

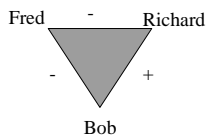
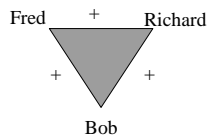
Dissonance and Self-Justification

Balance Theory – Fritz Heider

- A **balanced** state is one in which the entities comprising the situation and the feelings about them fit together.
- We prefer balance in our environment over imbalance.
- We know balance when we see it.
- Which is more balanced?
 - Fred hates Richard because Richard is similar to Fred's friend Bob
 - Fred likes Richard because Richard is similar to Fred's friend Bob.
- Irving avoids people he likes
- Irving seeks out people he likes
- This approach examines relationships between people and objects in the environment.

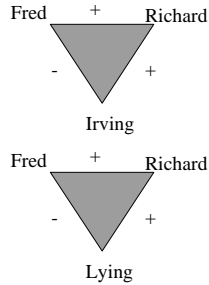
Balance From Fred's Point of View

- A triad (three entities in the environment) is balanced when:
- All three of the relations between the entities are positive
 - Fred likes Richard, Fred likes Bob, Richard is similar to Bob.
- Two of the relations are negative and one is positive.
 - Fred hates Richard, Fred hates Bob, Richard is similar to Bob.
- When you multiply the positives and negatives, the product is positive.



Imbalance From Fred's Point of View

- A triad (three entities in the environment) is imbalanced when:
 - Two of the relations are positive and one is negative
 - Fred likes Richard, Richard likes Irving, Fred hates Irving.
 - Fred likes Richard, Richard lied, Fred hates lying.
- When you multiply the positives and negatives, the product is negative
- Relationships with three negatives are ambiguous.

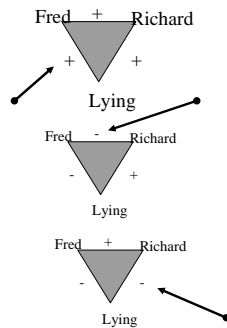


Equifinality

- The system we inhabit tends to become balanced one way or the other.
- We prefer balanced states, and tend to change our environment to produce balance.
- When there's imbalance in the environment, a **stress to change** is produced.

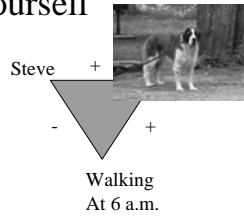
Producing Balance

1. **Change in sentiment relations** – change our **liking** for one or more of the entities.
 - I love lying – or,
 - I hate Richard.
2. **Change in unit relations** – change our belief in the **connection** between the entities.
 - Richard didn't really lie, he was just misinformed.



Try It Yourself

- Produce an imbalanced situation
- Figure out how to produce balance through **sentiment relations (change in our liking)**
- Figure out how to produce balance through **unit relations (change in belief about connections)**
- Make it realistic, what people really do in life



I like my dog, he likes to go for a long walk at 6 a.m., which I don't especially like.
What do I do?

Cognitive Dissonance

- A state of tension that occurs whenever an individual simultaneously holds two cognitions that are psychologically inconsistent.
- We become motivated to reduce the dissonance
- A **balance theory for cognitions**

What Causes Dissonance?

- Two cognitions are dissonant when, if considered alone, the opposite of one follows from the other.
- Examples of dissonant cognitions:
 - I value my life.
 - I smoke deadly cigarettes.
 - I love Nature.
 - I drive an 8-mpg Ford Expedition.
 - I believe that decent housing should be available for low income people.
 - I want my town to require 3-acre building lots to preserve its rural character, even though that will increase the price of housing and keep low-income people out.

Dissonance Process

Inconsistency between cognitions is noted.

Dissonance is created

Amount of dissonance can actually be calculated:

The Dissonance Ratio:

$$\frac{\text{Number of cognitions dissonant with relevant cognition}}{\text{Number of cognitions dissonant with relevant cognition} + \text{number of cognitions consonant with relevant cognition}}$$

You want a small numerator and a big denominator

Dissonance Ratio

- **Relevant Cognition:** *I think low income people should have decent housing*
- **Dissonant Cognition:** *I voted for 3-acre zoning*

Sample Ratios:

I voted for 3-acre zoning

I voted for 3-acre zoning, but also I worked for Habitat for Humanity

I voted for 3-acre zoning

I voted for 3-acre zoning, but also I worked for Habitat for Humanity and have supported mass transportation and have donated to other housing programs and volunteer at a homeless shelter

Who feels better?

Dissonance Reduction: Changing the Dissonance Ratio

Dissonance reduction strategy is implemented:

- **Cognition:** *I think low income people should have decent housing*
- **Dissonant Cognition:** *I voted for 3-acre zoning*

Remove or change dissonant cognitions – this is classic dissonance

- I didn't vote that way – difficult to remove behaviors
- I don't want affordable housing – might be easier – change belief to match behavior- decide boring club is fun

Add new consonant cognitions (make the denominator bigger)

- Interest rates are so low, anyone can afford a 3-acre lot
- 3 acre lots are necessary for good septic systems, we don't want low income people to have bad septic systems.

Reduce the importance of dissonant cognitions

- My vote didn't matter
- It doesn't matter if there's affordable housing here, there are plenty of other cheap places to live

Increase the importance of consonant cognitions

- Habitat for Humanity will provide housing for all that need it
- Mass transportation will allow low income people to commute to work from faraway, cheap lands

Dissonance reduced; relief experienced

Activity: dissonance - producing situations

Other Ways to Reduce Dissonance

- **Dampening of arousal:**
 - Dissonance is an unpleasant physiological state.
 - If you can't change cognitions to reduce dissonance, change physiological state:
 - Drinking alcohol eliminates dissonance (Steele et al., 1981), eliminating the need for cognitive change.
- **Self-Affirmation:**
 - Dissonance is an attack on one's self-concept.
 - If you can't change cognitions to reduce dissonance, reaffirm self-concept
 - Thinking about all the ways you are a good person reduces need for cognitive change.

Aronson's Approach to Dissonance

- Important dissonance involves self: dissonance between a cognition about oneself (I am wise and good) and another inconsistent cognition (I smoke, I drink, or do or think something else that is not wise or good).
- Serious dissonance arises when one's self-concept is dissonant with other cognitions.
