PSYC 325 Fundamentals of Social Psychology

Chapter 6: Attitudes & Attitude Change

Outline

- The Nature and Origin of Attitudes
- When Attitudes Predict Behaviour
- Attitude Change
- Resisting Persuasive Messages
- Changing Our Attitudes because of our Behaviour: The Theory of Cognitive Dissonance

TALK TO THE HAND

The Nature and Origin of Attitudes

- Attitude:
  - An evaluation of a person, object, or idea
  - Can be positive or negative
  - Three components:

Affective: feelings toward something

Cognitive: appraisal of pros and cons

Behavioural: look to what you do

Where Do Attitudes Come From?

- An affectively based attitude is based primarily on people's emotions and feelings about the attitude object

- A cognitively based attitude is based primarily on a person's beliefs about the properties of an attitude object

- A behaviourally based attitude is based primarily on observations of how one behaves toward an attitude object

Where Do Attitudes Come From?

- The significance of each component varies in terms of the issue in question
  - Negative attitudes towards particular groups is likely to have a cognitive basis
    - e.g., the belief that the group threatens our value system
  - Issues that are tied to our symbolic beliefs (value system) will give rise to affectively-based attitudes
  - Changing these attitudes = challenging values

Where Do Attitudes Come From?

- Attitudes toward homosexuality (Haddock, Zanna, & Esses, 1993):

- Affective: feelings experienced when thinking about homosexuality
- Cognitive: values promoted/ hindered by homosexuality
- Cognitive: characteristics homosexuals posses
- Behavioural: frequency & nature of contact with homosexuality

Where Do Attitudes Come From?

- Attitudes toward homosexuality (Haddock, Zanna, & Esses, 1993):

Positive attitude	Negative attitude
⬇	⬇
Liking for group	Disliking of group
⬇	⬇
Affect	Cognition
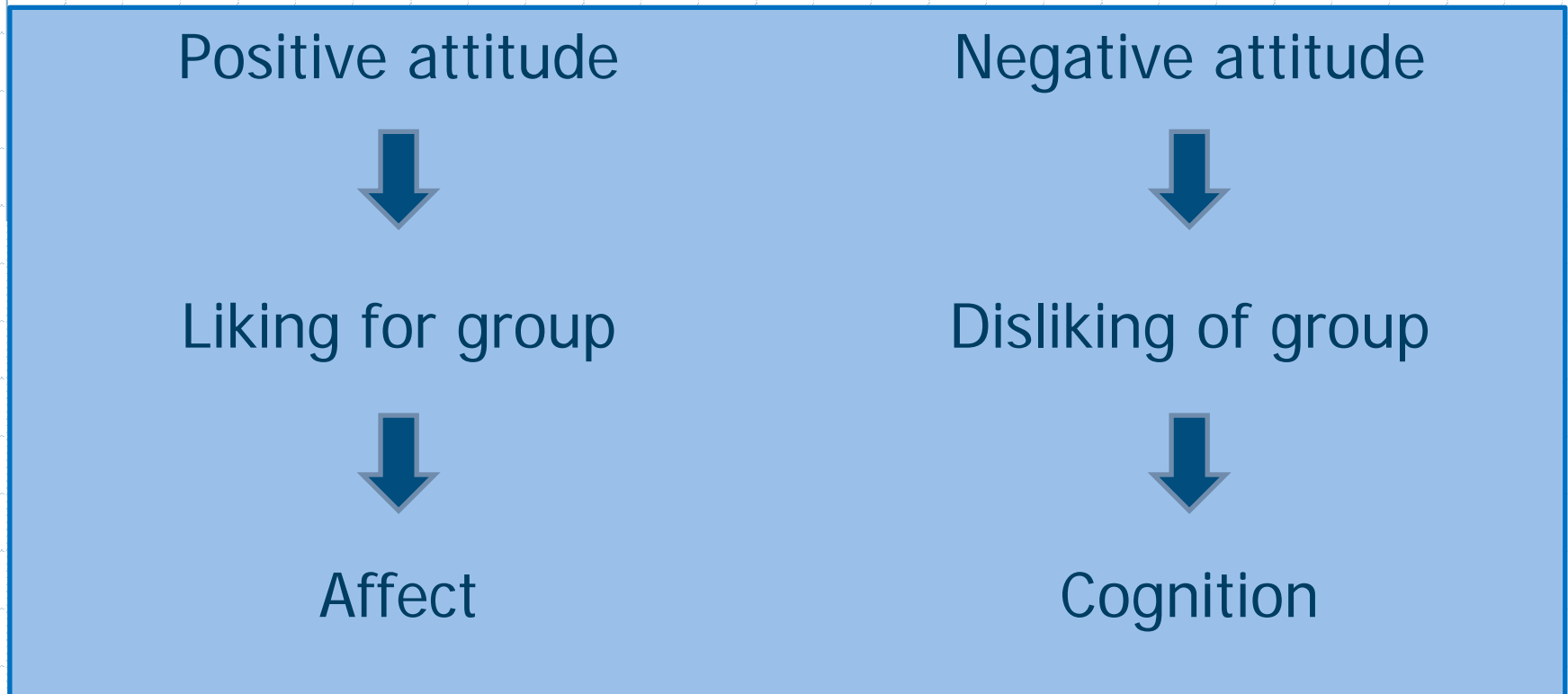
Attitude Strength

