

Anthropology and Public Relations:  
Annotated Bibliography of Recent and Significant  
Research of Import to Practitioners

by

**Marcia L. Watson**  
University of Miami

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

Keywords are listed in bold.

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## COMMUNITY RELATIONS

The following articles focus on community relations as related to community consultants, HIV/AIDS, online communities, urban development, socialization, and violence.

Blee, K. M. (2005). Racial violence in the United States. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 28(4), 599-619.

Through a proposed reconceptualization of racial violence in the United States, this paper defined racial violence and identified how it should be studied. The author departed from previous research that focused on the perpetrator to instead incorporate experiences and perceptions of victims and the public. This included the consequences of violence by exploring communication around the violence, interpreting violent actions, and the context of racial violence. Examples are provided based on research about white supremacist skinheads, the Ku Klux Klan and individual hate crimes.

**Community Relations, Governmental Relations, Media Relations**

Garrett, P. B., & Baquedano-López P. (2002). Language socialization: Reproduction and continuity, transformation and change. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 31, 339-361.

This study reviewed anthropological research on language socialization. Socialization was described as a process that is realized through the use of language. The authors reviewed research direction and goals pertaining to aims and orientations; methodology; routines and everyday life; practices and activities; communities; lifespan; bilingual and multilingual communication; literacy; the self in the social, emotional and moral world; narrative socialization; and ideologies of language.

**Community Relations, Corporate Relations, Cultural Relations**

Montgomery, W. (2004). Who is informing our young people about AIDS, and why aren't they listening? *Dialectical Anthropology*, 28, 365-376.

Connecting with the youth in the United States about HIV/AIDS is a difficult yet important challenge. The author discussed the large numbers of infected youth and provided factors for why they are so vulnerable to HIV. The best prevention is to inform our youth, but there remains an apparent disconnect between the information they have and the continued incidence of infection. Possible reasons for this disconnect are discussed and the author highlighted some of the more successful programs that combine non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations that together are making strides in connecting with youth about HIV/AIDS.

**Community Relations, Health Communication, Non-Governmental Relations**

Phillips, S., & Edwards, R. (2000). Development, impact assessment and the praise culture. *Critique of Anthropology*, 20(1), 47-66.

Through the use of a case study the authors used discourse analyses to document their experience assessing the impact of a donor funded urban development project. They focused on the resistance and negotiation strategies used by both the assessors and those being assessed in the development project with the aim of developing a community-based approach to the delivery of urban services. As consultants, the authors used surveys, interviews, and participant observation. Their approach was documented along

with their results and implications for project monitoring and evaluation that resulted through their experience.

### **Community Relations, Governmental Relations**

Stirrat R. L. (2000). Cultures of consultancy. *Critique of Anthropology*, 20(1) 31–46.

This article argued that today's short-term development consultants are employed in the development industry because of the expected pragmatic impacts their work (i.e., the implementation of 'better' projects and the alleviation of poverty), however, their work is typically judged by aesthetic rather than pragmatic criteria. The author argues that this aesthetic criteria is based on the modernity of perceived needs based on a culture of objectivity and rationality. Overall, the author identified what consultants do as particular cultural activities.

### **Community Relations**

Wilson, S. M., & Peterson, L. C. (2002). The anthropology of online communities. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 31, 449-467.

Through a review of anthropological and related research dealing with Internet communities and communicative practices the author provided an overview of online communities. Specifically, the questions asked, the methodologies used, and the insights gained are reviewed. In some ways the Internet has brought about expected changes while in other ways communication has changed more than expected. The author reviewed these changes as they pertain to the topics of terminology, culture, media, community, identity, communication, ideology, power, access, and ethics.

### **Community Relations, Media Relations, Technology**

## **CORPORATE RELATIONS**

The following articles explore how corporate relations affects and is affected by a number of areas, to include cooperation, culture, employee relations, ethics, labor relations, political activism, risk, and social responsibility.

Cox, S. J., Sluckin, T. J., & Steele, J. (1999). Group size, memory, and interaction rate in the evolution of cooperation. *Current Anthropology*, 40(3), 369-477.

