

# [Cog dissonance essay sample](https://assignbuster.com/cog-dissonance-essay-sample/)

[Experience](https://assignbuster.com/essay-subjects/experience/)

Festinger’s (1957) cognitive dissonance theory suggests that we have an inner drive to hold all our attitudes and beliefs in harmony and avoid disharmony (or dissonance). Cognitive dissonance refers to a situation involving conflicting attitudes, beliefs or behaviors. This produces a feeling of discomfort leading to an alteration in one of the attitudes, beliefs or behaviors to reduce the discomfort and restore balance etc. As an other definition we can say that; People tend to seek consistency in their beliefs and perceptions. So what happens when one of our beliefs conflicts with another previously held belief? The term cognitive dissonance is used to describe the feeling of discomfort that results from holding two conflicting beliefs. When there is a discrepancy between beliefs and behaviors, something must change in order to eliminate or reduce the dissonance. Attitudes may change because of factors within the person. An important factor here is the principle of cognitive consistency, the focus of Festinger’s (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance.

This theory starts from the idea that we seek consistency in our beliefs and attitudes in any situation where two cognitions are inconsistent. Leon Festinger (1957) proposed cognitive dissonance theory, which states that a powerful motive to maintain cognitive consistency can give rise to irrational and sometimes maladaptive behavior. According to Festinger, we hold many cognitions about the world and ourselves; when they clash, a discrepancy is evoked, resulting in a state of tension known as cognitive dissonance. As the experience of dissonance is unpleasant, we are motivated to reduce or eliminate it, and achieve consonance. Cognitive dissonance was first investigated by Leon Festinger, arising out of a participant observation study of a cult which believed that the earth was going to be destroyed by a flood, and what happened to its members — particularly the really committed ones who had given up their homes and jobs to work for the cult — when the flood did not happen.

While fringe members were more inclined to recognize that they had made fools of themselves and to “ put it down to experience”, committed members were more likely to re-interpret the evidence to show that they were right all along (the earth was not destroyed because of the faithfulness of the cult members). Festinger’s blanket statement of his theory still needs further explanation. When he says, “ If you change a person’s behavior, his thoughts and feelings will change to minimize the dissonance” (Groenveld, 1999), he is referring to not only selective exposure and post-decision dissonance but also to minimal justification. Minimal justification predicts that if a person’s actions can be changed, with very little compensation, then the person, needing to eliminate the dissonance of behaving against her beliefs for something infinitesimal, will change her attitude about the situation. So, Festinger, through influential psychological experiments, has successfully proven that if a small incentive is offered for a behavior change, a significant attitudinal change is made whereas if a fairly large incentive is offered, a person will do it for the reward while maintaining their pre-existing attitude.

These experiments, called the $1-$20 experiments, show us we do not like to behave illogically without some explanation, and that explanation is we really did see the logic; it just took a little work to get there! In general, people do not like feeling as if their attitudes and beliefs contradict their behaviors because this means there is a “ lack of balance among cognitions, or ways of knowing, beliefs, judgments, and thoughts” (West & Turner, 2006, p. 131). According to Cognitive Dissonance Theory, this is a dissonant relationship, and it causes stress and overall unpleasantness (West & Turner, 2006). To relieve this stress, people either change their behaviors or their attitudes and beliefs so there can be a consonant relationship; a consonant relationship is when “ two elements are in equilibrium with one another” (West & Turner, 2006, p. 131).

A recent news article about the television show “ South Park” said creators Matt Stone and Trey Parker were angry because Comedy Central would not allow them to show an image of the Islamic prophet Muhammad on their show because Muslims would consider it sacrilegious (Bauder, 2006). In response to being censored, Stone and Parker showed an image of Jesus excreting on President Bush and the American flag (Bauder, 2006). By pushing the limits of televising a potentially offensive image to the public, Stone and Parker created a consonant relationship with their beliefs and attitudes by taking action and showing they should be allowed freedom of speech. The issue of the news article is free speech. In the article, Peabody awards director Horace Newcomb said South Park’s offensiveness “ reminds us of the need for being tolerant” . It is arguable that while freedom of speech is important, it is just as important to have limits. However, Stone and Parker believe in an all-or-nothing deal, which explains why they go to such great lengths to be offensive.