- Four major determinants:
  1. Ambivalence
  2. Accessibility
  3. Subjective experiences
  4. Autobiographical recall

Explicit vs. Implicit Attitudes

- Explicit Attitudes:
  – We can consciously endorse and easily report

- Implicit Attitudes:
  – Involuntary, uncontrollable, and at times unconscious

When Attitudes Predict Behaviour

- Contrary evidence:
  - Study by LaPiere (1934)
    - Demonstrated an inconsistency between people's attitudes and behaviour
  - Review by Wicker (1969)
    - Concluded people's attitudes make poor predictors of behaviour

The Theory of Planned Behaviour

- Under certain conditions, attitudes predict behaviours quite well

- Theory of Planned Behaviour
  - The best predictor of people's planned behaviour is their intention
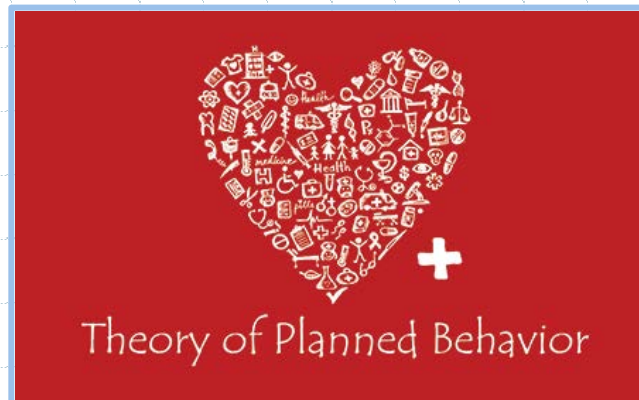
The Theory of Planned Behaviour

- The best predictors of people's intentions are:
  - Their attitudes towards the specific behaviour
  - Their perceptions of social norms regarding that behaviour
  - Their perceived behavioural control regarding the behaviour

The Theory of Planned Behaviour

- **Specific Attitudes**
  - People's specific attitudes toward the behaviour they are considering
- **Subjective Norms**
  - People's beliefs about how those they care about will view the behaviour
- **Perceived Behavioural Control**
  - The ease with which people believe they can perform the behaviour

The Theory of Planned Behaviour

Attitude toward the behaviour: People's specific attitude toward the behaviour, not their general attitude

Subjective norms: People's beliefs about how other people they care about will view the behaviour in question

Perceived behavioural control: The ease with which people believe they can perform the behaviour

Behavioural intention

Behaviour

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Attitudes & Predicting Behaviour

- Spontaneous Behaviours:
  - Automatic processing
  - Attitude = highly accessible
  - e.g., signing a petition
- Deliberative Behaviours:
  - Controlled processing
  - Attitude = not highly accessible
  - Based on behavioural intentions
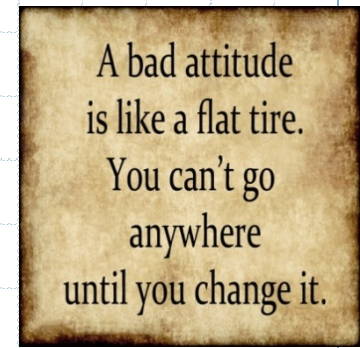 - e.g., condom use