Based on the prisoner's dilemma game, the authors studied cooperation through examining the manner in which group size and the number of interactions between players affects the ability of a group to sustain global economic behavior. Groups were evaluated based on repeated simulation models of the prisoner's dilemma game and macroscopic examination of the behavior. Cooperation was determined to be a dominant and stable strategy in very large social groups provided that certain conditions are met such as being able to refuse to play. The authors suggested future directions including correlations between personality and player strategies.

### **Corporate Relations, Community Relations**

Gardner, K., & Lewis, D. (2000). Dominant paradigms overturned or 'business as usual'? Development discourse and the white paper on international development. *Critique of Anthropology*, 20(1), 15-29.

This case study on development discourse was based on the Department for International Development's white paper on development. Contrary to previous scholars, the authors argued that changes can and do take place within development organizations. Specifically, this study indicated that dominant paradigms can be overturned by anthropologists showing how internal and external organizational political activism produces development discourse. They suggested a new direction in policy, changes in personnel and a change in the balance of power between interest groups.

**Corporate Relations, International Relations, Political Relations**

Garsten, C., & Hasselström, A. (2003). Risky business: Discourses of risk and (ir)responsibility in globalizing markets. *Ethnos*, 68(2), 249-270.

Market culture as expressed in media discourse and among financial traders and corporate managers was the focus of this paper. As important components of market culture, the authors focused on risk and responsibility as locally and culturally constructed perspectives. They suggested that ideas and actions of financial traders and corporate leaders contribute to the structuring of market transactions across the world. Through different although interrelated interests, perspectives, experiences, imaginations, and views, traders and leaders relate to risk and responsibility as it weaves into larger issues of social and cultural change. The authors indicated that market preoccupation both contributes to financial trader evasion of responsibility and presents an opportunity for corporations to position themselves as socially responsible actors.

**Corporate Relations, Financial Relations, International Relations, Media Relations, Social Responsibility**

Lister, S. (2003). NGO Legitimacy: Technical issue or social construct? *Critique of Anthropology*, 23(2) 175–192.

Institutional theory was applied to the analysis of the legitimacy of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Within institutional theory, the author focused on legitimacy as a social construction of an organization's environment. An example of different types of legitimacy with different stakeholders demonstrated the wide range of potential sources and symbols of legitimacy. Descriptions of normative and cognitive factors by stakeholder in the legitimacy of an evangelical Christian organization and a solidarity group are provided. Finally, the article concluded by considering how analysis may be taken beyond institutional approaches and the contribution that can be made by anthropological perspectives.

**Corporate Relations, Public Affairs, Social Responsibility**

Mills, M. B. (2003). Gender and inequality in the global labor force. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 32, 41-62.

The purpose of this paper was to review labor and gender inequalities in the global economy. This includes attention to recruitment, transnational mobility, and the gendered effects of international structural adjustment programs. The author explored global labor force and provided examples of ethnographic research that uncovers such

inequalities. By fleshing out such inequalities organizations can help in understanding the diverse global economy, the success or failure of labor unions, and conflicts between men and women in the workforce.

**Corporate Relations, International Relations, Gender Relations**

Sobo, E. J., & Sadler, B. L. (2002). Improving organizational communication and cohesion in a health care setting. *Human Organization*, 61(3), 277-287.

By describing an archeological approach to studying organizational culture, the method of participatory action (where participants are involved directly in the research process through participant observation and surveys) was used to evaluate and improve morale in a hospital. This process involved Employee Leadership Councils at which employee-leader exchange took place where topics such as communication, awareness, dissatisfaction, innovation, and employee involvement were discussed. Finally, the authors reviewed lessons that might be transferable to other organizational settings and may serve to increase managerial understanding of organizational culture.

**Corporate Relations, Cultural Diversity, Employee Relations**

Sriramesh, K., Grunig, J. E., & Dozier, D. M. (1996). Observation and measurement of two dimensions of organizational relationship to public relations. *Journal of public Relations Research*, 8(4), 229-261.

