

Trust and the New Realities

BledCom 2013

20th ANNIVERSARY



International Public Relation Symposium

June 14 – 15, 2013

Lake Bled, Slovenia,

www.bledcom.com

PROCEEDINGS OF THE 20TH INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC
RELATIONS RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM BLEDCOM

Editors: Dejan Verčič, Ana Tkalac Verčič, Krishnamurthy Sriramesh, Jon White

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EDITORS:

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Ana Tkalac Verčič

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PUBLISHED BY:

Zavod BledCom

Trubarjeva cesta 79

1000 Ljubljana

CIP - Kataložni zapis o publikaciji

Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica, Ljubljana

659.4(082)(0.034.2)

INTERNATIONAL Public Relations Research Symposium (20 ; 2013 ; Bled)

Trust and the new realities [Elektronski vir] : proceedings of the 20th International Public Relations Research Symposium BledCom, Lake Bled, Slovenia, June 14-15, 2013 / editors Dejan Verčič ... [et al.]. - Ljubljana : Pristop, 2014

ISBN 978-961-90484-9-8

1. Gl. stv. nasl. 2. Verčič, Dejan

271731200

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1. Editors



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Liz Bridgen leads the MA Public Relations and MA International Public Relations programmes at De Montfort University, Leicester, UK. She has an MA in Mass Communications from the University of Leicester and previously worked in public relations practice in the UK and Iceland where she specialized in corporate communications for clients including Visa, Bosch and the British Post Office.

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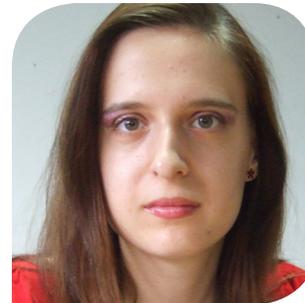
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Francine Charest is a professor at the Université Laval in the Department of Information and Communication, Québec, Canada. She is an expert in public relations and managing sensitive and crisis communication situations in social media, including e-reputation. In 2009 she published her first book, *Les racines communicationnelles du Web* (The Communication Roots of the Web), for which she was recognized by the Academy of Commercial Sciences of Paris with the Médaille 2010 award. A second edition, entitled *Les racines communicationnelles du Web et des médias sociaux* (The Communication Roots of the Web and Social Media), has been published in spring 2013. After joining the faculty of the Université Laval in 2010, she created the *Observatoire des médias sociaux en relations publiques* (Observatory of Social Media in Public Relations) to unite the work of teachers, students and professionals. The OMSRP functions under her leadership, along with notably the support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).



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Kate is on the editorial boards of *PRism* and the *Public Relations Review*. She served on the Public Relations Institute of Australia's State Council (2005–8) and National Education Committee (2008–11) and is on the Public Relations Expert Advisory Group for the Hunter Institute's Mind-frame program, which aims to promote responsible communication around mental health. Kate was also a member of the organising committee for the inaugural Research Colloquium at the World Public Relations Forum in Melbourne in 2012.

Kate was awarded an Australian Learning and Teaching Council Citation for Outstanding Contribution to Student Learning in 2011 for her development of the public relations curriculum and its focus on work-integrated learning. Prior to joining the university, Kate worked in public relations roles in arts, government and community sectors in the UK and Australia.



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Alex Frame is associate professor in Communication Science at the Languages and Communication Faculty of the University of Burgundy (Dijon, France), where he runs the MA course in Modern Languages Applied to Business and Trade (LEACA). Born in Britain, he graduated from the University of Oxford in 1998, before settling in France and completing his PhD in Communication Science at the University of Burgundy, in 2008. He is a member of the TIL ("Texte, Image, Langage") research group (EA 4182), where he specialises in intercultural communication. His current research interests centre on the mediation processes between cultures at different levels of society and organisations, including the cultural dimension of media and social media communication. Along with Euprepa president Valérie Carayol, he recently co-edited *Communication and PR from a Cross-Cultural Standpoint: Practical and Methodological Issues* (Peter Lang, 2012).



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Jyri Manninen

Dr. Jyri Manninen is professor of adult education at the School of Educational Sciences and Psychology. He has been involved in research, use and development of learning environments since 1989; especially so-called virtual classrooms and computer mediated communication (CMC). His field of expertise also involves evaluation of pedagogical and technological innovations in vocational training, and use of web based learning tools in Finnish open universities. Analyses and development of web based learning environments since 1995, with a special emphasis on didactical relevance. Recent research interests are more focused on learning environments in general, and on virtual innovation practice communities.



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He teaches courses at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, including public relations writing, campaigns, persuasion, communication management, integrated communications, and negotiation. In addition to his doctorate, Plowman has a master's degree in public administration from George Washington University and a bachelor's in communications from BYU. He is an accredited member of the Public Relations Society of America and serves as the North American Co-editor of the Journal of Communication Management.



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3. Papers



Why Do Women Leave Public Relations? A Feminist Phase Analysis

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INTRODUCTION

Women outnumber men in junior public relations roles across most of the world. However, above the role of account director/head of communications, this trend is reversed, despite women comprising the majority of public relations practitioners overall. This situation has been reported in many countries including the UK (e.g. Chartered Institute of Public Relations/ComRes, 2011), the USA (e.g. Aldoory & Toth, 2002; Sha, Tindall & Dozier, 2010), Germany (e.g. Fröhlich & Peters, 2007) and Russia (e.g. Tsetsura, 2012).

There have been many attempts in public relations literature to explain the reason for women's under-representation at the top level in public relations. While many papers (e.g. Fitch & Third, 2010; Fröhlich, 2004, and Mitrook, Wilkes & Cameron, 1998) acknowledge the complexity of the issue, the myriad of perspectives from which the problem has been discussed and the stridency of practitioner claims that inequality does not exist or that women voluntarily give up work (as mentioned in work by Yaxley, 2013, and Waddington, 2013) has done little to clarify the position or suggest concrete ways that women can be more strongly represented in senior management (if indeed this is possible or if promotion to management is seen as desirable, a perspective which is contested (e.g. Wrigley, 2002; Creedon, 1991)). To summarise, public relations research in the area of women's absence from the top level of public relations tends to focus on why women aren't there (where, due to a lack of data, assumptions regarding women's lack of presence are made) and what can be done to reverse this trend. It is these subjects rather than why women actually leave public relations which have been the focus of attention. As a result, the reasons for women leaving public relations (rather than their absence) and the lived experiences of those who depart is significantly under-researched. Furthermore, no data exists as to where the missing women in public relations go. Research in the area of women's departure from public relations roles tends to focus on pre-assumed reasons such as domestic situations (e.g. Hanson Research, 2012) and thus falls into the 'assumption trap' about female reasons for leaving public relations. The view that it is family matters that motivate women to leave public relations has been debunked by Korabik and Rosin (1995) who note that the "widely held beliefs about employed [...] women professionals is that having children leads to a reduction in commitment to the organization and

in professional attainment. [...However] dissatisfaction with aspects of the job, not family issues, appears to be a stronger motivator of voluntary turnover among professional women” (p. 514).

Research considerations

What motivates women to leave public relations roles has been little explored in public relations literature and while much research has been carried out on what attracts women and men into public relations roles (e.g. Tsetura, 2012; Reskin & Roos, 1995; Selnow & Wilson, 1985), this research is not linked to their longevity in the occupation.

Discussing women who left careers in academic research, Mavriplis, Heller, Beil, Dam, Yassinskaya, Shaw and Sorensen (2010) observe that “little is known about the numbers and attitudes of women who leave [...] Studies concentrate on those remaining in the pipeline, as these people are easier to locate for surveys.” (p. 140). This comment could equally apply to public relations where there is a similar dearth of information on women who have quit the occupation, with focus tending to be on those who remain (e.g. Yaxley, 2013). In part, this is due to the problem of traceability of those who have left any career, which results in many studies in other career occupations (e.g. Farquharson, Allan, Johnston, Johnston, Choudhary & Jones, 2012; Cooper & Mackenzie Davey, 2011; Kivimäki, Vanhala, Pentti, Länsisalmi, Virtanen, Elovainio & Vahtera, 2007; Blomme, Van Rheede, & Tromp, 2010) focussing on intention to leave. This intention may or may not be borne out in a person actually leaving their career – although Kivimäki et al (2007) point to research that demonstrates the correlation between intention to leave and actually quitting a job.

This article is the first stage of a larger project which aims to explore why women leave public relations and whether the haemorrhage of talent can be reduced. Thus, the purpose of this paper is not to establish why women leave the public relations industry, but to interrogate research considering other career occupations in order to explore the reasons why women leave similar roles. Once research themes in this area are established, these can then be explored through interviews with women who have left public relations to gain a richer picture of the situation and ensure that assumption traps and stereotypes in questioning and analysis are avoided.

Thus, as a result of the lack of research into women who leave public relations careers, this article paper turns to journal articles and periodicals concerning other career occupations to explore the motivations of female early leavers. Many of the papers discuss professions or occupations which are cognate with public relations such as STEM occupations (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), medicine and law (all of which require a university degree and/or some specific training) and those which have a level of public service and a defined career path, such as nursing

the police and armed forces. Hence, this paper intends to explore and establish key themes behind the exit of women from certain careers.

Studies into women’s exit from career occupations frequently fall into the category of work-family studies, where two competing perspectives vie for attention. Hakim’s Preference Theory (Hakim, 2011) focusses on a woman’s individual preferences and choice, believing that women make a conscious choice to, for instance, leave a career in order to raise a family and that their control over reproduction makes these choices possible. This perspective is in sharp contrast to studies that emphasise the continuing significance of constraints on women’s employment opportunities (e.g. Halrynjo & Lyng, 2009). While Hakim’s Preference Theory does not deny that social, economic and institutional factors exist, it still “emphasizes women’s motivations and inspirations as independent factors with causal powers on women’s employment decisions and on the type of job chosen” (p. 322). However, research in this area demonstrates that there are numerous constraints on women’s choice such as scarcity and cost of childcare arrangements, availability and security of jobs, workplace cultures, access to training and development and organisational policies. Further analysis in this area demonstrates how individual preferences are both socially and culturally shaped, reproduced and constrained and that the patriarchal and traditional structures of modern workplaces do not align with the domestic responsibilities of men and woman who, for instance, are often unable to join in with evening working or social events where visibility and promotion can go hand in hand.

Method

The analysis of existing literature on women’s departure from career occupations is informed by feminist phase theory, a system of classification initially introduced by Tetreault (1985) and developed in the field of public relations by Grunig (2006). Feminist phase theory acknowledges that not all writing on women in professional roles is from the same conceptual framework. Feminist phase theory “provides a classification system for analyzing any evolution in our thinking about women across the disciplines” (Grunig, 2006, p. 115) and in this project tries to make sense of how women in the workplace have been conceptualised in literature derived from a wide variety of disciplines including work-family studies, medical sociology, human resource theory, management theory and sports science where writing is from both academic journals and professional publications (e.g. *Computer Weekly* and *the Lawyer*).

The feminist phase theory helps to analyse, categorize, and make sense of the numerous perspectives on women’s departure from professional roles and importantly understand the perspective behind any particular research direction. It is important to realise that all research into women’s motivation to leave career occupations is not equal and is the product of the research

culture and research tradition from which it is drawn. The feminist phase theory helps us to make sense of the differences and understand the literature in its own contexts rather than judging it against other literature. It also helps a researcher identify and categorise those papers which fall into an ‘assumption trap’ and understand the motivations and perspectives of the original researcher. As Grunig (2006) observes: “Tetreault’s (1985) classification scheme imposes rigor on what otherwise may become a boundaryless, atheoretical look at a rapidly growing body of knowledge. Her framework is not intended to represent rankings or hierarchies. Instead, it reflects the evolution of thought about women’s incorporation into any field” (p. 117).

There are six phases used in this analysis (five from Tetreault and one developed subsequently by Grunig), which are reviewed in table 1, below:

Table 1: Six phases of feminist phase analysis (Grunig, 2006).

Phase one:	Male scholarship. The male experience is assumed to be universal and the absence of women is not noted.
Phase two:	Compensatory. Research seeks to overcome the previously unquestioned absence of women by searching for and profiling impressive women.
Phase three:	Bifocal. Women and men are conceptualized as separate and equal sexes. Neither is better; they are just different. This phase shows the beginning of a “sensitivity to difference” model. At the same time, this notion of inherent, complementary difference helps account for the oppression of women through seeing differences as inevitable and potentially natural.
Phase four:	Feminist. This phase conceptualizes women on their own terms. Women’s experiences are valued in their own terms and women’s activities become the focus.
Phase five:	Multifocal. A largely unrealised phase, characterized by exploration of the relationship between women and men and by reconceptualization of the human experience.
Phase six:	Integrative. This phase acknowledge the holistic nature of women’s lives which can include work, childcare, caring for the elderly, community commitments, etc.

Grunig’s (2006) development of the ‘sixth phase’ of feminist phase analysis is used in this research paper since helps us to understand research that sees “women and men [...] struggling to integrate their work, family, and community lives” (2006, p. 116). While this only represents two papers analysed by this research project, this category helps us to explore and understand research which, while putting women in a central position, also sees their lives as connected to their domestic, political and social spheres.

The papers chosen were from journals and professional magazines published since 2000 and from countries which, it could be argued, have a broadly similar culture in terms of women’s role in the workplace. While the research may appear to cover a relatively short period of time (13 years) over which to extend a phase analysis, the different research cultures and traditions from which the papers were drawn meant that some degree of categorization was necessary. To aid this categorization, only papers from Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the USA were selected since the experience of women in these countries could be deemed to be broadly similar (availability of professional careers; women accepted into the workplace; women having access to education). The papers were sourced via academic databases and search engines such as EBSCOHost and Google Scholar using a search which focussed on keywords such as “employee retention” “retention initiatives” “intention to leave” “considering leaving” and “turnover.” Papers written specifically on short-term career breaks (such as maternity and sickness leave) were not included in the sample. Books were excluded from the search to contain the scope of the project as they frequently included historic research or contained work from multiple authors. Conference papers were also excluded since work is often incomplete or can be duplicated later journal articles. In total, 35 papers were selected which focussed on women leaving a certain occupation and included primary or secondary research on the subject. The range of papers can be shown in table 2 and appendix 1. Although the research seems to be dominated by STEM careers, this is because of the wide range of occupations covered by this heading, including IT, physics and engineering.

Table 2: Number of journal papers discussing women’s exit from careers – by region.

Career	Region		
	Europe	USA/Canada	Australia/New Zealand
Academia	0	1	0
Architecture	1	0	0
Arts	0	2	0
Hospitality	1	0	0
Law	1	1	0
Management/General executive/Business	1	7	0
Medicine	1	2	0
Nursing	0	3	0
Police/Military	0	2	0
Politics	0	1	0
Sport	1	0	1
STEM	4	5	0

Coding was by date, country in which research took place, and occupation under discussion. Coding into phases was, by its nature, subjective, especially when considering phases four, five and six and focussed on the primary purpose of any paper. A list of papers is included in Appendix 1.

Findings and discussion

Steel (2002) observed that decision to leave should not be seen as a discrete event but part of a longer-term process, a point confirmed by Cooper and Mackenzie Davey (2011) whose research focussed on women teacher’s narratives of their career – for instance, those who recalled ambivalence about entering the career were more inclined to consider leaving the profession. The majority of the papers saw intention to leave or actual leaving as part of a longer process, often rooted in workplace structures and cultures and the incompatibility of these with domestic situations. In the majority of papers, women were committed to a career and had had many years of training behind them, so decisions to leave were not taken lightly and were often the result of ‘push’ factors rather than the ‘pull’ of childcare or other career choices.

The phase analysis of the papers showed no clear correlation between reasons for leaving and research phase – although, perhaps inevitably, the two papers studied under the ‘compensatory’ theme did not mention childcare as a reason for departure. Table three demonstrates phases and the occupations under discussion and while it would be difficult to draw any conclusions from this list, it is clear that a wide variety of research traditions exist, with management science being perhaps the most willing to explore new boundaries.

What did become clear in the analysis of papers was the methodological treatment that the subject of women’s departure received across the phases, with bifocal papers seeing women leaving as a measurable event which could be compared with the experience of men and the methodology being largely quantitative. This was in sharp contrast with papers which had a feminist, multifocal and integrative approach, where qualitative techniques were more likely to be used, thus gaining a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of women in the workplace.

Table 3: Phase analysis of journal and periodical articles.

Phase	Number of papers	Careers discussed
Phase 1: Male scholarship	0	
Phase 2: Compensatory	2	Politics, Arts
Phase 3: Biofocal	11	STEM, General/Business/Management, Hospitality, Medicine, Nursing, Sports, Police
Phase 4: Feminist	19	General/Business/Management, Law, STEM, Academia, Military, Nursing, Arts, Architecture
Phase 5: Multifocal	2	General/Business/Management
Phase 6: Integrative	1	Sport

Within this phase analysis it is not possible to categorize neatly the reasons why women exit careers as many overlap with others or are specific to certain industries. However, the five main themes which emerged from the phase analysis and are relevant to public relations are discussed below.

1. Lack of mentors/role models

The analysis demonstrated that women desiring access senior roles in business want and need mentors. While this is highlighted in professional literature (e.g. Hanson Research, 2012), simply having a successful woman as a mentor was not sufficient. Research suggested that there needed to be a level of personal chemistry or similar life circumstances between the two employees for mentoring to ‘work’. As Sprunt (2008) noted: “Younger women are looking not only to see if there are any women in upper management, but how many there are and how much they had to sacrifice their personal life to get there [...] The lack of highly regarded and well respected female role models in management is astounding and distressing. Many seem to be a better lesson in what NOT to do” (p.21).

This situation is not confined to senior positions, with Monument (2003) noting that the lack of role models started when women were studying science at university. Furthermore, Cropsey, Masho, Shiang, Sikka, Kornstein & Hampton (2008) linked a lack of role models/mentors to a general deficiency in terms of development paths or opportunities – when one was absent in an organisation, so was the other.

Thus, women who strive for senior positions in organisations have a double penalty – there is a lack of role models or mentors and where they exist, they do not always illuminate an appropriate pathway. As a result, while the number of women reaching senior positions remains low, the range of role models will continue to be narrow with ambitious and/or competent women potentially not seeing how ‘someone like them’ can reach the top.

2. Women are pushed, not pulled into leaving

Family reasons were cited as a reason for exit in the majority of papers. However, no paper saw this move as inevitable or natural or a sole reason – indeed, a consistent theme which emerged in research is that most women were committed to their careers and it was only those who were not committed, or who fell into their career by accident, were likely to want to leave (Cooper & Mackenzie Davey, 2011). What was clear from the research was that wide range of interconnected reasons made a woman’s decision to leave inevitable.

In essence, research showed that women are pushed into leaving, rather than pulled by the lure of a family role. Curran (2005), writing on nursing, observes that the 'glass ceiling' and rigid personnel policies push women back into the home, a factor similarly observed by, e.g., Melymuka (2008) and Patterson and Marvin (2009). Essentially, women are unable to reconcile the demands of their career with the rigidity of nursery and school collection times, the problem of ill children and the lack of management support (explicit and implicit) when problems occur in domestic settings. Structured working days, commuting, off-site work and the demands in many professions for long hours and on-demand working are not compatible with family life because, as Hewlett, Luce and Servon (2008) observe "women in two-income families still bear the brunt of household management [and] few are able to sustain those pressures" (p. 23). Consequently, many women find themselves compromised and unable to carry out the role that they would like to – leading to an inevitable 'time out.'

This imbalance in childcare responsibilities between men and women was particularly prevalent in feminist and integrative literature. Not only did the analysis show that women bore the brunt of domestic responsibilities but to have a lower salary than their husband, and/or having a husband who worked very long hours, were factors in a woman's decision to leave (Shafer, 2011) since working life became untenable. Of course, this again is a double penalty for women – women's wages are frequently lower than men's (Chartered Institute of Public Relations/ComRes, 2011) and by leaving a career they suffer a further financial penalty in terms of lost earnings which they will be unable to make up over their working lives.

Nonetheless, while most articles were in agreement that women do not leave their careers of their own free will, writers such as Mallor and Cohen (2001, cited in Patterson & Marvin, 2009) observe that seeing women's choices as a simple push-pull dichotomy "ignores the complexities of women's working lives" (p. 173). The 'triple shift' that leads to a difficulty balancing home and work coupled with conflicts at work (whether it was the result of departmental politics or untangling the mystery of the promotion process) was seen to bring women to a slow sense of disengagement their career, leading Pfister and Radtke (2006) to observe that "when a certain limit of their endurance was reached, they were no longer prepared to invest their energy and nerves" (p. 129).

However, while some papers noted that successful women delayed having children or did not have them at all in order to avoid or delay these conflicts (e.g. Wilson, 2005), Mavriplis et al (2010) noted that this, too, was unhelpful for women by "reinforcing the perception that to make it in the field women cannot be successful and have children at the same time" (p. 141).

3. Women are pushed into unfulfilling roles (and then leave)

The majority of articles focussed on women in male-dominated industries (e.g. general business, law, science, etc.). Only six articles looked at female-dominated industries (nursing, the arts, and the hospitality industry). Writing on women in the theatre, Burton and Green (2006) noted two situations where women were pushed into roles which potentially resulted in their early exit. Firstly that "the role of general manager—a position for which women are disproportionately hired—frequently requires the multi-tasking at which many women are adept, but exerts incredible demands." However, this role is often incompatible with domestic responsibilities, especially when coupled with the frequent evening working that theatre careers require. Secondly, in order to juggle family and work responsibilities effectively, women are pushed into routine or administrative roles which delivers to others "an indication that they somehow lack a certain creative spark. It is little wonder that these women, overworked, underpaid, under-appreciated, and now with damaged self-confidence, throw in the towel" (p. 68).

4. Women want to swap to another career

The analysis revealed that women who leave career occupations do not automatically move to lower-level careers or take over family responsibilities but may move to roles where they can exert some influence over their working lives (e.g. Patterson & Mavin, 2009; Hunt, 2010). However, this may be accompanied by a loss of visibility and status within their own profession, as Burton and Green (2006) noted when discussing women who left theatres to set up their own production companies or become scriptwriters.

