

# Public Relations: Critical Debates and Contemporary Practice

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From Routledge : **Public Relations: Critical Debates and Contemporary Practice** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Public Relations: Critical Debates and Contemporary Practice:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Critique of the Theory and Practice of Public Relations By David Manier The public relations of public relations is wanting. In fact, the standing of this field with the general public is abysmal. The reasons for this are obvious: The popular media in the United States today are flooded with the products of "spin doctors," often engaged in the unseemly practice of liberally applying lipstick to the proverbial pig. Several decades ago, the image of the infant profession of public relations was besmirched through association with one of the

most odious figures in human history, Hitler's minister of propaganda, Joseph Goebbels. Stained as it is with such associations, it is perhaps a wonder that the field of public relations survives at all. Public relations (PR) may well deserve the stains that blemish its popular image, but it would be a mistake to tar the volume reviewed here with the same brush. This volume is an update and expansion of an earlier one, which was more aptly titled *Critical Perspectives in Public Relations* (L'Etang Pieczka, 1996). The ambiguous reference in the present subtitle to "critical debates" does insufficient justice to the critical orientation of this volume, and to its grounding in works of critical theory and poststructuralism. The debates covered by this volume are not critical simply in the sense of being important, but more significantly, the volume provides a radical critique of the field of PR, in the sense of going to the very root of the issue of whether an ethical approach to PR is possible, and if so, how. The volume does an admirable job of analyzing the theoretical foundations of the field of PR, as well as surveying the history and sociology of PR as a practice and a profession. Its sixteen contributors are diverse, in the sense of representing several different nations (although half of them, including both the editors, are associated with the University of Stirling, Scotland, and several more represent Australian universities). There is some theoretical diversity among the contributors as well, but that is not this volume's emphasis - its contributors are media/communications professors who share the common goal of providing a critical analysis of the field of PR. Those seeking to be trained in methods of persuasion and publicity should look elsewhere, but readers seeking a thoroughgoing critique of the field of PR will find this volume to be both provocative and informative. Poststructuralists see truth and knowledge as being intimately linked to power and politics. Prevailing patterns of discourse help to maintain existing hegemonic power relations, even within a society in which opposing views are given a certain voice. Moreover, these patterns of discourse play an important role in constructing the identities of members of society. The way that citizens construe their own interests is shaped by their discursive practices, which in turn are shaped by the discursive practices that prevail in the society at large. In this view, citizens cannot be seen as passive victims who have been duped or persuaded by propaganda, but rather as having their very identities shaped by propaganda, along with other prevailing patterns of discourse. The proper role of critical theory, in this perspective, is not just to call for open and rational dialogue, but to analyze the character of the dialogues that take place, and to shed light on their role in manufacturing and maintaining power relations within society. This volume provides a plethora of examples of practical applications of this kind of analysis.

This new text for students and practitioners in public relations has been built on the acclaimed *Critical Perspectives in Public Relations*, also edited by Jacquie L'Etang and Magda Pieczka, which is no longer in print. Many of the liveliest minds on the public relations scene have contributed fresh ideas and diverse perspectives: their locations on the margins, either geographically or intellectually, or both, allowed them to present a variety of compelling critiques. Contributors from Germany, Sweden, Spain, and Scotland join those from New Zealand and Australia in providing historical and political perspectives. Topics such as propaganda, religion, publics, expertise, transparency, and discourse are tackled in new and imaginative ways. The book challenges conventions but also provides essential empirical detail and careful argument. Practical relevance is also present through interdisciplinary discussion of public relations problems in sport, health, science, tourism, and documentary film. This important volume will stimulate debate about the boundaries, definitions, functions, and effects of public relations.

"Public Relations: Critical Debates and Contemporary Practice is impressively comprehensive and incisive..." --  
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