Attitudes and Behavior

and infer their attitudes, motives, and feelings. Fazio, Zanna, and Cooper (1977) attempted to identify when cognitive dissonance occurs and when self-perception occurs. They argued that self-perception processes determine attitude change when we act in a manner that is not too discrepant from our initial position, and that cognitive dissonance determines attitude change when we do something that’s very discrepant from our initial position. Insofar as people rarely act in ways that are terribly discrepant from what they believe, self-perception processes tend to occur much more frequently than cognitive dissonance.

**F. What Creates Arousal?**

In addition to exploring whether physiological arousal influences attitude change in the manner specified by cognitive dissonance theory, researchers have also examined the origins of arousal. Several theoretical positions have been offered over the years.

1. **Festinger: Cognitive Inconsistency Creates Arousal**

According to Festinger’s (1957) original theory, cognitive inconsistency creates arousal. This inconsistency arises whenever two cognitions don’t go together. For example, if you think all NASCAR racers are uncouth, you will experience cognitive dissonance if you learn that your favorite driver has an extensive collection of fine

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**FIGURE 6.12**

Attitudes toward Pardoning Richard Nixon as a Function of Choice and the True Side Effects of a Drug

The data show two effects of interest: First, the drug’s effect was stronger in the high-choice condition than in the low-choice condition. Second, within the high-choice condition, participants given a tension-inducing drug showed a lot of attitude change, and participants given a relaxing drug showed relatively little attitude change. These findings provide stronger support for cognitive dissonance theory than for self-perception theory.