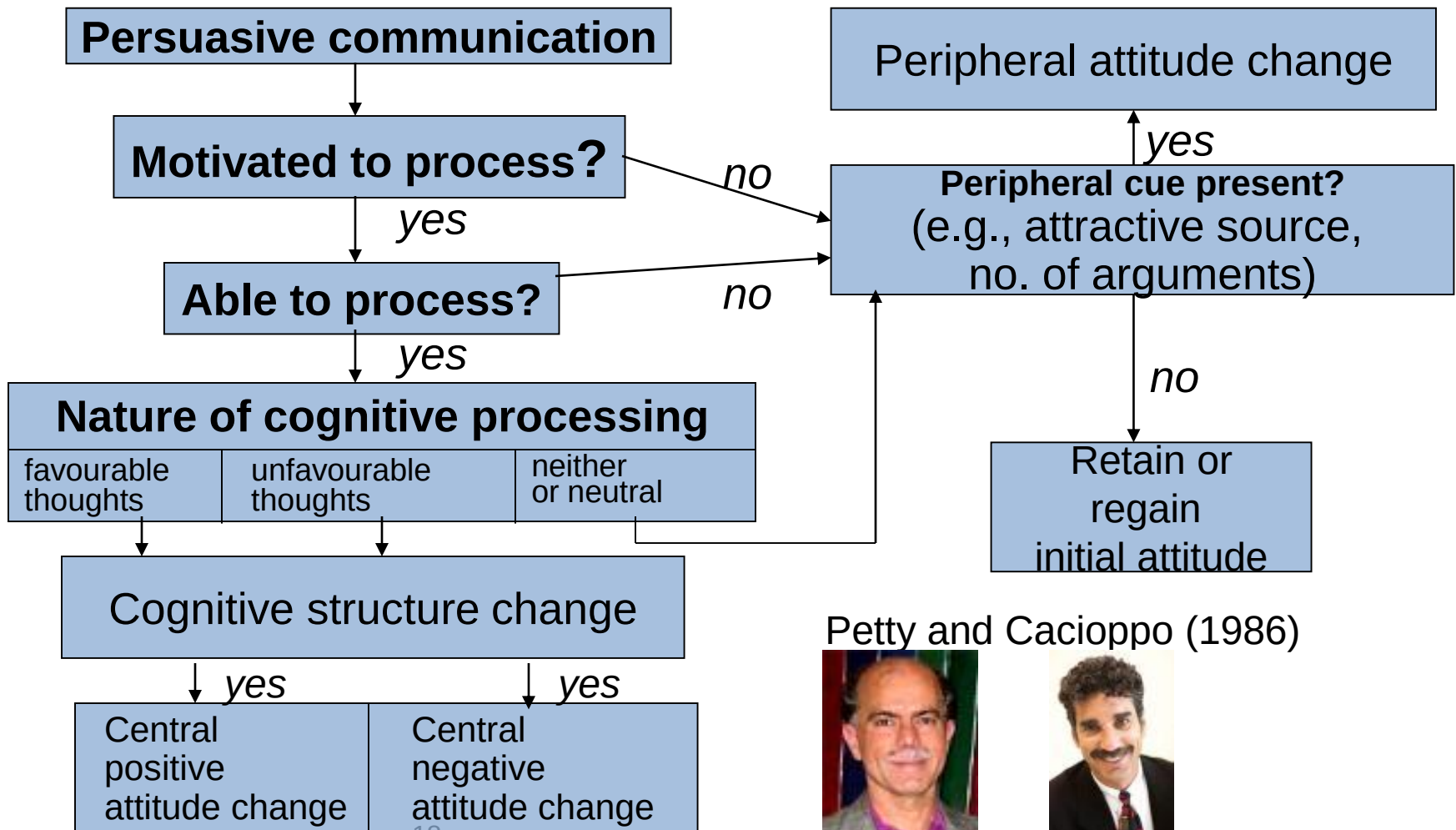
Ways of Inducing Cognitive Dissonance

- Getting people to engage in counter-attitudinal behaviour (induced compliance or 'forced' compliance)
 - What is dissonance-arousing is the sense that you are personally responsible for bringing about undesirable consequences
- Getting people to make choices between alternatives that are roughly equal in attractiveness
 - e.g., consumer decisions
- Exposing people to information that is inconsistent with their attitudes and/or behaviour
 - e.g., health education

