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In this Issue...

By
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As the country gears up for Election 2004, candidates and pundits eagerly carve the electorate into numerous camps--camps divided by an issue, separated by time zones, or determined by gender, race, or some other factor. These factions, of course, form the basis of many public opinion polls that are conducted, and polls that have come under increasingly harsher scrutiny as they proliferate in the media.

In this newsletter, PF&R chair Matthew Nisbet summarizes the thoughts and reactions of prominent academics at a recent panel dealing with eroding levels of trust in polls. Also in this issue, we tap into the expertise of what some have called the country's largest survey research outfit. Betsy Martin and Eleanor Gerber reveal how in an increasingly diverse nation, the U.S. Census Bureau has grappled with difficulties dealing with the measurement of race. Good questions are indeed hard to come by, as Teaching Standards Chair Michael McDevitt reminds us. He brings to light questions journalists should be taught to answer. And for the academic who gets his/her answer in the form of quantitative data, how do they report it? Andrew Hayes compares and discusses options for reporting effect sizes.

Also in this newsletter, we've included a new feature on page 7. Two young scholars discuss their research projects and how they hope to contribute to the field. The issues addressed in this newsletter are only a few that CT&M members encounter regularly in their work. But the discussion should not end here. I encourage you to share your thoughts this August in Toronto and on our listserv (ctm-discussion@journalism.wisc.edu). ❑

PF&R Panel at MAPOR Explores the Public Face of Polling

By
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In an effort to free up space on the AEJMC conference program for additional research paper panels, this year CT&M has organized PF&R-themed programming at other mass communication-related research conferences. In November, at the annual meeting of the Midwest Association for Public Opinion Research, CT&M sponsored a panel on "Building Trust in Survey Research." The panel brought together leading academic survey researchers--including Michael Traugott of the University of Michigan, Jerry Kosicki of The Ohio State University, and David Weaver of Indiana University--to discuss public perceptions of polling.

A common concern expressed by the panel members was the vast proliferation of surveys, in part a result of the declining cost of entry into the survey industry and increasing reliance by industry, government, the media, and universities on survey data. A societal "addiction to data," observed Kosicki, means that today almost any major institutional decision requires an opinion poll or market study. A consequence, warned Traugott, is that the opportunity to see the results of a poorly conducted poll has become more frequent, a trend that Kosicki predicted might catapult survey research into a "crisis of legitimacy." Traugott worried additionally that neither the public as survey consumers nor journalists have access to quality-control criteria that would enable them to assess the quality of specific polls or polling firms.

The panelists also detailed several methodological issues related to changing technology that might undermine the integrity of survey data. For example, Web-based surveys allow for innovative, relatively quick, and cost-efficient collection of data, but may also lead to several sources of systematic error, especially related to sampling. Other technologies, such as cell phones, threaten the geographical representativeness of surveys, whereas Caller ID and Do Not Call lists have hurt response rates.

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Kosicki noted that declining response rates were an additional issue, especially for academics who generally prioritize high quality representativeness in their data. Yet, as Kosicki observed, a single-minded focus on the response rate often misses a key aspect of data collection. Response rates, according to Kosicki, should be thought of in economic terms, with a high response rate a deliverable product that academics can pay for, assuming they have enough grant or project money at their disposal. In other words, under current conditions, there are tight financial limits on achieving textbook standard response rates.

Weaver and Traugott emphasized the importance of education efforts targeting both the media as well as the general public. Survey researchers should act collectively to help vet the many claims that are made by elites and the news media about the nature and results of polls, with academics maintaining an active dialogue with journalists. On the public side, lessons on public opinion and the function of polling in the political system should be included as major themes in high school civics education. Kosicki emphasized that the public's perception of polling as a manipulative and controlling technology had to change. Instead the image of survey research as a democratizing aspect of public life needs to be communicated in better and more effective ways.

