Annotated Bibliography of Recent and Significant Psychological Research Of Import to Public Relations Practitioners

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Annotated Bibliography of Recent and Significant Psychological Research Of Import to Public Relations Practitioners

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Editors' Note: The following bibliography consists of recent psychological research, reviews, and theoretical works that bear upon the work of the public relations practitioner. Most items in this list have been published within the last seven years and have been culled from scholarly journals in psychology or are public relations articles that draw heavily upon psychological research (no claim to representativeness, however, is made). It is hoped that this list will promote integrated research between psychologists and public relations practitioners.

Keywords are listed in bold.

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Attitude Formation

These articles explore how attitudes are formed and maintained.

Bateman, T. S., Sakano, T., & Fujita, M. (1992). Roger, me, and my attitude: Film propaganda and cynicism toward corporate leadership. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 77*(5), 768-771. This is a unique study of the effect of film propaganda on cynicism toward corporations using both American and Japanese samples.
Attitude formation, Attitudes toward business.

Kinder, D. R. (1998). Opinion and action in the realm of politics. In D. Gilbert, S. Fiske, and G. Lindzey, *The Handbook of Social Psychology*, 4th ed., pp. 778-867. Boston: McGraw-Hill. An absolute "must-read" for anyone interested in the psychological processes underlying and maintaining political attitudes and public opinion. The chapter thoroughly overviews the topic and provides insights about implications for democracy, measurement of public opinion, and the public opinion construct.
Attitude formation, Political attitudes, Public opinion, Measurement.

Lord, K. R., & Ptrevu, S. (1993). Advertising and publicity: An information processing perspective, *Journal of Economic Psychology, 14*, 57-84. Using information processing theory, this paper reviews relevant literature on the relative effects of advertising and publicity. Several proposals and suggestions for further comparative research are set forth.
Attitude Formation, Publicity, Advertising.

Schwartz, N. (2000). Social judgment and attitudes: Warmer, more social, and less conscious. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 30*, 149-176. This is a good update of social judgment research. Special attention is paid to the role of social, motivated, and less conscious processes in social judgment.
Attitude formation.

Williams, S. L. & Moffitt, M.A. (1997). Corporate image as an impression formation process: Prioritizing personal, organizational, and environmental audience factors. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 9*(4), 237-258. In contrast to established long-held conclusions that corporate image is determined mostly by the organization, recent findings suggest that image is also determined by both environmental and personal factors of the audience member. Studies suggest, further, that these factors combine in novel ways as part of an impression-formation process and produce an overall perceptually-based audience image. This study suggests different public relations campaign strategies based on findings of multiple images of audiences. These images come from social influence, personal impact, business-related and organization factors.
Attitude formation, personal involvement.

Attitude Change

These articles explore how attitudes change.

Bright, A. D., Manfredo, M. J., Fishbein, M., & Bath, A. (1993). Application of the Theory of Reasoned Action to the National Park Service's controlled burn policy. *Journal of Leisure Research, 25*(3), 263-280. This is a nice application of the Theory of Reasoned Action to a communication policy about environmental issues. The most interesting aspect of this investigation is the use of an elicitation study to identify salient beliefs and attitudes about the environmental policy.
Attitude change, Environmental issues, Theory of Reasoned Action.

Lavalee, L., & Suedfeld, P. (1997). Conflict in the Clayoquot Sound: Using thematic content analysis to understand psychological aspects of environmental controversy. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science, 29*(3), 194-209. The information campaigns of seven groups involved in a major environmental land dispute were content analyzed for integrative complexity, motive imagery (need for power, achievement, and affiliation) and value pluralism. Low levels of complexity and high levels of power imagery were found. Environmental and forest industry values did not overlap. The research suggests that more integratively complex campaigns may yield more innovative solutions to environmental conflicts.
Attitude change, Persuasion, Environmental issues.

Smith, R. D. (1993). Psychological type and public relations: Theory, Research and Application. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 5(3), 177-200.* This research applies psychological type theory (articulated by Jung and developed by Myers) to public relations, especially to matters of persuasion and message effectiveness. It includes an instrument developed to measure characteristics inherent in messages that relate to how persons gather information and make decisions. It reports a preliminary study that supports the hypothesis that a person will prefer a message that exhibits the characteristics of his or her own psychological type, and it offers guidelines for using psychological type theory in the production of public relations messages.
Attitude change, Personality correlates.