A Contrasting Theory

- The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) and similar theoretical models focus on the *non-behavioural* factors that determine attitude change
- The ELM is an example of a 'dual-process' theory of attitude change
- Main feature - distinction between a 'central route' and a 'peripheral route' to attitude change

The Elaboration Likelihood Model



Petty and Cacioppo (1986)



Motivation to process

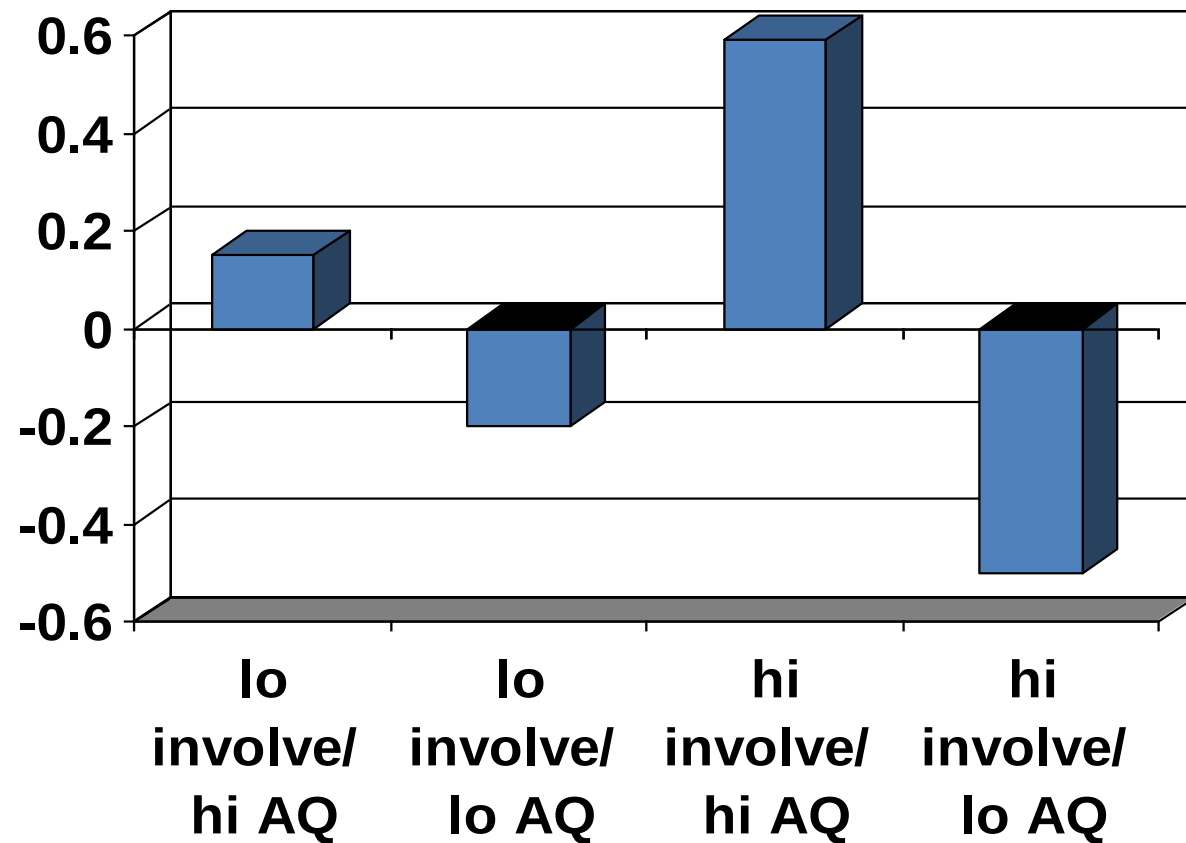
- Petty, Cacioppo and Goldman (1981)
 - Participants listened to message advocating ‘senior comprehensive examinations’ under one of two conditions:
 - university considering introducing these exams **next year** (high involvement)
 - university considering introducing these exams **next decade** (low involvement)
 - Message either
 - **strong** (high argument quality)
 - **weak** (low argument quality)
 - Message had been produced by either
 - **local high school class** (low expertise)
 - **“Carnegie Commission on Higher Education”** (high expertise)