Attitudes & Predicting Behaviour

- Factors influencing condom use:
    1. Alcohol
    2. Environment (risk-taking)
    3. Mood
    4. Embarrassment/ridicule
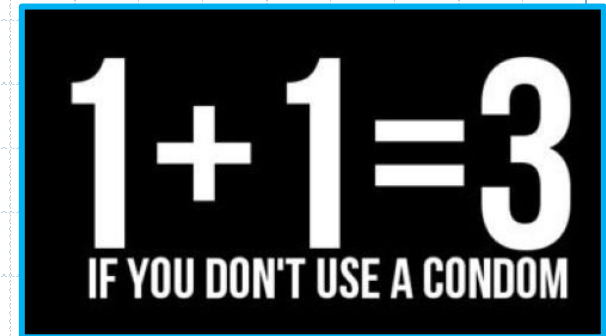
- Most people agree it's a good thing, but they don't do it. Why?
    - Attitudes inconsistent with behaviour

Attitude Change

A bad attitude is like a flat tire. You can't go anywhere until you change it.

- Persuasive communication
  - A communication advocating a particular side of an issue.
  - e.g., a speech or television advertisement

- Yale Attitude Change Approach
  - The study of the conditions under which people are most likely to change their attitudes in response to persuasive messages

Persuasive Communications and Attitude Change

- The effectiveness of the communication depends on:

  - The Source of the Communication
  - The Nature of the Communication
  - The Nature of the Audience

- "Who said what to whom?"

The Yale Attitude Change Approach

The effectiveness of persuasive communications depends on who says what to whom.

Who: The Source of the Communication

- Credible speakers (e.g., those with obvious expertise) persuade people more than speakers lacking in credibility (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Jain & Posavac, 2000).
- Attractive speakers (whether because of physical or personality attributes) persuade people more than unattractive speakers do (Eagly & Chaiken, 1975; Petty, Wegener, & Fabrigar, 1997).

What: The Nature of the Communication

- People are more persuaded by messages that do not seem to be designed to influence them (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Walster & Festinger, 1962).
- Is it best to present a one-sided communication (one that presents only arguments favouring your position) or a two-sided communication (one that presents arguments for and against your position)? In general, two-sided messages work better, if you are sure to refute the arguments on the other side (Crowley & Hoyer, 1994; Igou & Bless, 2003; Lumsdaine & Janis, 1953).
- Is it best to give your speech before or after someone arguing for the other side?

If the speeches are to be given back to back and there will be a delay before people have to make up their minds, it is best to go first. Under these conditions, there is likely to be a *primacy effect*, wherein people are more influenced by what they hear first. If there is a delay between the speeches and people will make up their minds right after hearing the second one, it is best to go last. Under these conditions, there is likely to be a *recency effect*, wherein people remember the second speech better than the first one (Haugtvedt & Wegener, 1994; Miller & Campbell, 1959).

To Whom: The Nature of the Audience

- An audience that is distracted during the persuasive communication will often be persuaded more than one that is not (Festinger & Maccoby, 1964; Albarracin & Wyer, 2001).
- People low in intelligence tend to be more influenceable than people high in intelligence, and people with moderate self-esteem tend to be more influenceable than people with low or high self-esteem (Rhodes & Wood, 1992).
- People are particularly susceptible to attitude change during the impressionable ages of 18 to 25. Beyond those ages, people's attitudes are more stable and resistant to change (Krosnick & Alwin, 1989; Sears, 1981).

Persuasive Communications and Attitude Change

- What matters more:
  - The actual content of the message or its superficial characteristics?
    - Depends on processing route

Shelly Chaiken

- Heuristic-systematic persuasion model:
  - Heuristic vs. systematic

- Elaboration likelihood model:
  - Central vs. peripheral

Richard Petty & John Cacioppo

Persuasive Communications and Attitude Change

- **Heuristic-Systematic Model**:
  - Suggests there are two ways in which persuasive communications can cause attitude change:
  1. **Systematic processing**
     - People process the merits of the arguments
  2. **Heuristic processing**
     - People use mental shortcuts (heuristics)
     - e.g., "experts are always right"

Persuasive Communications and Attitude Change

- Elaboration Likelihood Model:
  - There are two ways in which persuasive communications can cause attitude change
    - The central route occurs when people are motivated and have the ability to pay attention to the arguments in the communication
    - The peripheral route occurs when people do not pay attention to the arguments but are instead swayed by surface characteristics