Organizational culture theory was used to address internal and external organizational communication. Data from 4,631 employees in 321 organizations in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom are used to suggest a 48 item scale for measuring organizational culture. These items factored in to the dimensions of participative and authoritarian culture. Finally, the authors used these dimensions to explore the impact of corporate culture on the public relations activities of organizations.

**Corporate Relations, Cultural Relations**

Wilkins, L., & Christians, C. (2001). Philosophy meets the social sciences: The nature of humanity in the public arena. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 16(2&3), 99-120.

The authors suggested a philosophical conception of humans that included an ethical analysis of persuasion. As applied to advertising and public relations, the authors described a cultural perspective including logical human responses, culture and experience. This moved past the typical view of humans as rational beings to be more whole beings of mind, body, and spirit. The authors proposed potential maxims for ethical behavior and applied them to two case studies – political advertising and the Bridgestone/Firestone corporate narrative.

**Corporate Public Relations, Cultural Diversity, Ethics, Political Relations**

## **CULTURAL DIVERSITY/RACE RELATIONS**

The following articles focus on cultural diversity and race relations pertaining to historical review, mass communication, racial hierarchy, risk, social marking, storytelling, and technology.

Boholm, A. (2003). The cultural nature of risk: Can there be an anthropology of uncertainty? *Ethnos*, 68(2), 159-178.

As a shared schemata, culture is argued to define categories, relationships, and contexts, making it possible to process meanings and order information. The author argued that to succeed in investigating risk contextually, requires acknowledging diverse risk perceptions. This study has implications for individuals, social groups, corporations, and organizations. Through the use of examples pertaining to uncertainty, taboo and knowledge modes, this study discussed the cultural nature of risk.

**Community Relations, Corporate Relations, Cultural Diversity, Risk Communication**

Cook, S. E. (2004). New technologies and language change: Toward an anthropology of linguistic frontiers. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 33, 103-115.

New technologies and language change are reviewed. This included views from other disciplines and sought to identify ways that computer-mediated communication (i.e., Internet, satellite transmissions, and cell phones) alters interaction between people. The author discussed ethnographic anthropological studies on language, technology and change, and more specific – studies of cultural and linguistic frontiers as they relate to youth cultures and global media. Communication through new technologies was described to reproduce the social, political and economic relations that exist in the “real world.”

**Cultural Diversity, International Relations, Media Relations, Technology**

Diamond, S. (2004). Anthropology in Question. *Dialectical Anthropology* 28, 11–32.

Based on the belief of anthropology as the study of “men in crisis by men in crisis,” the purpose of this article was to review the study of anthropology and indicate future needs. The history of anthropological approaches to the person and the profession are discussed as related to the 1963 symposium organized by L’Esprit (the problem of self-knowledge), eighteenth-century Rousseau (his call for a proper anthropology, with the purpose of self-knowledge and authentic understanding of others), nineteenth-century Marx (abandoning the scientific utopianism emphasizing the descriptive nature of anthropology), and twentieth-century professionalism (including participation in all cultures finally appears that is scientifically justified as equivalent to participation in none). Overall, man should not be considered in isolation but as a part of community, culture, society, nature, etc.

**Community Relations, Cultural Diversity**

Hing-Yuk Wong, C., & McDonogh, G. W. (2001). The mediated metropolis: Anthropological issues in cities and mass communication. *American Anthropologist*, 103(1), 96-105.

Mediated communication such as cinema, radio, television, video, and the Internet have altered social practices and cultural encounters worldwide. To explain the discrepancies, this paper focused on urban life in cities versus their visual depiction and viewership. Hong Kong (high global fame for its image depiction in films) and Philadelphia (with less controlled images) were used to examine the movie going experience itself while reviewing the contestation and creativity in local and global frameworks.

**Cultural Diversity, Community Relations, Media Relations, Technology**



Houston, S. D. (2004). The archaeology of communication technologies. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 33, 223–250.