Strong versus Weak Arguments

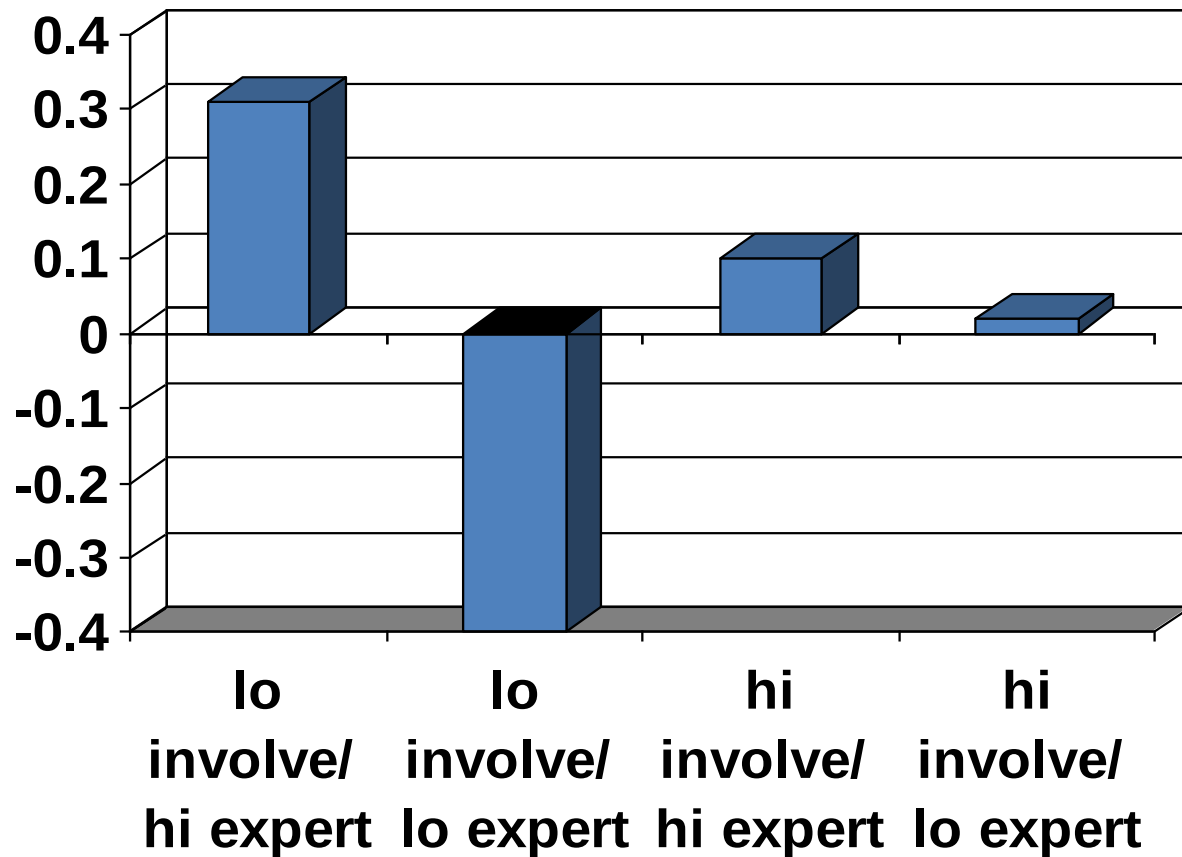
- Strong
 - Prestigious universities have comprehensive exams to maintain academic excellence
 - Average starting salaries are higher for graduates of schools with the exams
- Weak
 - The risk of failing the exam is a challenge most students would welcome
 - The difficulty of the exam would prepare one for later competitions in life