Vrij, A., & Smith, B. J. (1999). Reducing ethnic prejudice by public campaigns: An evaluation of a present and a new campaign. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology, 9*, 195-215. A 3-poster campaign to reduce ethnic prejudice was amended in light of social-psychological principles (e.g., categorization, attribution, source credibility). The original campaign worsened prejudice, while the amended posters did not.
Attitude change, Ethnic prejudice.

Vrij, A., Van Shie, E., & Cherryman, J. (1996). Reducing ethnic prejudice through public communication programs: A Social-Psychological perspective. *The Journal of Psychology, 130*(4), 413-420. This study used brief videos to experimentally test, with partial success, psychologically based efforts to reduce ethnic prejudice.
Attitude change, Ethnic prejudice.

Cognitive Processing

These articles use cognitive processing to consider how audiences and public relations practitioners make judgments

Culbertson, H. M., Denbow, C. J. & Stempel, G. III. (1998). Needs and beliefs in construct accessibility: Keys to new understanding. *Public Relations Review,* 24(2), 125-143. This study of respondents' closeness to osteopathic medicine suggested the storage-bin concept in construct accessibility theory, those who had experience with the concepts of osteopathy were most apt to use them in assessing osteopathic medicine.
Cognitive processing, Construct accessibility, Personal constructs.

Fischer, R. (1998). Public relations problem solving: Heuristics and expertise. *Journal of Public Relations Research,* 10(2), 137-153. This study examined one of the threats to successful problem solving identified by cognitive psychologists: error induced by the problem solvers' use of heuristics. The three factors comprising expertise (experience, education, and training) are considered in a controlled experiment involving conjunction-rule problem frames in a public relations context. A novel approach to measuring expertise is used and discussed in this study. Training was found to significantly affect error rate, whereas experience and education, as operationalized in the study, had no effect.
Heuristics, problem-solving.

Hallahan, K. (1999). No, Virginia, it's not true what they say about publicity's "implied third-party endorsement" effect. *Public Relations Review,* 25(3), 331-350. In this essay, the author argues that any implied third-party effect involves inferences by audience members who used biased processing that favors news and disfavors advertising. The author reviews relevant research, including 11 experiments that provide only qualified support.
Cognitive effects, attitudinal effects, involvement, attitude and knowledge interactions.

Hallahan, K. (1999). Content class as a contextual cue in the cognitive processing of publicity versus advertising. *Journal of Public Relations Research,* 11(4), 293-320. Based on Hallahan's prior literature review, this study presents original experimental research refuting claims supporting news superiority over advertising.
Cognitive effects, attitudinal effects, involvement, attitude and knowledge interactions.

Consumer Attitudes and Behavior

These articles link to marketing communication planning and evaluation.

Baron, J. (1999). Consumer attitudes about personal and political action. *Journal of Consumer Psychology,* 8(3), 261-275. This manuscript explores the effect of various moral views on purchase behaviors. Deontological (some acts are inherently wrong) versus consequentialist (some acts are wrong by virtue of their negative consequences) principles are compared and buying intention is measured in two questionnaire studies.
Attitudes, Consumer Behavior.

Consumer Attitudes and Behavior

These articles link to marketing communication planning and evaluation.

Moore, D. J., & Harris, W. D. (1996). Affect intensity and the consumer's attitude toward high impact emotional advertising appeals. *Journal of Advertising, 25*(2), 37-55. The intensity with which a person feels emotions is related to their enjoyment of and attitude toward positive emotional advertising appeals. Participants high in Affect-Intensity (AI) enjoyed a Hallmark television commercial more and had a more positive attitude toward the commercial than low AI participants.
Attitude change, Personality correlates.

Framing Effects

These articles help guide public relations communication strategies.

Kaufman, S., & Smith, J. (1999). Framing and reframing in land use change conflicts. *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research, 16*(2), 164-180. Presents a discussion and typology of frames used in land use change conflicts. It also analyzes a specific landfill expansion conflict with regard to these frames.
Framing effects, Land use issues.

Nelson, T., E., Oxley, Z. M., & Clawson, R. A. (1997). Toward a psychology of framing effects. *Political Behavior, 19*(3), 221-246. Describes a study in which questions about support for welfare are framed differently. Findings accord with the idea that framing results in a differential weighting of important attitude beliefs.
Framing effects, Attitudes, Political attitudes.