The author explained the historical advancement of communication by highlighting the concepts of situation and extraction. These concepts are used to explain how graphic notations were recorded in social and cultural settings. Situation refers to the context, participants, and the relations between them. Extraction is the means by which ancient thought and sound become accessible in current research. Through the use of these concepts, archaeology can be used as an anthropology tool to detect crucial advances in human development.

**Community Relations, Cultural Diversity, Historical Review**

Jackson, M. (2005). Storytelling events, violence, and the appearance of the past. *Anthropological Quarterly*, 78(2), 355-375.

Stories are described as ways to understand the present and they serve as an aid for making informed choices. Therefore, the author argued that storytelling offers insights into the ways people evaluate, discuss, and negotiate social and ethical strategies. The author demonstrated how the past is played out through the use of stories about the violence in Sierra Leone. He also described how the past can contain positives (i.e., trust, happiness) and negatives (i.e., defensiveness, violence) and how it is up to the person in the present to decide which option will be preferred and how the past will be interpreted.

**Community Relations, Cultural Diversity, Ethics, Political Relations**

Leichty, G. (2003). The cultural tribes of public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 15(4), 277-304.

Cultural theory was applied to communication about public relations. The author proposed that public relation is comprised of five distinct cultural typologies: (1) fatalist, (2) egalitarian, (3) hierarchical, (4) autonomous individualist, and (5) competitive individualist. Each cultural topoi (preferred argument structure) is explained and fundamental beliefs are provided whereby identifying a starting point for characterizing public relations theory and practice.

**Cultural Relations**

Nettle, D., & Dunbar, R. I. M. (1997). Social markers and the evolution of reciprocal exchange. *Current Anthropology*, 38(1), 93-99.

By using computer simulation, the authors examined ways linguistic dialects may be used to mark membership in social groups and how it affects reciprocal exchanges. The authors found that the production of distinctive codes is the way a reciprocal exchange in large groups can be made stable. These separate languages or dialects serve to limit mobility and provide quick identification of outsiders. Social marking such as language, dress, and material artifacts were found to become necessary when the size of the local population exceeded the size of the cooperating group which can be maintained by direct personal acquaintance. The authors contend that since language cannot be separated from a person, it is therefore central to evolution.

**Community Relations, Cultural Diversity, International Relations**

Song, M. (2004). Who's at the bottom? Examining claims about racial hierarchy. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 27(6), 859-877.

To examine the concept of racial hierarchy the author reviewed literature in both the United States and Britain. He defined and highlighted current debates about racial hierarchy along with discussing the differences between the two countries and the difficulties that arise from claims about racial hierarchies. Finally, the paper concluded by considering whether the concept of racial hierarchy is helpful in making sense of racial inequality.

**Governmental Relations, International Relations, Public Affairs, Racial Relations**

## EDUCATIONAL RELATIONS

The following articles pertain to relations within education – specifically employee/university and professor/university relations.

Cooper, P. (2004). The gift of education: An anthropological perspective on the commoditization of learning. *Anthropology Today*, 20(6), 5-9.

Higher education was explored as a commodity service provided to paying customers. Though the use of straw polls and fieldwork with students, the author explored whether the students viewed themselves as consumers and, if so, how it influenced their expectations of the university. Overall, there was a lack of consensus among the students about the cost of education, the accrual of debt, and their status as customers. Most agreed that buying an education is not the same as buying a car, and that they were more likely to view themselves as a customer when something was wrong. Based on these findings, the author reviewed the concepts of commodity exchange, gift, and the relationship between teachers and students.

**Educational Relations, Relationships**

Grimshaw, A. (2001). Teaching visual anthropology: Notes from the field. *Ethnos*, 66(2), 237-258.

The field of visual anthropology was discussed through the use of a critical appraisal of the fieldwork site of Granada Centre for Visual Anthropology, University of Manchester, UK. The author discussed teaching, research, and filmmaking practices at the Centre over the years to demonstrate the relationship between vision and knowledge in ethnographic enquiry; teaching practice and academic writing; and visual anthropology and television documentary.

**Educational Relations, Relationships**

Price, D. H. (2004). Standing up for academic freedom: The case of Irving Goldman. *Anthropology Today*, 20(4), 237-258.