5. 'Risky' behaviour is rewarded

Papers discussing women's exit from STEM careers highlighted working practices that 'pushed' women from certain careers. This was because the long hours, on-demand travel or combative working styles demanded were incompatible with domestic responsibilities. Women did not dismiss these practices because of lack of will or because of gender (only one paper noted that this may be the case) but simply because women tended to be responsible for childcare (e.g. Shafer, 2011; Pfister & Radtke, 2006) and even when had husbands' support did not have the time to take part in these practices.

"Some system is crashing in Bulgaria, so you get on the plane in the middle of the night and dash off and spend the weekend wrestling with a router and come back a hero, and there's a ticker-tape parade and you get two promotions – you can actually leap a whole grade if you rescue a big enough system." Melymuka (2008, p. 35)

While women's inability to join in with this 'risky' behaviour did not disbar them from working in a certain area, it did reduce their opportunity for promotion and visibility. Similarly, when faced with domestic responsibilities, the 24/7 culture of some jobs was not something that was accessible which meant that women were given the more manageable (and lower profile) jobs which did not result in promotion and placed them firmly under the 'glass ceiling.'

However, flexible working, often cited as a panacea, was not always the answer, with Wilson (2005) noting that the false flexibility of academic jobs was "part of the problem. The work is never ending" (online) with this too encroaching into women's family lives. For many women, being able to work flexibly or on reduced hours was to work invisibly – and thus not be considered for exciting roles or promotions.

It was clear from analysis of the articles that as women try to balance work and domestic roles, they lose visibility and status in the workplace, or are given administrative or lower-level work. As Hewlett et al (2008) points out, in reality the intertwining of the push and pull factors often leads women to take the definitive step of leaving.

Conclusions and future directions for public relations research

The phase analysis was valuable in confirming research directions for public relations research into the motivations and lived experience of women who leave public relations. Thus, this paper allows research to go beyond the assumption trap of seeing family as the only reason why women leave and explore the complex and intertwined reasons for the early exit of women from public relations.

While family responsibilities are a driver for the exit of talented women, it is not the only factor at play and it is clear from this research that the frequently-cited professional answers to women's domestic issues (such as giving women mentors and introducing flexible working) can create as many problems as they can solve. One of the factors at play was that a woman's lack of visibility in the workplace after having children ultimately spelt her downfall because, however flexible her working hours, she was not able to join in with the masculine working culture and thus suffered a numerous penalties in terms of missed promotion, missed opportunities and ultimately became excluded from key decisions.

Whether this is the situation in the public relations industry will be valuable to explore.

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Public Relations: Rules, Gamesmanship and the Professional Project - Why Academics Must Confront the Realities of Practice

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Since my intention is to say something that will prove of practical use to the inquirer, I have thought it proper to represent things as they are in real truth, rather than as they are imagined.

Niccolo Machiavelli (quoted in Shea, 1988)

Many would agree the grand narrative of modern public relations is that of professionalization. The story presented by professional associations and academics alike tells of a discipline that, in the course of the 20th century, groped its way out of the darkness of unethical, undemocratic, manipulative practice into the light of mature understanding, where strict adherence to values such as transparency, honesty, and integrity, as well as devotion to public and societal values, is recognized as the only viable long-term strategy (cf. Hoy, Raaz & Wehmeier 2007). Professional associations, such as the PRSA (USA), the CIPR (UK), the DPRG (Germany), and Sveriges Kommunikatörer (Sweden), assure us that professional behaviour in PR is not only desirable, but is the key to success. Almost without exception, academic framings of PR, first and foremost through Excellence Theory, argue along the same lines, and these ideas are then reproduced, in spirit or letter, in the majority of academic textbooks.

It is natural for scholars to be orientated towards their own discipline, but it must be noted that few social scientists outside the PR field actually buy the story developed by the professional associations and their affiliated academics. Eminent philosophers and sociologists such as Noam Chomsky (Barsamian & Chomsky, 2001; Chomsky, 2002) or Jürgen Habermas (1989) have devoted critical attention to public relations. Their accounts, although no doubt ideologically driven, do not construe the practice as a force for good in society - which, according to some theorists, would be the prerequisite for a real profession. On top of that, a whole genre of books reveals the 'lies' and 'damned lies' industrially produced by the multi-million-dollar-business of

public relations: Toxic Sludge is Good for You by John Stauber and Sheldon Rampton (2002) is perhaps the best-known example.

PR scholar Moloney (2006, p. 28) remarked that the only verdict on public relations that the social sciences agree on is that the practice is a dangerous triviality with the potential to undermine democracy. They do not seem to notice, Moloney adds (ibid.), that something that endangers democracy cannot be trivial. What Moloney really seems to refer to, however, are the efforts of PR academics who in attempting to come to grips with 'their' practice, often avoid the big questions in favour of technical trivialities. As Miller and Dinan write: "While the PR industry expends considerable effort lauding and legitimating itself and its 'best practice' and many academics specialising in PR attend to the often apolitical technicalities of PR practice, the broader issues of what evasion, deception and manipulative communications are doing to democratic structures are avoided and neglected." (Miller & Dinan, 2008)

This paper is authored by PR scholars who feel that the 20th BledCom conference is a good point in time to declare the teenage years of academic reflection about public relations over, once and for all. Persistent attempts to brand outstandingly successful practitioners who do not pay lip-service to the official version as 'black sheep' are becoming less and less convincing. This means that even PR academics who do not see their primary interest in criticizing the practice should stop taking the self-serving accounts of professional associations as a starting point. Narratives offered by professional associations may be a necessary legitimation facade in societies not free of hypocrisy, but they do not capture what public relations does. Once you take a closer look, it quickly becomes clear that accounts centred on unconditional truth, accuracy, honesty, integrity and the like simply do not give the full picture. That does not mean a society in which professional communicators are committed to truth is impossible in principle, nor that no practitioners are committed to truth. What this cannot explain, however, is the existence of a PR industry with rather well-paid PR experts. The sterile official version, in other words, trivializes the practice while failing to explain why corporations, in particular, pay handsomely for an apparently straightforward service.

The answer of the professional associations we have already sketched. The non-triviality, the argument runs, lies in the very capacity to resist the temptations to which amateurs succumb, and to see that adherence to professional values and ethical practice is the only viable strategy for long-term success. We believe it is time to question that argumentation, empirically and logically. We must ask whether 'doing it by the book' - be it textbook, guidebook or whitebook - really is the key to success in public relations. The core proposition of this paper is that it is not - or at least not in the straightforward way commonly suggested. We argue, conversely, that the officially sanctioned discourse about public relations and its resonance in academic textbooks is to a degree disconnected from the realities of the practice, and probably deliberately so. Therefore we challenge the way professional associations present the link between professionalism and success as self-evident. While the connection, in principle, might hold for, say, dentists or pilots, we see reasons to believe that it does not hold for PR practitioners.

We do not argue, however, that public relations is a practice without rules. That must be very clear. On the contrary, our suspicion is that the PR industry can only be adequately modelled as a practice that is largely self-governed by insiders and their enlightened strategic self-interest. The insiders are not exclusively PR practitioners, to be sure, but operators who are part of the PR game (here lieth the real reason, we believe, why the emergence of social media caused such a commotion - outsiders endangered the system). Our analysis leads us to conclude that the expertise of PR for which consultants are paid, and which is commonly referred to as 'strategic advice', boils down to gamesmanship. The professional judgement of PR practitioners ultimately is a judgement about what one can get away with in public and media. What is believed and what is not. How empty can a glass be for it to be declared, accurately and truthfully, half-full? Where does providing only relevant information - to cut out the irrelevant information is in the public interest, surely - deteriorate into suppressing information unfavourable to the client? In which contexts is it legitimate for the public interest to shift away the emphasis from facts to narrations, to fictions? Where does 'having good, professional relationships' with journalists end and where do punishment-reward-structures, bribery and blackmail begin? With a professional PR expert at your disposal, you can get away with less - or more. All these behaviours and framings lie on an ethical continuum (see fig 1) that runs from the universally acceptable to the unjustifiable, indefensible and criminal. It is our contention that a significant proportion of those who succeed in PR practice, those whose services are valued most highly by clients, operate in a zone on the continuum that approaches (but is careful not to cross) the indistinct border between acceptable and illegitimate.

Fig. 1

The following pages take a closer look at this system. We pursue three indirect lines of investigation: The first explores the idea of modelling public relations as a gamesmanship-game *in abstracto*. The second, third and fourth substantiate that idea. In the second and third parts, we contrast the official expositions of 'what PR does' (part 2) with recent non-fiction insider accounts or authorized media portraits of senior practitioners (part 3). The controversy that followed in the wake of Tim Burt's *Dark Art: The Changing Face of Public Relations* (2012), for example, demonstrated that the onus is on the defenders of the professionalism-equals-success paradigm to prove such grey zone practices are both rare or exceptional, and are in fact negatively connected with success. Finally, we contrast the 'official' versions of PR practice with fictional representations from popular culture. For this study we take examples from novels written by UK writers, some of whom are or have been PR practitioners themselves (Lancaster, 1996; Michie, 1998, 2000; Shea, 1988; etc). There are two reasons for this: First, if PR practitioners were to have committed legal offences they would not write non-fiction accounts about them - but they might want to engage with them by transposing them into fiction (as is well-known from the genre of war biography). Second, to be effective, fictional representations must resonate with the framings used by their audiences (who may not have actual experience of PR practice); thus we can argue that fictional accounts

can more closely reflect the true nature of PR practice than the idealised picture painted by professional associations. (Furthermore, it may be the case that fictional accounts are influenced, even inspired, by practitioner biographies, such as Alastair Campbell's diaries or Max Clifford's book *Read All About It*).

1. PR as gamesmanship

In game-theory, gamesmanship denotes the attitude of a player who does everything to win the game short of actually breaking the rules since that would, if detected, mean disqualification. The opposite is sportsmanship - where fair play is more important than winning. Wikipedia (Gamesmanship, retrieved May, 15, 2013) defines gamesmanship as "the use of dubious (although not technically illegal) methods to win or gain a serious advantage in a game or sport." In perhaps the most cited definition, sports philosophers Lumpkin, Stoll and Beller define it as "pushing the rules to the limit without getting caught, using whatever dubious methods possible to achieve the desired end" (Lumpkin et al., 1994, p. 92). Another philosopher of sport, Leslie Howe, succinctly defines gamesmanship as "the attempt to win one game by playing another" (Howe 2004). The term goes back to a book, chiefly humorous, published in 1947 by British author Stephen Potter: *The Theory and Practice of Gamesmanship: The Art of Winning Games Without Actually Cheating* (Potter, 1978). We do not use the concept satirically here, however, but employ it in the technical sense it has acquired in game-theoretical language: pushing the rules to the limit (cf. McDonald & Kam, 2007 where it is applied to scholarly publication). To model public relations as a gamesmanship means, very abstractly, to construe the officially sanctioned rules - accuracy, honesty, truth, etc - as the starting-point for a game but not its end-point. The 'real' game is about bending the rules without breaking them. This does not mean, and this has to be emphasized, that PR practitioners are scoundrels by definition. It means that PR practitioners do not tell The Truth in the sense a scientist or historian or philosopher aspires to (although it is probably never attained). They tell a 'version of the truth' which, in their strategic judgment, they can get away with. That happens under conditions of uncertainty, since there is always the danger of the bluff being called. In that case, the version of the truth is not accepted as 'a version' anymore, but is identified as a downright lie - with journalists and other commentators gleefully pointing at the gap between professional codes and realities of practice. If the bending of the rules is detected and identified, the practitioner has failed in his gamesmanship. However, gamesmanship by definition is not cheating in the technical sense, it just reveals the player is not a sporting - not always credible, or trustworthy. Subjectively, the practitioner might still believe that the version she told was the truth 'somehow', that she did nothing wrong; or she might concede to herself that she tried to get away with a lie and got caught - it does not really matter for the modelling of the game.

Fig. 2

Whatever the subjective attitude to one's own statements, the strategic calculus of the actors in the game is determined by the rewards expected from getting away with a certain, more or less creative version of the truth versus the probability of detection (i.e. calling the bluff) multiplied with the consequences of detection (e.g. being discredited). There is the implicit assumption, furthermore, that probability of detection is higher and consequences are graver the closer the rules are bent towards breaking-point. Furthermore, temptation is driven by competition. If you are not prepared to declare that the glass is half-full, a rival actor will - which might make you take the risk.

The reason the game remains a game, and does not deteriorate into war, is the presence of another force, corresponding to disqualification in games, which presents itself as criminal liability or, worse, threats to personal safety. Practitioners might stick to the 'rules' as proposed by professional associations or bend them. At a certain point, however, bending a rule necessarily transgresses into criminality, as Fig. 2 shows. It's not a crime to give ambivalent answers at a press conference but once the matter goes to court, questions answered by representatives of the judicial system will require a clear answer, and lying under oath is a criminal offence - as is bribing politicians, blackmailing journalists, etc.

Thus, bending the rules can be reconstructed, by way of logical argument, as the middle-ground between sticking to the officially sanctioned rules on the one hand - and not transgressing into criminality, i.e. breaking the rules, on the other. Illustration 1, once again, captures that idea. In a sense, the borderline of bending the rules defines the real rules of the game: the professional realities (cf. Fig. 2). The logical difference is that the consequences of criminal behaviour, if detected, are more or less known. The consequences are not in the hands of professional associations or insiders, furthermore. They are defined by law and are severe for the career of a professional. The consequences of bending the rules are ultimately a matter of empirical investigation, but we return to the question with some ideas. The same holds true for the probabilities of detecting cases of either bending or breaking the rules. Once again we are aware that they are matter of empirical investigation, but we believe there are logical reasons to assume that the chances of detection for rule-breaking are much higher than for rule-bending.

What we will try to show is that the temptation to work around the official version of the rules is high, probability of detection normally low, and consequences of detection by and large are negligible. But there are two twists. The first is that the danger-factor (probability of detection x consequences of detection) remains low only as long as you limit yourself to bending the rules. If you break the rules, the situation looks very different. The reason for this anomaly, we believe, is that in public relations only experienced insiders have the knowledge and insight needed to detect bending and breaking. But while they only have a limited incentive to call attention to rule-bending,

they do have powerful incentives to whistle-blow about rule-breakers. Why? The reason why they have few incentives to whistle-blow about 'bending' of professional rules, i.e. behaviours which are not legally actionable such as lying, is that there would be few consequences anyway. Despite claims otherwise, we hold that any damage to the reputation of an agency that demonstrates a willingness to lie on behalf of a client is, in practice, negligible. Furthermore, we have to be aware that established practitioners benefit from professional solidarity since they benefit from an expansion of the vague manoeuvre space of strategic PR where gamesmanship acquired in long years of doing the job is required. The reasons practitioners do whistle-blow about rule-breakers, on the other hand, are simple: First and foremost, they don't want to be part of a system in which you have to risk criminal liability in order to be successful. They want to keep their house clean and play the game legally and safely (that is why, in Fig. 2, the zone of strategic PR does not overlap with illegality). Moreover, there are now real consequences for a detected infraction - consequences that take a competitor out, eliminate a rogue.

While the first twist is about playing the game with a clear safety zone separating players from serious injury if detected (i.e. criminal liability or violence), the second twist is about ensuring the game does not deteriorate into triviality. What does that mean for insiders playing the PR game? Despite the necessity to uphold a convincing facade, attempts to define the official rules with scientific precision (which would make bending easily identifiable), and to enforce them with serious consequences to fear, e.g. the revocation of licence to practice, must be resisted and undermined. That is the experience, it seems, of scholars who have been working together with practitioners on ethical codes. And it is clear why. It is in the interest of the players to keep the game vague so what objectively constitutes rule-bending can be convincingly declared 'sticking to the rules somehow', at least subjectively. If it is defined and enforced that only a one-litre glass with a content of no less than 500ml can be called 'half-full', PR loses its room for manoeuvre. It is not in the interest of insiders to let their game be trivialized into everybody-tells-the-truth-and-nothing-but-the-truth-and-then-let's-see-who-the-public-believes.

The result of the interplay of the two forces, a strategic interest to keep the practice legal and safe and to keep it spacious enough for advanced manoeuvres, is a perfectly reasonable system, and it is, to emphasize this once again, by no means sinister or uncommon. It consists of insiders who cooperate in upholding a socially acceptable facade (professional discourse) in the face of societal hypocrisy while creating, maintaining and enforcing their own, slightly different 'real' rules (professional reality). In this way, such rules make much more sense of explaining why PR is an industry with handsomely paid top-practitioners. The only problem is that some practitioners seem to expect that academics and scholars naturally should make a contribution to the facade and stay away from professional reality - a paradigm we do not share.

2. Doing it by the book

The profession and professionalization of public relations is a long standing issue, which has been given a lot of attention by practitioners and scholars alike. Professions form when a group of people claim jurisdiction over a certain field of practice. The professional status may be invigorated by trade associations, ethical codes, formal education and in some cases by legal regulations (Larson, 1977). The following traits tend to characterize a profession: (a) a set of professional values, (b) strong professional organizations, which socialize practitioners into these values, (c) professional norms – such as those provided by codes of ethics – that can be used to enforce values, (d) technical skills acquired through professional training, and (e) an intellectual tradition and established body of knowledge (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). The norms and self-conceptions that arise within the professional body contribute to maintain internal consistency and external legitimacy as they are discursively enacted in various arenas such as trade and news media, with clients and at work. In the PR field these framings face consistent challenge from sustained attacks on the ethics, morality and social legitimacy of its practices and practitioners (Edwards & Pieczka, 2013).

The somewhat sordid reputation of public relations nevertheless seems to belong to the past, at least according to many textbooks. As Hoy et al. (2007) observe the story told is of a virtuous progression wherein practitioners left their dubious persuasive tactics behind, progressing ethically and technically to foster a two-way, dialogue-oriented communication process. Thus, the grand narrative claims that public relations professionalism (i.e. adhering to the official codes of conduct) is not only desirable, but is also the way to success.

Trade associations reinforce this narrative globally as they echo in near identical codes of conduct and ethics (e.g. Abracom in Brazil, Anzca in New Zealand and Australia, Dircom in Spain, Sveriges kommunikatorer in Sweden and Prisa in Southern Africa). The Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Managements (GA) Code of Ethics captures the core values of the profession by pledging: “To conduct ourselves professionally, with integrity, truth, accuracy, fairness, and responsibility to our clients, our client publics, and to an informed society” (Global Alliance, 2013, p. 3). Another example of ideal professional behaviour is provided by The International Public Relations Associations (IPRA) Code of Conduct, stating that in the conduct of public relations practitioners shall: “Act with honesty and integrity at all times so as to secure and retain the confidence of those with whom the practitioner comes into contact with”, and “Take all steps to ensure the truth and accuracy of all information provide” (IPRA, 2013). Furthermore, The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) Code of Ethics advises professionals to: “Protect and advance the free flow of accurate and truthful information, foster informed decision making through open communication” (PRSA, 2013). Finally, in the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) Code of Conduct we can read about confidentiality, another professional pillar: “Never use

confidential and ‘insider’ information to the disadvantage or prejudice of others e.g. clients and employees, or to self-advantage of any kind” (CIPR, 2011). The revenue of obeying these codes is stated by IPRA: “Upon joining IPRA all members undertake to uphold these codes and in doing so benefit from the ethical climate that they create” (IPRA, 2013).

There is also an outspoken societal function and responsibility of public relations professionals in textbooks (eg. the Excellence Project) as well as in codes of conduct. For example, the GA states: “In serving the interest of clients and employers, the GA dedicates ourselves to the goals of better communication, understanding, and cooperation among diverse individuals, groups, and institutions of society” (Global Alliance, 2013, p. 3). The International Communication Consultancy Organization (ICCO) Stockholm Charter announces: “Public Relations consultancies are professional service firms who help clients influence opinions, attitudes and behaviour. Along with this influence comes responsibility to our clients, our people, our profession and society at large” (ICCO, 2013). Another example is found in the codex for Deutscher Rat für Public Relations (DPR) saying: “Those belonging to the professional field of public relations fill an important societal function ...” (DRPR, 2012). Even though ethical behaviour and an altruistic drive for a better society stands out as an integral part of public relations professionalism, this does not obscure the fact that ethics is also good for business, something that is expressed on the PRSA web page: “Bottom line, successful public relations hinges on the ethics of its practitioners” (PRSA, 2013).

So, does strict adherence to codes of conduct and textbook practice lead to success? In an ideal world it would. But if professionalism here is about something as commonplace as ‘delivering objective information’, ‘not misleading audiences’ and ‘compliance with rules’, public relations would have a hard time claiming superior expertise in relation to other professional groups, since these tasks can be carried out by almost anyone. What the current situation displays is a tension and a paradox within the professional project, which provides a foundation for claiming successful public relations is very loosely coupled to the official discourse. A benevolent interpretation would be that since discourses tend to guide thought and action (Fairclough, 2010), the official accounts to some extent actually contribute to the setting of frames for professional conduct in the field. This is probably true for many or even most practitioners. Nevertheless, institutional theory explains how practices often are decoupled from talk, simply because this is more efficient. Institutions and organizations adopt guidelines and practices rhetorically because they have to – for legal reasons, or in order to appear modern and legitimate (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). But in practice people often need to go about their daily tasks and business in a way that differs from official guidelines in order to get work done. This latter alternative may be a more appropriate way to understand the professionalism/success divide. Successful practitioners bend ‘rules’, be they codes of conduct or institutionalized discourses, to proceed and be successful. What we have then is an official account, which is more or less unanimously reproduced globally in a variety of arenas, a story that might guide how a great number of professionals think and act in order to be successful.

Nevertheless, we claim this may be only part of the story. Even if there are critical accounts, such as *Toxic Sludge is Good for You* (Stauber & Rampton, 2002), these tend to highlight only the blackest sheep. As we show with accounts of PR practice from fiction and non-fiction, there are a lot of other things going on that are not as bad, but are still at odds with, official values and codes of conduct, such as suppressing and distorting information, lying, corruption and intimidation.

3. What PR ‘really’ does: Non-fiction accounts

Lobbying researcher McGrath points out that “writing authoritatively about lobbying is as difficult as writing authoritatively about the practice of espionage. Anyone (with) relevant current information is likely not to be writing about it but practising it, yet will not tell you how, or with what success.” (McGrath 2005, p. xi) This difficulty applies to public relations research, too. In *A Century of Spin*, Miller and Dinan (2008) argue that “The powers of public relations are mysterious in the sense that they are not well known, they are shrouded in secrecy and deception, which often enables PR operatives and PR firms to pursue their objectives undetected. The efficacy of corporate PR has in fact been largely suppressed from the historical record.”