Inter-group relations

This article gives perspective to public relations strategy for solving group conflicts.

Stephan, W. G., Stephan, C. W., & Gudykunst, W. B. (1999). Anxiety in inter-group relations: A comparison of Anxiety/Uncertainty Management theory and Integrated Threat Theory. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 23*(4), 613-628. Nice explication and comparison of Anxiety/Uncertainty Management theory and Integrated Threat Theory. Both point to the central role of anxiety reduction in successful inter-group relations.
Inter-group relations, Uncertainty, Anxiety.

Internet

These articles contribute to how we can use the Internet as a research method and how Internet information is processed.

Bordia, P., DiFonzo, N., & Chang, A. (1999). Rumor as group problem-solving: Development patterns in informal computer-mediated groups. *Small Group Research, 30*(1), 8-28. Content analysis of e-mail rumor discussions showed patterns similar to group development.
Rumors, Internet.

Bordia, P., & Rosnow, R. L. (1998). Rumor rest stops on the information highway: A naturalistic study of transmission patterns in a computer-mediated rumor chain. *Human Communication Research, 25*(2), 163-179. Content analysis of Internet rumor discussions.
Rumors, Internet, Reputation management.

Fisher, D. R. (1998). Rumoring theory and the Internet: A framework for analyzing the grass roots. *Social Science Computer Review, 16*(2), 158-168. The author uses Shibutani's idea of rumor as collective sense making to help understand use of the Internet by Social Movement Organizations.
Rumors, Internet, Reputation Management, Social Movement Organizations.

Kaye, B. K., Johnson, T. J. (1999). Research methodology: Taming the cyber frontier: Techniques for improving online surveys. Issues and guidelines for generating and administering Internet surveys are proposed.
Internet, Measurement.

Issues Management

These articles deal topically with challenges often faced by the PR practitioner.

Nickell, D., & Herzog, H. A. (1996). Ethical ideology and moral persuasion: Personal moral philosophy, gender, and judgments of pro- and anti-animal research propaganda. *Society and Animals, 4*(1), 53-64. Undergraduates rated sixteen pro- and anti-animal research campaign propaganda messages. Women and idealists (persons with a sense that acting ethically will result in positive outcomes) found anti-animal research propaganda more effective than males and non-idealists.
Attitude change, Animal research issues.

Stone, G., Barnes, J. H., & Montgomery, C. (1995). ECOSCALE: A scale for the measurement of environmentally responsible consumers. *Psychology & Marketing, 12*(7), 595-612. Presents the development and uses of a scale to measure "environmental responsibility" of consumers.
Measurement, Environmental issues, Attitudes.

Issues Management

These articles deal topically with challenges often faced by the PR practitioner.

Wandersman, A. H., & Hallman, W. K. (1993). Are people acting irrationally? *American Psychologist, 48*(6), 681-686. Brief overview of psychological processes underlying public perceptions of risk from environmental threats, especially the fear of cancer.
Risk perception, Environmental issues.

Political Attitudes

These articles contribute to developing political communication strategies.

Fischle, M. (2000). Mass response to the Lewinsky scandal: Motivated reasoning or Bayesian updating? *Political Psychology, 21*(1), 135-159. Two waves of interview data supported a motivated reasoning approach to social judgment of President Clinton in light of the Lewinsky affair. Appraisal of the veracity and the importance of the scandal allegations were strongly influenced by prior Clinton approval ratings.
Motivated reasoning, Attitude formation, Political attitudes.

Greene, S. (1999). Understanding party identification: A social identity approach. *Political Psychology, 20*(2), 393-403. Nice application of social identity theory to party affiliation.
Political attitudes, Social identity.

Mehrabian, A. (1998). Effects of poll reports on voter preferences. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 28*(23), 2119-2130. Evidence for the bandwagon or "rally-around-the-winner" effect was found. Participants preferred the candidate they thought was winning. Participants also preferred the winning position in an issue with moderate, but not strong consensus.
Attitude change, Political attitudes.

Rahn, W. M., Kroeger, B., & Kite, C. M. (1996). A framework for the study of public mood. *Political Psychology, 17*(1), 29-57. Presents the conceptualization, origins, and a scale to measure "public mood."
Political attitudes, Attitude formation.

