

# [Cognitive dissonace](https://assignbuster.com/cognitive-dissonace/)

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Cognitive dissonance can be referred as an attempt by an individual to maintain equality between one’s attitudes, and one’s actions. To understand better cognitive dissonance, an examination of the concept of cognitive dissonance is necessary. During this examination, a brief analysis on the issue of does cognitive dissonance explains why behavior can change attitudes will be discussed. The definitions of consonant and dissonant cognitions will be examined. The next topic of discussion will provide an analysis on the influence that consonant and dissonant cognitions have on behavior and attitudes. The final topic for discussion will analyze the concept of persuasion. This examination begins will a brief summary on the issue of “ Does Cognitive /dissonance Explain Why Behavior Can Change Attitudes?”

Cognitive Dissonance Analysis In analyzing the issue of “ Does Cognitive Dissonance Explain Why Behavior Can Change Attitudes?” was an intriguing topic of discussion. A brief summary of the main points discussed by both sides of this issue is shown as follows:

Pro Side: The authors believed that people can change their attitudes when they experience a conflict between their attitudes and their behavior. Con Side: The authors believe that when people are unsure of their attitudes, they examine their own behavior to determine their attitudes. The Pro side noted the historical studies that showed that under certain situations if a person has to comply with orders that he or she does not believe in, or makes them feel uncomfortable, this individual will adjust his or her behavior to ensure he or she complies with the orders. The authors believed that people can change their attitudes and reduce unpleasant thoughts by adding a more pleasant thought as well as reducing or eliminating the unpleasant thoughts. The conclusions from this study indicated that (1) if a person is forced to do or say something the opposite of his own opinion, there will be a tendency for him or her to change his or her opinion so as to bring it into correspondence with what he has done or said. (2) The greater the pressure used to comply with the opposite behavior, the weaker his or her responses will be for compliance.

The con side noted the results of their own research study that believed that people observe their own behavior and can adjust their attitudes accordingly. This theory is referred as the self perception theory. The focus of this theory surmised that a person does not have to experience unpleasant thoughts, or to change their cognitive processes. The results of their study supported their contentions “ that simply making self-judgments based on the same kinds of public evidence that the community originally employed in training them to infer the attitudes of any communicator” (Nier, 2010, p. 115).

Although both side presented compelling arguments, the evidence submitted by the Pro side of this issue inferred the premise is that if an individual experienced an unpleasant thought, or some feelings as the result of that unpleasant thought, the conclusion of the self perception theory are less valid. However, the con side of this issue could not refute this statement. The analysis indicates there should be more research conducted before an opinion regarding if dissonance does explain why behavior can change attitudes can be given. The next topic for discussion focuses on the definition of the consonant and dissonance cognitions, and their use in cognitive dissonance. Consonant and Dissonant Cognitions

In reviewing the concept of cognitive dissonance, there are two forms of cognition on display during cognitive dissonance. These forms are referred as consonant and dissonant cognitions. A definition of both of these forms of cognition is as follows: Dissonant cognitions can be viewed when an individual’s attitude is in the total opposite from the way he or she behaves.

Consonant cognitions can be viewed when an individual’s attitudes reflects how he or she behaves. The two forms of cognitions are frequently viewed during cognitive dissonance. The next topic for discussion is how these two forms of cognition influence an individual’s attitudes and behaviors. The Influence of Consonant and Dissonant Cognitions on Attitudes and Behavior

Consonant dissonance requires an individual to reconcile what he or she has done with his or her attitude toward the action. Festinger (1957) states that when a person holds an opinion or attitude on a matter of importance and is exposed to a communication that supports a contrary opinion, the result is cognitive dissonance and the individual needs to find a way to reduce this dissonance. Consonant cognitions can be added to deal effectively with the psychological tension that often accompanies cognitive dissonance.

Attitudes may be defined as the outlook one has on daily tasks and circumstances and the mental approaches we use to process them. Behaviors are the ensuing performance-based activities that result from what the individual perceives that needs to be done to respond to specific sets of stimuli. Consonant cognition is a way that the individual aligns his and her thought processes or attitudes to the task at hand.

Shaffer (1975) states that forced compliance in situations produce an adverse or aversive psychological tension when the subject acknowledges that his or her behavior is inconsistent with their attitude. To reduce this cognitive dissonance, the individual engages in consonant cognition; a process to reduce aversive dissonance by aligning the attitude with the behavior. Adams (1961) stated that there were several means that individuals used to reduce dissonance:

" The person may change his opinion to conform more closely with the communication; he may attempt to persuade the communicator to alter his opinion; he may distort the content of the communication; he may discredit the communicator; he may reduce the importance of his opinion; or he may attempt to obtain support for his opinion" (p. 74)

Concept of Self-Persuasion

In the original case study first performed by Festinger and replicated by Dem, individuals were able to align their attitudes with the compensation they received as part of the experiment. Attitudes were altered as a result of alignment. According to dissonance theory, this was a result of the perceived importance of the compensation provided. In self-perception theory, emphasis is placed on the actual task and the ensuing perception based on analysis of the task as opposed to deficiencies in alignment.

Self-perception theory in the case study conceives that the individual is not responding to the task specifics but to the associated compensation. This association is what motivates how the individual perceives the task and influences his or her subsequent attitude toward task completion and the behaviors he or she will employ for completion. When comparing the Festinger experiment in the duplicated Dem experiment in the case study, there is a difference in the perception of the defining motivating factor.

Self-perception theory posits that individuals examine their behavior to determine the attitudes that cause the behavior. As a result, emotional responses, and the impact of those responses are determined by behavior. Inferring attitude based on behavior differs from the tenets of dissonance theory that posits that organisms will respond to dissonance with attempts at attitudinal and behavioral adjustment. Fazio, Zanna, and Cooper (1977) stated the following:

" Self perception theory, it is suggested, accurately characterizes attitude change phenomena in the context of attitude-congruent behavior and dissonance theory attitude change in the context of attitude-discrepant behavior. “ Attitude-congruent is defined as any position within an individual's latitude of acceptance; attitude-discrepant as any position in the latitude of rejection" (p. 464).

Within self-perception theory, attitude is seen as part of a congruence process; dissonance theory is seen as a process that attempts to characterize and define differences and inconsistencies.

Conclusion

Cognitive dissonance and self perception theories characterize how individuals perceive and process their world. Festinger's cognitive dissonance theory and the drive to achieve alignment are seen as an individual striving for cognitive reconciliation. In self-perception theory, a counterintuitive process occurs in which the organism is required to define purpose and emotion from actions. Both Festinger and Dem have brought to the forefront theories that re-articulate the question of which came first, the chicken or the egg?