

PsychoBabble

www.uh.edu/psichi.com

Special points of interest:

- Cognitive Dissonance
- Abraham Maslow's Holistic Dynamic Theory

Congratulations on making it this far into the semester. We hope you're feeling ready for finals and already planning great psychology related things to do over the winter break! Have a great break and see you next semester. As always, if you have any questions or suggestions please email us at uh.psichi@yahoo.com, and we will be more than happy to assist you.

Ana Gonzalez
Editor



Evolutionary Role of Cognitive Dissonance

Natalie Plummer

Cognitive dissonance plays a large role in our own lives and to the workings of society. Researching its origins may lead us to clues that will enhance our understanding of the true complexity of this phenomena and its importance. Research conducted by Egan, Santos, and Bloom suggests that human children and nonhuman primates both experience cognitive dissonance and actively engage in cognitive dissonance reduction strategies in similar ways adults have been found to do. There are issues with the sample sizes of these experiments, but subsequent research has provided more evidence to Egan's et al. theories (West, Jett, Beckman, Vonk 2010). If cognitive dissonance did develop earlier than what was previously assumed, as this research suggests, then there could be many implications such as dissonance reduction being a biological mechanism to combat anxiety.

Two separate experiments were done in Egan's et al. research. In the first experiment, four-year old children were asked to evaluate their preferences towards stickers. Researchers then picked three equally preferred stickers and gave the children an option between A or B or in the no-choice condition were given either A or B randomly. The children were then given an option between which option they did not pick or receive and the novel option C. The second experiment was set up similarly but with capuchin monkeys instead of human children. The preferences toward certain M&M colors were ranked for each capuchin.



Inside this issue:

- | | |
|--|---|
| Evolutionary Role of Cognitive Dissonance | 1 |
| Holistic Dynamic Theory and Further Research | 3 |
| Just For Fun | 6 |

Evolutionary Role of Cognitive Dissonance (cont.)

Researchers again picked three equally preferred colors and gave the capuchins a choice between A or B; capuchins in the no-choice condition were randomly assigned color A or B. They were then offered the choice between the color not received and the novel option C. In the choice condition of both studies participants were more likely to pick the novel option C over the option they did not pick in the first trial. This shows that the participants were engaging in dissonance reduction strategies by devaluing the previously highly rated item to reassure themselves of their original decision.



regarding the origins of cognitive dissonance and reduction techniques we may be able to better understand its natural purpose and importance in the workings of daily life.

Egan's et al. study raises the debate of to what extent humans are truly more complex than other animal species. If nonhuman primates are exhibiting this behavior, how many other species will? Just as this article claims, this either means humans are less complex than previously thought or monkeys are more complex than previously thought. It is my opinion that other species have similar emotional experiences as the ones we humans have. It is pure assumption that they do not. The problem is that it may be much harder to set up an effective test to measure to what extent non-primate animal species experience these phenomena. If more research is done

What role may cognitive dissonance have played in evolution? Dissonance reduction causes us to become more confident of and satisfied with our behavior and choices. Someone who made a poor choice, but reduced their own dissonance level, would likely experience less stress than the person who recognizes the mistake, but does not resolve the uncomfortable feeling that dissonant behavior often causes. Someone who is having difficulty reducing dissonance would presumably often be left worrying if they made the appropriate decision. Are some people who are suffering from symptoms of anxiety actually struggling to reduce their own cognitive dissonance? This research suggests that dissonance reduction is not only a learned behavior, but an evolutionary mechanism that allows us to accept our decisions and move on to the next problem. Dissonance reduction is a way for us to avoid counterfactual thinking. However, it may be possible for someone to be prone to dissonance reduction too often. The individual who repeatedly engages in immediate dissonance reduction strategies may continue to make the same mistakes over and over because instead of learning from the mistake and accepting it they justify it. It seems to be important to keep a balance of self-evaluation to maintain optimum mental health.