It is definitely a problem for PR research that public relations, in contrast to advertising or journalism, is a largely covert activity, undertaken outside the view of the public eye: the greatest successes of corporate PR are not on record, because their very success consists of exactly that: being off-record. However, if one is not interested in ‘relevant current information’ or narrations of singular cases but stable and established patterns of the practice, there are ways to gain insider insights without becoming an insider. One is to analyse of insider accounts which, no matter what they tell, reveal the reasoning of practitioners. Another is to take a close look at the few instances when the full range of PR activities are openly discussed.

In the United Kingdom perhaps the two best known PR practitioners, (although not recognised as such by the ‘profession’), are publicist Max Clifford, and Tony Blair’s former head of communications, Alastair Campbell. Clifford penned a third-person autobiography (with Angela Levine) under the title *Read All About It!* Campbell published three volumes of extracts of his diaries from his time in public office, *The Blair Years*. Besides Clifford and Campbell, there is a tradition of person-centred PR ‘insider accounts’, either authored by insiders themselves or by professional writers. Not taking into account the writings of the founding father Edward Bernays himself, we find, decade by decade, examples including *The Anonymous Empire* (Finer, 1958), *The Lobbyist* (Schriftgiesser, 1965), *The Pressure Boys* (Crawford, 1974), and *Power and Influence* by former Hill & Knowlton CEO Robert Dilenschneider (1991), amongst many others.

It is perhaps unsurprising that nearly all contain passages, be they confession, admission or advice, which are hard to reconcile with the professional project. Contemporary accounts, such

as Tim Burt’s *Dark Art: The Changing face of Public Relations* (2012) in no way paint a more favourable picture. On the contrary, Burt reminisces about the PR industry in the 1980s and 1990s as being nepotistic, feudalistic and corrupt in a harmless and endearing way. He goes on to discuss whether the majority of agencies and consultancies stuck in this spirit are prepared for the harsher realities of the 21st century. Burt draws attention to, say, specialists hired to erase unfavourable articles or other damaging imagery from the internet, and lucrative business intelligence where the ‘consultants’ with a background in intelligence services occupy a grey area between private detectives and forensic accountants.

It is worth emphasizing once again, here, that we do not claim that PR practitioners by way of their jobs or by definitions are liars or, even worse, criminals. The situation is more complex, and probably not very different from any other discipline. It might be that the seasoned practitioner who claims to have never told a lie in 30 years of practice tells the truth in some way. This, however, reveals the complexity of gamesmanship, for it might equally well be that this practitioner never told a lie in his or her subjective perception which is, of course, shaped by what is acceptable in the established professional reality. From the more rigorous and unforgiving outside view of the scholar, which we term the objective perspective here, it is crystal-clear, however, that there have been a lot of smaller and greater lies: glasses that are more empty than full being declared half-full, and so on.

Klaus Kocks, a controversial but successful German practitioner, was a key figure in a theoretically interesting series of minor ‘scandals.’ In 2008, Kocks was almost debarred from the Deutsche Public Relations-Gesellschaft (DPRG), for claiming practitioners are allowed, required and even expected to lie (Kocks, 2008). In an interview with news magazine *Der Spiegel*, Kocks made clear that lying begins innocently: “Imagine you’ve been working a couple of years doing PR for Opel, but now you are with Ford. Is that because you had a revelation and suddenly realized that Ford is better? Or do you concede the simple truth: ‘For four years I got paid to aggrandize their cars. Now I’m paid by someone else to aggrandize theirs.’” (Kocks, 2007, p. 1, translated from German by the authors)

Kocks’s statement was supported theoretically by University of Münster-based professor Klaus Merten. Merten had earlier elaborated his ideas that PR was ‘difference management’ (Differenzmanagement) and as such ‘a technique of conditionally accepted deception of the public’ (Technik bedingt geduldeter öffentlicher Täuschung) in a peer-reviewed journal (2008b). In another paper and a speech, Merten circulated the idea that PR had a ‘licence to deceive’ (2008a, p. 1), that PR practitioners ‘professionally employ the elasticity of truth’ (2008a, p. 10). His propositions sparked the industry’s outrage (cf. Klawitter, 2008), predictably, and he was reprimanded by the Deutscher Rat für Public Relations (DRPR, 2008), the joint ethics council of the public relations associations in Germany.

The debate that ensued - 'a bizarre quarrel', in the words of Der Spiegel's Nils Klawitter (2008) - did not revolve around the continuum between 'the truth and nothing but the truth' and downright, legally actionable fraud. The argumentation expounded by the most prominent members of the ethics council, by-then president Horst Avenarius as well as University of Leipzig professor Günter Bentele, emphasized that no-one denies there are PR practitioners who actually are lying, but that does not mean that lying becomes acceptable: the ethics code unambiguously condemns lying (DRPR, 2008).

But the real problem, we believe, does not lie with the acceptance of lies. It begins with the question where lying starts and what is accepted as just not lying - in other words, gamesmanship, or Merten's 'elasticity of truth'. With his Opel-Ford Kocks anecdote points out that it is considered perfectly legitimate for PR practitioners to convince themselves of the quality of their employer's products, as it is for car-dealers and other sales-people. Indeed, it is part of the professional code that a practitioner should appear convinced of the quality of Ford cars, even if they themselves are not at all convinced. To portray a product in a favourable light does not conflict with the norm of accuracy, surely, because that's what you're expected to do - and everybody knows it. Leaving out the unfavourable and emphasizing the favourable, is surely not lying, is it? As long as you don't say anything factually false (for example, that the new Ford Fiesta will come with a 12 cylinder Ferrari engine), then you're safe. But what happens if you strip the professional code away? Assume the naïveté of the scholar, and it becomes crystal-clear that here is a practitioner saying something he does not personally believe, that does not give the full picture, and he might know to be untrue - and if that is not lying, then we scholars don't know what is. Kocks and Merten, it must be noted, conclude that PR practice is amongst other things about lying because they adopt the strict, unforgiving scholars' definition of lying. "Liars always talk about white lies," Kocks notes with barely concealed disdain for his peers. "Probity consists in admitting to it" (2007, p. 1). Kocks' claims could be dismissed as the ramblings of an enfant terrible ('Querkopf'), if there wasn't a wealth of other notorious but consistently successful practitioners saying the same thing. For example, publicist Max Clifford is quoted in PR Week (February 2007), 'confessing':

The only mantra I work to is that your duty is to your client. If I'm not comfortable lying, I won't do it, but there will be plenty of other agencies lining up to take the business. All PROs at all levels lie through their teeth. I lie on behalf of a cross-dressing MP, a prominent businessman who is having an affair with a man, and a gay footballer. Always the aim is to keep their identity out of the press. There's only been one footballer who was revealed to be gay, and he hanged himself. I know the ruin that will befall these people if news gets out. Here the truth is destructive - I lie because there is no choice. (Clifford, cited in Sharma 2010)

Although adept at gaining exposure, Clifford claims much of his work focuses on shielding his clients from the tabloid gaze, from keeping them out of the news. This, it must be noted, is another

as PR skill seldom mentioned in the official version. Clifford openly states he will lie if that best serves the interests of his clients. He could attempt, in the spirit criticized by Kocks, to declare these 'white lies', but he elects to give things by their proper name.

Clifford was behind the Freddie Starr Ate My Hamster story, which became an iconic front page for The Sun newspaper in 1986. What weight does the voice of the man carry who made up the tabloid story that a minor celebrity ate a girlfriend's pet in a sandwich? The answer is not only that Clifford's weight derives from being successfully in business for 40 years. The answer is, moreover, that one of the most admired consultants in the highly paid, highly professional mergers and acquisitions sector is portrayed as doing something very similar. A clearly authorized portrait of Alexander Geiser in the quality daily Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung carried this headline and intro:

The Storyteller: Business as Fiction. Alexander Geiser is hired by top-managers to invent stories. Be it Continental or Deutsche Bank - real economy is fiction and has been so for quite a while. The best story triumphs. (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 2012)

This portrait does not suggest Geiser lies or invents facts, to be sure. But accounts of his work in the mergers and acquisitions battle involving Continental or Josef Ackermann's succession at Deutsche Bank make it abundantly clear that Geiser is not in the business of serving the public interest with plain and simple truth. 'The best story triumphs' is a punchline that applies equally well to Clifford as it does to Geiser. And it makes us aware, once again, that insider rules are not determined by PR practitioners alone. They are determined by the whole media-system, first and foremost journalists, that either has an interest not to knock down a good story - or does have that interest when the story is not good.

Contrary to the cases of Starr, Anshu Jain or Elizabeth Schaeffler, there was a clear interest for many in the media to bring down Alastair Campbell and the dodgy dossiers affair gave them an opening. In The Blair Years, Campbell presents himself as a reasonable, hard-working guy (albeit with a history of alcoholism, a mental breakdown and a crush on Princess Diana) facing bickering politicians and an often hostile, unreasonable press. His diaries are fascinating, therefore, for three reasons. Firstly, even though his critics might claim the diaries are sanitized - downplaying the author's role in engineering public support for the invasion of Iraq ('Dodgy Dossier') - the account as it stands is hard to reconcile with the ideals of the professional project. Secondly, Campbell's writing provides a valuable insight into the dramatic differences between self-perception and perception by others of a prominent PR practitioner. A minor point, thirdly and ironically, is that the whole exercise of publication contradicts CIPR codes which debar practitioners from using confidential and 'insider' information to the disadvantage or prejudice of others e.g. clients and employees, or to self-advantage of any kind.

The Hutton Inquiry, which examined the government's involvement in the suicide of Dr David Kelly, can be read as clearing Blair's government of 'sexing up' intelligence reports concerning Saddam Hussein's capacities to employ Weapons of Mass Destruction within 45 minutes of the order given. It is fascinating and highly relevant for our argumentation, however, that the very same report can also be read as portraying the government as creating spin (albeit to an acceptable degree). So even if one accepts the conservative and government-friendly conclusions of the Hutton Report - perceived as whitewash by at least some media and, according to a poll, 49 percent of the UK population (see e.g. Cozens, 2004) - the actions of Campbell, proven beyond doubt in the report, nevertheless stand as a clear example of misleading the public while not actually lying straight into the people's face - in other words, gamesmanship par excellence.

From the naive point of view of a scholar, the only information that matters is that the report was stronger than it would have been without government influence: that alone constitutes the disservice to the public. Why does the government have to meddle with expert opinions, the scholar asks? Isn't it the *raison d'être* of expert advice to be digested as such? Common-sense and realism, however, suggest it is of course entirely reasonable for Campbell to make the experts aware of the political agenda - and to demand that the case presented should be as strong as possible considering the available evidence. 'As strong as possible' presumably means 'so that the ordinary man on the street gets the message'. Hutton, interestingly enough, tries to vindicate Campbell by portraying him as displaying gamesmanship, namely bending the rules (as strong as possible considering the evidence) but not breaking them (falsify the report). This time, however, the story was not bought - although it reveals what is considered acceptable in government circles. One reason may be that Campbell did not get away (he resigned under public pressure in August 2003) is that he had a history of more or less 'subconsciously influencing'. A former tabloid journalist, Campbell was widely regarded as tough to the point of bullying. His approach to media relations is illustrated by a memorandum to the GICS (Government Information & Communication Services) which demands government-employed communicators 'raise their game': "Decide your headlines", Campbell allegedly advised, "sell your story and if you disagree with what is being written argue your case." (cf. Barnett/Gaber 2001, p. 122)

4. What PR 'really' does: Accounts in fiction

Contrasting 'official' versions of PR practice with representations that appear in popular culture can shed interesting light on the way in which those outside the discipline perceive public relations to be. To be effective, fiction must resonate with the framings used by its audiences (who may or may not have actual experience of PR practice) and thus fictional accounts can offer a useful perspective on how the discipline is perceived. Furthermore, a slight displacement into fiction allows those with direct experience to refer to practices, attitudes and events with an element of

distance that provides a buffer against hurt feelings, broken confidences, respect for colleagues and in more extreme cases, a defence against legal action. Indeed, it is plausible to take this further and argue that the fictionalised portrait can more closely reflect the true nature of PR practice than the idealised picture painted by professional associations.

Certainly, we can begin to identify both a set of characteristics that are consistently identified by authors who are attempting to portray 'professional' success and also behaviours that mark out approaches to the discipline that resonate with public perception. As well as drawing on the experience and imagination of the writer, it can be the case that fictitious accounts are influenced or inspired by practitioner biographies, such as Alastair Campbell's diaries or Max Clifford's third person autobiography, *Read All About It*. Fiction is often employed as a lens through which to expose and examine events and attitudes in a way that allows greater flexibility of expression, and avoids some of the negatives that might flow from too precise a factual adherence.

By its very nature, popular fiction is fuelled by drama, and not least in crime and thrillers, or by absurdity in humorous writing. PR can appear in fiction either as a device or consequence of plot development, or to suggest certain character traits. In both cases, it is to be expected that the author will exaggerate certain traits for comic or dramatic effect. The argument here is that the amplification or focus on such traits, is dependent on there being a fundamental authenticity to portrayal. Thus, portrayals that harmonise with a perspective that suggests adherence to professional values and ethical practice as the only viable long-term-success strategy are unlikely to have limited dramatic value. On the other hand, fiction is drawn to those who are less inclined to the 'doing it by the book' approach. Accepting these parameters does not mean that insights drawn from the study of fiction have less value.

The first serious attempt to find new insights into the nature of public relations practice by an examination of creative output was Karen Miller's 1999 study *Public Relations in Film and Fiction*. Miller's work comes out of a research tradition (Spicer, etc), which examines perceptions of PR in terms of a legitimacy defined by often hostile journalists, illustrating the clichéd-but-true view that "PR is not very good at its own PR". Miller's study identifies a number of significant themes, including works that examine the ethical behaviour of PR practitioners and in some cases, relates these qualities to their perceived effectiveness in their working lives: "Although practitioners are presented as despicable in many ways, they are at least good at their jobs.... only rarely were they ineffective." But she has to add: "However, effectiveness should not be considered a sign of respect. Quite often, the least ethical practitioners are the most effective." (Miller, 1999: p. 15)

For this study we have taken examples from novels written by UK writers, some of whom who are or have been PR practitioners themselves. In particular, we focus on four novels which feature PR practitioners who are portrayed as successful. Interestingly, three are written by authors with experience of PR practice, (Graham Lancaster, David Michie, Michael Shea), and one by a

former journalist (Sophie Kinsella) whose commercial success will have brought her into contact with publicity machinery on a regular basis. Notice all three practitioner-authors are men, and that all four successful practitioner characters are male. Bear in mind that PR is frequently used as a shorthand for triviality, for empty-headed consumerism, and its practitioners often portrayed as a shallow, 'dumb blonde' young women. ("If only I were a cow, thought Grace. If only I were anything but someone who works in books PR" from *Fame Fatale*, by Wendy Holden, 2002, p. 42).

The less astute are used as figures of fun, and mistakes, misunderstandings and limited world knowledge are staples in this genre. Boring and ambitious combine in this jibe from *Confessions of a Shopaholic*, by Sophie Kinsella (2009) which has Ellie is discussing her latest failed date:

He's in PR. I'm in PR." "So?" "So nothing. Apart from the fact that we spent the evening discussing ways of getting more publicity for the brand of verruca cream he represents. He told me that he wouldn't rest until he had made it the country's number one foot fungus treatment. (p. 140)

At this level PR is indeed trivial, and although its distortions of the truth in the service of consumerism can have damaging implications, the core purpose of portrayals is humour. Often it is only when the practitioner is portrayed as being either successful, or has ambitions of becoming successful, that ethical conflicts flicker on to the page. Share This, the CIPR's guide social media, makes the observation that: "Having the right attitude is just as important as possessing hard PR skills." Likewise, writing in the UK trade publication *PR Week* (December 2009), Graham Lancaster, chairman of Euro RSCG Biss Lancaster, and author of the 1996 novel *Grave Song*, suggested that PRs need a mix of talents. These include a good intellect and quick, street-wise mind to assimilate masses of information quickly, as well as being obsessively inquisitive and a sales person par excellence. Such are the basic requirements to succeed in "the best job in the world", "the senior service of all communications disciplines."

Note "street-wise," which resonates with notions of gamesmanship mentioned earlier; it is used to refer to knowledge that cannot be gained from textbooks, rather must be earned the hard way by exposure to urban realities. Certainly, having the appropriate "attitude" seems to be regarded by many fiction writers as a useful indicator for PR success. For example, Lancaster chose a 42-year-old divorcee, John Blake to be the central character of *Grave Song*. Blake is international director of Globecom, the third largest PR group in the world, earning almost £100,000 a year in 1996. His role is to court and win big international clients, such as Korean giant, SGT. And not only does he court and win the \$1.5m contract, he courts and wins chairman Sool Kay-Sheen's beautiful, alcoholic, model girlfriend, Jane Field. And he in turn is courted by MI6, to spy on Sool. This is dangerous territory. Blake will not emerge unscarred, but he will have fun on the way... like when he finds Jane standing in his hotel doorway, wearing riding gear and holding a whip:

...her eyes now glazing over in a kind of aroused dreaminess he had seen before in some highly sexed women. Women wanting sex, not him. I just hope you're not a typical PR man, Blake. You know? All talk... (Lancaster 1997, p. 80)

Glamour, espionage, danger... and self-deprecation are all on the fictional menu. Happily for Blake, he proves himself up to the task and Jane will confide thus in a girlfriend: "He is funny. Funny-amusing funny. Also his world isn't so different from ours. PR and modelling. It is all about image, confidence and presentation." (Ibid p. 198)

Lancaster's fictional Blake appears to have characteristics in common both with the ideal described in *PR Week*, and with Luke Brandon, the dashing anti-hero of *Confessions of a Shopaholic*. Brandon, 'head honcho' of Brandon Communications, is handsome and rich (journalists always believe PRs make much more money than for doing much less work). Brandon has "such a scary reputation," we are told. "Everyone talks all the time about what a genius he is... He started Brandon Communications from nothing, and now it is the biggest financial PR company in London. (Kinsella, 2009: p.24)."

This "scarily intelligent entrepreneur" is ranked No 31 in *Harpers & Queen's Hundred Richest Bachelors*, having by the age of 32, accumulate an estimated wealth of £10million: He lives in Chelsea and is currently dating the daughter of a French billionaire. (ibid, p191) Note the use of "scary" and "scarily", linked to intelligence and with the inference that this somehow confers an unfair advantage. Brandon, it seems to imply is adept at gamesmanship, but stays just on the on the right side of roguishness. He looks, we gather, pretty much as one might expect a dashing anti-hero to look. Luke Brandon is "wearing an immaculate dark suit, his hair is shining, and his face is bronze with make-up. And there ain't an ounce of friendliness in his face. His jaw is tight: his eyes are hard and businesslike. As they meet mine they don't even flicker." (Ibid p. 271) The description may come straight from central casting, but it is also designed to resonate with reader's picture of success personified. These, are assumed to agree, are the attributes to be expected in a highly successful (and young) PR tycoon.

The archly-named Jo Smiley, of *The New You Survival Kit* by Wendy Holden (2002), lives in a fashionable street in Islington... opposite a clearly disreputable minicab firm. She wanted to go to Cambridge but ended up at Manchester "discovering underprivilege." Jo is described as a highly paid "professional pleaser", skilled in ensuring the comfort of potentially useful VIPs who has "learnt in her years in public relations that the best way to camouflage any moment of inadequacy was to inject it with a gentle stream of meaningless agreement." (2002, p. 82) Note again, without pushing the notion too hard, the successful Smiley lives on the border between fashionable and disreputable.

Brandon, Blake and certainly Smiley are lightweights compared to Mike Cullen, in David Michie's novel, *Conflict of Interest* (2000): "The PR man had all the skills of a modern day Merlin and had knew exactly how to use them." Michie has Cullen become the driving force behind Lombard Communications. Lombard is in a different league, the epitome of paranoid PR. Unless one believes in UFOs and conspiracy theories, Lombard is more powerful – and more sinister - than any agency in the real world. Established 15 years ago, it is the largest PR firm in the City of London, with more FTSE 100 clients than any other. Cullen founded Lombard on the premise that "to build up the best client list you had to hire the best people" and "has created the Hitler Youth of PR." The staff are known as Lomboids, and have a reputation for relentlessness without equal.

Several novelists have encountered PR from the perspective of journalism. Those with some experience of handling communications for clients include Michael Shea, who was the Queen's Press secretary, Martin Sixsmith, who went from reporting for the BBC to become a government advisor, and former practitioner Michie, who learnt his media relations skills with Fishburn Hedges. Interestingly all three created powerful males who use the dark arts of PR in ways which don't figure prominently in 'professional project' textbooks, and Michie and Shea have both written non-fiction that draws from their own experience – Michie, *The Invisible Persuaders* (1998) and Shea, *Influence* (1988).

In his non-fiction Michie describes dirty tricks, media manipulation, anonymous briefings. *Invisible Persuaders* includes a chapter on *Accentuating the Negative: PR's Dark Underworld* - and distils these insights into the monster that is Lombard, an organisation prepared not just to bend rules but to break them, and will plunge headlong into behaviour that is undoubtedly criminal. The conclusion must be drawn that for Michie, the one-time insider, to be as successful as Lombard requires a willingness to operate at the farthest fringe of gamesmanship, and that those who step too close to the edge will inevitably cross to the criminal.