The next PF&R-sponsored session is scheduled as a Mass Communication Division panel at the May 2004 International Communication Association annual meeting. A range of panelists including Patricia Moy and John Gastil of the University of Washington, Gary Kreps of the National Cancer Institute, and Dale Kunkel of UC-Santa Barbara, will present on the topic of "Communication Research and Public Scholarship." At the AEJMC meetings in August, we will be sponsoring two PF&R panels--the first on "The Uses and Abuses of Political Polls" (co-sponsored with the Newspaper Division), and the second on "Women Redefining Leadership" (co-sponsored with CSW and MAC). ❑

Adapting Journalistic Thinking

By
Michael McDevitt
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Long before I heard the phrase "uses and gratifications," I would rely on nightly viewing to catch up on the news. Mostly I just wanted to relax after a day of writing my own news for a daily in the Bay Area. Evening relaxation is more of a challenge for me as an academic because of what I call the "cringe moments" of TV news. For example, I tense up when a cable "news" host asks a politician to provide a yes/no answer to a complex question. Even worse is when this demand for simplicity is preceded by a convoluted or poorly conceived question. I would unwind better at night if every journalism student completed a research methods course. Indeed, there is much to be gained in explicating how journalism might be improved by identifying specific patterns of thinking that are at odds with scientific reasoning. Habits of scientific thinking are applicable to daily journalism even if some methods are out of reach on deadline.

I want to calm some currents of anti-intellectualism in the press with the following proposal--all BA and MA journalism students should be required to take a course in research methods. But a convincing rationale would be needed to overcome the inertia of course-sequence requirements in many journalism schools. Consequently, I'd like to add some thoughts to Bryan Denham's article on the value of teaching research methods to undergraduates (*Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, Summer 2003). The following is a heuristic outline for (a) identifying key problems of journalistic thinking and (b) contrasting these tendencies with principles of epistemology associated with social science.

Truth in the concrete or the abstract? - The practical relevance of an idea or concept is often discounted in professional circles if it's not reducible to a "nut graph." Journalists must be more comfortable with abstraction if they are to go beyond the transmission of information to the production of meaningful knowledge.

Explanatory frame - Social psychology illustrates the fallacious reasoning that arises out of interpreting behavior in purely dispositional terms; situational explanations are usually more powerful. The narrative requirements of conventional journalism, however, seem to require moralistic characterizations tied to personality.

Change & adaptation - Newsworthiness is usually assessed in terms of change, which can be sudden as in social eruptions or gradual as in emergent trends. But this idea of change is quite different from the perspective of structural functionalism; social systems evolve for the purpose of adaptation and continuity. Lippmann's disconcerting metaphor of the restless searchlight is relevant here. Through social science methods such as ethnography, journalists might refine conceptions of newsworthiness.

Tolerance for ambiguity - This is the biggest problem of political journalism in my view, and it brings me back to the annoying habit of reporters insisting on simple answers and soundbite dialogue. It also helps to explain the overly determined narratives that limit alternative agendas for public discourse. I have a practical suggestion

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Methodological Influences on Race and Origin Measurements

By
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U.S. Census Bureau

As defined by the federal government, race is a social rather than a biological concept, and self-identification is the preferred method of measurement. There are five major categories of race (White, Black, American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander). Race is considered distinct from Hispanic origin, which is defined as origin and descent in a Spanish-speaking country. Thus, Hispanics may be of any race. Significant changes in official racial classifications were introduced in 1997, the most important being to allow respondents to report one or more races.

In the course of redesigning and testing questions for the Census Bureau, we have learned that several design features may influence measurements of race and origin, including question wording, order, mode effects, and interviewer effects. We summarize some of what we have learned below, in the hope that our experience may prove useful to others. We also provide some references where readers may find more detailed information and results.

QUESTION WORDING ISSUES:

1. Communicating an appropriate concept of race. The wording of the question needs to be sensitive to the intent to measure social identification, as distinct from biological heritage and appearance. Consider the following question:

(1) "I'm going to read a list of race categories. Please choose one or more categories that best describe [NAME'S] race."