Persuasive Communications and Attitude Change

Chaiken

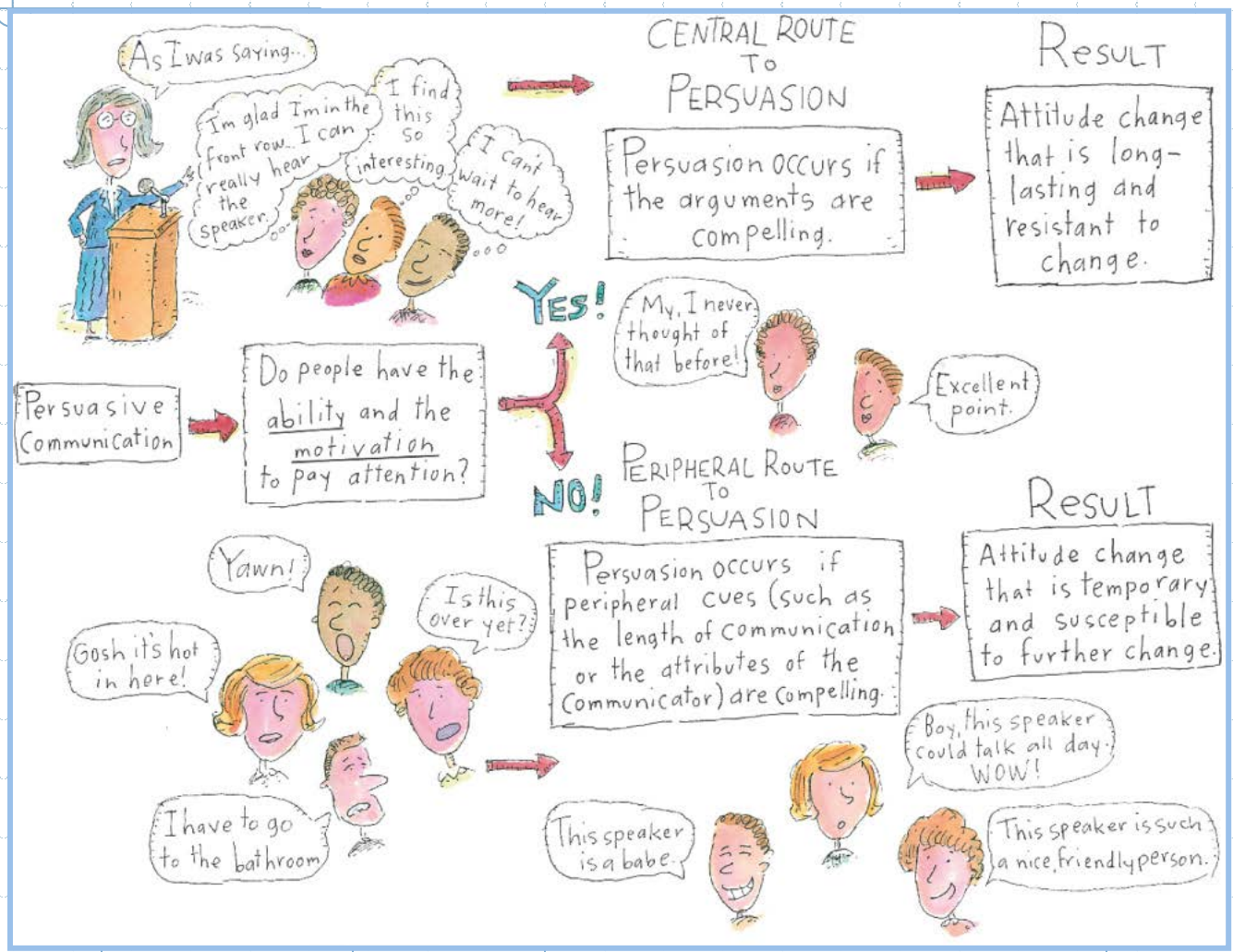Systematic: motivation + ability to pay attention

Heuristic: no motivation + no ability

Petty & Cacioppo

Central: motivation + ability to pay attention

Peripheral: no motivation + no ability

Persuasive Communications and Attitude Change

Elaboration Likelihood Model

Persuasive Communications and Attitude Change

- Motivation:
  - Personal relevance of the topic
  - Need for cognition
    - ↑ = focus on facts
    - ↓ = focus on speaker