Both of the experiments in this research study have a relatively small sample size. The first experiment had a sample size of 30 four year-old human children, but can 30 four year-olds accurately represent the entire world's population of four year-olds? This is a reasonable sample size, yet the results would be much more powerful if more children had been studied. The second experiment, in which capuchins were studied, only included results from four capuchins. This really is not a big enough sample size to make this experiment statistically sound, especially compared to the 30 human children in the first experiment. It was unclear if part of the results from the capuchin study had been altered due to the capuchin's perception of being given the lesser of the two options when in the "no-choice" condition. Egan's et al. study over all would hold a lot more relevance with a larger sample size in both experiments, but especially in the primate experiment. Luckily for them, another team of psychologists decided to replicate this study using several types of animals, including several species of monkeys (still only seven total), parrots, and bears. While the research did not lead to any evidence of cognitive dissonance reduction in the non-primate categories, there was evidence of cognitive dissonance reduction in the primate categories (West et al., 2010). This subsequent study helps to back up the claims made by Egan et al. in their research. Since this study relates to the evolutionary background of cognitive dissonance and its origins, it is recommend more emphasis be put on the non-human primate aspects of the

Holistic Dynamic Theory and Further Research

Abraham Maslow's Holistic-Dynamic theory is one of the humanistic theories of the psychology of personality that continues to generate research throughout the world. It allows a look into the motivation of individuals while providing a hierarchy of needs that include the self-actualization need. Research has sought to apply this theory to specific groups in society while developing measures for the hierarchy of needs.

According to the Maslow, motivation involves the whole person to fulfill needs which are arranged on a staircase-like hierarchy of needs. Because there are several areas of the person and the whole is involved, the reason why a person is compelled to do something may be because of several hidden or obvious specific needs the person has formed. Although these needs can take different forms when they are manifested specifically and uniquely in individuals, each person tends to follow a regular pattern of need fulfillment in the hierarchy of needs. Once the lower level needs are fulfilled, one can move on to satisfy the next needs on the hierarchy. These needs can be divided into physiological needs, safety needs, love and belongingness needs, esteem needs and finally the need for self-actualization. Once each need is met, one can focus one's attention and energy on the next need. Once the need for esteem is met, the person enters a stage of self-actualization. Maslow argued that a healthy individual will also have other needs, the aesthetic need and the cognitive need. Each of the needs allow an individual to fulfill their potential.



Abraham Maslow

On the other hand, if these needs are not fulfilled an individual may acquire neurotic needs that lead to pathology. These needs are counterproductive and therefore are a stumbling block in the individual's attempts towards fulfillment of full potential and self-actualization. Since an individual is not able to separate their whole attention and energy efficiently enough, if one is focusing on fulfilling a need on a certain level, fulfillment of needs at other levels is stopped. This assumes that the individual must completely fill the need at each level.

The next greatest assertion of Maslow's theory is that of the self-actualizing person. In this theory, the criteria that are set forth for the self-actualized person are strict and at times ambiguous to Maslow himself. Since the needs of self-actualized people have all been, theoretically, met, they are motivated instead by metamotivation, which is also referred to as "eternal verities" or B-values which are unselfish and are interested in the being of others (Maslow, 1970). There are 14 identified values in this theory which include: truth, goodness, beauty, wholeness, spontaneity, uniqueness, perfection, completion, justice and order, simplicity, totality, effortlessness, playfulness, and autonomy. These were referred to as the many facets of a jewel (Feist et al., 2013).



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs
166-171).

In addition to the 14 values of self-actualizing people, Maslow identified 15 characteristics or traits of life that these individuals have. These traits are a "more efficient perception of reality and more comfortable relations with it", acceptance of self, others and nature, spontaneity, simplicity or naturalness, problem centering, the quality of detachment or the need for privacy, autonomy, independence of culture and environment, will or active agents, a continued freshness of appreciation, the mystic or peak experiences, gemeinschaftsgefühl, a word that Maslow borrowed from Alfred Adler (Maslow, 1970, p. 153-165). In addition, the traits include interpersonal relations, the democratic character structure, the discrimination between means and ends or between good and evil, a philosophical or unhostile sense of humor, creativeness and lastly, resistance to enculturation or the transcendence of any particular culture (Maslow, 1970, p.