"Describe" carries strong visual connotations, and is likely to strike respondents as a request for how others literally see them, placing undue emphasis on external features like hair and skin color. Phrases such as "consider him/herself to be" or "identify" are preferable because they clearly mark the question as referring to subjective, rather than physical, facts.

2. Communicating the "one or more" option. Reporting their race is a very familiar task for most people, which in our tests made it difficult to get them to notice the novel "one or more" option. Instructions or plural grammatical forms (e.g. "race or races") were frequently overlooked in self-administered questionnaires, and not absorbed in telephone or personal interviews. One design solution was to repeat the option--within the question or on the flashcard--giving the respondent multiple chances to grasp the one or more option.

Syntactical problems may confuse respondents about question intent. For example, in question (1), above, "one or more" is contradicted by the singular reference to "race" and by "best describe," which is interpretable as a request to select one.

3. Question sensitivity. In the decennial census, the race question is primarily sensitive because it is asked, not because it requests sensitive information. Race and ethnicity questions often are seen as part of an ongoing dialogue about race, and certain response patterns make sense only in that context. For example, respondents who perceive the question as divisive may write in an inclusive answer, such as "American" or "human."

Respondents are sensitive to indications of differential treatment. Non-Hispanic respondents sometimes comment on the unfairness of giving Hispanics their own question, while Hispanics may object to being singled out. Black or white respondents may object that other groups, but not theirs, are given an opportunity to write in more information about their backgrounds. Thus, an entry of, for example, "Italian/Irish" on the Asian write-in line on a census form may represent an attempt to achieve fairness, rather than a misunderstanding of the question.

If possible, questions should be designed to avoid suggesting that some groups are treated preferentially. The phrases "best indicate" or "best describe" are interpreted by some respondents as asking which race is thought to be superior to others and should be avoided.

3. Category problems. Difficulties can arise from mismatch between the categories of the question and culturally appropriate categories in use by respondents. Some groups fail to find a category that expresses their own sense of race, such as Hispanics who want to report as "Mexican," or who search for a middle color term between "Black" and "White" such as "mestizo" (for Mexicans) or "trigueno" (for Puerto Ricans).

Particular labels engender emotional reactions, and may affect respondents' understanding of which, if any, category they belong in. Take, for example, the category labeled "Black, African American, or Negro" in

*(**RACE/ORIGIN -** Continued on page 4)*

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here - journalists should be subject to the same criticism they direct at Hollywood producers. Movie critics often complain about recycled plots in mainstream films. The same dynamic exists in political journalism due to intolerance for unconventional and ambiguous themes. ❑

*(**RACE/ORIGIN -** Continued from page 3)*

Census 2000. The term "Negro" engendered negative reactions among many Black respondents, as well as those of other races. The term "African American" was an obstacle for respondents from the Caribbean or Africa, who saw themselves as "Black" but not "African American" and therefore hesitated to mark the category.

4. Effects of examples. There is reason for concern that providing examples may distort reporting. "English" appeared first in the list of examples following the census ancestry question in 1980, but was dropped in 1990. There was a corresponding drop from 1980 to 1990 of about 17 million people reporting English ancestry, along with other shifts apparently due to changes in the particular examples listed, or their order. Such effects may occur because respondents write in the first ancestry listed that applies to them.

Examples also may affect interpretations of question intent by illustrating the intended specificity of responses. In Census 2000, there was a loss of information about detailed Hispanic origin groups, apparently because examples had been dropped from the question. An experiment conducted during Census 2000 confirmed that a question with examples elicited more detailed reports of Hispanic origin (such as "Colombian" or "Salvadoran") than a question without examples, which obtained more generic reports such as "Hispanic," "Latino," or "Spanish." Examples led to more reporting of specific groups, whether or not they were mentioned as examples.