Through the declassification of government documents on anthropologists held by the FBI, CIA, National Security Agency, and other American governmental agencies, the author has reconstructed the relationship between such agencies and anthropologists while identifying the impact of McCarthyism on anthropology. This study provided an overview of a university professor and anthropologist Irving Goldman including his

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problems with the Senate Judiciary Committee and how his university board of trustees protected him. This article has implications for our post-9/11 era where academic freedom may change.

**Educational Relations, Historical Review, Relationships**

**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

The following articles focus on international relations as related to rituals, languages, and need for localization.

Caviedes, A. (2003). The role of language in nation-building within the European Union. *Dialectical Anthropology* 27, 249-268.

The author shed light on the creation of the new European identity through an examination of the language policy of the European Union (EU). Essentially, with nation-forming, language diversity is critical because language generally plays a central role in determining the character of a nation's identity. The author explored the EU language policy, its multilingual educational programs, its treatment of minority languages, and immigrant languages. He then provided a framework for a nation-building process and the creation of a common European identity.

**International Relations, Media Relations, Political Relations**

Korff, R. (2003). Local enclosures of globalization: The power of locality. *Dialectical Anthropology*, 27, 1-18.

This paper discussed the interactions between the concepts of globalization and localization. Through advances in communication and media interactions have changed, so areas that were once isolated, because of their distances, now regularly interact, making globalization no longer separated from localization. The author contends that issues should be evaluated both on a local and a global level by considering things such as how the issue relates to space, ethnicity, social organization, power-differentials (such as control of resources), and how the local knowledge can be globalized.

**Community Relations, International Relations, Media Relations**

Robbins, J. (2001). Ritual communication and linguistic ideology: A reading and partial reformulation of Rappaport's theory of ritual. *Current Anthropology*, 42(5), 591-614.

In an effort to extend or reformulate the concepts of ritual and language, the author revisited Rappaport's 1999 book on the theory of ritual (an influential book in the area of the anthropology of religion). He argued that ritual is best viewed as a form of communication because the signs rituals produce are unique and trustworthy forms of communication whereas language can be misunderstood and contain lies. This is discussed along with examples of rituals and language usage in Melanesia and their historical use in Christianity.

**Community Relations, International Relations, Religion**

## POLITICAL RELATIONS

The following articles pertain to the political relations concepts of democracy, elections and social movements.

Coles, K. A. (2004). Election day: The construction of democracy through technique. *Cultural Anthropology*, 19(4), 551-580.

Through the use of ethnographic analysis, this study explored the technical and instrumental aspects of democracy. Through the juxtaposition of ritual and science, the author conceptualized democracy as a set of practices and artifacts applied to elections as a ritual that creates democratic knowledge and authority. Based on this, an election can be analyzed as a ritual with the intent to uncover its function and meaning as a symbol of democracy embedded in social practices, epistemology, and artifacts. Elections, the core of democracy, are therefore, a cultural practice as well as a political one.

**Community Relations, Cultural Diversity, Political Relations**

Edelman, M. (2001). Social movements: Changing paradigms and forms of politics. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 30, 285-317.

The purpose of this article was to invigorate global social movement research. The author used four short stories to describe the collective action paradigm shifts from mass behavior to resource mobilization, political process, and new social movements. By starting the stories with the post-1960s paradigm the author described the changes up to today's new developments in social movements. Finally, the use of ethnographic analyses is discussed, as it is the dominant form of social movement research.

**Community Relations, Corporate Relations, Governmental Relations, International Relations, Political Relations**

Paley, J. (2002). Toward an anthropology of democracy. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 31, 469-496.

Through a review of US based anthropology literature combined with critical and ethnographic perspectives gleaned from over 50 anthropologists, this article begins the development of an anthropology of democracy. This includes a historical review of anthropological studies covering culture, citizenship, civil society, governmentality, discourse, and alternative democracies. The author was especially interested in how researchers have used ethnography to study local meanings and changing forms of power accompanying the installation of new political regimes.

**Community Relations, Public Affairs, Political Relations**