- Ability:
  - Complexity of the argument
    - Easy = central
    - Difficult = peripheral

Persuasive Communications and Attitude Change

- Mood + route selection:
  - Good mood = peripheral route, maintain mood
  - Bad mood = central route, analyze argument

- Route selected + permanency of change:
  - Central route = more permanent/resistant
  - Peripheral route = more easily swayed

Fear and Attitude Change

- **Fear-arousing communication** is a persuasive message that attempts to change people's attitudes by arousing their fears

Fear and Attitude Change

- Fear can lead to attitude change but under certain conditions only:
  - Information about changing behaviour
  - Level of fear

- A moderate level of fear followed by recommendations to enable change is the most effective way to use fear-arousing communication

Advertising and Attitude Change

- Most people think that advertising works on everyone but themselves

- Contrary to such beliefs, advertising works
  - When a product is advertised, sales tend to increase

Advertising and Attitude Change

- Which type of ads work best?
  - It depends on the basis of the attitude
    - For cognitively based attitudes, using rational arguments and personal relevance is best
    - For affectively based attitudes, using emotion is best

- Individuals also vary on how important cognitively based and affectively based messages are to them

Advertising and Attitude Change

- Tailor ad to suit the attitude base
  - e.g., heartburn medication - cognitive base
  - e.g., long-distance rates - affective base
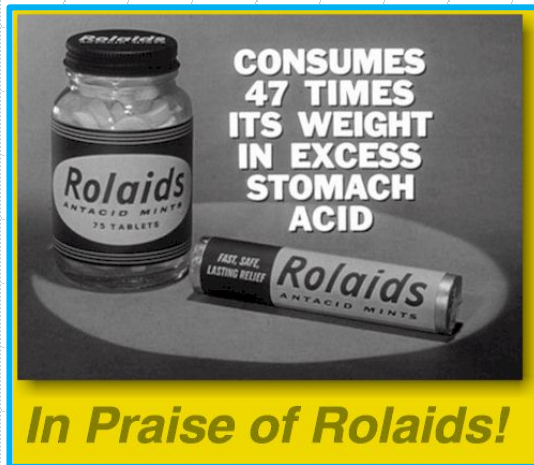
Advertising and Attitude Change

- Make the product personally relevant:
  - e.g., Listerine ad "halitosis"

Advertising and Attitude Change

- Cultural Differences
  - People in Western (individualist) cultures should be most persuaded by advertising that stresses independence
  - People in Eastern (collectivist) cultures should be most persuaded by advertising that stresses interdependence
  - Research has supported these predictions
    - e.g., Han & Shavritt (1994)

Advertising and Attitude Change

- Which ad would you prefer to watch?
  - One with direct advertising or one with subliminal advertising?
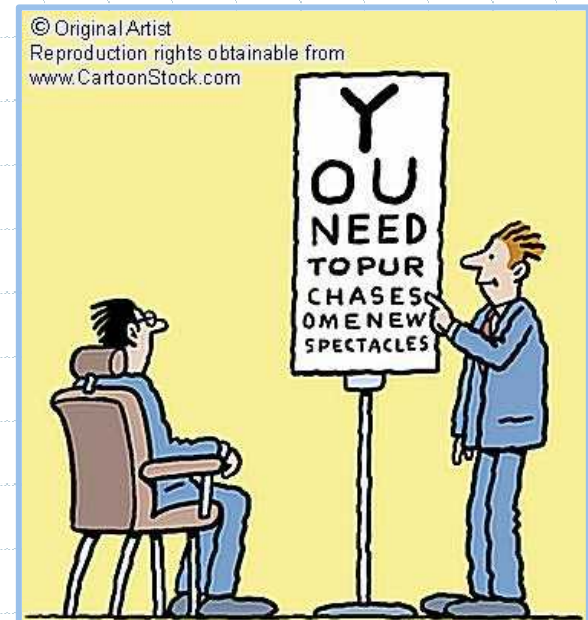
Advertising and Attitude Change

- Subliminal messages are words or pictures used to persuade that are not consciously perceived
  - There is no evidence to suggest that subliminal messages in advertising have any influence on consumer's behaviour
  - Wilson found most students prefer direct advertising, because they were afraid subliminal advertising would influence them more
    - Not the case, direct works better