In a nutshell, Cognitive Dissonance Theory applies to the issue of freedom of speech because being censored makes Stone and Parker feel they were being forced to behave in a way that causes dissonance with their beliefs and attitudes. In order to harmonize their attitudes and behaviors, Stone and Parker changed their behavior by showing another offensive image in their show to substitute the Muhammad image. Kearsley said Cognitive Dissonance Theory is particularly relevant to decision-making. Obviously, Stone and Parker made a decision to defy Comedy Central and in doing so reduced their dissonance. Professor Mullin said Cognitive Dissonance Theory was developed by Leon Festinger; he believed ways to reduce dissonance included preventing it, either through selective exposure, selective attention, selective interpretation or selective retention, or rationalizing after making a decision by listing reasons why it was the right decision.

Selective exposure is looking for information consistent with one’s current beliefs and behaviors, selective attention is only paying attention to information consistent with one’s beliefs and behaviors, selective interpretation is interpreting vague information so it goes along with one’s beliefs and attitudes, and selective retention is only remembering information that is consistent with beliefs and behaviors. According to West and Turner (2006), magnitude of dissonance is the amount of discomfort a person feels and it determines what actions a person will take to reduce dissonance. There are three factors that influence the magnitude of dissonance: importance, dissonance ratio, and rationale. West and Turner said importance is the degree of significance of an issue, dissonance ratio is “ the amount of dissonant cognitions relative to the amount of consonant cognitions (West & Turner, 2006, p. 135), and rationale is the explanation of why there is an inconsistency between attitudes and behaviors.

In the case of Stone and Parker, deciding to air an offensive image is consistent with their attitudes and beliefs. Stone and Parker have the belief that it is important to have free speech rights and their attitude is they like to exercise their rights, so it makes sense that they behaved in a way that shows they have free speech rights. Stone and Parker do not believe in censorship; it causes them dissonance. Because they were willing to take action to correct this dissonance, their magnitude of dissonance was great. The issue of freedom of speech is important; in the show the character Kyle said “ Either it’s all OK, or none of it is. Do the right thing” (Bauder, 2006, p. 1). Blanton, Pelham, Dehart and Carvallo (2001) said one reason people may take such bold actions is due to overconfidence. As the “ cognitive dissonance associated with feeling uncertain (is) increased, confidence (is) increased in a way that was not warranted by the increases in accuracy” (Blanton, Pelham, Dehart & Carvallo, 2001, p. 382). Stone and Parker felt uncertain about the extent of their freedom of speech rights, so they became more confident about having freedom of speech rights. They may not have been accurate about what freedom of speech rights they had, but they managed to push the limits with the image of Jesus and the American flag.

Cognitive Dissonance Theory explains well what Stone and Parker believe and their attitudes towards freedom of speech. However, it is does not adequately explain their behavior. Although it explains why Stone and Parker would show a possibly offensive image, Cognitive Dissonance Theory is geared more towards persuasion theories and how to use cognitive dissonance to persuade people. In this case, Stone and Parker are neither being persuaded nor trying to persuade anyone; they are merely trying to harmonize their attitudes and beliefs with their behaviors. Simon, Greenberg and Brehm (1995) said another way to reduce dissonance is through trivialization. The researchers discovered that most scholars believed the most common way to reduce dissonance is through changing one’s attitude (Simon, Greenberg & Brehm, 1995). However, they believed that using trivialization to reduce dissonance had been overlooked . They believed that if given the chance, people would relieve their discomfort by making certain values or issues less important.