As Lombard's Kate Taylor explains: "We do control the media. That's what our clients pay us for." He didn't try to mask his surprise. "But, I mean how can you tell a reporter what to run?" "That's how." "Client list?" She nodded... "If a reporter pisses us off he'll never hear from us again. He'll never get a single piece of information on any of those companies." "But surely he can call them direct?" "It's in our terms and conditions... if we represent a company, it has to be on the basis that all media calls are referred to us." (2000, p. 45) In stark contrast, *Shopaholic* views the PR machine through the eyes of the less than engaged financial journalist, Becky Smallwood: "I even pretend to make notes. It's not as if we ever put anything in the magazine except the puff that comes on the press release. Foreland Investments takes out a whopping double page spread advertisement every month and they took Philip (the editor) on some fantastic research (ha ha) trip to Thailand last year - so we are never allowed to say anything except how wonderful they are. (Kinsella 2009: p. 30)

It is not easy to find a fictional practitioner who demonstrates a strong commitment to ethics. The usual position is either ruthlessness, for the successful, and a slight feeling of discomfort for a daily routine that includes vaguely excusable "white lies" among the lightweight technicians. Full blown ethical conflict is rare. When Luke Brandon does take an ethical stance, choosing to denounce his own client on live television, the fact that in doing so he breaches professional obligations is passed over lightly: "To be honest, says Luke, with a wry smile, "I am not sure I'll be representing Flagstaff Life any more after this." (ibid p. 284)

In the introduction to *Invisible Persuaders*, Michie points to a "very obvious difficulty" in writing about spin doctors: "You are dealing with people who are trained professionals when it comes to looking an interviewer straight in the eye and delivering a version of events which may or may not accord with reality." This could of course apply to Michie himself, or to Michael Shea, the former Foreign Office diplomat, who was press spokesman for the Queen, in charge of Buckingham Palace's relations with the media during the courtship and wedding of the Prince of Wales and Lady Diana Spencer. In *Spin Doctor*, (1995) Shea introduces us to the urbane Dr Mark Ivor, "a professional strategist, a spin doctor, of whom it is said, the only views he has of life are those of his clients". (1995, p. 1) Another character describes Ivor as like a cockroach: "You stand on him and as soon as you remove your heel he gets up, shakes himself and scuttles away. Too clever by three-quarters." (Ibid, p.96) Ivor admits to "manipulating people, situations, not for financial gain, but because I enjoy it. Altering future history: does that sound pompous? (Ibid p. 96) I avoid the headlines. People seek publicity or get built up by media hype: then they are massacred when they slip." (Ibid p. 122) Note 'manipulating.' Manipulation is not a word that appears often in guides to best professional practice but one quite at home in Shea's 1988 non-fiction guide *Influence: How to Make the System Work for You*, which was marketed with the tagline "A Handbook for the Modern Machiavelli." The jacket, adorned by a rather sinister portrait of the author, promotes a number of Rules of Influence including: It is seldom profitable to broadcast what you are doing in the influence game; Tell the truth but seldom reveal the whole truth; and Train yourself to appear genuine and sincere.

It is hard not to read Martin Sixsmith's *Spin* (2004) as a New Labour roman a clef, so it is reasonable to assume readers who try to match characters with real people might draw similar conclusions about the role, attitude – and ethics – of political communicators, including "special adviser" Geoff Maddle and Director of Strategy and Communications, Charlie McDonald. Together they made Downing Street the most efficient, most revered and most feared PR outfit in the whole of Europe: "Foreign governments sent their Charlie MacDonald wannabes to study at the court of the master: to learn how carrots, sticks, black eyes, blackmail, saccharine and smears, seduction and schmooze can all be deployed to keep the government at the top of the news agenda; how the media could be flattered and cowed into submission; how difficult journalists could be neutralised; and how inconvenient stories could be killed by kindness, by cunning or by cutting some

bastard's balls off." (2004, p. 30) It is Maddie who does the much of the hands-on dirty work: "Success for (him) was when a story did not appear, when a dog did not bark." (Ibid, p. 30) As we note earlier, this is an area of PR that, as some of its more persuasive critics point out, gets very little attention. 'Professional project' definitions simply don't talk about the art of suppression, but it is at the heart of Spin in which the Lancelot computer system provides ammunition for blackmail, and Conflict, whose Lomboids owe their success to a hugely successful (and hopefully entirely fanciful), supersecret and murderous media surveillance unit.

The fictional reframings engineered by Shea, by Lancaster, and most notably Michie certainly suggest the expertise of PR, boils down to gamesmanship, and that the professional judgement of PR practitioners ultimately is a judgement about what one can get away with in public. To an extent, eschewing ethics aids such characters, and bolsters the view that using PR as a code for distortion and lies has legitimacy in fictional realities.

Morris and Goldsworthy (2008) note that PR complainers want their industry to be taken seriously and resent the way it is satirised without realising that successful satire must have basis in fact. Fiction has no obligation to deal in fact – but it must be convincing, it must create characters and situations which resonate with perceived expectations. In this brief account it is demonstrated that for many novelists, not least those with experience of PR, gamesmanship is inextricably linked with success. Not only do the nice guys not finish first, they are often not even in the race.

5. Conclusion

The professional public relations project underscores ethics, transparency and truthfulness as guiding principles for a successful practice but we argue that this picture, for various reasons, does not make sense. In mass media coverage, practitioner biographies and other non-fictional sources successful practitioners publicly bear witness to a practice that has little to do with unconditional commitment to these ideals. Fictional accounts, which have to resonate with the frames of reference of the audience to be convincing, also expose an image of the practitioner as someone who is more than willing to engage creatively with the official rules in order to please their clients. In addition, companies pay handsome amounts of money to consultants. Would they do so if the expertise they bought was as simple as providing unbiased information and safeguarding societal interests?

Our point is that public relations cannot be as straightforward as the official discourse claims. In this paper we suggest that by placing these anomalies within a framework of gamesmanship we may be able to conceptualize public relations' professionalism and success as something quite different. What the client pays for is not someone who tells the truth and nothing but the truth

(anyone could do that); the client actually buys expertise in serious rule bending, carried out by actors who appreciate how far the official and unofficial rules can be stretched without getting caught. This line of reasoning leaves us with another way of understanding the professionalism/success-divide: In PR, professionalism is not about adhering to rules but more accurately about bending them - but not breaking them - in a true spirit of gamesmanship.

Our contribution in this paper constitutes first and foremost an exploration of the system of gamesmanship. The reason to pursue this matter leads back to academia, however. For PR academics, the divide between the official discourse about public relations professionalism on the one side and the actual, 'real' practice on the other has serious implications. For instance, it raises questions concerning public relations pedagogy, education and research. What are the consequences for students planning a career in communication if they are wholeheartedly taught the official version of public relations as having left the dark ages - and then the practice they meet differs substantially from their training? Will they be successful? Other consequences originate from the pervasiveness of the the official accounts as they are constructed by scholars, practitioners and other actors. If the professionalism-equals-success discourse is continuously sanctioned as the truth, it will hamper our ability to question and fully understand the multifaceted practice of public relations. Our suspicion is that many of the problems PR academics face – such as limited acceptance by practitioners, continuous doubts about the value of 'studying PR' – are due to our inability, or unwillingness, to face up to this divide.

Finally we want to put emphasize that this paper is not a condemnation of PR practitioners, rather it is a plea for public relations academics to stop writing between the lines to locate their discussions with greater candour and a more robust appreciation of real world behaviours. We must come to the point where students no longer have to read between the lines to learn how the real job is done in the real world.

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Free Markets, Democracy, and Civil Unrest: Contemplating a Role for Public Relations in Peacemaking

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ABSTRACT

This paper proposes peacemaking as a societal role for, and a higher purpose of, public relations. A political economy approach is taken in that civil unrest resulting from free market democracies is examined alongside public relations literature addressing neocolonialism, subaltern publics, conflict resolution, and community building. A five-stage framework dating back four decades to U.S.-Middle East peace talks is introduced as a promising means by which public relations practitioners can work to unify communities, reduce violence, and provide a voice to marginalized groups directly affected by unresolved conflict. The work of an international NGO is used to illustrate how dialogue, mutual understanding, and collective action can contribute to peacemaking. Public relations scholars and practitioners are called to enact a societal role for public relations that counters hatred, indifference, conflict, and violence.

Keywords: political economy, capitalism, democracy, market-dominant minorities, conflict resolution, peacemaking, community, dialogue, civil society, public relations, societal role

INTRODUCTION

In *Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith (1776) promoted the classical idea of an unfettered market guided by the invisible, cue-providing forces of supply, demand, and competition. From this perspective arose the 19th century neoclassical view of political economy in which a free market is regarded as the most efficient distributor of economic resources (Caporaso & Levine, 1992). The neoclassical role of the state in the marketplace remains minimal, but government intervention is justified in cases of market failures, such as monopolies, externalities, and public goods. Twentieth century economists Fredrick Hayek (1944), Ludwig von Mises (1949), and perhaps most notably Milton Friedman (1962) explicated an essential tie between economic freedom and political freedom whereby each serves as a check on the other, rendering a market based on individual action and voluntary exchange in which the government, in Friedman's terms, determines, interprets, and enforces the "rules of the game" (p. 15) yet plays a minimal role in the game itself. Contemporary commentators on economic and political freedoms have observed that free markets provide the best environment in which rule of law can evolve (Vásquez, 2005), are a more powerful contributor to economic growth than political freedom (Hassett, 2007), and would more effectively empower citizens than democracy in the Middle East (Miller, 2011).

A frequent source of activism against capitalism is the resulting imbalance of outcomes, influence, and power between those who succeed in a free market compared to those who fail or at least have a diminished voice in the marketplace (Duhé & Sriramesh, 2009). Democracy is frequently promoted by Western nations as the essential complement to free markets (Chua, 2003). Both democracy and civil society have been addressed in the public relations literature, and the terms are often used interchangeably to describe the roles of media, technology, organizational networks, capitalism, and social capital within the Habermasian public sphere (Hiebert, 2005; Sommerfeldt, in press, 2012; Taylor, 2000; Taylor & Doerfel, 2005; Taylor & Kent, 1999).

The purpose of this paper is to propose a societal role for public relations in easing civil tensions brought about by the combination of free markets and democracy – two seemingly worthwhile components that, when hastily combined, can have detrimental, even violent, societal outcomes. To begin, Chua's (2003) concept of market-dominant minorities is introduced, juxtaposed with the concept of subaltern publics (cf. Dutta-Bergman, 2005), and then followed by exploration of a peacemaking role for public relations in addressing civil unrest through conflict resolution, community building, and peacemaking. The work of an international NGO is offered as an exemplar of the interrelatedness of dialogue, political economy, and the quest for peace through lasting social change, along with suggestions for continuing research in public relations and peacemaking.

Market-Dominant Minorities and Multinational Corporations

One decade ago, Yale law professor Amy Chua (2003) brought attention to the explosive potential of free market democracies to exacerbate civil unrest, ethnic hatred, and even genocide around the globe. Although Chua recognized both economic freedom and democracy as stabilizing forces in the long run, she highlighted and took exception to a common element of U.S. foreign policy to implement free markets and universal suffrage simultaneously – a formula, she explained, no Western nation in history has followed, yet it is eagerly exported to developing nations. Chua argued that this rush to free market democracy is particularly dangerous in nations with market-dominant minorities, whom she defined as "ethnic minorities who, for widely varying reasons, tend under market conditions to dominate economically, often to a startling extent, the 'indigenous' majorities around them" (p. 6). She described market-dominant minorities as "the Achilles' heel of free market democracy" (p. 6) and offered various examples of their existence, including the Chinese in the Philippines, Lebanese in Sierra Leone, whites in South Africa and Venezuela, and Jews in the Middle East. Although the U.S. is not economically dominated by one particular ethnic group, Chua noted that the country is viewed as a market-dominant minority on the global stage, resulting in great resentment against the U.S. in numerous parts of the world. Market-dominant minorities do exist in some U.S. communities, however, and result in ethnically charged conflicts (e.g., Korean business owners in inner city neighborhoods with majority, and less well off, African-American populations).

Paradoxically, it is an "outside" ethnic minority who is economically dominant – often to significant extremes in the regions Chua (2003) investigated – yet politically marginalized by resentful majorities through the democratic process. These minorities are seen by the ethnic majority as greedy invaders and selfish exploiters of resources (e.g., diamonds, oil) belonging to indigenous populations. Chua described three types of backlash that occur in the presence of market-dominant minorities: backlash against markets and minority wealth; backlash against democracy by the minorities themselves; or backlash in the form of violence, including genocide, by the majority against market-dominant minorities.

How do Chua's (2003) grim observations relate to the practice and study of public relations? The following comment in her closing chapter reveals a potential tie to community relations:

What is to be done about the underlying hatred, not just against Americans at the global level, but against market-dominant minorities everywhere in the world? One long-term strategy – in my mind more likely to be effective and certainly more dignified than erecting barbed-wire fences – is for market-dominant minorities to make significant, visible contributions to the local economies in which they are thriving. Although such efforts to date have been relatively few and by no means always successful in promoting goodwill, some valuable models can be found. (p. 283)

Chua referred to the contributions of powerful Indian families in East Africa and a Jewish billionaire in Russia as examples of the “voluntary generosity” (p. 283) that can alleviate societal tensions rooted in economic inequalities. Public relations scholarship in community relations has focused on the actions of corporations more so than private philanthropists in this regard.

Corporate entities can be characterized as market-dominant minorities in certain communities, whether at home or abroad. Chua (2003) cited philanthropic efforts by Coca-Cola, Procter & Gamble, Hewlett-Packard, and Nike that were visibly intended to benefit disadvantaged majorities in developing nations. In the U.S., manufacturing facilities surrounded by residents who are less well off than company employees are frequently targeted with social justice, environmental, and other negative externality concerns on behalf of those who have a less powerful voice. Such is the focus of activists and NGOs and the countering intent behind some corporate outreach programs to improve quality of life in these communities. Regardless of their largesse, community relations efforts are not always welcomed by industrial neighbors. Suspicions of being “bought” can spark outrage among residents who see only company dollars, and not company employees, at work in the community or lack access to dialogue, information, and debate with company officials (Sandman, 1993).

Heath and Ryan's (1989) description of three varieties of corporate social responsibility is relevant here. First, corporations can strive to appear socially responsible primarily for image building, which “typically implies more form than substance” (p. 21). The second option is moral rectitude. Similar to the idea of a categorical imperative, moral rectitude idealistically suggests a company could at once identify and implement a singular ethical standard of social responsibility that would be fair to all publics. The third option, recommended by the authors, is for corporations to discover and be responsive to their publics' interests. Wakefield's (2000, 2001, 2008) research reflects this responsive theme, and he has long prescribed an organizational structure coupled with public relations expertise that balances local and global interests for multinational corporations (MNCs) certain to face various levels of resistance when operating abroad.

Neocolonialism and Subaltern Publics

Related discussions in global public relations literature center on neocolonialism, subaltern publics, and how MNCs and governmental entities are frequently perceived as hegemonic invaders in lands not their own. Chua's (2003) telling of ethnic conflicts mirrors much of the societal tensions described in public relations scholarship between economically powerful MNCs and indigenous populations. Bardhan and Patwardhan (2004) wrote how host culture resistance to MNC entry is

frequently related to memories of colonial occupation and fears of its return. Such anxieties, they explained, are prevalent in several regions of the world, related to suspicions of capitalism, and trigger opposition to any measure that “symbolises ‘foreign’ domination” (p. 247). Munshi and Kurian (2005) used postcolonial theory to assert that ethical, socially responsible public relations practice must include the resistant voices of marginalized publics. Dutta-Bergman (2005) has likewise taken a critical approach to highlight the struggles of subaltern publics in the globalization process, and his work provides a suitable point of comparison to Chua's description of market-dominant minorities.

In its most basic form, subaltern means subordinate, whether in class or rank (www.merriam-webster.com). The “subaltern studies project” (cf. Dutta-Bergman, 2005, p. 281) began when an interdisciplinary group of South Asian scholars edited and published a series of volumes titled *Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History and Society* with Oxford University Press between 1982 and 1999 (Ludden, n.d.). These publications initially focused on India but, over time, inspired a growing body of knowledge on the subaltern that expanded the project both intellectually and geographically (Ludden). Long before *Subaltern Studies* was published, Marxist thinker and writer Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) developed his thoughts on the subaltern as “part of his overarching inquiry into Italian history, politics, culture, and the relation between state and civil society” (Green, 2002, p. 1; see also “Antonio Gramsci,” n.d.). Gramsci's subaltern work made its posthumous contribution to the subaltern studies project in the 1980s (Ludden). Green told of how Gramsci developed the subaltern concept over time, first in the literal context of a subordinate social class, and then toward a threefold interest in the history, portrayal, and “sociopolitical transformation” (p. 3) of the subaltern. In a similarly critical, political economy tone, Dutta-Bergman (2005; see also Kim & Dutta, 2009; Pal & Dutta, 2008) argued for including subaltern perspectives in public relations scholarship and embracing the narratives of the marginalized in public relations practice:

The subaltern perspective needs to be incorporated into the discursive space of civil society projects enacted by public relations scholars to (a) shed light on the marginalizing practices of the initiatives of civil society development and nation-building; (b) expose and problematize the relationship among the national bourgeoisie, the transnational global corporations, and the U.S. government; (c) understand the struggles of the millions of dispossessed and marginalized people in the world; and (d) begin constructing and understanding alternative forms of communication (e.g., participation) and approaches to them. (p. 281)

Upon closer examination, some differences surface between those described as marginalized in the subaltern studies literature and those described as market-dominant minorities in Chua's

(2003) research. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to comprehensively compare and contrast these groups, one point of potential distinction seems reasonable. That is, in colonialism, both political power and economic power are usurped from indigenous populations. In many free market democracies, however, Chua found majority indigenous populations have political power, but a wealthy outside minority has economic power, thus giving rise to potentially dangerous outcomes.

If, as Dutta-Bergman (2005, drawing on Beverly, 1999) explained, the examination of power is central to subaltern studies, particularly in regard to those who have it and those who do not, these bodies of work examined adjacently lead one to ask what kind of power renders a group part of the elite, ruling class – political power, economic power, or some combination thereof? Is it possible for a group to be “subalterned” politically, yet not economically, as Chua (2003) has described the case of market-dominant minorities? Or is the term subaltern reserved for members of “peasant societies” (Dutta-Bergman, 2005, p. 283) who lack both economic and political power but, through collective action, voice resistance against hegemonic structures? In the case of free market democracies, does not a division of economic and political power marginalize each group to some extent?

A researcher’s cultural perspective undoubtedly plays in role in this analysis. Ludden (n.d.) reported that the meaning and application of subaltern studies are ever evolving because of the breadth of scholars entering the project. In his review of subaltern literature, he contrasted the approaches taken to subalternity by U.S. versus South Asian scholars:

In the U.S., readers are generally encouraged to think about cultures in essentialist terms, in the ethnographic present; to see colonialism and nationalism as cultural phenomena; to disdain Marxism; and to distance academic work from partisan politics, a separation that bolsters academic credibility. But in South Asia, cultural change preoccupies scholars and activists, colonialism includes capitalist imperialism (which is still at work in the world of globalisation), Marxism is alive, and most scholars embrace politics in one form or another as a professional responsibility of citizenship. Such contextual differences differentiate readings of subalternity. (pp. 2-3)

This paper does not attempt to reconcile these different approaches or in any way suggest that reconciliation of perspectives on the subaltern is even necessary. Rather, the desire here is to propose a societal role for public relations in easing market-related tensions and provide frameworks through which the practitioner or scholar potentially “facilitates the expressions of marginalized voices and actively participates in resistance against acts of marginalization and silencing” (Dutta-Bergman, 2005, p. 287).

A Societal Role for Public Relations

Although admittedly idealistic or perhaps even impossible in some cases, there does seem to be a role for public relations grounded in research, dialogue, and mutual understanding to ease tensions between ethnic groups in free market democracies. In general parlance, the practice of public relations is most closely associated with the press agency model (Grunig & Grunig, 1989) and its reliance on one-way messaging and emotional appeals to garner media attention. “PR” as a paradigmatic term frequently carries a negative connotation and is used to describe attempts to hide the truth, make a false impression, or pursue organizational interests without regard for broader societal interests (Broom, 2009; Grunig, 2009; Rawlins & Stoker, 2006). Attempts have been made by practitioners and scholars to enhance the professionalism of public relations through accreditation, education, and widespread emphasis on two-way communication, dialogue, and ethics. Conversely, Moloney (2006) has embraced the idea of PR as weak propaganda, noting “the phrase ‘public relations ethics’...is, indeed, a risible oxymoron when it describes most past and present PR practice” (p. 101), and he has taken a skeptical stance against “the assertion of PR people that their work aims at the creation of goodwill, mutual understanding, good reputation and trust” (p. 101). The most effective way to counter public relations’ poor image, in Moloney’s view, is to ensure every entity has a voice in the marketplace of ideas. In fact, a common critique of public relations practice is that its applications are reserved for the elite who can afford counsel (Fawkes & Moloney, 2008; L’Etang, 2004; Sriramesh, 2008; Sriramesh & Verčič, 2004), thereby leaving subalterns unattended (Fawkes & Moloney, 2008).

Mackey and Sisodia (2013) asserted that professions should be “animated by service to a higher purpose, one that is aligned with the needs of society and that gives the profession legitimacy and value” (p. 49). Despite its more common associations with publicity and media relations, public relations has the capacity to serve a higher purpose in society (Duhé, 2013), but that realization is dependent on practitioners having a working knowledge of the political, economic, and social factors that affect both organizations and publics (Duhé & Sriramesh, 2009). Byrnes (1984) recognized a higher purpose of public relations in peacemaking. He explained that all aspects of public relations practice, whether writing press releases or managing public affairs, are intended to enhance understanding, which he referred to as part of the profession’s “noble and necessary task” (p. 14). He further emphasized:

Public relations is today the only economic activity deliberately organized to promote the exchange of information and understanding among society’s many economic and social institutions....In this sense, we public relations professionals are unintentionally fulfilling an ancient and honorable biblical role. We are the peacemakers of our society....Our work provides a glue that can bind superficially incompatible elements of society closer together so they can function harmoniously as a team. (p. 14)

Presented herein are three frameworks that provide guidance for a societal role for public relations in easing market-related tensions. Two of the frameworks – conflict resolution and community building – are drawn from existing public relations literature. The third framework of peacemaking comes from diplomatic practices, incorporates tenets of conflict resolution and community building, and is offered here as a complementary, promising addition to the public relations body of knowledge.

Conflict Resolution

Plowman (2005) defined conflict in the context of communication as “the notion of perceived incompatibilities” (p. 133). He and other scholars have described the role of conflict resolution in public relations vis-à-vis the mixed motive model of public relations practice (Dozier & Ehling, 1992; Murphy, 1991; Plowman, Briggs, & Huang, 2001) and the strategic management of relationships between organizations and their stakeholders (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002; Grunig & Repper, 1992; Plowman, 2005; Plowman et al.). Over time, Plowman drew upon and collaborated with other scholars to develop nine approaches to negotiation – “contention, avoidance, principled, mediated or cultural, compromise, accommodation, cooperation, unconditionally constructive, and win/win or no deal” (Plowman et al., p. 307). The last three – cooperation, unconditionally constructive, and win/win or no deal – were highlighted by Plowman et al. as the most symmetrical of the approaches because they seek to preserve relationships.