Holistic Dynamic Theory and Further Research (cont.)

Along with self-actualization and its traits, Maslow differentiated between love that is expressed by a self-actualized person and by someone who has not self-actualized. A self-actualized person will show B-love, which is love for the being. B-love is unselfish, altruistic and allows an individual to seek out sexual intimacy without personal gain as the goal (Tribe, 1982). On the other hand, D-love, or deficiency love, can be seen as the opposite of B-love in that it is selfish, conditional and functions on the safety level (Tribe, 1982).

Lastly, Maslow spoke about the Jonah complex which can be defined as the one has for being the best one could be (Feist et al., 2013). He argued that this was one of the things that keeps people from reaching their full potential for self-actualization and gave two possible reasons for its presence. The first is that reaching self-actualization is so great a feeling and being that one does not know how to handle the feeling and therefore retreats from it. The second reason is that since we each have our own fantasies for greatness, we tend to ignore them or set them aside so that we do not ruin ourselves with pride (Feist et al., 2013). This is usually because we do not want to appear as what would be prideful according to society. Therefore, although we each have the potential for self-actualization once our lower level needs have been met, there are obstacles that we face in reaching this psychological state.

Research Developing Holistic-Dynamic Theory



Of the most significant changes to Maslow's Holistic-Dynamic theory are those that have led the way to positive psychology. This new field in psychology, which emphasizes an optimistic look on humanity and individuals while striving for their greatest well-being, has been influenced by the theories of humanistic schools of thought, like that of Maslow (Feist et al., 2013). Positive psychology has not attempted to stray too far away from Maslow and others' theories although it has some differences in that positive psychology draws away from being just a personality theory to being an entire philosophy that can be applied to other areas of life, not just those dealing with the psychological. Positive psychology aims to find that which will cause a greater positivity in humanity, whereas Maslow attempted to identify the criteria for self-actualizing people. While the goals of researchers are different, the ultimate goal that an individual should strive for is different as well. Maslow allowed for a realistic view of knowing one's own strengths and weaknesses while positive psychology has attempted to emphasize only the strengths in people in keeping with the positive outlook.

Other theorists that have drawn from Maslow's theory have argued that there should be a differentiation between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in the humanistic theories (Cooper, 2102). These argue that the source of motivation is just as important as the motivation itself and that it is through the study of motivation that one can reach a unified stance on the humanistic theories of which Maslow is part of (Cooper, 2102). In addition to this, theorists have attempted to expand Maslow's theory by developing ways to measure his hierarchy of needs. Among these is the Life Motivation Scale, from Goebel and Brown, as well as newer scales including the Basic Needs-Satisfaction Scale (Saeednia, 2011). Theorists have argued that the looseness of language Maslow used called for a qualitative approach to the study of basic needs (Saeednia, 2011).

Holistic Dynamic Theory and Further Research (cont.)

There has been critique regarding the lack of emphasis on intimate relationships in Maslow's theory. It is because of this that theorists have also added an inter-personal factor to Maslow's theory, calling it the Inter-personal Model of Self-actualization (Hanley, 2002). This model attempts to re-emphasize the value of close relationships to the self-actualization of the individual, using as an example the relationship between mother and child (Hanley, 2002). Also, Maslow's theory has been used to focus in on a certain group of society like students. Research has been conducted to understand the relationship between deficiency needs and growth needs in children of school age. Growth needs are defined as the need to learn and deficiency needs as the need to be loved and for safety (Noltemeyer, 2012). Maslow's needs have thus been adjusted to fit into different categories. The Statements about Schools, a measure for the assessment of four of Maslow's needs (security, love and belongingness, esteem and self-actualization), has also been developed, furthering the application of Maslow's theory (Noltemeyer, 2012)

On a larger scale, theorists have used Maslow's hierarchy of needs to predict the quality of life in various countries throughout the world. Research on the topic has confirmed that as the needs in the hierarchy are met, the quality of life as experienced by the individual also increases on an S-shaped trajectory (Hagerty, 1999). Lastly, Maslow's application of his ideas on motivation to business management, and to life in general, have been used to develop ways to motivate the workforce and to develop leaders in business and the workplace (Bennet, 1991).

