Influence Communication Theories

Name

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**Summary of the Theories**

Psychological conflicts that arise from people having different attitudes or incompatible beliefs constitute cognitive dissonance. For instance, a person can dislike the habits of another person but still like them. According to the cognitive dissonance theory, people always try to strike a balance in what they believe in. so in order to reduce conflicts or dissonance, people will either match their actions with their beliefs or avoid listening to conflicting viewpoints in order to achieve inner harmony or consonance (Harmon-Jones & Mills, 2019). On the other hand, the formation of attitudes and how they change is the major focus of the elaboration likelihood model. The theory suggests that persuasion had two roots, the peripheral and the central roots. In the peripheral route, surface characteristics are used to judge messages. For instance, the credibility of a speaker could be used to judge the credibility of their message. The shifts in attitudes in the peripheral route are small. In the central route, however, attitudes are judged through logical thought processes (Petty, Cacioppo & Kasmer, 2015). This means that more attention is needed in these routes it can allow for major shifts in attitudes. And lastly, the social judgment theory suggests that listeners would interpret a message based on how they agree or disagree with their attitudes. In other words, listeners will be more involved in discussing topics that are more interesting to them because they impact on their attitudes.

**Compare and Contrast**

The social judgment theory has been found to have some practical utility. However, a speaker or a writer must analyze his audience to determine where there latitudes of rejection, non-commitment, or rejection lie (Griffin, 2011). The theory has also been found to be successful in predicting what happens in the mind of a listener or a reader of a message or messages that are within their latitudes of rejection or acceptance. In addition, ego-involvement and the involvement of perceptual distortions of contrast and assimilation explain what happens behind our eyes. However, the mental processes and structures are not visible but can only be explained through observation of input and output and through observing how someone responds to a message. While the social judgment theory explains the process of persuasion to be complex, Sherriff’s explanation seems to be a simpler one considering the fact that attitude can be explained from one angle (Griffin, 2011). And even though the social judgment theory’s research base is limited, some of its predictions have been found to be testable, some have failed while some have been supported.

For so many years, the leading persuasion model was the Elaboration likelihood theory. However, recent studies have shown that this theory to be less predictive and more complex. The theory does not explain comprehensively the effects that a speaker or a writer has on the audience. All these are not good qualities of a good scientific theory. The ambiguities and the weaknesses of the theory’s explanations also make it less testable (Griffin, 2011). The Elaboration likelihood also suggests that good messages are those that generate favorable thoughts when readers or listeners think about them. in other words, arguments are considered to be weak if they do not appeal to the audience and strong if they persuade the audience. These arguments are not considered to be that strong. However, even if this theory’s views on what constitute strong arguments seem to be vague, the model is very impressive because of its diverse research that theorists have puzzled over for many years.

The cognitive dissonance model is a theory that has attained a lot of acknowledgment within popular culture. But despite its wide recognition, the theory is not without serious flaws. For instance, it is very difficult to prove this theory wrong, meaning that it is very difficult to test its arguments. Good scientific theories need to be testable (Griffin, 2011). The dissonance process occurs in four stages, as elaborated in the dissonance diagram below:

Attitude/Behavior Inconsistency

Dissonance Created

Attitude

Change

Dissonance Reduced

A B C D

(Cognitive Dissonance Process as proposes by Festinger)

From the above diagram, it appears that Point A is where proponents of this theory intended to induce counter attitudinal advocacy – making people utter or say things in public that they do not believe in private. But when attitudinal shifts occur at point C, dissonance researchers assume that point B is where dissonance is created, and it disappears at point D. they do not perform any tests to determine whether dissonance actually exists. On the other hand, Festinger – the theorist who came up with this model did not provide reliable means of detecting or testing the degree of dissonance (dissonance thermometer) people experience, if any (Griffin, 2011). This means that distressing mental states will never be understood until dissonance research introduces dissonance thermometers to be used to measure the degree of dissonance.

References

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Petty, R. E., Cacioppo, J. T., & Kasmer, J. A. (2015). The role of effect in the elaboration likelihood model of persuasion. In *Communication, Social Cognition, and Affect (PLE: Emotion)* (pp. 133-162). Psychology Press.