Reputation Management

These articles help develop public relations strategies involving reputation management.
Abalakina-Paap, M., & Stephan, W. G. (1999). Beliefs in conspiracies. *Journal of Political Psychology, 20*(3), 637-647. Personality correlates (e.g., authoritarianism, anomie, powerlessness) were predictive of belief in specific conspiracies (e.g., AIDS is a plot to wipe out minority groups, the government is storing information in computer files to against its citizens, fluoridating drinking water will hurt people). Low sense of trust was predictive of the existence of conspiracies in general.
Reputation management, Attitudes toward Business, Rumors, Personality Correlates.

Reputation Management

These articles help develop public relations strategies involving reputation management

Highhouse, S., Zickar, M. J., Thorsteinson, T. J., Stierwalt, S. L., & Slaughter, J. E. (1999). Assessing company employment image: An example in the fast food industry. *Personnel Psychology, 52,* 151-172. Describes a "forced-choice inductive" methodology for assessing public perceptions of a company as a place to work.
Measurement, Reputation management.

Risk Communication

These articles add information on how to select public relations communication strategies when perceptions of risk are involved.

Heath, R. L. & Abel, D. D. (1996). Proactive response to citizen risk concerns: Increasing citizen's knowledge of emergency response practices. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 8(3), 151-172. A research project was conducted to further test the approach to risk communication, which assumes that the information provided by the chemical industry to the members of surrounding communities needs to be that which members of those communities believe will give them control over the risks they encounter due to the manufacturing and transportation.
Risk communication, Involvement, Attitude change.

Heath, R. L. & Palenchar, M. (2000). Community relations and risk communication: A longitudinal study of the impact of emergency response messages. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 12(2), 131-162. This study replicates and extends Heath & Abel's (1996) quasi-longitudinal analysis of the long-term impact of risk communication and emergency response measures. Findings included that because concern remains high that risk events are likely to occur and harm community safety, citizens are willing to become knowledgeable of emergency response measures.
Risk communication, Involvement, Attitude change.

Heath, R. L., Seshadri, S. & Lee, J. (1998). Risk communication: A two-community analysis of proximity, dread, trust, involvement, uncertainty, openness/accessibility, and knowledge on support/opposition toward chemical companies. *Journal of Public Relations Research,* 10(1), 35-56. This research examined how people's levels of trust, involvement, uncertainty, perceptions of openness, support, dread, and knowledge were affected by proximity to chemical manufacturing facilities. The research suggests that proximity is a negative factor in risk assessment. Analysis confirms the model that features openness and trust-building efforts as a means for achieving support by addressing residents' cognitive involvement, dread, and uncertainty.
Risk communication, Involvement, Attitude change.

Rumors

These articles contribute to an understanding of rumor as a channel of communication.

Bordia, P., DiFonzo, N., & Schultz, C. A. (2000). Source characteristics in denying rumors of organizational closure: Honesty is the best policy. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 11,* 2301-2309. Experimental study testing the effectiveness of denial of a rumor by various sources. Sources rated as honest were most effective.
Rumors, Reputation management.

DiFonzo, N., & Bordia, P. (1998). A tale of two corporations: Managing uncertainty during organizational change. *Human Resource Management, 37*(3&4), 295-303. Interviews with PR and management personnel during organizational change explore role of uncertainty, trust, and effective communication programs.
Rumors, Organizational change, Uncertainty.

DiFonzo, N., & Bordia, P. (2000). How top PR professionals handle hearsay: Corporate rumors, their effects, and strategies to manage them. *Public Relations Review, 26*(2), 173-190. Survey of top PR professionals with regard to prevalence, types, and effects of corporate rumors, and strategies used in dealing with them.
Rumors, Reputation Management.

Social Identity

This article discusses the importance of group memberships on persuasion.

McGarty, C., Haslam, S. A., Hutchinson, K. J., & Turner, J. C. (1994). The effects of salient group memberships on persuasion. *Small Group Research, 25*(2), 267-293. Two experiments showed that making the persuader's in-group membership salient enhanced persuasion effectiveness to the extent that in-group membership is important to self. Making the speaker's outgroup membership salient led to greater rejection of arguments.
Persuasion, Social Identity Theory.

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