Message effects on source perceptions

misc. references from Dan O’Keefe

These are unsystematically collected references that, in one way or another, can be seen to bear on questions of how various properties of messages influence perceptions of the communicator (especially credibility).

••• There’s some research concerning the effects (on credibility perceptions and persuasion) of advocating positions opposed to one’s apparent self-interest (or otherwise engaging in actions that violate similar expectations). Here are some illustrative studies:

Arnold, W. E., & McCroskey, J. C. (1967). The credibility of reluctant testimony. *Central States Speech Journal, 18*, 97-103.

Combs, D. J. Y., & Keller, P. S. (2010). Politicians and trustworthiness: Acting contrary to self-interest enhances trustworthiness. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology, 32*, 328-339. doi: 10.1080/01973533.2010.519246 [abstract: Trustworthiness is an important characteristic for politicians to possess. However, politicians are perceived as manifestly untrustworthy. One way politicians might build trustworthiness is to behave in a manner that seems contrary to self-interest. Three studies examined whether acting contrary to self-interest can help build trustworthiness. In each study, participants reacted to political content in which a politician acted contrary to self-interest (praised an opponent) or acted in a more common and self-serving manner (e.g., attacked opponent or praised the self). Participants perceived the candidate who acted contrary to self-interest as more trustworthy than candidates who acted in a more self-serving manner. Participants were also more willing to consider voting for such a candidate. These results were not constrained by party affiliation.]

Howard, C. R., Cohen, S. H., & Cavior, N. (1974). More results on increasing the persuasiveness of a low prestige communicator: The effects of the communicator's physical attractiveness and sex of the receiver. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 1*, 393-395.

Hunt, J. M., & Kernan, J. B. (1984). The role of disconfirmed expectancies in the processing of advertising messages. *Journal of Social Psychology, 124*, 227-236. [in the expectancy-disconfirmation condition, a clock-radio was described as “not the best” on one of four features and “superior” on three others, versus the expectancy-confirmation condition in which the product was described as “superior” on all four] [p. 234: “Subjects in the expectancy-disconfirmation group did not rate the advertiser as being anymore honest or sincere than did those in the expectancy-confirmation group.” But those in the expectancy-disconfirmation group “exhibited a greater degree of message acceptance” than did those in the expectancy-confirmation group.]

Knight, P. A., & Weiss, H. M. (1980). *Benefits of suffering: Communicator suffering, benefiting, and influence*. Department of Psychological Sciences, Purdue University, Report no. 6, prepared for Organizational Research Effectiveness Program, Office of Naval Research, Contract N00014-78-C-0609, NR 170-876. [abstract: Two studies were conducted to examine the effects of an actor's suffering or benefiting upon observers' perceptions of the actor's honesty, independence and bias, their attributions for the actor's expressed opinions, and the actor's influence. In both studies, subjects read bogus newsmagazine articles about an individual who had taken a public stand on an issue and had either suffered, benefited or received no outcome as a consequence. The results of both studies showed that the suffering actor was rated as more honest, more independent, and less biased by subjects. The subjects also made more dispositional attributions for the suffering actor's expressed opinion and more situational attributions for the benefiting actor's opinion. Additionally, results of the second study showed that the suffering representative was more influential than the benefiting representative. Results are discussed in terms of their implications for influence and leadership in various settings, and their relationships to other research findings on attribution and persuasion.]

McPeek, R. W., & Edwards, J. D. (1975). Expectancy disconfirmation and attitude change. *Journal of Social Psychology, 96*, 193-208.

Straughan, R. D., & Lynn, M. (2002). The effects of salesperson compensation on perceptions of salesperson honesty. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 32*, 719-731. [abstract: A reputation for honesty and trustworthiness is important to success in sales. In this article, we report 2 experiments examining the effects on perceived salesperson honesty of information about how the salesperson is compensated (commissions vs. straight salary). In both experiments, commissioned salesmen were perceived as less honest than were noncommissioned salesmen, but compensation method had no effect on the perceived honesty of saleswomen. The discussion of these findings focuses on their implications for sales management.]

Walster, E., Aronson, E., & Abrahams, D. (1966). On increasing the persuasive­ness of a low prestige communicator. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 2*, 325‑342.

••• One line of work concerns the effects (on credibility perceptions and persuasion) of whether the message presents only supporting arguments and so ignores opposing arguments (a “one-sided” message) as opposed to presenting supporting argument *and* discussing opposing arguments (a “two-sided” message)—discussing those opposing arguments either by refuting them (a “refutational two-sided” message) or by merely mentioning them (a “nonrefutational two-sided” message). Here are some illustrative studies:

Allen, M., Hale, J., Mongeau, P., Berkowitz-Stafford, S., Stafford, S., Shanahan, W., Agee, P., Dillon, K., Jackson, R., & Ray, C. (1990). Testing a model of message sidedness: Three replications. *Communication Monographs, 57*, 275-291.