- Results
 - ***Low involvement*** condition, source expertise (but not argument quality) affected attitudes
 - ***High involvement*** condition, argument quality (but not source expertise) affected attitudes

Petty et al. (1981): Involvement and Argument Quality



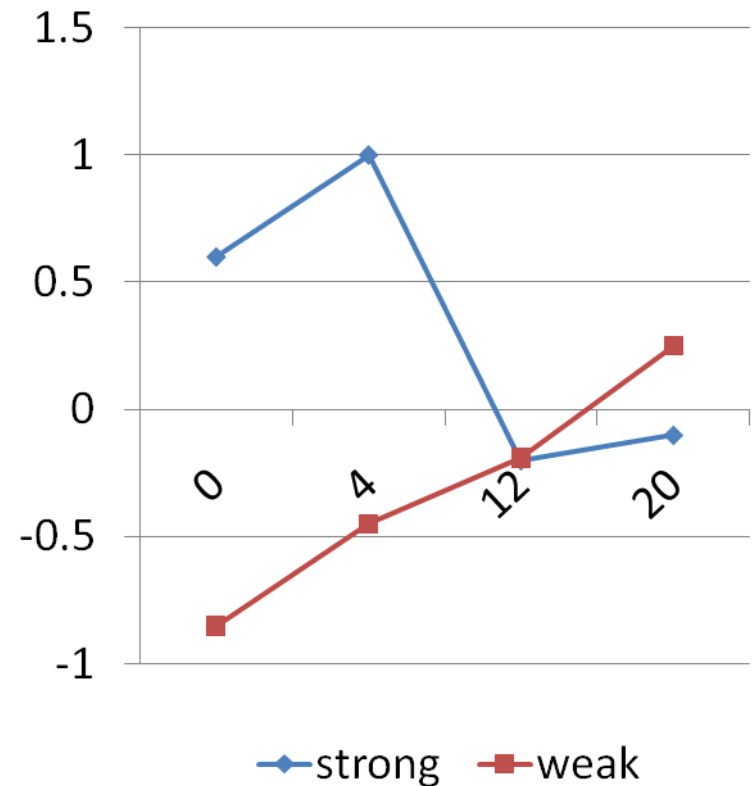
Petty et al. (1981): Involvement and Source Expertise



Ability to process

- Petty, Wells and Brock (1976)
 - Participants listened to a message advocating senior comprehensive examinations under one of four distraction conditions (monitor and record position of Xs projected during message):
 - **No** (zero Xs per minute)
 - **Low** (4 Xs per minute)
 - **Medium** (12 Xs per minute)
 - **High** (20 Xs per minute)
 - Message was either
 - **Strong**
 - **weak**

- Results
 - At higher levels of distraction
 - participants who listened to strong message showed **less** agreement, and
 - participants who listened to weak message showed **more** agreement,
 - than at lower levels of distraction



Heuristic-Systematic Model

- Similar to the idea of central/peripheral processes in the ELM
 - But it is the processing that is seen as different
 - Either systematic and more thoughtful processing
 - Or use of heuristics, quick rules of thumb that allow us to process info quickly but at the expense of accuracy

Factors Influencing Attitude Change

■ Communicator

- Experts more persuasive than non-experts (Hovland & Weiss, 1952)
- Popular attractive communicators more effective than unpopular/unattractive (Kiesler & Kiesler, 1969)
- Rapid speakers more persuasive than slow speakers (Miller et al., 1976)

■ Message

- more easily persuaded if we don't think the message is meant to persuade us (Walster & Festinger, 1962)
- Fear arousal works – as long as it doesn't go so far as to stop people taking notice of the message (Leventhal et al., 1965)

Factors Influencing Attitude Change

- Audience
 - Low self-esteem people more easily persuaded than people with high self-esteem (Janis, 1954)
 - More susceptible to persuasion when distracted, particularly if the message is simple (Allan & Festinger, 1961)
- Message & Audience
 - When audience is hostile/not receptive to the idea of attitude change, it is more effective to give both sides of the argument than just one side (Hovland et al., 1949).