Subliminal Advertising Examples

Resisting Persuasive Messages

- Attitude Inoculation:
  - The process of making people immune to attempts to change their attitudes by exposing them to small doses of the arguments against their position (McGuire, 1964)
  - A method of developing resistance to attitude change techniques

Resisting Persuasive Messages

- Attitude Inoculation:
  - Exposed to counter arguments
  - Useful for resisting persuasion
    - e.g., peer pressure
  - Reactance theory (boomerang)
    - Approach cannot be too strong or it will boomerang
    - Prohibited activity will become attractive

Being Alert to Product Placement

- Product Placement:
  - A persuasion method whereby advertisers place their product into the script of a movie or television show
  - Forewarning people that someone is about to try to change their attitude is an effective solution

Changing Our Attitudes Because of Our Behaviour: The Theory of Cognitive Dissonance

- Cognitive Dissonance:
  - A feeling of discomfort caused by the realization that one's behaviour is inconsistent with one's attitudes or that one holds two conflicting attitudes
  - Dissonance most often occurs whenever we do something that makes us feel stupid or immoral

The Theory of Cognitive Dissonance

- The discomfort motivates us to take steps to reduce it

- Solution:
  - Change the behaviour
  - Change the cognition
  - Add new cognitions

The Theory of Cognitive Dissonance

- Ways to reduce dissonance:

① Here you are, a reasonably happy, content person with a good amount of self-esteem.

② Then you do something that goes against your image of yourself... Something stupid, immoral, or foolish.

The Surgeon General has determined that smoking is hazardous to your health.

③ You experience Dissonance! An unpleasant arousal state that you are motivated to reduce!

④ But HOW?

⑤ You could change your behaviour...

⑥ You could change one of your cognitions...

Cigs Cause Cancer

Ah...so relaxing.

⑦ Or, you could add consonant cognitions.

⑧ Successfully doing any of these three will reduce your dissonance. You're a happy camper once again!

The Theory of Cognitive Dissonance

- Excuses, excuses, excuses!
  - Smoking
  - Overeating
  - Not exercising
  - Drinking/drugs
  - Unprotected sex
  - Staying in a bad relationship

You can make **EXCUSES** or **YOU** can make **PROGRESS**. **Your Choice.**

catrinaishungry.com

Excuses, excuses, excuses...

Attitudes & Attitude Change
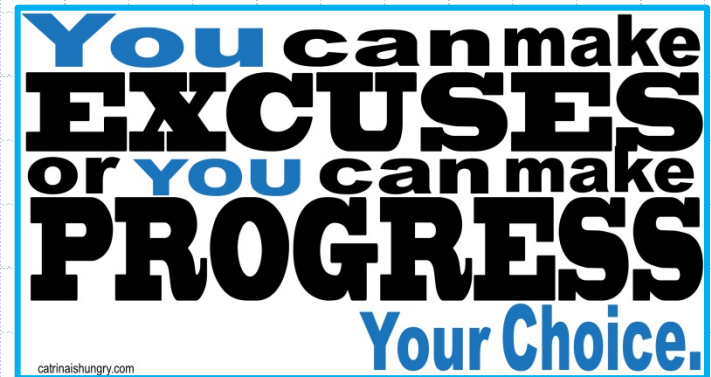
Decisions, Decisions, Decisions

- Dissonance is also experienced when we make a decision

- Post-decision dissonance:
  - Dissonance that is inevitably aroused after a person makes a decision
  - Typically reduced by enhancing the attractiveness of the chosen alternative and devaluating the rejected alternatives

- Dissonance reduction greatest when having to choose between two unattractive alternatives

Decisions, Decisions, Decisions

- The more permanent and irrevocable the decision, the greater the need to reduce dissonance

- Dissonance experiences alter values, especially where difficult moral decisions are concerned

Decisions, Decisions, Decisions

- The Decision to Behave Immorally:
  - The more permanent and irrevocable the decision, the greater the need to reduce dissonance
  - When presented with a moral dilemma the decision made will evoke dissonance
    - e.g., to cheat or not cheat on an exam
  - A decision either way will influence attitudes in order to reduce the dissonance
    - e.g., attitudes about cheating