5. Distinguishing questions about race and ethnicity. The perceived redundancy of Hispanic origin and race causes reporting problems. When race is asked first in a self-administered questionnaire, many Hispanic respondents look for but do not find a category to report themselves, and so either leave the question blank or mark "Some other race" and write in a Hispanic group, such as "Mexican" or "Salvadoran." Many non-Hispanic respondents skip Hispanic origin, apparently thinking it does not apply to them.

Reversing the order of the two items to ask Hispanic origin first and adding an instruction (e.g., "Please answer BOTH questions ...") reduces the apparent redundancy and allows Hispanic respondents to report their Hispanic origin before responding to the question on race.

INTERVIEWER & MODE EFFECTS:

Differences in the way interviewers administer the race and Hispanic origin questions may influence the data. Not surprisingly, interviewers trained to probe "other" responses (such as "Hispanic") obtain lower rates of "Some other race" reporting. Interviewer effects due to differences in training are suspected to account for different race distributions obtained by the census and other surveys. Some interviewers may record race based on their own observation; this practice was customary in the past and may persist, although it is no longer considered acceptable.

Race and origin questions may need to be adapted for administration in different modes, but it is important to avoid altering question meaning and intent in the process. When that occurs, question wording variations across mode may cause differences, apart from any possible mode effects. Mode also affects the presentation of the categories, which may be presented visually in self-administered or personal interviews, but must be presented orally in telephone interviews. It may be necessary to shorten the list or set up branching questions.

CONCLUSIONS:

Methodological research on race and origin measurements support several conclusions:

1. Race reporting--especially by Hispanics--may be influenced by question wording and context effects, as well as mode and interviewer effects.

2. Lack of standardization of questions (including in different modes in the same survey) may contribute to lack of comparable data.

3. Experiments are needed to investigate and achieve better control over methodological effects on race and origin measurements.

4. Methodological effects should be taken into account by analysts. For example, comparisons of detailed Hispanic reporting in 1990 and 2000 censuses are affected by differences in the design of the questionnaire.

5. In the absence of a fuller understanding of the effects of question wording and interviewing mode upon race data, we urge caution in deviating from Census 2000 question wording, order, concepts, and other survey procedures (such as editing) especially for surveys which require race data comparable to the census or use census race data for their denominators.

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On the Comparability of Effect Sizes Across Studies

By
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As with all things statistical, there are differences in opinion and approach, and what is proper ultimately depends on so many factors other than just what formula to use. Articles, although differing in emphases and recommendations, all take a stand on the proper reporting of effect sizes. For example, Hunter and Hamilton (2002) argue that standardized regression coefficients should be routinely used and reported because they are comparable across studies that differ in design and measurement. Levine and Hullett (2002; Hullet & Levine, 2003) argue in favor of η^2 over partial η^2 on the grounds that η^2 has more desirable statistical properties, more accurately estimate a variable's effect, and can be included in a meta-analysis more meaningfully. And yet Beatty (2002) argues that measures of variance explained such as η^2 underestimate effect sizes and shouldn't be used.

Although there are many important lessons to be learned in these articles, and some points of contention, I focus my discussion here not on what is "proper" (because it depends) but instead on the comparability of effect sizes across studies, a common theme to all the articles. The point I wish to make is that any measure of the effect of independent variable *X* on dependent variable *Y*, regardless of how quantified, can rarely be compared across studies in a meaningful way unless the studies are comparable with respect to the number of independent variables included in the analysis, whether those variables are measured or manipulated, and if manipulated, that they are manipulated with equal fidelity. Rarely do two investigations of the same phenomenon in communication meet these criteria. I focus my discussion on the comparison of effect sizes in experiments, but I could make the same point for nonexperimental studies as well.