References

References for Evolutionary Role of Cognitive Dissonance

- Egan, L. C., Santos, L. R., & Bloom, P. (2007). The Origins Of Cognitive Dissonance: Evidence From Children And Monkeys. *Psychological Science*, 18(11), 978-983.
- West, S., Jett, S. E., Beckman, T., & Vonk, J. (2010). The Phylogenetic Roots Of Cognitive Dissonance.. *Journal of Comparative Psychology*, 124(4), 425-432.

References for Holistic Dynamic Theory and Further Research

- Cooper, M. (2012). The intrinsic foundations of extrinsic motivations and goals: Toward a unified humanistic theory of well-being and change. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 53(2), 153-171.
- Feist, J., Feist, G.J., & Roberts T. (2013). *Theories of Personality: International Edition* (8th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw Hill.
- Hagerty, M.R. (1999). Testing maslow's hierarchy of needs: National quality-of-life across time. *Social Indicators Research*, 46(3), 249-271.
- Hanley, S.J., & Abell, S.C. (2002). Maslow and relatedness: Creating an interpersonal model of self-actualization. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 42(4), 37-57.
- Maslow, A. (1970). *Motivation and personality* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Harper & Row.
- Noltemeyer, A., Bush, K., Patton, J., & Bergen, D. (2012). The relationship among deficiency needs and growth needs: An empirical investigation of maslow's theory. *Children and Youth Service Review*, 34, 1862-1867.
- Saednia, Y. (2011). Generating a scale measuring hierarchy of basic needs. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 15, 3084-3094.
- Tribe, C. (1982). *Profile of three theories: Erikson, maslow, piaget*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company.

IMPORTANT DATES

December 6: Inductions ceremony
December 20: Official closing of the fall semester.



JUST FOR FUN



Welcome to the Psychiatric Hotline.

If you are obsessive-compulsive, please press 1 repeatedly.

If you are co-dependent, please ask someone to press 2.

If you have multiple personalities, please press 3, 4, 5, and 6.

If you are paranoid-delusional, we know who you are and what you want. Just stay on the line so we can trace the call.

If you are schizophrenic, listen carefully and a little voice will tell you which number to press.

If you are depressed, it doesn't matter which number you press. No one will answer.

If you are delusional and occasionally hallucinate, please be aware that the thing you are holding on the side of your head is alive and about to bite off your ear.

RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

Anxiety and Health Research Laboratory/Substance Use Treatment Clinic is a research lab in the Psychology Department that examines mental illness and addictive behaviors (e.g., drinking, marijuana use, and smoking). We are looking for bright, talented, and motivated undergraduates to join our research team starting Spring 2014. •Requirements: You may work in our lab either for credit or as a volunteer. You must commit to at least 10 hours per week in the lab for two consecutive semesters. You will be required to complete a CV and personal statement by the end of your second semester. You must have a GPA of 3.5+ and interest in a research career within psychology.

•Duties: As a research assistant, your primary responsibilities will include assisting in grant related preparations, literature searches, data entry, lab organization, human subjects application preparation, recruiting and running research subjects, in addition to a variety of other tasks. If you are interested, please complete the attached application and email it to Lorra Garey at lgarey@uh.edu along with your CV or resume, or drop off your application and CV or resume in Heyne Building Suite 104.

The Cognitive Development Lab at the University of Houston is currently accepting applications for Research Assistant positions. This position is ideal for undergraduate students in psychology or related fields who are interested in volunteering or enrolling in course credit (Psyc 4398) and who would like to gain hands-on research experience. More information about ongoing research in the lab may be found at www.uh.edu/cogdevlab. •Requirements: •- 2 semester commitment

•- minimum of 10 hrs/wk commitment

•- attend meetings Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 12-2pm.

•*Spanish fluency, Vietnamese fluency, multi-media experience or programming experience are highly desired.*

•If you are still interested in the RA position, you can fill out our online application at http://www.class.uh.edu/psyc/cogdev-forms/grad_form.php.