In their experiments, the researchers created different scenarios in which people were either forced to change their attitudes or they were allowed to merely trivialize an issue . Simon, Greenberg and Brehm (1995) conducted four studies where psychology students had to choose whether or not they supported or opposed their university to have mandatory cumulative finals at the end of each semester. The first study found that “ when the preexisting attitude is highly salient, people trivialize the cognitions rather than change their attitudes” (Simon, Greenberg & Brehm, 1995, p. 256). The second study found that people trivialize “ when the opportunity to evaluate the importance of the cognitions is presented prior to the opportunity to indicate their attitude”.

And the third and fourth studies found that “ making important values or issues salient leads to trivialization rather than attitude change. Overall, trivialization is used to reduce dissonance, and people may even use it more often than they would change their attitudes to create a consonant relationship. Sultz, Leveille and Lepper (1999) said people rationalize the choices they make. They believed Cognitive Dissonance Theory would “ predict only a greater separation with a difficult choice than with an easy choice” . The researchers conducted an experiment where participants had to judge how appealing eleven posters were to them. Once they judged, they were allowed to choose one poster to take home with them . Sultz, Leveille and Lepper (1999) wanted to know if after making a difficult choice, the participants would rationalize they had made the better choice to reduce dissonance. They predicted “ the amount of dissonance is greater the closer the alternatives are in desirability before the choice is made” (Sultz, Leveille, & Lepper, 1999, p. 44).

However, they found that the evaluation of the chosen alternative in a set of alternatives where it was easy to choose a poster rose more than the evaluation of the rejected alternative in a set of alternatives where it was more difficult to choose a poster . In a way, this is like minimal justification, which is the idea that one only needs to offer “ the least amount of incentive necessary to obtain compliance” (West & Turner, 2006, p. 137). Although this deals more with the persuasion aspect of Cognitive Dissonance Theory, it supports the idea that the poster chosen in a difficult set of choices rose more in evaluation than the rejected poster in an easy set of choices. Minimal justification states that given a situation where the person receives a small reward, that person will justify his or her actions and start to believe what he or she did was the best thing to do, and choosing to do it was a good thing.

The news article and the empirical studies are similar with how they applied theory because they all explained ways of reducing dissonance. However, there are some differences between the studies and the article because the article merely shows there was a need to take action in order to reduce dissonance whereas the studies found specific ways to reduce dissonance. The studies themselves differed because one study found trivialization was another alternative to reduce dissonance and the second study found that there are different degrees of dissonance and different ways people rationalize to relieve dissonance. Cognitive Dissonance Theory does not apply to all situations, and it does not completely apply to the issue of free speech in the news article. It does not explain why Stone and Parker showed an possibly offensive image of Jesus and the American flag, it merely explains that Stone and Parker had to take some sort of action to reduce dissonance. Some of Cognitive Dissonance Theory’s shortcomings are that is applies mostly to persuasion theories; it does not necessarily apply to all instances where people feel dissonance. It does help explain how to persuade people by exploiting their feelings of dissonance, but it does not provide many alternatives for relieving their discomfort.

One way to make the theory more applicable to more situations is to include trivialization and rationalization as ways of reducing dissonance in the theory. Another shortcoming of the theory is the coping mechanisms listed in the theory. Although selective exposure, selective attention, selective interpretation and selective retention are effective ways of preventing dissonance, they focus more on attitude changes, and do not allow for behavioral changes. Cognitive Dissonance Theory is an effective way of explaining why people may either change their attitudes or their beliefs. There are many ways of reducing dissonance; some ways are not as well known as others, but it is important to be open to all options. Overall, it is important to people to reduce their levels of discomfort.

TEMPLATE OF COGNITIVE DISSONANCE

The template of cognitive dissonance is where they replace God with Satan, light with darkness by calling darkness light. This is the source of our cognitive dissonance and it takes place all of the time.

Thus, when it is obvious that the universe is governed by a magnificent creative power and that following the inherent natural and moral design results in health and happiness, we are punished for espousing this view. We are told the universe is empty and chaotic.

Why? Because the essence of the New World Order is replacing what is real with what is false i. e. replacing God with the cabalistic central banker who is reorganizing the world according to his interests. When he is done, we will not remember the truth.