Plowman (1998, 2005) found public relations practitioners with conflict resolution skills were more likely to be contributing members of an organization’s dominant coalition. Furthermore, conflict resolution expertise correlated with other desirable management qualities, including “two-way communication, problem solving, trust building in long-term relationships, strategic planning, and control mutuality in relationships” (Plowman et al., 2001, p. 306). Cross-cultural communication can complicate or enhance conflict resolution, depending on whether mutual benefit is sought by the parties involved. Regardless, Plowman et al. acknowledged a societal role for public relations practitioners in addressing “the concerns of their stakeholders over business, environmental, human rights, and peace issues. Public relations, still in its global adolescence, can now transcend media divisiveness and traditional advocacy roles in favor of a mutual gains approach that unites all of us” (p. 309). This broader focus on public relations serving to reconcile, provide mutual benefit, and unify aligns conflict resolution with the tenets of community building.

Community Building

Kruckeberg and Starck (1988) introduced community building as a central theory for public relations scholarship and practice. They argued that the purpose of public relations should be to restore and maintain the sense of community eroded by development of communication and transportation venues that tend to separate, rather than unify, publics. “Public relations practitioners,” they wrote, “do not understand their most important role in society. That role is to serve not only their clients but society at large” (p. xii). Similar to Byrnes (1984) and Plowman et al. (2001), Kruckeberg and Starck recognized a higher purpose of public relations beyond publicity:

The public relations practitioner’s role as a communicator, and, more specifically, as a communication facilitator should be a calling of the highest order. This is a greater and more important role than merely influencing public opinion through persuasion and advocacy. (p. 71)

Community relations in its most common form, they explained, focuses on an organization using persuasion and good works to meet its goals among a geographical public. Instead, Kruckeberg and Starck (1988) suggested “an alternative approach to community relations” (p. 26) drawn from the Chicago School of Social Thought that: (a) increases awareness of common interests; (b) helps community members get acquainted; (c) creates a sense of community; (d) encourages leisure activities among members; (e) communicates for enjoyment, not just persuasion or advocacy; (f) provides opportunities for charitable association among members; (g) promotes the community’s cultural values; and (h) fosters personal friendships. Kruckeberg and Starck did not discount the need for organizations to benefit from community relations practice. Rather, they insisted that organizations have more to gain by focusing on broader societal interests:

Public relations practitioners have been so preoccupied with superficial, obvious, and pragmatic goals that they have not considered other avenues that promise even greater benefits to their organizations and society as whole. It is, after all, the larger environment in which public relations must function. (pp. 27-28)

This idea of community building is highly relevant for easing tensions created by market-oriented inequalities. Valentini, Kruckeberg, and Starck (2012) explained that the rapid growth of communication technologies in the 21st century accompanied by vast shifts in the economic, political, and cultural landscape has further eroded any sense of community, making it imperative that “public relations’ role becomes one of helping both organizations and publics build a community where dialogue and mutual understanding can take place” (p. 874).

They urged, too, that the conventional notion of relationship building in public relations can and should extend beyond those relationships established by the organization itself. That is, organizations should encourage community building among members outside of their direct involvement. In Valentini et al.'s view, this transforms the focus of public relations from being organization-public centric to being public-centric.

Hallahan (2004) suggested public relations might be better named "community relations." Whether a community is geographic, symbolic, or moral in nature, he proposed that "community" is a preferable alternative to "public" because "a community provides the arena in which people communicate. Unlike an ephemeral public that emerges around a particular issue and then dissolves, a community can be located, and its interests, values, history, power, and political structure understood" (p. 249). The practice of community relations, he argued, is a nobler concept than conventional public relations emphasis on controlling messages and managing relationships. Hallahan defined three forms of community building: (a) community involvement, in which practitioners represent an organization's interests in an existing community; (b) community nurturing, which involves organizations supporting a community's "economic, political, social, and cultural vitality" (p. 261); and (c) community organizing, which creates "new communities among disparate individuals with common interests" (p. 261) and resembles a social movement.

Along with Kruckeberg and Starck (1988), Hallahan (2004) recognized the inherent idealism of public relations as community building but argued that in increasingly complex environs "public relations needs a strong ideal if the field is to reach its full potential as a contributor to society" (p. 262). Both conflict resolution and community building are part of the peacemaking process through which practitioners could proactively contribute to a societal role for public relations.

Peacemaking

The peacemaking framework introduced here comes from Harold Saunders (1999), a former member of the White House National Security Council Staff who worked with both Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and President Jimmy Carter to forge Middle East peace talks in the 1970s. The principles presented in Saunders' text, *A Public Peace Process: Sustained Dialogue to Transform Racial and Ethnic Conflicts*, closely align with a number of prevalent concepts in public relations literature, namely, dialogue, two-way communication, negotiation, and mutual understanding. Saunders sets the tone for his work by highlighting the human, relational dimension of peacemaking and its larger role in society:

The human dimension of conflict must become central to peacemaking and building peaceful societies. Only governments can write peace treaties, but only human beings – citizens outside government – can transform conflictual relationships between people into peaceful relationships. The study and practice of conflict prevention, conflict management and resolution, diplomacy, politics and peace-building will not be soundly based until the human dimension of political interaction becomes a full part of the operational picture. As long as policymakers focus primarily on institutions – states, governments and formal organizations – and on the tools of diplomacy, formal mediation, negotiation and elections, that picture will provide an incomplete basis for action. (p. xvii)

Peacemaking, then, becomes the work not of governments but of individuals committed to the often frustrating, unpredictable, yet hopeful process of assessing common interests and reconciling differences for the greater good. The process is simultaneously political, social, cultural, and human, thus adding to its complexity, but, above all, it is dependent on citizen engagement.

Too often, Saunders (1999) explained, well-meaning groups come into a community, jump start "talks" between citizens, and erroneously implement action plans while either ignoring or failing to take enough time to uncover the deeper dimensions of values and relationships that underlie conflicts and civil unrest. Saunders' peace-building experience revealed that when citizens are allowed to fully explore and express their perspectives, regardless of how uncomfortable and imperfect the process may be, most cultures are able to "move from violence to workable peaceful relationships" (p. 3). He formally defined the peacemaking process, also referred to as "the citizens' instrument," as follows:

A public peace process is a sustained political process through which citizens outside government come together in dialogue to design steps for changing conflictual relationships in ways that create the capacities to build the practices, processes and structures of peace. The longer-term goal is to immunize the society against the recurrence of violence. As an instrument of citizens outside government, the public peace process stands apart from the formal mediation and negotiation of governments and, at its best, can complement, support or even energize the official peace process. (p. 9)

Saunders described the role of citizens as essential. He argued that longstanding conflicts grounded in ethnic, racial, and religious origins (similar to those described by Chua, 2003) are not effectively addressed by the typical instruments of government, such as elections, formal mediation, or referenda. Instead, these divisive civil tensions "require an approach that probes the human roots of conflict and changes relationships in enduring ways" (p. 13) that is outside the purview of governments.

Based on the premise that “the aim of dialogue is a changed relationship” (p. 85), Saunders (1999) introduced a moderated five-stage dialogic peace process that can last several weeks, months, or years, depending on the issues and circumstances at hand:

Stage one: Deciding to engage. Either individuals involved in the conflict or an interested third party identify those who want to make a positive change in the current relationship. This stage ends when parties to a conflict agree to discuss the causes and possible remedies of the tensions that divide them.

Stage two: Mapping and naming problems and relationships. The parties gather for the first time to discuss relationships, causes of tension, and how the ongoing conflict has personally affected them. The objective is to “map” the dimensions of the conflict, from its surface to its roots. Eventually, participants agree on what to name the issues of greatest concern. This stage ends when participants are ready to delve into a deeper dialogue on the issues they have defined.

Stage three: Probing problems and relationships to choose a direction. At this stage, participants (a) confirm problem definitions, (b) probe problems to identify which aspects of the relationship must be changed to address those problems, (c) frame possible directions to tackle problems, (d) weigh choices and decide on next steps, and (e) assess the group’s will to make a change versus doing nothing. This stage ends when the group makes a commitment to seek change.

Stage four: Scenario-building – experiencing a changing relationship. Participants begin the experience of designing actions to accommodate the needs of others by (a) listing obstacles, (b) listing reasonable steps that could be taken to remove obstacles, and (c) listing individuals who can take those steps in an iterative fashion. This stage ends with scenarios ready to be tested.

Stage five: Acting together to make change happen. As participants discuss how their scenarios can be put into action, they may also discover a need to return to a previous stage to reexamine an issue, redefine a problem, or raise a new issue. This is an expected part of the process and, in fact, can serve to enhance the profundity and lasting effects of the overall process. Saunders’ (1999) text provides detailed guidance for the moderation of each stage, evaluation measures, and case studies of how this dialogue process was used to stop violence in Tajikistan; ease racial tensions in Baton Rouge, Louisiana; and facilitate Palestinian-Israeli discussions among women and youth. To conclude this section on a societal role for public relations, the work of an international NGO is offered as an example of how peacemaking can be used to address tensions related to economic inequalities like those Chua (2003) observed.

Peacemaking in Action: International Alert

International Alert (“Overview,” 2013) is a peace-building NGO operating in areas including Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America under the premise that five factors contribute to peace: power (the right of all to be heard and affect decisions made by their leaders), livelihood (a healthy, inclusive economy in which to earn one’s living), system of law (under which all are treated equally), safety (living free of fear and violence), and well-being (fair and decent access to physical and social necessities). The organization utilizes a variety of methods - dialogue, research, advocacy, training, and collaboration with both individuals and groups (what International Alert calls “accompaniment”) – toward the realization of these five contributors to peace. International Alert is a registered charity and a member of the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI). Its funders include the European Commission (EC), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF), numerous ministries of foreign affairs, United States Aid Agency for International Development (USAID), World Vision, Shell International, and the World Bank (“Our Funders,” 2013).

International Alert’s peacemaking work focuses on five themes (“Our Work,” 2013): aid effectiveness, climate change, gender, security, and that of most interest in this paper, economy and peacebuilding, described as follows:

Our vision is of a world where the economic “peace factors” are strengthened, not undermined. Our goal is that economic development, investment and trade in conflict-prone and conflict-affected countries strengthen and do not undermine peace. We want to ensure that economic interventions in conflict-prone and conflict-affected countries help to reduce violent conflict and build peace. We therefore aim to enhance the peacebuilding potential of a variety of economic interventions that are key in conflict contexts: the conduct and investment of private companies, the international community’s economic recovery efforts and government policies and practices. (“Economy and Peacebuilding,” 2013, Why, para. 1 and 2)

One example of the NGO’s use of a dialogic process similar to that described by Saunders (1999) is in Rwanda, a tragic case Chua (2003) described as “the most extreme form of majority-supported, democracy-assisted efforts to exterminate an economically dominant ethnic minority” (p. 165). International Alert has established “dialogue clubs” in communities and schools to allow genocide survivors, former combatants and prisoners, and youth to tell their stories and improve mutual understanding (“The Power of Dialogue,” 2013). According to participants, tensions have improved over time, but trauma and mistrust still linger. Since 2010, the program has trained

64 facilitators overseeing dialogue clubs in 45 communities and 17 schools across Rwanda, with an estimated 3,000 people participating in the clubs to date. International Alert conducts additional economic peacemaking projects in Sri Lanka, Columbia, and Uganda (“Economy and Peacemaking”). Each of these areas is mentioned in Chua’s (2003) account of the detrimental effects of free markets, democracy, and civil unrest. Public relations as a peacemaking practice has the capacity to address and help alleviate market-related tensions.

Concluding Thoughts on Public Relations and Peacemaking

To be effective, both public relations and peacemaking are reliant on relationships and dialogue. Each hinges on trust. Though public relations is most commonly associated with publicity, several authors (Byrnes, 1984; Duhé, 2013; Hallahan, 2004; Kruckeberg & Starck, 1988; Plowman et al., 2001) have recognized a higher calling for the practice in its service to society. This paper adds peacemaking to expand and complement current public relations literature focused on conflict resolution and community building. Peacemaking as a function of public relations aligns well with Byrnes’ (1984) early observation that “our work provides a glue that can bind superficially incompatible elements of society closer together so they can function harmoniously” (p. 14). Given its close affiliation with both democracy and markets, public relations as a socially oriented practice can utilize peacemaking to address civil unrest in political and economic realms. Is this a noble ideal? Perhaps, but when feasible, the practice of public relations for peacemaking can be facilitated by a corporation, educational institution, NGO, nonprofit, or a dedicated group of individuals committed to lasting social change through dialogue, mutual understanding, and collaborative action. The reach of public relations for peacemaking can be local and specific (resolution of a neighborhood spat) or broad and complex (recovery and healing after genocide). When faced with its inevitable challenges, those dedicated to peacemaking must go through the same process described in stage three of Saunders’ (1999) peace-building framework, which is to assess one’s will to continue this work and act accordingly. If public relations is to fulfill a higher purpose in society, scholars and practitioners must persevere through adversity, even ridicule, to actively demonstrate the restorative powers of unifying communities.

Peacemaking is a highly imperfect, but worthwhile, process. Its goals and benefits are societal, rather than organizational, in scope. As such, this line of thinking deviates from public relations literature and practice, which is exceedingly corporate in its focus. Peacemaking represents a shift in public relations practice described by Kruckeberg and Starck (1988) and Valentini et al. (2012) from being organization-public centric to being public-centric. Their research contends that organizations still benefit, perhaps even more so, when public relations is practiced with a broader aim to serve, stabilize, and unite society. The tenets of peacemaking not only complement, but

also demand implementation of frequently stated values of public relations, including participation, access, and share of voice. A dialogic, trust-based framework such as Saunders’ (1999) peacemaking process would be intolerant to “lip service” and would work only if practitioners heeded Dutta-Bergman’s (2005) call for “participatory communication that involves subaltern voices in dialogue” (p. 287). Saunders’ model addresses hegemonic concerns expressed by Dutta-Bergman and other critical scholars by (a) drawing upon the unedited voices of marginalized groups; (b) allowing them to tell their own histories and stories, and, most importantly; (c) giving participants the role of identifying and naming the critical issues to be addressed through agreed upon collective action. Any peacemaking process can be muddied by ulterior interests, but the call of public relations practitioner is to remain steadfast in genuinely listening and providing a voice to all parties affected by conflict. The awkward, even painful, stage of participatory dialogue must precede any attempt, no matter how well intentioned, to throw uninformed philanthropy, infrastructure, or other assumed aid at the “problem.” It is imperative that those in conflict have a say in how to best explain, define, and address issues that directly affect the quality of their lives. Only then can authentic and lasting solutions emerge.

Future research should investigate the application of Saunders’ (1999) peace-building model from a community relations perspective, both domestically and abroad, as facilitated by either organizations or groups of concerned citizens. Opportunities for interdisciplinary analysis of the model are plentiful. Cases involving market-dominant minorities should likewise be investigated, such as in the U.S. where unspoken tensions have hampered economic progress in certain communities for generations. Both the spiral of silence and the co-orientation model would provide intriguing theoretical frameworks for this research. Scholars could identify untapped granting agencies interested in funding research focused on peacemaking through communication. Such peace-related efforts in research and practice will not only enact a societal role for public relations, but more nobly foster mutual understanding to counter hatred, indifference, conflict, and violence. Ours is an important role in the human dimension of conflict.

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 4

The Unseen Power of Public Relations in the Era of Globalization

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ABSTRACT

In an excellent book “THE UNSEEN POWER: Public Relations. A history”(1994) based on Scott M. Cutlip’s 40 years of research in the history of public relations in the United States the author came to a conclusion that public relations had a “...strong impact That generally goes unseen and unobserved” (Cutlip,1994:ix). In his book he also emphasized “..the influential role of public relations in our society – its unseen power”.

In his opinion from 1994, “Public relations strategies and tactics are increasingly used as weapons of power in our no-holds-barred political, economic, and thus deserves more scholarly scrutiny than they have had”.

Following the above guidance, the aim of this conceptual paper is to try to demonstrate the unseen power of the public relations industry in the era of globalization: the first half of the 21st century. Today global multinationals sell their products and services around the world; in order to reach their clients (publics) they need the services of the global communication industry and public relations.

As a result of consolidation, global communication holdings, independent agencies and networks of independent public relations firms, have now reached the size, scope and power of a global industry capable of influencing public behaviour on a global scale.

The third part of the paper presents a short case study of a global communication campaign for swine flu pandemic which could not be effectively orchestrated without “the little help of our friend”, namely the global public relations/communication agencies/holdings.

1. Introduction

In an excellent book “THE UNSEEN POWER: Public Relations. A history”(1994) based on Scott M. Cutlip’s 40 years of research in the history of public relations in the United States the author came to a conclusion that public relations had a “...strong impact ...that generally goes unseen and unobserved” (Cutlip,1994:ix). In his book he also emphasized “..the influential role of public relations in our society – its unseen power”. In his opinion from 1994, “Public relations strategies and tactics are increasingly used as weapons of power in our no-holds-barred political, economic, and thus deserves more scholarly scrutiny than they have had”.

Following the above guidance, the aim of the paper is to try to demonstrate the unseen power of the public relations industry almost twenty years after Cutlip’s study was published, in the era of globalization. Today the global multinationals sell their products and services around the world. To reach their clients (publics) they need the services of the global communication industry and public relations agencies capable of offering a full range of marketing services.

Following the methodology applied by The Holmes Report, this paper defines public relations broadly as “..any activity designed to help corporations and other institutions build mutually-beneficial relationships with their stakeholders”. According to this methodology, a public relations firm may engage in a wide range of activities including but not limited to media relations, sponsorship, lobbying, advertising, social media, corporate identity, website design and research. These services can be provided by mainly global communication holdings like e.g. WPP, Publicis, Omnicom, Interpublic, Havas with revenues amounting to \$3.85 billion in 2011 as well as the largest global independent agencies like Edelman. They appeared in the global communication market as a result of consolidation and decades of mergers and acquisitions. They have now reached the size scope and power of a global industry capable of influencing public behaviour on a global scale. That is why the issue of the power of public relations is raised in this paper to a global level. However, the author refers to an issue of an economic power only, leaving the other side of the coin: the ability to exercise political power worldwide for a time when another opportunity avails itself. ¹

¹ Just one of the examples illustrating the political power of PR provided by O’Dwyers on April 17, 2013 informing under the title “Iranians Light ‘The Torch’ for PR” that The Paris-based National Council of Resistance of Iran is working with former New Jersey Senator Bob Torricelli’s Rosemont Associates to promote political change in Iran by educating policy makers and the general public about the “injustice of the current Iranian regime,”.

2. Globalization requires global reach of communication services

The major „players” in the process of globalization are transnational corporations (TNCs) like Coca Cola, Burger King, Hewlett-Packard, General Electric, Microsoft, MasterCard, Toshiba, Unilever, Pfizer, GlaxoSmithKline, Roche...and many others...In order to transfer effectively their products and services to all corners of the world, they cannot limit themselves to activities instigated by in-house marketing and public relations departments; they need companies from various areas of communication which have at their disposal:

- a global network and
- ability to tailor their communication to many diversified cultures, political and economic systems.

As Vercic rightly noticed, “It is not uncommon to find some diversified conglomerates that have only a handful of public relations professionals in HQ being responsible for activities around the world! One may wonder how they succeed ...” (Vercic 2009, p.802). The answer seems to be relatively simple – the TNCs outsource their global communications tasks to huge global marketing and media conglomerates, which now dominate the advertising industry. Today a major trend, not only for American corporations, the outsourcing. For example Omnicom works for many automakers, including DaimlerChrysler, General Motors, Nissan and Volkswagen.

Therefore, demand was created for integrated services in the realm of communication including services related to:

- advertising
- marketing
- public relations,
- lobbying,
- opinion polls

“under one roof” i.e. rendered by one company: a conglomerate of communication-related services in the form of a holding. One could therefore say that the globalization processes and the need for global activity in the foreign policy arena have forced worldwide agencies operating in the communication services industry to consolidate.

3. Consolidation through M&A: global advertising and marketing holdings/conglomerates.

Like so many other industries, also the communication industry has experienced lots of consolidation in recent years as companies join forces to lower the costs and remain competitive in the global marketplace. The driving force behind the consolidation tendency was an assumption that for agencies (advertising/marketing/public relations) simply to survive they must have a global presence, an enormous size and a full range of marketing services.

That has led to decades of mergers and acquisitions. According to the 2007 Advertising Age Agency Report, as soon as 2006, the top four marketing organizations: Omnicom Group, WPP Group, Interpublic Group, and Publicis Groupe which together own 35 of the 50 largest U.S. advertising agencies, accounted for 57.4 per cent of the U.S. marketing communications business. The Report underlined also that:

Since the 1980s, most advertising agencies have tended to move towards a common structure. ...At the same time, while the number of individual agencies has as a result increased, ownership of those agencies has concentrated dramatically. Massive consolidation within the industry has led to a huge number of mergers and acquisitions, and the creation at the top end of the market of a small group of major holding companies, each of whom owns or controls a large number of separate agencies.” (http://www.adbrands.net/advertising_industry_structure.htm)

At the very top of the global communication industry pyramid is a small number of holding companies. There are now just five major international groups: WPP, Omnicom, Interpublic, Publicis Groupe, and Havas, each of them controlling a huge number of different agency brands spread all over the globe. They own eight out of 10 largest public relations firms, and generated in 2011 PR revenues around \$4.4 billion (<http://globalpragencies.com/top-250>)

The second group consist of global independent agencies with Engelmann as the largest of them -. The number of these still independent, owner-operated agencies dwindles and most of them are small by comparison with the group-owned brands, with the obvious exceptions of Edelman and FTI Consulting. In 2011 those agencies even outperformed the publicly traded holding companies, reporting combined fees of \$4.5 billion.

