

# Social psychology – spin doctoring flashcard



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1. Which path(s) to persuasion is/are present in the global warming case? I believe that both central route and peripheral route paths to persuasion are used in the global warming case. Central route persuasion is evident in global warming because people are more globally conscious and aware of the issues concerning our planet than they were decades ago.

People are more concerned now about protecting our planet and better informed, thus, global warming, its causes, and ways to reduce our carbon footprint are of great concern to the public. The hydrocarbon producers, one of the communicators, credibility is lessened against other communicators such as Greenpeace, because many in the public realm view them as big business, just out to make money. They are perceived as untrustworthy and less credible. On the other hand, Greenpeace, the Suzuki Foundation, and Al Gore are perceived by most to be trustworthy.

Al Gore has been deemed an expert on environmental issues despite the fact that he has no formal educational background in environmentalism. This perceived expertise, coupled with his two runs for President and his previous position of Vice President, give him much credibility and trustworthiness. His Nobel Peace Prize win certainly sealed his expert title. Peripheral route persuasion is shown in the public's admiration of Al Gore; he is an attractive gentleman, has good family values and shares most American's concerns with saving the planet.

Most approve and believe him. The message of hydrocarbon producers is they are using technology to produce cleaner and greener fuels as a method of putting a good spin on their involvement with CO2 emissions. Greenpeace

and other environmentalists and organizations use peripheral route persuasion in their emotional appeal to end global warming such as the use of fear-arousing ad campaigns. Central route persuasion is also used with the use of global warming facts garnered by environmental experts on the subject.

The media and other people share the channel of communication for environmental organizations and environmentalists. Their global warming message is delivered via YouTube, television, and print media. Al Gore's book and movie, "An Inconvenient Truth" created the most "buzz" with people and got them talking about global warming. This demonstrates the truth "...that the major influence on us is not the media but our contact with people." (Myers, 2008 p. 242) "... 18 to 29-year-olds, the age group generally most concerned about global warming and most likely to say the problem is underestimated..." (Saad, 2009) is the audience for the global warming message.

Their attitude toward global warming will probably remain unchanged as "... early-adult experiences are formative partly because they make deep and lasting impressions." (Myers, 2008, p. 245) The message that global warming can greatly harm the planet and that one must act to stop it evokes favorable thoughts in that one is saving the world, a very positive thing to do. In summary, the global warming case uses a combination of central and peripheral routes of persuasion, both based on fact and involvement as well as based on acceptance of authority and personal and social influence.

2. How does the tobacco industry example fit into our understanding of impression management? Impression management should be the motto of the tobacco industry. The example fits impression management to a tee. Although clear evidence exists that smoking causes lung cancer, the tobacco industry still presents themselves as having good qualities and as an organization doing public good. Accessing the website of Philip Morris USA (PM USA), makers of cigarette brands such as Marlboro and the smokeless tobacco brand Marlboro Snus, it is very obvious they are actively using impression management to offset damaging publicity. Their Responsibility section of the website touts their commitment to reducing underage tobacco use and their support of cessation.

These commitments are somewhat suspect to me as without smokers, they will be out of business and as to reducing underage tobacco users; those who are underage will eventually adults. Philip Morris USA seems to be talking out of both sides of their mouth with their statement “ As the manufacturer of a product intended for adults who smoke, PM USA has an important role to play in helping to prevent kids from smoking or using other tobacco products.” (Philip Morris USA, 2010) Their website also shares how PM USA invests in their communities with corporate contributions that help resolve “ societal concerns” that are relevant to their business. These programs are Positive Youth Development and Environment, specifically cigarette butt litter prevention.

They also involve their employees with an Employee Community Fund. While their use of impression management is somewhat impressive, smoking rates are declining and public opinion about smoking is less than favorable. They

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can spin it however they would like but as a quote by Laney Davis in “ Spin Doctoring 101” says “ Facts are facts – and no amount of spinning will alter those facts.” (Dean, 1999)3.

Is spin doctoring the same as propaganda or is it fundamentally different? Address the weapons of mass destruction in your answer. I believe spin doctoring and propaganda are fundamentally different, spin doctoring is a public relations tactic used to spotlight the side of something we want to be believed or known while leaving sometimes contradictory areas in the dark. The use of propaganda is a way to deceptively manipulate people to think a certain way and have them believe it as the truth. In the weapons of mass destruction (WMD) case, fear was used as a motivating factor in the spin on the intelligence reports of Iraq’s possession of WMDs. Americans were still on edge from the 9/11 attacks and were ready to exact revenge on those they thought responsible for the attacks. Therefore, it was not difficult for the Bush Administration to play up the fact that Iraq indeed held WMDs and that the only way to remove them, and keep our country safe, would be to invade Iraq and declare war on Iraq’s Saddam Hussein.

Patriotism was on the side of the Bush administration and their public relations focused on America’s freedoms, strength, and intolerance of Saddam Hussein’s regime and tactics. The media quickly jumped on board the patriotic freedom train and it seemed that every time you turned on the television or radio or picked up a magazine, weapons of mass destruction were being discussed. As the occupation continued, Saddam Hussein was indeed removed from power and eventually executed. No weapons of mass destruction were ever found.

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Almost seven years later, Americans are still deployed in Iraq. Former President Bush, in an interview with ABC News said, “ The biggest regret of all the presidency has to have been the intelligence failure in Iraq,” (NewsMax. com, 2008) The honesty is at least appreciated.