Eisend, M. (2010). Explaining the joint effect of source credibility and negativity of information in two-sided messages. *Psychology & Marketing, 27*, 1032-1049. doi: 10.1002/mar.20372 [abstract: By referring to different stages of an attribution process, this study examines how source credibility effects and opposing effects of negative information in two-sided messages can be disentangled. The findings show that disclosure uniqueness (i.e., whether disclosures in a two-sided message are given voluntarily or not) leads to both inferences on source credibility and inferences on product uniqueness. The inference on product uniqueness requires more cognitive effort on the part of the consumer than the inference on source credibility. Therefore, the effects of disclosures in two-sided messages on brand attitudes depend on the cognitive load of consumers. Consumers make either an inference on the source or on both the source and the product. The results add to previous attribution research and the two-sided message literature, showing that consumers under cognitive load can fail to make inferences on negative brand attributes in two-sided messages.]

Golden, L. L., & Alpert, M. I. (1978). The relative effectiveness of one-sided and two-sided communication for mass transit advertising. In H. K. Hunt (Ed.), *Advances in consumer research* (vol. 5, pp. 12‑18). Ann Arbor, MI: Association for Consumer Research.

Jensen, M. L., Averbeck, J. M., Zhang, Z., & Wright, K. B. (2013). Credibility of anonymous online product reviews: A language expectancy perspective. *Journal of Management Information Systems, 30*, 293-323. doi:10.2753/MIS0742-1222300109 [Abstract: Online reviews play a significant role in forming and shaping perceptions about a product. With the credibility of online reviewers a frequent question, this research investigates how potential buyers assess the credibility of anonymous reviewers. Technology separates the reviewer from the review, and potential buyers are left to rely on characteristics of the review itself to determine the credibility of the reviewer. By extending the language expectancy theory to the online setting, we develop hypotheses about how expectancy violations of lexical complexity, two-sidedness (highlighting positive and negative aspects of a product), and affect intensity influence credibility attributions. We present an experiment in which favorable experimental reviews were generated based on actual reviews for a digital camera. The results indicate that two-sidedness caused a positive expectancy violation resulting in greater credibility attribution. High affect intensity caused a negative expectancy violation resulting in lower credibility attribution. Finally, high reviewer credibility significantly improved perceptions of product quality. Our results demonstrate the importance of expectancies and violations when attributing credibility to anonymous individuals. Even small expectancy violations can meaningfully influence reviewer credibility and perceptions of products.]

Kamins, M. A., & Assael, H. (1987). Two-sided versus one-sided appeals: A cognitive perspective on argumentation, source derogation, and the effect of disconfirming trial on belief change. *Journal of Marketing Research, 24*, 29‑39.

And here are some sidedness review papers:

Eisend, M. (2006). Two-sided advertising: A meta-analysis. *International Journal of Research in Marketing, 23*, 187-198. doi:10.1016/j.ijresmar.2005.11.001 [abstract: A meta-analysis is conducted that integrates empirical findings from the two-sided advertising literature. First, the study provides a summary of findings of the persuasive impact of two-sided advertising. Secondly, using regression analysis, the influence of message structure, marketer, and receiver variables on the persuasive impact of two-sided messages is tested. Finally, the crucial problem of the net-effect of source credibility and the amount of negative information on attitudes toward the brand is investigated. The results confirm that the persuasive impact of message sidedness depends on suggested variables (amount of negative information, attribute quality, placement of negative information, correlation between negative and positive attributes and marketers' voluntariness). Also the curvilinear relationship between the amount of negative information and brand attitude is supported.]

O’Keefe, D. J. (1999). How to handle opposing arguments in persuasive messages: A meta-analytic review of the effects of one-sided and two-sided messages. *Communication Yearbook, 22*, 209-249. [pdf available at www.dokeefe.net]

There are several studies that seem (to my eye) conceptually related to the sidedness work, even though the researchers might not use that language. As an example:

Schlosser, A. E. (2011). Can including pros and cons increase the helpfulness and persuasiveness of online reviews? The interactive effects of ratings and arguments. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 21*, 226-239. doi: 10.1016/j.jcps.2011.04.002 [abstract: One guideline given to online reviewers is to acknowledge a product's pros and cons. Yet, I argue that presenting two sides is not always more helpful and can even be less persuasive than presenting one side. Specifically, the effects of two- versus one-sided arguments depend on the perceived consistency between a reviewer's arguments and rating. Across a content analysis and three experiments that vary the information provided in the online review and whether the ratings are positive or negative, the results support these predictions. Furthermore, beliefs that the reviewer is able (vs. willing) to tell the truth mediated the effects.]