This Illuminati banker is behind most wars and revolutions; he is behind the so-called “ Enlightenment” — all designed to undermine and control humanity, and enable him to supplant God.

“ Humanism” only deifies the cabalist banker. It debases humanity by stripping us of our connection to God.

So there we have the template: instead of acknowledging our Creator and his design so we may prosper, we are taught to deny His existence, defy His morality, and live in a dysfunctional solipsism in the name of “ freedom.”

“ Modernity” is simply the satanist’s rejection of inherent order and purpose. It is the glorification of the alienated individual’s dysfunction and reflects the Illuminati Jews’ alienation from man and universe alike. Modernism eschews the universal in favor of the solipsistic and personal because truth is universal.

Our cognitive dissonance comes from the contrast between what God (common sense, instinct, intuition and our senses) reveals, and what the paid liars and dupes of the Illuminati tell us to believe.

I wasted much of my life because I listened to the bankers ‘ great men’ instead of myself. Examples of day-to-day Cognitive Dissonance could be: o Driving 75 in a 55 mph zone because 75 mph is the flow of traffic. o “ Fudging” on your tax return, after all, taxes are too high. o Stealing office supplies from your employer because he doesn’t pay you enough. o Pocketing a cash transaction so there would be no income tax. o Munching your way through the supermarket without paying for the food you eat. o Returning a dress for a refund after you wore it to the event you bought it for. o Accepting pricey gifts from vendors or contractors, a “ thank you gift” in advance. o Being an animal rights supporter that eats a hamburger while wearing leather shoes, jacket and belt. If we want to give an expanded real-life examples, i can say two of them from real life. Lets think about the man who is not satisfied with his car, want to sell it and want to buy a new one.

This man doesnt like type of fuel of his car. Consumption of gas is too much for him and he decided to sell car for this reason. On the other hand he is looking for the new car especially for a diesel model but when he is searching, he realizes that diesel car is more expensive than the regular cars and the performance of the diesel one is not good as much as the regular ones. He consulted to salesman about the gas consupmtion and he decides to buy 1. 2 engine car. He thinks that this 1. 2 engine car has similar consumption with the diesel one but he is wrong. During the city traffic, he still pays more than the diesel one. However, he ignores that and he tries to get enjoy of his new car. Another example from the mobile phone industry.

Two years a go there are two brands that most of young people prefer to buy; Blackberry and i-Phone. I was the one of them and i preferred to buy Blackberry. I knew that i-Phone has the better operating system but Blackberry Messenger was so common in my cricle of friends. Thats why i bought the Blackberry but, in time i realized that Blackberry is so slow and internet capacity is not enough to me also, i-Phone has a whatsapp messenger which is similar to Blackberry Messenger. But i ignored this fact and still i use Blackberry. My friends still ask me ‘ why do you still use the Blackberry’. I know i am not satisfied as much as i-Phone users but i still say because of Blackberry Messenger. Critical Evaluation

There has been a great deal of research into cognitive dissonance, providing some interesting and sometimes unexpected findings. It is a theory with very broad applications, showing that we aim for a consistency between attitudes and behaviors, and may not use very rational methods to achieve it. It has the advantage of being testable by scientific means (i. e. experiments). However, there is a problem from a scientific point of view, because we cannot physically observe cognitive dissonance, and therefore we cannot objectively measure it (re: behaviorism). Consequently, the term cognitive dissonance is somewhat subjective.

-REFERENCE-

en. wikipedia. org/wiki/Leon\_Festinger
explorable. com/cognitive-dissonance. html
Introducing Communication Theory: Analysis and Application (Richard L. West, Lynn H. Turner) Icomm: Interpersonal Concepts and Competencies (Roy M. Berko, Joan E. Aitken, Andrew D. Wolvi)

Social Psychology (Sultz, Leveille and Lepper 1999)

The handbook of social psychology (Simon, Greenberg & Brehm, 1995) The Oxford Handbook of Human Motivation (Blanton, Pelham, Dehart & Carvallo, 2001)