

TABLE 6.5 Comparing Various Theories of Cognitive Dissonance

Theorist	Explanation	Does Arousal Play a Role?	Does Inconsistency Play a Role?	Do People Need to Resolve the Particular Inconsistency That Created Dissonance?	Do Private Attitudes Change?
Festinger	Inconsistency between any two cognitions creates an aversive state of arousal that people are driven to reduce.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bem	People look at their behavior in the context in which it occurs and draw an appropriate inference about why they acted as they did.	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Aronson	Inconsistency between a self-relevant cognition and a behavior creates an aversive state of arousal that people are driven to reduce.	Yes	Yes (but one of the cognitions must be self-relevant)	Yes	Yes
Schlenker	People don't want to be hypocritical, so they attempt to negotiate a more positive social identity with themselves and their audience.	Yes	Yes (but only public inconsistency; private inconsistency is tolerable)	Yes	Not necessarily
Cooper and Fazio	People have been punished for willingly bringing about foreseeable negative outcomes. The punishment gives rise to anticipatory anxiety, which people are driven to reduce.	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Steele	People are motivated to maintain a global image of adequacy. This image is challenged when they behave in a hypocritical fashion, and they restore the positive image by engaging in self-affirmation (independent of whether it involves resolving the specific inconsistency).	Yes	No	No	Yes