One line of (seemingly) sidedness-related work concerns what is called “stealing thunder,” in which one volunteers negative information about oneself before an opponent does. Here are some references:

Williams, K. D., Bourgeois, M. J., & Croyle, R. T. (1993). The effects of stealing thunder in criminal and civil trials. *Law and Human Behavior, 17*, 597-609.

Dolnik, L., Case, T. I., & Williams, K. D. (2003). Stealing thunder as a courtroom tactic revisited: Processes and boundaries. *Law and Human Behavior, 27*, 267-287.

Howard, M. V. A., Brewer, N., & Williams, K. D. (2006). How processing resources shape the influence of stealing thunder on mock-juror verdicts. *Psychiatry, Psychology & Law, 13*, 60-66. [abstract: Stealing thunder is a dissuasive tactic that involves volunteering self-incriminating information before another party does. This study investigated how the impact of stealing thunder on mock-juror judgments varied with the processing resources available to mock-jurors. Stealing thunder, thunder and no thunder conditions were contrasted under conditions that were conducive to central route processing (high elaboration) or only permitted peripheral processing (low elaboration). Results indicated that stealing thunder reduced the likelihood of guilty verdicts under peripheral, but not central route, processing conditions. Further, it appeared to do so by eliciting positive perceptions of source credibility that were then used as a peripheral cue supporting the arguments of the source.]

••• There is a line of work, stimulated by the elaboration likelihood model, that concerns how message properties can influence perceptions of the communicator (which then can feed into heuristic processes). This work is framed as describing the interplay of systematic and heuristic processes:

Reimer, T., Mata, R., & Kuendig, S. (2006, November). *Argument quality can affect attitudes by its impact on perceived expertise: Evidence for a moderated mediation in persuasion*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the National Communication Association, San Antonio, TX. [abstract: Previous research has revealed that argument quality has an effect on receivers’ attitudes and perceptions of source expertise when messages are processed systematically. We present a study in which perceived source expertise mediated the effect of argument quality on attitudes. This mediation was more prevalent among judges reporting low self-expertise than among judges reporting high self-expertise. Results indicate that the expertise heuristic might be applied more often than has been acknowledged in the persuasion literature.] [Torsten Reimer (U Maryland / Max Planck Institute Berlin)]

Reimer, T., Mata, R., Katsikopoulos, K., & Opwis, K. (2005). On the interplay between heuristic and systematic processes in persuasion. In B. G. Bara, L. Barsalou, & M. Bucciarelli (Eds.), *Proceedings of the twenty-seventh annual conference of the Cognitive Science Society* (pp. 1833-1838). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. [“We propose a multistage view that builds on dual-process models of persuasion but emphasizes the interplay between processing modes. According to this multistage view, there are contexts in which receivers first use systematic processes to derive information about expertise from argument quality and, subsequently, make use of the expertise heuristic to arrive at an attitude” (abstract, p. 1833).] [available at: http://www.cogsci.rpi.edu/CSJarchive/Proceedings/index.html ] [reports the study described more fully in Reimer’s 2003 *Zeitschrift für Sozialpsychologie* article in German]

Reimer, T., Mata, R., & Stoecklin, M. S. (2004). The use of heuristics in persuasion: Deriving cues on source expertise from argument quality. *Current Research in Social Psychology, 10*, 69-83. [abstract: Dual-process models of persuasion contrast the expertise heuristic “experts’ statements can be trusted” with systematic processing of message content. Studies in which source expertise and argument quality were simultaneously manipulated revealed that the expertise manipulation affects attitudes when receivers are not highly motivated to scrutinize the provided message. In contrast, when receivers are highly motivated and are able to scrutinize a message their attitude is usually affected by argument quality but is independent of the expertise cue. We argue that this does not rule out that receivers still make use of the expertise heuristic. Rather, they may consider argument quality to infer the expertise of the source. We show that a classic study (Petty, Cacioppo, & Goldman, 1981) may be interpreted by this alternative explanation and present a study, in which the effect of argument quality on receivers’ attitudes was partially mediated by perceived source expertise. This mediation tended to be stronger among receivers reporting low self-expertise than among receivers reporting high self-expertise.]