Dissonance, the Brain, and Evolution

- Neuroscientists have shown that reasoning areas of the brain "shut down" when people are confronted with dissonant information
  - When the inconsistency is resolved, the brain's neural circuits involved in pleasure are activated

The Justification of Effort

- The more effort we put into gaining group membership, the more we like the group we have just joined

- Justification of Effort:
  – The tendency for individuals to increase their liking for something they have worked hard to attain

The Justification of Effort

- Dissonance can also be experienced when we invest a lot of effort in obtaining a seemingly unworthy goal
  - e.g., initiation rituals, boot camp

- Solution:
  - Justify effort by increasing liking for group/event

The Psych. of Insufficient Justification

- When we experience dissonance, we look to both external and internal justifications of our behaviour

- External Justification:
  - A person's reason or explanation for dissonant behaviour that resides outside the individual
    - e.g., in order to receive a large reward
- Internal Justification:
  - The reduction of dissonance by changing something about oneself
    - e.g., one's attitude or behaviour

The Psych. of Insufficient Justification

- Sufficient external justification:
  - Dissonance will be low = no change required

- Insufficient external justification:
  - Dissonance will be high
  - Look inward to justify behaviour
  - Change in attitude or behaviour

The Psych. of Insufficient Justification

- Counter-Attitudinal Advocacy:
  - The process that occurs when a person states an opinion or attitude that runs counter to his or her private belief or attitude
  - When you cannot find *external justification* for your behaviour, you will attempt to find (or create) *internal justification*

The Psych. of Insufficient Justification

- Festinger & Carlsmith (1959):
  - Participants were paid $20 or $1 to lie to a fellow student
  - Those who had insufficient external justification (i.e., paid $1) changed their attitudes to make themselves feel like they were telling the truth

The Psych. of Insufficient Justification

- Using Counter-Attitudinal Advocacy to Tackle Social Problems
  - State an opinion or attitude that goes counter to your own
  - Results in change of attitude
  - Change in attitude is greater if coupled with hypocrisy induction

The Psych. of Insufficient Justification

- Using Counter-Attitudinal Advocacy to Tackle Social Problems
    - In several different studies, participants generated counter-attitudinal arguments for a social cause they did not originally support
        - e.g., condom use
    - The hypocrisy created resulted in positive behavioural changes
        - e.g., Leippe & Eisenstadt (1994)

The Psych. of Insufficient Justification

- The Power of Mild Punishment
  - Insufficient punishment is the dissonance aroused when individuals lack sufficient external justification for having resisted a desired activity or object, usually resulting in the individuals devaluing the forbidden activity or object

- Harsh Punishment:
  - Sufficient external justification
  - Low dissonance
  - Requires constant vigilance

The Aftermath of Bad Deeds

- According to dissonance theory, when we hurt someone, we come to dislike or hate that person as a way to justify our cruelty
  - e.g., dehumanizing the victims of war

Your ability to rationalize your own bad deeds makes you believe that the whole world is as amoral as you are.

Douglas Coupland
Canadian Novelist
Born 1961

QuoteHD.com

Avoiding the Rationalization Trap

- We may also experience dissonance when we harm others

- One way to resolve this dissonance is by derogating the victim

- Danger - can lead to a continuation, or escalation of violence against them:
  - Rationalization trap
    - The potential for dissonance reduction to produce a succession of self-justifications that ultimately results in a chain of stupid or immoral actions

Avoiding the Rationalization Trap

- Self-Affirmation Theory
  - A theory suggesting that people will reduce the impact of a dissonance-arousing threat to their self-concept by focusing on and affirming their competence on some dimension unrelated to the threat

Avoiding the Rationalization Trap

- Dissonance, Self-Affirmation, and Culture
  - Whether a culture is individualistic or collectivist may influence whether or not dissonance is experienced, and whether a subsequent change in attitude occurs
    - See Heine & Lehman, 1997

Avoiding the Rationalization Trap

- Dissonance, Self-Affirmation, and Culture
    - Research shows that an independent self-affirmation diminished the need for dissonance reduction among European-Canadians (Hoshino-Browne et al., 2005)
    - An interdependent self-affirmation diminished the need for dissonance reduction among East Asians

on the next...

social
PSYCHOLOGY

MIDTERM dunh dunh dunhhhhhh!