Suppose Professors A and B are both interested in the effect of online versus traditional print news on public affairs knowledge and conduct similar studies at the same time. They use the same measure of public affairs knowledge (a 20-item multiple-choice test of knowledge of recent world events, *Y*) and a measure of form of news exposure (online versus print, *X*), and each study has 100 participants. Professor A's study is the simplest, including only the single independent variable *X* manipulated in a one-way experimental design, where participants are randomly exposed to either a print or online version of a newspaper for 30 minutes, after which they are given a test to assess knowledge of the news. Professor B manipulates *X* in exactly the same way as Professor A but has a second independent variable *Z* crossed with *X* in a factorial design. Suppose *Z* is the number of exposures manipulation, operationalized as the number of sessions of exposure the participant receives (60 minutes over one day or 60 minutes over 3 days, 20 minutes each). In short, both studies are identical with the exception of an additional manipulation in Professor B's study and, of course, different participants. Each investigator reports a common measure of the effect of *X* on *Y*.

Levine and others (Cohen, 1973; Haase, 1973; Kennedy, 1970; Maxwell, Camp, & Arvey, 1981) have distinguished between η^2 and partial η^2. Whereas η^2 quantifies the proportion of total variability in *Y* uniquely attributable to *X*, partial η^2 quantifies the proportion of variability in *Y* that can be uniquely attributed to *X* after first partialing out the effect of the other variables on *Y*. It is a partial measure of effect because it is based only on part of the total variability in *Y* (that is, the part not explained by the other variable or variables in the analysis). Regardless of whether A and B consistently report η^2 or partial η^2, their effect sizes are not necessarily comparable. Suppose for example that both report $\eta^2 = 0.20$. Without more information, we cannot necessarily say that *X* has the same effect on *Y* in these studies even though *X* appears to be explaining the same amount of variability in *Y*. Because Professor B manipulated a second variable *Z,* that manipulation as well as the interaction between *X* and *Z* may serve to increase variability in *Y*, with the amount of that increase being a function of how large the effect of those variables is. For example, distributing the same learning time over more sessions could increase the number of relatively high learning scores (*Y*) in B's study compared to what A observed because some (but not necessarily all) of the participants might be less fatigued over 3 short learning periods. So the total variability of *Y* is probably higher in B's study. Even if sample sizes were the same, an η^2 of 0.20 corresponds to more total variability in learning explained (SS_X) in Professor B's study, even though *X* explains the same amount of relative variability (i.e., SS_X/SS_{TOTAL}).

Without knowing more about between study differences in variability of *Y*, the effect sizes cannot be meaningfully compared. Changing to partial η^2 or standardized β in a regression context does not solve the problem. Indeed, partial η^2 is even less comparable across these studies because partial η^2 quantifies the proportion of variability that *X* explains after first partialing out the effect of the other variables on *Y*. Because A included no other variables in the analysis, η^2 = partial η^2. Just by including an additional independent variable in the design that has some effect on *Y*, the effect of *X* on *Y* increases in B's study using this measure of effect size. Partial η^2 is determined in part by the number of additional variables in the analysis and so isn't necessarily comparable across studies that differ in the number or nature of the additional variables. Had A included additional variables (manipulated or just measured) related to *Y*, partial η^2 likely

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would have been larger. And whether standardized β is larger or smaller in B's study would depend on the how large the effect of W and $W \times Z$ are in that study.