The third level consist of the networks of independent public relations firms like WorldcomPublic Relations Group or IPREX.) which in 2012 reported combined revenues of around \$1 billion. This indicates that in total, these three types of agencies/companies were able to generate about \$10 billion in worldwide revenues, employing close to 60,000 people and growing faster than the world economy as a whole. (<http://globalpragencies.com/top-250>)

The consolidation process within the communication industry is going to continue. According to Maurice Levy, Publicis' Chief Executive Officer whose company made more than a dozen acquisitions in 2012, one may predict more consolidation in the advertising industry even if some prices, like those for London's Aegis Plc (AGS) and the U.S.'s AKQA, are too high. Levy admitted that Publicis considered buying both Aegis acquired by Dentsu Inc. in July 2012 for 3.16 billion pounds (\$5 billion) and AKQA which WPP Plc (WPP) agreed to buy a month earlier for \$540 million. (Schweitzer, 2012) Publicis, the Paris-based owner of advertising agencies including Leo Burnett and Saatchi & Saatchi, will continue to expand by buying digital assets and companies in fast-growing markets.

4. The sources of power of the global communication industry.

Power may be defined after Castells (2009, p.10) as "...the relational capacity that enables social actors to influence asymmetrically the decisions of other social actors in ways that favour the empowered actor's will, interest and values". This paper presents an argument that the public relations industry is able to exercise such power on a global scale, reaching different kinds of actors: individuals, organizations (also intergovernmental like WHO), institutions, and even governments.

The above mentioned advertising and marketing global communication holdings and independent global agencies have grown in response to fundamental changes among their clients and media companies. The clients- global TNCs, have become bigger and increasingly global. Many have changed their marketing strategies to rely less on television and printed ads and more on other avenues like coupons, direct mail, sports sponsorships, in-store promotions and product placements in movies and on television shows. This process brought about the effect of concentration of power.

The power of the largest six global communication holdings comes from their:

- size and global presence (measured by the number of affiliates in over 100 countries and the number of employees);²
- financial assets available;
- human resources of their highly qualified "best-in-the business" professionals, being able to offer their services in every multicultural environment.

² For example, WPP - the world leader in marketing communications services. In its 3,000 offices located in 110 countries, it employs 165,000 highly qualified experts in Advertising; Media Investment Management; Consumer Insight; Public Relations & Public Affairs; Branding & Identity; Healthcare Communications; Direct, Digital, Promotion & Relationship Marketing; Specialist Communications. Its

All the above mentioned characteristics can be brought down to a synergy effect.

- To illustrate this power let us only quote the opinion of a New York Time commentator who as soon as 2002 came to a conclusion that "Besides dominating commercial speech, a \$500-billion-a-year industry, these four agency companies ...also hold incredible sway over the media. By deciding when and where to spend their clients' ad budgets, they can indirectly set network television schedules and starve magazines to death or help them to flourish." (Elliot, 2002). In the same article, Elliot also quoted O. Burch Drake, president and chief executive of the American Association of Advertising Agencies, who rightly underlined: "Now you have four mega-companies with revenues that are staggering, bigger than some of the companies they serve."

5. Demonstration of the unseen power – global campaign for the swine flu pandemic.

To illustrate how such global power can be executed, a short case of a global communication campaign for the swine flu pandemic is presented below. Such a campaign could not be effectively orchestrated without the almost unseen and unnoticed "little help from our friends" – the global public relations /communication agencies/holdings. By resorting to this case, three phases of a model of influence are presented to illustrate the PR machinery of the probably largest global PR campaign in the industry's history.

5.1. The pharmaceutical industry vaccination business –swine flu pandemic case.

Swine flu kept the world in suspense for almost the entire 2009. A massive vaccination campaign was mounted to put a stop to the anticipated pandemic. However, as it turned out, it was a relatively harmless strain of the flu virus. How, and why, did the global pandemic hysteria begin?

In mid-May 2009, about three weeks before swine flu was declared, the vaccine industry was mainly interested in one question: the decision of WHO to declare phase 6 of pandemic. This decision was extremely important because much earlier, many pandemic vaccine contracts had already been signed with governments around the world to enable supplies of the flu vaccine to large parts of the world's population. Therefore, by classifying swine flu as pandemic, nations were compelled to implement pandemic plans and also purchase swine flu vaccines.³

³ For example, as early as 2007 the German government signed an agreement with the British firm GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) to buy its pandemic vaccine as soon as phase 6 is declared.

5.2. A model of the impact of global communication agencies on the swine flu pandemic hysteria.

To ensure record rip-off profits to the vaccine industrial complex, three crucial strategic tasks were to be achieved:

- firstly, to persuade the WHO to declare phase 6 of the pandemic;
- secondly, to gain support of nations' health authorities, and
- thirdly, to engage media around the world to spread the fear.

Our assumption is that all those tasks could not be realized without the help of global communication agencies. The models below present the three phases of the communication chains.

Phase I – Campaigns: lobbying and spreading the fear - hidden, almost impossible to prove links.

The aims of phase one of the communication campaign for the swine flu pandemic consisted of two basic steps:

Step 1) Convince the WHO to hype up the pandemic risk by declaring phase 6 pandemic even when the mortality rate of the virus was so low that it could be halted with simple vitamin D supplements. As a result, the WHO pulled off one of the greatest vaccine pandemic scams in this century.

Step 2) Persuade the national health authorities around the world to echo the message.

Step 3) Keep people in a state of fear in order to keep demand for the vaccines as heavy as possible. To achieve this, both media and the WHO should give rise to fear

by warning that H1N1 was extremely dangerous and everybody should be vaccinated.

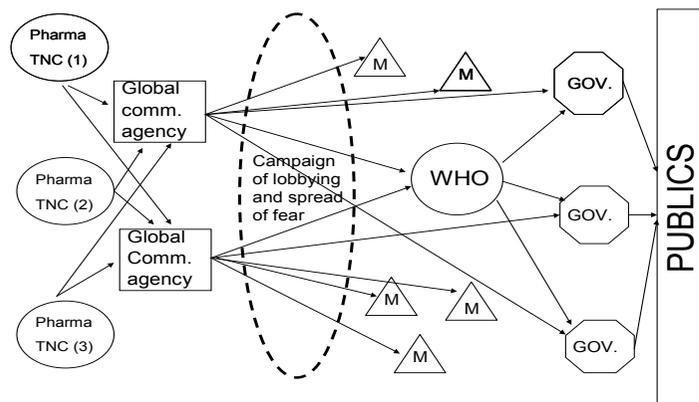


Fig.1 illustrates the communication chains of the first phase of the communication campaign for the flu pandemic illustrating the probable engagement of the global communication industry agencies.

Fig.1. A model of the global communication agencies' probable engagement (Phase III: Campaign of lobbying and spreading fear)

Lobbying the WHO and national governments and parliaments were the most crucial target of the communication experts. Therefore, in mid-May 2009, thirty senior representatives of the pharmaceutical industry met with the WHO Director General Chan and the UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon at the WHO headquarters with the official goal of discussing ways to ensure that countries around the world would be timely provided with the pandemic vaccine in case of emergency.

At national levels (according to a report released by the Centre of Public Integrity), in the U.S. alone the pharmaceutical industry spent a record \$ 168 million in 2007 on lobbying efforts aimed at the members of the Congress. (<http://projects.publicintegrity.org/rx/report.aspx?aid=985>)

On top of that, the pharmaceutical industry spends most of its annual budget to influence the US lawmakers, forking over a total of \$2.6 billion on lobbying activities from 1998 through 2012. To get some perspective on just how big that number is, the defence and aerospace industry spent \$662 million on lobbying the Congress over the same time frame, a fourth of Big Pharma's total (Potter, 2013).

It can be concluded that today we have sufficient information to raise very serious doubts whether national health authorities of many countries (with the exception of Poland) were truly serving public health rather than commercial interests.

Even today, in the era of internet, proving the strong impact and influential role of global communication agencies /holdings in phase one of lobbying and the media campaign of fear was almost impossible. One can only assume such engagement by means of deduction from two facts:

- first, TNCs (including pharmaceutical) have no choice as to outsource their global communication tasks to specialized global communication agencies,
- second, such agencies do not hide the fact that they undertake such work.

As revealed by the WPP Corporate Responsibility Report 2010/1011:

"We undertake public policy work for clients including direct lobbying of public officials and influencing public opinion. The majority of our public affairs work is undertaken for clients in the US, although many of our clients are multinational companies. Our public affairs companies include:

- *Burson-Marsteller, and its subsidiaries:*
 - *Prime Policy Group*
 - *Direct Impact*
 - *Penn Schoen Berland*
- *Hill & Knowlton, and its affiliate, Wexler & Walker Public Policy Associates*
- *Ogilvy Government Relations*
- *Quinn Gillespie & Associates*
- *Dewey Square Group.*

WPP companies comply with all applicable laws and regulations governing the disclosure of public affairs activities."

It is obvious that complying with the above mentioned regulations, they will never disclose this industry's lobbying on behalf of the pharmaceutical or any other industry. Given that pharmaceutical companies pay for advertising, it would be an act of "suicide" for organizations and mainstream media to start exposing their sponsors' lobbying efforts.

However, from time to time some investigating journalists manage to expose such practices. One of them is Mike Adams, the Natural News editor who revealed (Adams, 2009) "... that top scientists who convinced the World Health Organization (WHO) to declare H1N1 a global pandemic held close financial ties to the drug companies that profited from the sale of those vaccines". On top of that, a report published in the British Medical Journal exposed that hidden ties that resulted in the WHO's declaration of pandemic generated billions of dollars in profits for the vaccine manufacturers.

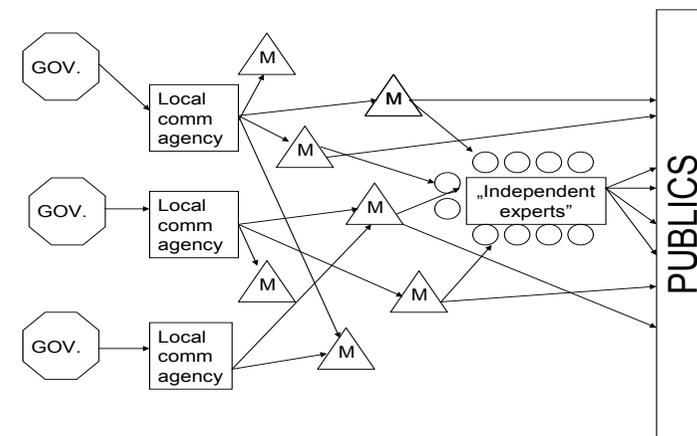
Phase II – Public administrations campaigns to impose flu vaccination

In the US as well as around the world, the immense profits of the vaccine industry could never have been accomplished without a dynamic, marketing initiative to convince the concerned citizens around the world that vaccines will keep them protected and alive. There is no better public relations machine for the vaccine complex and all its supporters in health

insurance and professional medical institutions than support from governmental health institutions. Besides the US Centre for Disease Control and the Department of Health and Human Services, most of other governments and their health institutions (with one exception of the Polish Ministry of Health⁴) supported the disinformation campaign over the major media networks (Gale& Null.2009). The health ministers felt pressurized from all sides: the media were stocking the virus-related fears by printing new tales of horror almost on a daily basis; the lobbyists were brainwashing parliamentarians while drug makers like Roche urged governments to purchase Tamiflu, the flu medication (Chossudovsky, 2010)

At that phase, however, it was much easier to detect the engagement and influence of the global communication/PR industry because the largest and best known global holdings and independent agencies were officially invited by national health authorities to help to convince their respective citizens to take/buy vaccine against swine flu.

Fig.2 A model of the global communication agencies' influence (Phase II: Global campaign to impose a flu vaccination)



4 In a 2009 debate, the Polish Health Minister Eva Kopacz told the Parliament members that she would not authorize use of vaccines with inadequate safety testing on millions of people in Poland. In her speech, she provided the following reasons: "other governments of wealthier countries have signed up with vaccines producers. We also know to the proposal for Poland...So what is a Health Minister's duty? To sign agreements that are in the best interest of the Polish people or to sign agreements that are in best interest of pharmaceutical companies?.. Has anybody, anywhere, announced a pandemic because of seasonal flu? And the seasonal flu is much more dangerous than swine flu. ..Was there ever a pandemic announced before? ..I am asking those who push me to buy vaccines: Why didn't you scream and shout last year, 2 years ago, and in 2003? In 2003 there were 1,200,000 Poles with seasonal flu!"

For example, as early as 2008 the UK Department of Health commissioned WPP company: MEC London to develop a communications strategy as part of the response to a potential flu pandemic in the UK. A year later, the World Health Organization announced that a swine flu outbreak originating in Mexico had become a pandemic. MEC's strategy was put into action.....Throughout the pandemic, MEC gave the Department of Health advice on communication and developed communication plans for key campaigns. These included the 'Catch It, Bin It, Kill It' campaign, encouraging people to adopt good hygiene habits to limit the spread of swine flu, and a campaign to raise awareness of a national hotline and a website which provided advice and enabled people to get anti-viral drugs. MEC also developed a communications plan to encourage people 'at risk' such as healthcare workers and pregnant women to get vaccinated. ...which ensured that public concern remained relatively low. (WPP Corporate Responsibility Report 2009/2010)

Another proof of WPP Group global PR/communication involvement in the pandemic communication campaign was selection of Ogilvy PR/Washington by the US Department of Health and Human services (HHS) "...to execute the fundamental Pandemic Planning Communications preparedness campaign or up to three years" (<http://ogilvypr.om>)... Another subsidiary of WPP Group - Cohn&Wolfe - was also engaged in the pandemic flu campaign winning the 2008 Best Product Campaign sponsored by Edelman and titled : "Finding a clear and consistent voice on pandemic flu". Its client was Roche, the pharmaceutical company and producer of Tamiflu (www.pmlive.com)

Phase III: campaigns to restore confidence in the pharmaceutical industry and government health institutions

At the end of December 2009, Dr. Wolfgang Wodard, Chairman of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe' Health Committee (PACE) introduced a motion demanding that PACE launches an inquiry on the influence of the pharmaceutical companies on the global swine flue campaign of disinformation. He was of the opinion that this campaign is "one of the greatest medicine scandals of the century" (<http://www.wodardde/english/29481.html>). In January 2010, he once more made an accusation against the pharmaceutical lobbies and governments concerning the role they played in the global operation of disinformation about the virus.

It is, however, interesting that, to the author's knowledge, no one has so far demanded an inquiry on the global communication industry's role and possible influence in orchestrating one of this largest global campaigns ever. So the power of public relations remains further on almost unseen.

The revealed "pandemic scandal" raised the issue of credibility and accountability not only of the pharmaceutical industry (mainly companies like GlaxoSmithKline, Roche, Novartis and Baxter which benefited from production of drugs and untested H1N1 vaccines) but also of important public national and international health agencies. As a result, demand for enhancing image and restoration of confidence campaigns for these organizations was created, and a new phase of the crisis management public relations campaigns may be observed, as illustrated in Fig.3.

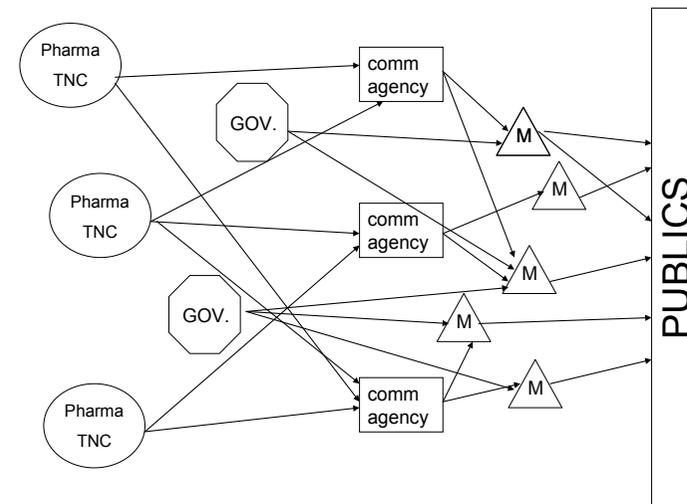


Fig.3. A model of global communication agencies' probable influence (Phase III: Campaign to restore confidence in the pharmaceutical industry and governmental health institutions).

6. Conclusion

1. In the 21st century, an era of globalization, the Internet and social media, Cutlip's thesis about the unseen power of public relations can be further confirmed. Even more, this power has become global and gained in strength immensely, both in the political as well as the social and economic spheres.
2. The main source of such power comes from the synergy effect which global communication/public relations holdings and independent agencies have gained through consolidation of their advertising, marketing, public relations, lobbying and other type of services. It is also reinforced by their global reach and financial resources at their disposal.

3. Today, in order to reach their stakeholders around the world , TNCs have no choice but to outsource their communication tasks to consortia of global communication agencies.
 4. The global campaigns for the “false” avian and swine flu pandemics may serve as an excellent case study, demonstrating the power of public relations and the communication industry because it was at least partly executed worldwide with the help of global communication agencies/holdings.
 5. In January 2010, the Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe introduced a motion demanding PACE to launch an inquiry on the influence of the pharmaceutical companies on the global swine flu campaign of disinformation. However, the fact that (to the author’s knowledge) no one has so far demanded an inquiry on the global communication industry role and possible influence in orchestrating one of the largest ever global campaigns. It the best proof that the power of public relations remains further on almost unseen.
 6. Finally, the good news is that the concentrated pandemic campaigns executed by communication/PR agencies around the world, acting on behalf of the vaccine industrial complex and government health officials, appeared not quite so powerful or effective. The growing anti-vaccination community in almost all countries resulted in millions of dollars’ worth losses due to stockpiles of vaccines which the governments had ordered and were not able to distribute because the citizens refused to take the H1N1 Vaccine. As K. Moloney (2010) rightly observed, ” There is no determinism about outcomes; all forms of power/public relations fusion produce all forms of reaction, from domination to resistance”
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 5

Smartphones and Young Publics: A New Challenge for Public Relations Practice and Relationship Building

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ABSTRACT

Over the last decades, the co-creational perspective came to dominate public relations research. The co-creational perspective emphasizes the important role of communication in enabling publics to become co-creators of meanings. This study embraces the co-creational perspective, since it emphasizes the importance of dialogue and two-way communication to organization–public relationship building, while focusing on a new technology: the smartphone.

Nowadays, for the first time, mobile technology enables the usage of Web 2.0 and social media ubiquitously (embodied in what is best known as smartphones), and as such, opens up new opportunities for relationship building and dialogue between organizations and publics.

Since young people tend to be early adopters of new technologies (Skinner, Biscope & Poland, 2003) and they serve as strategic publics of various businesses and nonprofit associations, this study tries to map the perceptions, patterns of usage, and profile of the typical young smartphone adopter. This is done in order to better understand how organizations can utilize the smartphone to engage and to build relationships with young publics. In other words, this study explores whether young people use their smartphones to satisfy various needs, and if yes, how they go about following, engaging, sharing among them and communicating with businesses and nonprofit associations. This issue is especially relevant nowadays when the smartphone is seen as “the next big thing” in public relations practice (Pavlik, 2007) and there are over 1.5 billion smartphone users, almost 6.5 billion mobile phone subscribers, and more than 250 million tablet users worldwide (Portio Research, 2013).

Literature review

The co-creational perspective put organization–public relationship (OPR) at the core of public relations research (Botan & Taylor, 2004), and emphasizes the important role of communication, relationship building (Botan, 1992; Grunig & Huang, 2000), and dialogue (Kent & Taylor, 1998; Taylor, Kent, & White, 2001) in enabling publics to become co-creators of meanings. One of the co-creational approaches is the relational approach. The relational approach considers the building, management, and maintenance of OPRs as the main public relations activity (Botan, 1992; Broom, Casey & Ritchey, 1997; Grunig & Huang, 2000). According to Bruning and Ledingham (2000) the relationship management perspective fundamentally shifts the practice of public relations away from manipulation toward mutually beneficial organization–public relationships. In the past two decades, OPR has gained importance in the field of public relations, since it has been demonstrated that one of the field’s main contributions to organizational effectiveness is the building of long-term, positive, and trustful relationships with key publics.

The dialogic communication approach is another co-creational theory. The dialogic communication approach adds to the OPR building the notion of dialogue and “dialogic communication” as the theoretical frame guiding relationship building between organizations and publics (Taylor, Kent, & White, 2001). This approach suggests that in order to create effective organization–communication channels, organizations must be willing to communicate with publics in honest and ethical ways (Taylor et al., 2001).

The emergence of the Internet, and mainly Web 2.0 and social media elements, enabled public relations practitioners to implement the co-creational principles in practice. Businesses, nonprofit associations and governmental agencies were able, at least potentially, to use blogs, social networks, micro-media and other social media elements to communicate and build relationships with various publics, such as customers, donors, volunteers and journalists. Social media allowed the creation and exchange of user-generated content, and enabled people to communicate with each other, to collaborate, and to share information (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). This popularity is demonstrated by more than 1 billion active users of Facebook as of April 2013. One of the new online dialogic tools that became popular in recent years is the mobile phone and mainly the smartphone. According to Portio Research (2013), approximately 1.5 billion people regularly download mobile applications, and more than 46 billion applications were downloaded in 2012 by users around the world. The most successful applications of all times are: WhatsApp (message application), Angry Birds (game), Draw Something (a social network game) and Instagram (pictures application).

As for Israel, the smartphones entered the Israeli market of cellular communications in 2008, and since then the number of users is in a state of a rapidly growing. Patterns of mobile phone usage in Israel position the mobile phone as an instrument of great importance and as an everyday, multi-purpose and interpersonal device (Lemish & Cohen, 2005). According to Flurry Analytics (2012), in July 2012 there were in Israel approximately 3,105,474 smartphones with an internet connection. This number represents an increase of 33 percent from the previous year. Table 1 represents the growth rate of the smartphones in Israel between the years 2011-2012:

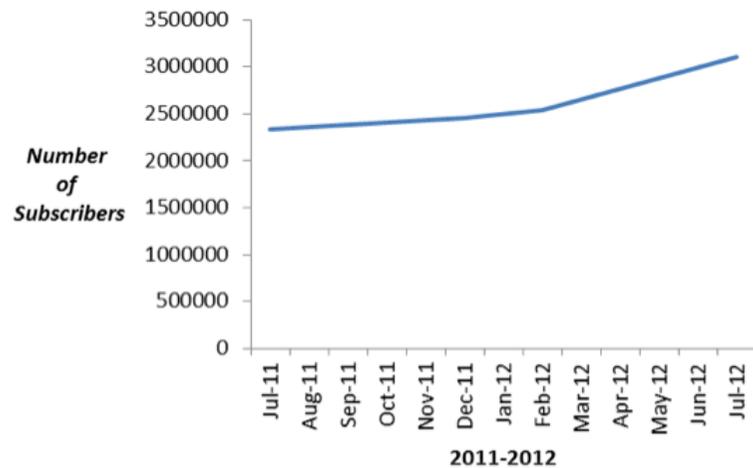


Table 1: Growth rate of smartphones in Israel between 2011- 2012. Based on Flurry Analytics (2012)

In recent years, more research is being done about users of mobile phones (Ling & Helmersen, 2000; Brown, Green & Harper, 2001; Katz & Aakhus, 2002; Rice & Katz, 2003; Katz, 2006). Early studies found that the growth in mobile phones' adoption might be attributed to safety and accessibility (Palen, Salzman, & Youngs, 2000; Schejter & Cohen, 2002). Within this context, the usage of mobile phones came to symbolize the complex interactions among adolescents (Ling & Yttri, 2002) and students (Chen & Katz, 2009), who attribute great importance to the mobile phone (Harris Interactive, 2009). Indeed, mobile phone usage became an integral part of daily-life routine, and what is more, its usage has well eclipsed the standard communication through voice phone calls (Ling, 2004).