Reimer, T. (2003). Direkte und indirekte effekte der argumentqualität: Der einfluss der argumentstärke auf die wahrgenommene expertise eines kommunikators [Direct and indirect effects of argument quality: The impact of argument strength on the perceived expertise of a communicator]. *Zeitschrift für Sozialpsychologie, 34*, 243-255.

••• There is a line of work that examines the effects of certain confidence-related message features on communicator perceptions and persuasion. These features are variously labeled, including “language intensity,” “powerful (vs. powerless) language,” “opinionated language,” “hedges,” “tag questions,” “confident style,” “directive language,” and so forth. Here are some illustrative studies:

Hosman, L. A., & Siltanen, S. A. (2011). Hedges, tag questions, message processing, and persuasion. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, *30*, 341-349. doi: 10.1177/0261927X11407169 [Abstract: This study explored the effects of tag questions, hedges, and argument quality on receivers' perceptions of a speaker, perceptions of message quality, cognitive responses, and attitude change. The results showed that tag questions and argument quality directly affected speaker and message quality perceptions and cognitive responses. They also interacted to directly affect perceptions of the speaker's power and credibility. Mediational analyses also showed that tag questions and argument quality had indirect effects on attitude change. The results are discussed in terms of their implications for the cognitive processing of and research on linguistic markers of powerlessness.]

Karmarkar, U. R., & Tormala, Z. L. (2010). Believe me, I have no idea what I’m talking about: The effects of source certainty on consumer involvement and persuasion. *Journal of Consumer Research, 36*, 1033-1049. [abstract: This research explores the effect of source certainty—that is, the level of certainty expressed by a message source—on persuasion. The authors propose an incongruity hypothesis, suggesting that source certainty effects depend on perceived source expertise. In three experiments, consumers receive persuasive messages from sources of varying expertise and certainty. Across studies, low expertise sources violate expectancies, stimulate involvement, and promote persuasion when they express certainty, whereas high expertise sources violate expectancies, stimulate involvement, and promote persuasion when they express uncertainty. Thus, nonexpert (expert) sources can gain interest and influence by expressing certainty (uncertainty).]

Miller, C. H., Lane, L. T., Deatrick, L. M., Young, A. M., & Potts, K. A. (2007). Psychological reactance and promotional health messages: The effects of controlling language, lexical concreteness, and the restoration of freedom. *Human Communication Research, 33*, 219–240. [pdf avail; issue in hand] [abstract: Recent social influence research utilizing psychological reactance theory (J. W. Brehm, 1966) has focused on how reactance motivates message rejection due to threats to perceived freedoms posed by controlling language. Although reactance has been shown to increase message rejection and source derogation, persuasive appeals employing alternative forms of restoration of freedom, as suggested by the theory, have received little if any empirical scrutiny. The present study manipulated the levels of controlling language and lexical concreteness within health messages targeting a young adult population. Results show a number of negative outcomes associated with the use of controlling language but suggest more positive outcomes associated with the use of restoration postscripts. Findings also indicate that relative to abstract language, messages using concrete language receive more attention, are viewed as more important, and generate more positive assessments of the source.]

Miller, G. R., & Lobe, J. (1967). Opinionated language, open- and closed-mindedness, and response to persuasive communications. *Journal of Communication, 17*, 333‑341.

Sparks, J. R., & Areni, C. S. (2008). Style versus substance: Multiple roles of language power in persuasion. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 38*, 37–60. [abstract: This research explores how message style influences persuasion in conjunction with message substance. Using the elaboration likelihood model, the study operationalizes message style as language power and message substance as argument quality, then considers the multiple roles language power can assume in persuasion. The authors investigate whether language power acts as a (a) central argument, (b) peripheral cue, (c) biasing influence on assessment of arguments, or (d) distraction that inhibits argument processing. Additionally, they manipulate exposure time to examine how processing ability influences which persuasive roles language power assumes. The authors find empirical support for the multiple-roles perspective and conclude that the role of message style depends partially on the ability to process message details.]

And here’s a review paper that covers at least some of this territory:

Hamilton, M. A., & Hunter, J. E. (1998). The effect of language intensity on receiver evaluations of message, source, and topic. In M. Allen & R. W. Preiss (Eds.), *Persuasion: Advances through meta-analysis* (pp. 99-138). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

••• There are at least a few studies that examine the effect of discrepancy (between the advocated view and the view held by the recipient) on credibility perceptions:

Brehm, J. W., & Lipsher, D. (1959). Communicator-communicatee discrepancy and perceived communicator trustworthiness. *Journal of Personality, 27*, 352‑361.

Eisinger, R., & Mills, J. (1968). Perception of the sincerity and competence of a communicator as a function of the extremity of his position. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 4*, 224‑232.