To their credit, Levine & Hullet (2002) acknowledge that the inclusion of additional manipulated variables that increase variability in Y can affect measures of effect size. But even if Z and $X \times Z$ had absolutely no effect on Y (meaning they did not affect either the means or the total variability in Y relative to variability observed in A's study), the meaning of η^2 might be different in the two studies. Imagine that in B's study, the sample size in the print-multiple exposure condition was smaller than in the other 3 cells, perhaps because participants in this condition found the study less interesting and were less likely to return for the 2nd or 3rd exposure period. In that case, the independent variables (and their interaction) are intercorrelated. Most discussions of effect size in the communication and other literatures have assumed that the total sum of squares in an experiment can be partioned perfectly into nonoverlapping components, as reflected in Levine & Hullet's (2002) examples and claim that "eta-squared has the property that the effects for all components of variation (including error) will sum to 1.00" (p. 619). But life in science is not always so clean and perfect. Even in true experiments where the investigator has some control over the intercorrelation between variables through random assignment and control of cell sizes, things happen that induce correlation between the independent variables, such as participants being lost to follow-up, procedural errors, discarding of participants due to suspicion about a deception, equipment malfunctions, etc. Unless there is some attempt to reequalize cell sizes (which introduces new design and analysis problems and can't generally be recommended), it becomes impossible to perfectly partition total variance into the effects of interest plus error. In this case, η^2 will be reduced in study B in proportion to how predictable X is from Z and $X \times Z$. Remember that η^2 quantifies the proportion of total variability in Y uniquely attributable to X. When independent variables are correlated, some of the variability in Y that X might explain is not attributed to X statistically (or any other variable for that matter) because, as such designs are typically analyzed, variability in Y attributable to more than one independent variable is eliminated from η^2 (and partial η^2). Because A's study has only a single independent variable, this does not affect the interpretation of η^2 in that study. The fact that η^2 is the same in B's study in spite of the intercorrelation between Z and X suggests that X may have a larger effect on Y in B's study, but it is impossible to know just how much larger. Using partial η^2 or standardized β rather than η^2 does not eliminate this ambiguity in the comparison of effect sizes, as they too are affected by the intercorrelation between independent variables.

The purpose of this very brief discussion is not to argue that effect sizes are meaningless, nor to imply that meta-analysis is a hopeless exercise. On the contrary, effect sizes are an important supplement to tests of significance in a study because they reveal information that *p*-values do not. And meta-analsis can be useful if the meta-analysis includes design features as potential moderators of the effect size. The point I am making (after exceeding my word budget by a factor of two) is that (a) the comparison of effect sizes across studies is not a simple matter even in studies that are as similar (but not the same) as the hypothetical ones described here, (b) meaningful comparison between effect sizes require more information than is often reported, and (c) none of the measures of effect size advocated in the recent communication literature can be unambiguously compared across studies that differ in design.

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CT&M Call for Papers

CT&M Division invites submissions of original papers dealing with the study of communication processes, institutions, and effects from a theoretical perspective. CT&M welcomes both conceptual and data-based papers and is open to all systematic methodologies. We strongly encourage submissions by students. First authors of accepted student papers will be awarded $50 to help offset the cost of traveling to the conference. Winners of the Chaffee-McLeod Award for Top Student Paper will be awarded $250. Student papers are those having only student authors, i.e., no faculty co-authors, and should be clearly labeled as such.

Please submit papers to:
Glenn Leshner, School of Journalism, 181C Gannett Hall, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO 65203.

Late submissions and submissions by e-mail or fax will not be accepted.

Information Processing and Health Communication: How Mass Media Messages and Family Communication Influence Youth's Perceptions and Smoking Behaviors

By
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Doctoral Candidate
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There is an interesting contrast between the persuasive appeals used in product commercials and those used in antismoking ads (or public services announcements, PSAs) on television. Most commercials are positive and extol the features and benefits of their products (gain-framed) while most antismoking PSAs feature risks and dangers (loss-framed, e.g., "every cigarette is doing you damage," "smoking is cancer-causing"). The question of how people may process and react to differently framed antismoking ads has been a major part of my research program since my master's thesis. Later, with Dr. Glenn Leshner at Missouri, I conducted a laboratory experiment examining the impact of antismoking message attributes (message frames and arousal level) on attention and memory, as well as perceptions of ad persuasiveness. We presented our findings at a CT&M-sponsored research panel last year.