According to Jenkins (2004) a fundamental process of media convergence took place in the media arena of the 21st century; a process that has changed diametrically the

relationship between existing technologies, markets, industries and audiences. The smartphone demonstrates that new mobile technologies enable the usage of various tools, such as voice call, receiving and sending text messages, playing games, taking pictures, downloading information from the Internet and the consumption of either traditional media content or audio and video, which were specifically created with this market in mind.

Research questions

Although there are several studies that focus on mobile phones, most studies do not embrace a public relations perspective and do not explore the patterns of smartphone usage among young early adopters. Hence, two key questions guide this study:

RQ1: What are the main uses of smartphones among young early adopters?

Revealing the main uses of smartphones among young early adopters may help public relations practitioners understand how they can better engage with these publics. For example, the study might reveal that young early adopters use their smartphones mainly to watch TV programs, send text messages to their friends and consume entertaining content. This may help public relations practitioners to better understand on what platforms and with what type of content they have better chances to successfully engage with these publics.

RQ2: To what extent do young early adopters attribute various gratifications to smartphones?

Similarly, the second research question may help public relations practitioners better understand the importance of smartphones in satisfying various needs of young early adopters, among them receiving valuable content, sharing information, and engaging with family, friends, and organizations.

Methodology and data

The data for this study was collected using both a qualitative and a quantitative method. First, a survey was conducted. The survey included a representative sample of 550 young Israelis, aged 21-31 (maximum sample error 4.5%). The survey contained 65 questions that referred to: (a) the profile of the smartphone user, (b) frequency and types of usage (c) possible gratifications that one may attribute to smartphone usage. More generally, the questionnaire was constructed on the basis of a recent Pew survey (2011) that tracked existing trends in the usage of new communication technologies. Second, 60 personal in-depth interviews were conducted with Israeli undergraduate students. The interviews, each about an hour, explored the perceptions of the students regarding smartphone usage, frequency and type of usage, and the personal experiences of the students with the new device.

Findings

The aim of this study was to explore the potential contribution of smartphones to relationship building between organizations and young early adopters of mobile technologies.

The sample was distributed evenly between females (50.2%) and males (49.8%), the age ranged from 21 to 31 with a mean of 25.45 (SD=2.75). Most respondents were single (73.6%) and 66.3 percent defined themselves as having a lower than the average income. As for education, 30.9 percent were still undergraduate students, and 46.5 percent already held an academic degree.

As shown in Figure 1, smartphones are used for various purposes. The smartphone replicates its function as a medium for voice conversation (performed daily by 85.3%), but it is mainly used for Web surfing (87.3%), and also for text messaging (83.5%). It is important to note that almost half (45.6%) of the respondents had unlimited Internet connection packages, which allowed them to surf and use internet related applications without restriction.

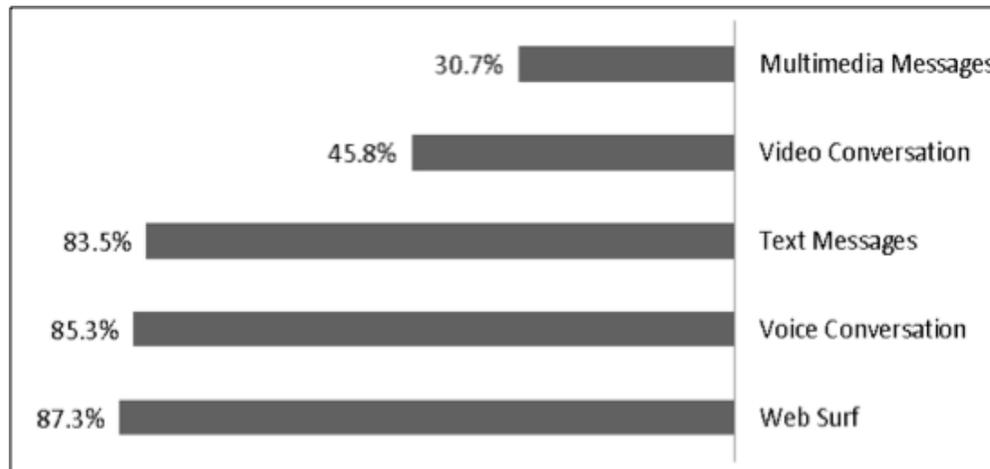


Figure 1: Smartphone daily activities

68.7 percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they use their smartphones to search for information; 54.7 percent agreed or strongly agreed that they use their smartphones “for fun”, 47.1 percent use a photo application (such as Instagram) at least once a day, and 52.4 percent use gaming applications at least once a day. In addition, 72.0 percent visit social networks at least once a day, while 62.0 percent do it several times a day. On the other hand, only 14.1 percent of the respondents reported that they receive daily messages that include commercial ads, while 37.9 percent receive such messages at least once a week.

Smartphones potential for commercial purposes is still in its early stages. While only 16.9 percent reported that they use their smartphones regularly to purchase services or goods, almost 80 percent had been involved in such activity with their smartphone at least once. Usage of the smartphone for purchase is closely related to the intensity of general usages of the smartphone, thus we found a significant difference of general usages among purchasers and non-purchasers of services or goods ($t(548)=7.6, p<.01$). Users who never bought any services or goods through their smartphone use smartphone applications less ($M=3.6, SD=.98$) than users who bought through their smartphone at least once ($M=4.4, SD=.72$).

Finally, only 14.9 percent of the respondents reported that they use their smartphones to contact businesses or other organizations, a quarter (25.1%) never uses local based services (LBS), and 31 percent use LBSs once a week or less.

Type of application	Frequency of use	
	Daily	Never
Music	49.3%	17.6%
News	48.2%	15.3%
Messages	66.2%	12.7%
E-Mail	69.4%	11.5%
Location Base Services	28%	25.1%
Games	52.4%	11.1%

Table 2 - Frequencies of smartphone application usage

When asked about their usage habits during the in-depth interviews, similar answers were given. All participants indicated that they use their smartphones for interpersonal and social interactions, as well as for information ‘mining’ (especially news). In addition, escapism-oriented activities, such as watching clips, movies, and sports games, listening to music or playing games, were much less popular among interviewees. Although many said that they use their smartphones for routine errands (like checking their bank accounts, results of medical tests or college grades), only few said that they use their mobile phones for shopping. Among those who did, using eBay and similar other applications seemed to be very popular. Other usages included checking for coupons in designated sites or applications, and checking for up-to-date products, and sometimes even purchasing, especially through applications of popular fashion brands. Nevertheless, none of the interviewees said that he/she uses the smartphone to interact with nonprofit organizations.

In order to analyze the findings, five indexes of gratification clusters were computed: (1) Cognitive index – news updating, information quest and management of information; (2) Human integrative index – staying in touch with friends and family, transference of personal message, acknowledging others (3) Environmental integrative index – participation in local events, feeling of belongings to local and global; (4) Emotional index – amusement, games, having fun, self-stimulation; (5) Diversion index – relaxation, time passing, fight one's boredom.

The results indicate that the highest gratification index is Human integrative index with a mean of 5.04 (SD=1.06), following the Cognitive index with a mean of 4.39 (SD=1.18); Diversion index with a mean of 4.26 (SD=1.33); Emotional index with a mean of 3.8 (SD=1.19) and least the Environmental integrative index with a mean of 2.84 (SD=1.26).

Furthermore, we built three indexes of users' usability: (a) General uses, (b) Interactions related uses, (c) Non interaction related uses. The second index concerning interactions obtained the highest values (M=4.43, SD=.81). A Pearson correlation test indicated that all three indexes were positively and significantly correlated with the cognitive index (e.g. General uses, $r=.52$, $p<.01$). The index of Non interaction uses was also highly correlated with the emotional index ($r=.44$, $p<.01$). Gender differences were found in the General uses index in favour of men ($t(548)=2.2$, $p<.05$). Respondents living in big or medium cities had higher values in the Interactions related uses index than small communities ($F(5,539)=2.24$, $p<.05$).

Discussion and conclusions

This study looks at the Israeli case-study, one of the fast-growing smartphone markets worldwide. The study focuses on the population of (relatively) young users (age 21-31), a population which is commonly known for carrying many early adoptions of new technologies. According to Rogers (2003), processes of adoption and spread of technology are contingent, among other things, on the characteristics of technological innovation, social system, and agents of change, decision-making processes and the diversity of communication channels.

The findings of this study clearly indicate that smartphones have become an indispensable medium among young Israelis, being used in various ways and for multiple reasons. Some of the traditional internet activities, such as sending and receiving electronic mail and surfing the Web are being replicated. However, the table of reported application usage (Table 2) reveals that interaction is the keyword for smartphone usage, as the most popular applications are those of sending and receiving messages and e-mails, or in other words, interacting with other users.

Most users use the smartphone to satisfy both interaction-related and cognitive-related gratifications; they interact with friends and family, but also search for news, interesting content and manage their personal information. In other words, the smartphone offers many new communication channels that a savvy public relations practitioner can utilize for interaction and engagement 24/7 almost everywhere. For example, a public relations practitioner may satisfy the cognitive and interaction-related needs of his publics by posting relevant, interesting and valuable content on the organizational Facebook page, by using a conversational style and an open human voice in his online dialogue with users, and by combining useful information (important events, sales or calls for action) with playfulness (games, competition) and local based services. Furthermore, the interviews indicated that in the eyes of young publics a smartphone-based application is a "must have", since Web sites, although accessible, are perceived as less attractive and more time-consuming than an organizational application.

The findings of this study indicate that from a public relations perspective much work still has to be done. Although most young adopters use their smartphones during all day and for various purposes, only a small group of young early adopters use their smartphones to contact businesses and other organizations, to read organizational messages, to purchase products, services or goods and to utilize local based services. In other words, public relations practitioners still do not utilize the dialogic potential of the smartphone to better engage and interact with young strategic publics.

Given that smartphones have many unique properties and features, and providing the constantly increasing adoption rate of this innovative technology, it is important that public relations practitioners understand the role of contemporary communication technologies in OPR building. The multiple uses and applications that are offered by smartphones make it, at least potential, a generator of significant change in terms of current patterns of thinking, communication, behaviour and socialization among everyday users. Hence, it is important for public relations practitioners to utilize the dialogic and interactive potential of the smartphone to better communicate and engage with various strategic publics.

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 6

In Search of the Holy Grail? Balancing Rigour and Relevance in PR Research¹

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INTRODUCTION

The rigour/relevance dilemma is intrinsic in many academic disciplines (Argyris & Schön, 1991). On one hand there is no such thing as academic research without sound theories and methodological rigor; on the other hand, to be relevant at all outside academia, research has to create viable knowledge to be passed on to decision makers and practitioners. The creation of sharp as well as viable knowledge is not a trivial task; organizational performance and research “purity” call for different reputation and accreditation systems (March & Sutton, 1997), therefore implying the development of diverse competences and praxis.

The rigour/relevance dilemma is inherently present in the discipline of Public Relations. The constant debate about the definition of the discipline, its boundaries and the relationship between theory and practice has been highlighted in the first issues of *Public Relations Review* in 1975 (Sisco, Collins, & Zoch, 2011, p. 145), has been worded as a context in which “all [researchers in both academic and professional setting] perceive “two worlds” of concerns and a gap between the practitioners’ information needs and theory-based research findings rewarded by academic institutions and research journals” (Broom, Cox, Krueger, & Liebler, 1989, p. 143) and is still on-going (McKie, 2001).

If we look at the development of Public Relations studies, we may say that the discipline “grew” from the fertile soil of practice and produced an accumulation of theories and models without creating a well distinct body of knowledge (Sisco, Collins, & Zoch, 2011, p. 150; Sallot, Lyon, Acosta-Alzuru, & Jones, 2003, p. 30), struggling to mediate between professional-oriented and academic literary production but with scarce results.

In disciplinary fields like management e public management there is an on-going debate on how to address this dilemma. Some authors suggest different roles for explanatory and design sciences. The first is to explain and predict reality (i.e. Weber dialectic between idiographic and nomothetic sciences, (1922), while the seconds aim at producing heuristic technological rules (van Aken, 2004). The latter are not ad hoc solutions, but grounded and field-tested prescriptions to address classes of problems (van Aken, 2004). Within this approach management and public management take on the role of design sciences (Barzelay, 2011).

The aim of this paper is to present some preliminary reflections on how this approach can be adopted in Public Relations studies. In addressing this issue, the paper will follow Barzelay (2011) approach as follows. First of all we define what is a “design science” paradigm and what are its implications; then we analyse why this approach could be useful in Public Relation studies; subsequently we address the appropriateness of research methodologies (Suchman, 1993; Boudon, 1995; Bardach, 2004; Barzelay, 2007); finally we explore contributions in Public Relations studies for a preliminary assessment of what can be considered already falling into this approach. While a full discussion on the theoretical framework adopted would hopefully expand beyond this paper, it is therefore important to notice that we are actually placing our contribution at the epistemological level, in terms of generalizations versus general laws and contextual knowledge, and at the methodological level, in reference to case studies as extrapolation-oriented research strategy (Barzelay, 2007, p. 524; Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 534).

A design science approach

Assuming that practitioners would prefer a practical approach, if only for the etymological shared root, then it is probably worth exploring if “all good theories are practical, but some are more practical than others” (van Aken, 2004), and have a closer look to such a combination of antonyms to try to define what a more practical theory looks like.

Both Van Aken (2004, p.220) and Craig (1993, in Sallot, Lyon, Acosta-Alzuru, & Jones, 2003, p. 30) start from acknowledging that the mission of science (or scientific theory) can be summarised in description, explanation and prediction (within the positivist and post-positivist tradition), or creation of shared understanding (in a more interpretive approach) of phenomena under scrutiny. However, as noble as this mission can be, it leaves open the question about its relevance for the profession. Both management, public management and public relations professionals, still face the dilemma that Ferguson described as : “mak[ing] decisions based on intuition or conjecture, or make decisions based on generalizations culled from empirical evidence” (in Sallot, Lyon, Acosta-Alzuru, & Jones, 2003, pp. 30-31).

¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Barcelona Meeting Com #1, International PR 2011 Conference, held in Barcelona, 28th – 29th June, 2011.

It seems reasonable to say that the quest for a common research paradigm as defined by van Aken (2004, p. 220) might start, from a theoretical standpoint, somewhere in between grand theory and local knowledge, in the territory of middle range theories (Boudon, 1995).

If this could be considered a satisfactory answer for researchers to go beyond localism (or at least a reasonable starting point), it still leaves opened the question about how practitioner can refer to theory to “make decisions”. To this end, we assume the distinction made by van Aken, among formal, explanatory and design science (van Aken, 2004, p. 224). What seems more interesting here is the main research output of a design science approach: “[...] valid and reliable knowledge to be used in designing solutions to problems.” (van Aken, 2004, p. 225). Far from providing local solutions to specific problems, a design science approach aims at generating scientific knowledge that allows professional people with a sound theoretical background to be used as the foundation of their own action.

What do professionals need from theories then? Most often than not guidance, of course, that is to say a prescriptive set of norm that could inform their action in a specific situation. But who knows better than Public relations scholars and practitioners that there is no easy fix and that standard solutions are most of the time worse than problems themselves?

What a design science approach suggests is not a one-for-all set of rules, but the possibility of creating heuristic prescriptions “to be used as design exemplars” (van Aken, 2004, p. 227). These prescriptions (we will come back to them in more detail in the next paragraph) maintain on one hand a general character and, on the other hand are applicable to classes of problems (van Aken, 2004, p. 229).

The synthesis that a design science approach allows is embedded in the two “commandments” that prescriptions need to respect: be grounded in theory and tested in the practice, therefore suggesting a possible meeting place for theory and practice.

Heuristic technological rules

Hedström (2006, p. 31), in his analytical approach, suggests that an explanatory theory can be built on the basis of social mechanisms at the origin of changes in social entities. A social mechanism, in this acception, brings along the multiple dimensions of actors, interactions and regularity of effects. Heuristic technological rules are norms that specify social mechanisms and represent their prescriptive dimension.

The two main features of heuristic technological rules, following van Aken (2004) and Barzelay (2011) are the fact that they need to be grounded and field tested.

Grounded simply means that a given set of norms-in-use is based on scientific knowledge (a general positive proposition). Psychologists and engineers, but as well managers and public relations professionals adopt grounded sets of rules coming from different disciplines. Field tested refers to employment in a systematic manner of a successful rule in a given environment.

The combination of these two conditions applied to heuristic technological rules, defines “a chunk of general knowledge, linking an intervention or artefact with a desired outcome or performance in a certain field of application” (van Aken, 2004, p. 228).

Methodological approach

As mentioned before, we start the present discussion on two levels: epistemological and methodological. We briefly presented what the first one implies in terms of theory. We approach now the related methodology and what we called extrapolation-oriented research (see p. 3).

If we agree that our theory is mainly about finding prescriptions applicable to classes of problems, then “the typical research design to study and test technological rules is the multiple case: a series of problems of the same class is solved, each by applying the problem solving cycle” (van Aken, 2004, p. 229).

Barzelay (2007, pp. 223-224) suggests that case studies can be considered as a series of “accounts of design exemplars” and that this approach to research strategy needs to be structured to enable the researcher to come up with prescriptions that will enable the design of appropriate solutions to classes of problems. Taking as reference Stake’s (1995) typology, reluctantly, Barzelay let the extrapolation-oriented case studies fall within the category of instrumental ones. In reality, his description implies a possible middle way, between localism of intrinsic case studies and the more general approach of instrumental case studies.

But what is the object of study? We can look at case studies at least from two perspectives: as entities or as processes. We can agree that the research outcome derived from case studies as entities is not coherent with a design science approach: a static description of an organisation is a poor source of information in terms of causal links. In this light we are more interested to focus on an object of study that shows what kind of effects are produced by the events we are observing in a temporal sequence. As a consequence, what we are going to explain is the process (as a combination of social mechanisms) within the cases, keeping in mind the objective of highlighting the causal source of exemplary effect. This definition of what are the features of exemplary effect needs to be traced through the relevant literature of the discipline.

Furthermore, a brief indication on “how” to explain. On the basis of a social reality based on mechanisms (see p. 5), if we are to determine a specific effect of a series of interacting mechanisms, aiming at identifying which causal combination can be reproduced elsewhere with the same result, then we may refer to narrative explanations. These are “causal reconstructions of events, and the activation of one or more mechanisms, in combination, can be seen to have given rise to event trajectories” (Mayntz in Barzelay, 2007, p. 528).

This approach and interpretation seems reflected in Pauli contribution about case studies and their use in Public Relations: in spite of the rare use into the PR, they have an heuristic value for comprehension of causation of intervenor factors belonging to the PR actions in the field, through the study of particular PR functions, the comparison of different typologies of relations in the same or different context or consequences of the same strategies in different contexts. (Pauly & Hutchison, 2001, p. 387-388)

Finally, some necessary considerations before examining the significance of this approach for Public Relation studies: quite obviously, the reassuring linearity of this approach is much more complex than these few pages could possibly express; reasonably there is no event that can be reduced to one combination of mechanisms alone. Every occurrence implies different factors at work and therefore event trajectories are as well the result of contextual factors of different kind that need to be considered in the formulation of extrapolation based research designs. Just to mention the main categories concerned, it is essential to include and clarify the role of process context factors and participation.

What is going on in Public Relations studies?

Why would the design science management approach be an interesting option for Public Relations studies? In a period of growing complexities, with the whole world facing a period of dramatic changes and challenges, we believe there is little chance and -hopefully- space for ivory tower retreats or sectarianism approaches. Globally scarce resources call for creativity, collaboration and synergies. To borrow Barzelay (2011) argument in relation to Public Management that “it’s important for actors in the ‘world of situations and stuff’ to have reliable knowledge that is relevant to deliberating about responses to challenges and opportunities” we trust that Public Relations is even more concerned about activating synergies between profession and practice and, actually, that “Public relations academic research is informed by both practice and theory” (DiStaso & Stacks, 2010, p. 325).

We started grounding this reasoning in a preliminary assessment of the Italian situation and some introductory reflections based on the main international textbooks, followed by an initial screening

of the last two years issues of the main journals (Public Relations Review and Journal of Public Relations Research) as the privileged loci of reflection of this debate.

Public Relations textbooks

In this paragraph we made an initial analysis of public relations, to assess the presence (in different forms) of heuristic technological rules that present the characteristics described above, that is grounded and field tested.

Due to the vast production of public relations textbooks, we started this exploration, with the aim of individuating initial findings and stimulating the following research and debate. As a matter of fact, our intention is here to show the exploration rather than its findings - still to come.