Understanding how people process antismoking PSAs is one aspect of research in my areas of interest--advertising, public relations, strategic communication, and new media. At present, I am in the early stages of carrying out my dissertation. For my dissertation, I will complete a survey that looks at how mass media and family communication influence teen attitudes and behaviors about smoking. The study focuses on younger teens (aged 11-15) because they have been studied less frequently. I will use paired sample data from both parents and children from the same household. This research approach can afford more power to describe the relationships among mass media, interpersonal communication, and health behaviors. In addition, I hope the study provides insight for anti-smoking interventions, such as encouraging parents to talk with their children as well as delivering messages through children to help parents quit smoking.

My dissertation work connects closely to my involvement as a member of several interdisciplinary research teams at Missouri that are working on federally funded projects on health and risk communication. During the past four years at Missouri, I have worked with Dr. Glen T. Cameron to develop proposals and design survey instruments pertaining to the topics of teen smoking, breast cancer, health intervention in African American communities, and the evaluation of an arthritis Web site. Surveys for some of the studies are currently in the field, and I will continue to coordinate data collection and analysis in the near future. ❑

Cracking the Mystique of Brand Associations

By
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Consumers associate various thoughts, feelings, and experiences with specific brands. For instance, when we think of "Pepsi®" we think of related concepts such as "Britney Spears," "sweet," "fizzy," and even "vending machines." Despite the importance of understanding the structure of psychological mechanisms that underlie such "brand associations," though, our knowledge is somewhat limited. Although there is an abundance of theory and research delineating associative contents and implicating "priming" in the retrieval processes, there is far less that attempts to model ways in which such contents interrelate, especially as the processes relates to brands in particular.

However, studies in cognitive psychology suggest that our associations with a concept tend to form a network in which they are linked to one another with varied strengths, as opposed to a simple aggregation of otherwise isolated nodes. Perhaps more importantly, such networks have been shown to consist of "causal" relationships between associations, such as "A enables B" or "A allows B." This in turn suggests that certain associations may play a more "causally central" role than others in a given network and, therefore, when primed, are more likely to facilitate the activation of other causally related associations.

Premised on these theoretical assumptions, a study I recently conducted explored the impact of causally central brand associations on consumers' responses. The study first identified attributes that consumers consider important in automobile purchase decisions, and, subsequently, it investigated perceptions of causal relationships among the various attributes. The underlying structure of these relationships was then analyzed using UCINET 5.0, a software program sociologists have developed to examine network structures. From the analysis, the attributes were classified as either "causally central" or "causally peripheral," as a function of the extent to which they were seen as causally related to other attributes. As hypothesized, it was demonstrated that consumers inferred more attributes of a hypothetical car when the car was associated

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with causally central attributes (e.g., design and durability) as compared to causally peripheral attributes (e.g., safety and comfort) of reportedly identical importance. This rather provocative exploratory finding suggests that the way in which different content is processed affects consumer preferences for products that are promoted by emphasizing attributes of greater causal centrality. At the same time, the results highlight the importance of understanding what types of content are considered more causally central to whom and under what circumstances. Through my dissertation research, I'm continuing to probe these questions in greater detail, and it is hoped that the discoveries made will greatly improve our understanding of cognitive responses to persuasion, which should prove especially helpful in establishing valuable guidelines for developing strategic communications. ❑

Keeping Current

- **Barrow Minority Doctoral Student Scholarship Fund**: Each year, CT&M awards $1,500 to an outstanding minority doctoral student in the field of journalism and mass communication. Please consider supporting this fund, named after Lionel C. Barrow's pioneering efforts to bolster minority education in the field. The future of our fund is in your hands! Put Barrow Scholarship Fund on the memo line of your check and mail your donation directly to:

  AEJMC
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- **Erik Bucy,** Indiana University, and **John Newhagen,** the University of Maryland, have edited and published a new book titled *Media Access: Social and Psychological Dimensions of New Technology*, with Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

- **Dane S. Claussen,** Point Park University, has published his fourth book titled *Anti-intellectualism in American Media: Magazines and Higher Education*, with Peter Lang Publishing.