Finally, being in the purely qualitative phase of the analysis, far from providing quantitative data, with the appropriate coherence and methodological rigour, we leave the trail of bibliography references scrutinized, to allow scientific falsification (DiStaso & Stacks, 2010; Popper, 1959). Starting from the Italian context, Invernizzi (2006), in the final part of his manual, positions his work as a bridge between theory and practice. As for this phase of the research, the initial screening of the Italian manuals didn’t find any example of extrapolation-oriented research (extrapolation-oriented case studies, heuristic technological rules, grounded and field tested). Instead, there are many examples of best practices (e.g. Vecchiato, 2008), historical perspectives, guidelines and praxis (Falconi, 2004; Invernizzi, 2005; Facchetti & Marozzi, 2009). Needless to say, for its own nature, this is neither an exhaustive index of Italian contributions, nor an in-depth review of their individual value. What we notice here is the predominance of didactic-oriented university manuals. In relation to international contributions, we started our exploration by approaching the two versions of Heath handbooks of public relations (Heath, 2001; 2010). There are three main reasons why we deemed appropriate to start with these handbooks:

- they have been mentioned in many of the contributions dealing with public relations theory development (i.a. Sallot, Lyon, Acosta-Alzuru, & Jones, 2003; Botan & Taylor, 2004; Pasadeos, Berger, & Renfro, 2010; Sisco, Collins, & Zoch, 2011);
- in “Google Scholar” is the first indexed manual of Public Relations;
- the second volume, in the words of its own editor, is “as less a conventional ‘second edition’ than an updating of the field’s progress over the past decade[...] as a continuation -not a replacement but an extension- of the 2001 version” (Heath, 2010, p. XV).

The chapters including heuristic technological rules (extrapolation oriented case study - grounded - field tested) are:

Heath, Handbook of Public Relations, 2001

- Grunig, Two-Way symmetrical public relations. Past, present, and future, pp.11-30;
- Springston & Keyton, Public Relations Field Dynamics, pp. 115-126;
- Leeper, The measurement of ethics: instruments applicable to public relations, pp. 435-440.

Heath, The Sage handbook of public relations, 2010

- Pang, Jin & Cameron, Strategic management of communication: insights from the contingency theory of strategic conflict management, pp. 17-34;
- Watson, Reputation models, drivers and measurement, pp. 339-352;

Pauly & Utchinson (2001) identify three typologies: campaigns summaries, case method, and case study, specifying that “many of the case studies in current textbooks fall into [the first] category, as do some of the cases in professional journals” (ib. p. 386). We are will look at examples from the last category, combined with the presence of grounded and field-tested heuristic technological rules:

“[A] case study [...] could start in a different place. A case could study one public relations agency across several campaigns. Or, it could study a particular function, such as media relations, within an organization or across organizations. Or, it could compare the effects of different organizations’ public relations activities within a single community. Or, it could examine the use of a similar campaign strategy by the same organizations at different moments or by different organizations at the same moment. All of these examples would count for legitimate case studies in the social sciences. But such cases are rare in public relations today.” (ib. pp. 387-388).

As a matter of fact, if we look for case studies that show -as for our methodological approach- the intention to apply and test a model with the aim of generating prescriptions, these cases become even scarcer. However interesting and bearing a distinct heuristic value, most of the case studies observed belong to the first two typologies (campaigns summaries and case methods) and we prefer to include those as best practices (see Hinrichsen, 2001).

The selection criteria for the mentioned chapters are as follows:

In Grunig, after a comprehensive theoretical discussion both in favour and against his approach of two-way symmetrical public relations and its grounding in the “Excellence Study”, he sets out a four-dimension model connected to: 1) symmetry and asymmetry, 2) one-way-to-way; 3) mediated and interpersonal forms of communication; 4) ethical. This model bears a prescriptive value for public relations practice the author reports some field tests of it;

Springston and Keyton clarify the theoretical background of public relations field dynamics (PRFD) as follows:

“A theoretical perspective based on group dynamics that has the capacity to capture the complexity of a multipublic environment. Complementing issue negotiation, PRFD provides a methodology to analyse the potential effects message before they are sent [...] PRFD methodology is adapted from the study of small group communication (Springston, Keyton, Leichty, & Metzger, 1992) and derived from Bales and Cohen’s (1979) System for the Multiple Level Observation of Groups (SYMLOG). At the center of PRFD is the notion of a fluid field encompassing all relevant actors” (p. 117).

After explaining the PRFD dimensions (self-oriented VS community-oriented; unfriendly VS friendly), Springston and Keyton examine the possible applications of PRFD to theory extension and practice.

Leeper starts by presenting studies on values, ethics and moral, and then case studies oriented to the measurement of ethics in public relations. Finally he identifies instruments that:

“[...] provide a basis for significant research in public relations ethics. This will improve our ability to identify ‘common set of value, principles, and loyalties’ or that ‘common set of ethical guidelines’ that McElreath (1996) discussed as the ‘hallmark of professionals’” (p. 440).

Pang, Jin and Cameron’s start from a theoretical framework grounded in contingency theory, then builds on a series of implementation-oriented researches and finally explores a possible transition to the practice.

Finally, Watson, after theoretically grounding the definition of reputation and questioning the validity itself of the term “reputation management” (p.341), reports on four case studies on reputation and draws management prescriptions on the basis of the procedures extrapolated from the case studies.

Journals

We considered the issues of the Journal of Public Relations Research from April 2008 (Vol. 21, no. 2) to April 2010 (Vol. 23, no. 2) and the issues Public Relations Review from June 2009 (Vol. 35, no.2) to June 2011 (Vol. 37, no.2). First we selected the articles that adopting case studies as research strategy (or that at least included a case study as empirical base), then we tried to identify research outcomes that might fall into the category of grounded and field tested heuristic technological rules. The procedure was conducted by looking at: the method/methodology employed (case study typology), the presence of prescriptions (heuristic technological rules), the theoretical framework and/or a literature review (grounded), the application of this latter within the case. For the exploratory nature of this contribution, we tried to explore, beyond the terminology adopted by single authors, the substantial application of the logical categories described.

Journal of Public Relations Research

1. (Kim & Dutta, 2009, p. 142-164)
2. (Edwards, 2009, p. 251-272)
3. (van Woerkum & Aarts, 2008, p. 180-206)

Public Relations Review

4. (Kruvand, 2010, p. 367-375)
5. (Chen, 2009, p. 187-198)
6. (Xifra & Ordeix, 2009, p. 353-360)
7. (Han & Zhang, 2009)

A brief discussion of the preliminary results (summarized in Table 1) follows.

In terms of findings, two hundred and six articles were examined, forty-six from the Journal of Public Relations Research and one hundred sixty from the Public Relations Review. Only seven included case studies: four from the first journal and three from the second. There was no occurrence of multiple case studies. Four articles were considered suitable for an extrapolation-oriented approach. Two of them presented a series of prescriptions reasonably falling in the “heuristic technological rules” category, while the others resulted in local knowledge. All of the articles were scientifically grounded (whether in a theoretical framework or through a literature review) and four of them were field tested.

More in detail, Kim & Dutta (2009, p. 161) even if mainly directed to theory advancement, give interesting examples of prescriptions as: “[i]n this sense, the subaltern studies perspective points out the importance of engaging subaltern communities in participatory frameworks rather than imposing dominant crisis-solution configurations on subaltern communities.” In Edwards (2009, p. 270), while the declared aim is about explanation, there is a distinctive potential for applying results and certainly the idea of extrapolation is present in the author when argues that “these findings have the potential to inform understandings of power exercised by PR practitioners in other organizational contexts” and calls for additional research in public relations practice using his research results despite the position held by “Gomm, Hammersley, and Foster (2000) point[ing] out that generalization, in the sense of extrapolating a particular experience to other circumstances, takes place every day and may or may not be empirically-based.” Edwards proposes, in fact, his model as an “indication of the kinds of strategies, capital, and resources that in-house public relations teams in commercial organizations have available to them to pursue symbolic power. “ To close this brief discussion, we present a very simplistic summary of Woerkum & Aarts’ work (2008), whose structure appears somehow exemplar in relation to the design science approach: they ground their model in theory, they test their model in the field in a case study and they come up with prescriptions that go beyond the local context and that, in their own words can be a useful instrument for the self-reflective practitioner (ib., p. 220).

Table 1: Preliminary results

Journal	Tot no. of article examined	Case Study	Multiple case studies	Typology	Heuristic technological rules	Grounded	Field tested
Journal Of Public Relations Research	(2008) 12 (2009) 24 (2010) 10 Tot. 46	3	/	1. Ex. o 2. Ex. o 3. Ex. o	1. Yes 2. No 3. Yes	1. T f 2. T f 3. T f	1. Yes 2. Yes 3. Yes
Public Relations Review	(2009) 68 (2010) 54 (2011) 38 Tot. 160	4	/	4. D 5. D 6. D 7. Ex. o	4. L k 5. L k 6. L k 7. L k	4. L r 5. L r 6. T f 7. T f	4. n/a 5. n/a 6. n/a 7. yes
TOT.	206	7	/	4	2	7	4

Legenda: Ex o= extrapolation oriented, D= descriptive, T f = theoretical framework, L k= local knowledge, L r = literature review, n/a= non applicable

Preliminary conclusions and further research

We approached this initial study paying a substantial tribute to Barzelay’s in summarizing that “extrapolation-oriented research should be performed through well-designed, instrumental case studies of experiences, geared to play the role of design exemplars in efforts to improve governmental undertakings” (2007, p. 529) and approaching public relations contributions searching for similarities and confirmations.

Heterogeneity of case studies and scarcity of exemplars didn’t allow a thorough comparison following Barzelay analysis of design exemplars (Barzelay, 2007, p. 534); however, at this stage of the research , we did not find the “design science” approach to be a very present stream in PR studies.

Before trying to provide an explanation for this finding, we want to share Sallot et al. concern for rigorosness in the use of terminology in relation to theory development (2003, p. 53). We acknowledge, in fact, that this is one of the major issues that could inherently affect this

discussion and it will be one of our major concerns in future research on this topic.

Our position is that conducting extrapolation oriented research (and multiple case studies) might contribute to fill the gaps between academic research and the practice. So why is this approach not present in PR studies? To provide a possible answer, we play the devil's advocate and formulate a set of questions that potentially nullify the relevance of the design science approach in public relation studies. These questions represent, in our opinion, starting points for developing future research.

First, the design science approach advocates that knowledge produced by researchers should be at the same time theoretically sound and viable for the industry. Therefore, the natural question to ask is : are Public Relations scholars interested in tuning with industry needs, on one hand? On the other hand, is there a clear perception of this need in the industry itself? In other terms, might the underdevelopment of this paradigm be just the simple consequence of the fact that academia interests lie elsewhere and that the added value of research is not properly spelled out or recognise? The answer to the first question (are researchers interested?) is summarised, i.a. by Cheng & de Gregorio, 2008, p. 395:

“[...] public relations academy is, overall, industry-oriented, perceives a clear gap between the two parties, and believes that forging closer relationships to close that gap will better the academic endeavour. Public relations scholars widely believe that their selected research topics should and do address issues relevant to the industry, and they personally select topics with such industry orientation when conducting research on their own, as well”.

The answer to the second question (is industry interested?), is still waiting, in our opinion for a satisfactory answer.

Second, even taking for granted the validity and the usefulness of the design science paradigm, there is another question to be answered. Is PR the right field? Are there epistemological or methodological obstacles in the application of the approach? Again the answer comes from the field itself: “[...] over the past 20 years, public relations [...] has become much more than just a corporate communication practice. Rather, it is a theoretically grounded and research-based area (Botan & Taylor, 2004, p. 659).

We see two potential developments in the research. On one side, the concept of “usable by industry” needs to be further refined. Usable by whom and how is a question that for the sake of a more precise argument deserves an answer. On the other side, the viability of the approach to PR studies needs to be further specified. Considering the process-oriented nature of public relations and the centrality of relationships as a key component (van Woerkum & Aarts, 2008, p.

220), future research can possibly explore relationships between an organization and its publics as the macro level units of analysis where heuristic technological rules can apply on the basis of the social mechanisms involved. These rules are grounded in a tradition of studies that, to quote only the main milestones, dates back to the work of Ferguson (1984), through the cycle of perspective layers (direct, meta-, metameta-, etc.) as illustrated in the Interpersonal perception method by Ledingham and Bruning (2000, p. 194), and the dialogic approach of Taylor, defined as “[...] a product of on-going communication and relationships, [...] what dialogue does is change the nature of organisation-public relationship by placing emphasis on the relationship” (2002, p. 23).

The challenge will be then to make the relevance vs rigour debate a dialogic relationship.

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Is Strategic Internal Communication Culture-free or Culture-specific? A Study on Internal Magazines from Different Companies in Europe

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ABSTRACT

In a highly dynamic business environment marked by mergers, acquisitions and conquering of new markets, academic and corporate debates around the relation between organisational processes (including communication) and culture are being revived. Debates could be placed under two umbrella-approaches: culture-specific versus culture-free (Tayeb 1988, in Grunig et al., 1992, 601). Applied to PR, the culture-specific approaches imply that communication is infused with culture, thus PR strategies need to be adapted to and acknowledge national specifics. On the other hand, culture-free approaches rely on the fact that globalisation has been complete and organisational communication principles apply uniformly, regardless the influence of national cultures.

Whilst, the influence of culture on external communication has been widely discussed, internal communication is still a curious case. Considered a field at the confluence of PR, human resources and management, internal communication has struggled to shape its own identity. Internal communication can be looked at from two different angles (Cismaru, 2010, 80): operational and strategic. Operational internal communication defines the daily interactions with colleagues and managers in the context of work (leadership, group interactions, communication patterns, power, leadership etc) whereas strategic internal communication (internal public relations) comprises planned, deliberated promotional actions meant at different categories of internal publics. Nevertheless, the two are faces of the same coin: operational internal communication forms the basis of research for internal PR.

Organisational culture (Schein, 1985, in Lundberg, 2000, 704) gathers “artefacts and creations (technology, art, visible and audible behaviour patterns)” belonging to internal communication,

be it strategic or operational, and they embody the non-material aspects of culture - corporate values and basic assumptions. However organisational culture alone does not shape the work environment; furthermore national culture prevails over it, at least on several specific dimensions (Gulev, 2009, 260-261). Though the influence of national culture in relation to operational communication (internal and external) and the way people do business has been intensively studied, less information is available regarding its influence on strategic internal communication.

The present study seeks to determine the influence of national culture on strategic internal communication, by analyzing the internal information dissemination tactics. The research looks into print outlets (magazines) from companies' headquarters from Belgium, Austria, Portugal, and branches of multinational companies in Belgium, the UK and Romania.

Based on Geert Hofstede's model (Hofstede, 2001: 98,161,225,297,359 in Vinken, Soeters, & Ester, 2004, 9), the analysis answers an intriguing question: how does national culture influence strategic internal communication? Each national culture dimension is decomposed in a range of sub-indicators pinpointing the degree to which each company matches its national culture index results. The power distance dimension is depicted through the image of managers and employees, events dedicated to employees on various levels, and symmetrical, two-way communication built through feed-back, a large basis of participation etc. Individualism is seen through the lenses of team projects versus individual competitions, portraying achievements of singular employees or departments etc. Masculinity deals with the corporate social responsibility initiatives, events dedicated to wellbeing, stress management etc. Uncertainty avoidance will be analyzed through the way companies promote creativity and innovation etc.

Finally, taking into account that all print outlets were winners of the national PR competitions and the European FEIEA Grand Prix 2011 and 2012, the study will aim at demonstrating if the characteristics of national cultures influence the way one evaluates excellent internal PR (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2002, 17).

In conclusion, the article feeds into the series of academic researches on PR in European nation states, revealing the influence of culture on strategic internal communication. For business, the research aims at offering an answer to the dilemma of communications and PR professionals in multinationals and consultancies: import of internal communication strategies and tactics from headquarters to local branches – success or failure?

Key words: internal communication, culture, organisations, nations

Operational & strategic internal communication and culture

On internal communication. Internal communication is one of the youngest communications professions and due to its multidisciplinary character, it has been struggling to position and define itself against other fields. According to an inter-disciplinary perspective (Kalla, 2005, 305-306), internal communication brings together four different fields. Firstly, business communication (Reinsch, 1996, 28 in Kalla, 2005, 305) refers to the wide variety of communication skills employees need to develop in order to share information. Management communication (Smeltzer, 1996, in Kalla, 2005, 305) includes managers' communication skills that improve effectiveness and increase employees' job satisfaction. On the other hand, corporate communication (Argenti & Forman, 2002, 4, in Kalla, 2005, 305) is performed by communications professionals and it is part of PR. Last, but not least, organisational communication (Miller, 2003, 1, in Kalla, 2005, 306) describes the context in which organisations operate and defines the way processes distort and influence communication, making each company different.

Another approach of internal communication theory (Welch & Jackson, 2007, 177-198 in Buck, 13) speaks about four types of internal communication: internal line communication management (communication from managers to employees), peer communication (intra-peers communication), project peer communication (communication within project teams) and internal corporate communication (strategic communication aimed at disseminating corporate values, mission, vision, objectives etc).

Summing up the approaches above (Cismaru, 2010, 80), one can identify two main types of internal communication: strategic and operational. In this article I shall consider that operational internal communication (OIC) integrates all employee, management, project and organisational communication processes which are most of the time led by the human resources function or by management. Its role is to improve effectiveness, job performance and satisfaction. On the other hand, strategic internal communication (SIC) or corporate (internal) communication is a field of public relations that deals with transmitting the corporate mission, vision, goals and culture in order to support the human resources processes, transform employees in brand ambassadors and help the company gain the status of most desired employer. Nevertheless OIC (especially organisational communication) forms the basis for strategic communication and it can be found often in forms of employee surveys, analysing the effects of various SIC tactics on organisational processes (job motivation, team work etc). Moreover, in order to be successful, SIC has to consider all aspects of OIC, especially corporate culture: "Popular accounts of organisational culture emphasize the exotic and uncommon such as heroes, unusual labels, dramatic stories, peculiar ceremonies, and special events (e.g., the pink Cadillacs of Mary Kay Cosmetics, R&D skunk works, a CEO "pitching in" on the production floor, and the garage origins of a computer firm)" (Lundberg, in Golembiewski, 2000, 704).

National and organisational culture. National culture is “the collective programming of the mind distinguishing the members of one group or category of people from another” (Hofstede, www.geerthofstede.com/culture). Culture represents that sum of “beliefs and values that dictate the way people think, behave, solve problems, make decisions, plan and lay out their homes and cities, and even organize their economic, political, and transportation systems” (Hall, 1976, in Ali, Brooks, 3). “Culture consists of several elements of which some are implicit and others are explicit [...] explained by terms such as behaviour, values, norms, and basic assumptions” (Groeschl, Doherty, 2000 in Ali, Brooks, 3).

The definition can be narrowed down and applied to organisational culture. Corporate culture embeds artefacts and creations (technology, art, visible and audible behaviour patterns), values, and basic assumptions (Schein, 1985, in Lundberg, 2000, 704). The relation between corporate culture and national culture has already been analysed, as several layers of corporate culture include leadership features inherited from national culture (Schein, 1999 in Gulev, 2009, 3). Some researchers (Bussey, 1999, Ogbor, 1998, Neelankavil et al., 2000, Hofstede, 2001, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998, in Gulev, 2009, 3) show that a corporate culture compatible with the national culture contributes to smoother implementation of business strategies. However, there is no consensus in this respect and other researchers state that a corporate culture different from the national one can only challenge the state of art and generate better performance and more innovation (Chandler, 1994, Reed & Suresh, 2003, Singh & Parashar, 2005 in Gulev, 2009, 3-4).

Analysing all definitions above, it appears that organisational culture embodies two categories of elements: visible, explicit ones (from symbols like company logos to mission statements and speeches etc) and non-explicit ones (jargon, values, assumption, norms of behaviour). Internal communication has a major impact on all elements: on the one hand, OIC makes it highly likely that national culture is manifest, as “cultural difference is a factor that affects the individual communication style and the communication process (Cheng, Seeger, 2012, 118)”. For example, the way of accepting business cards, addressing superiors, greeting, eye contact, losing face and so on vary across cultures and failing to understand these aspects can even undermine business (Zoeller Veras, Bicudo Veras, 2001, 78-79). However, a study of cultural differences between the German and Dutch police force (Sand, Gerritsen, Hermans, 2011, 8) on the influence of the masculinity dimension, mostly on OIC, but partly on SIC as well, revealed a surprising result. At ideological level, SIC (written media) was shaped by the masculinity index value for both cultures, whereas in the case of OIC (management and peer communication) it was not confirmed.

Furthermore, the Excellent Public Relations model assumes that excellent PR programmes are more likely to be developed in organisations with specific characteristics: participative organisational cultures, symmetrical internal communication, organic structures, equal opportunities for men

and women and minorities, high job satisfaction among employees (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002, 17). It is easily noticed that participative cultures and symmetrical communication systems correspond to national cultures where there is lower power distance, organic structures are more probably emerging in low levels of uncertainty avoidance and individualism, equal opportunities for men and women are more likely to appear in feminine cultures, whereas job satisfaction is more of an organisational aspect. In the light of this model, a legitimate question arises: are criteria of the excellent PR model enough to correctly assess all PR strategies/ tactics/ programmes? Are our expectations culturally shaped when evaluating them? And if yes, what role does culture play in the design, content and evaluation of PR strategies/ tactics/ programmes?

Research methodology

While SIC is the main vehicle for disseminating the company culture, in my article I am going to investigate whether SIC is influenced by national cultures traits. Through SIC I understand corporate magazines and their components (used as PR tactics in both external and internal PR): interviews, team/ individuals/ management profiles, news, corporate social responsibility (CSR), articles on internal or external news etc.

The operationalisation is done (the references are text-based only; the counting unit is the article) according to Hofstede's dimensions (Hofstede, 2001: 98,161,225,297,359 in Vinken, Soeters, & Ester, 2004, 9) as following:

- Uncertainty avoidance: number of references related to change, innovation versus respecting the internal rules, the threat of market conditions and the pressure to keep up with competition, future scenarios versus present;
- Power distance: number of references to management achievements, employees' possibility to give feed-back, events and activities dedicated to management or all employees and recognition of either management or employee achievements;
- Individualism: number of references related to personal versus team achievements, recognition of individuals' merits, team or individual profiles, activities involving teams or individuals only;
- Masculinity: articles related to CSR programmes (including well-being and gender equality), interest towards private life of the employee or profits, business articles, cooperation versus competition-style activities.

Each magazine will shape a profile which will be turned into percentages and compared to Hofstede's scores. Two hypotheses will be verified:

1. If the magazine is issued by a local company, SIC will mirror the national culture - the closer the results to the country national culture profile are, the more SIC is dependent on national culture – SIC is culture-specific.
2. If the magazine is created by a branch office with a different culture from the headquarters, the internal communication contents will mirror the issuing culture model.

The national cultures magazines analyzed are: We are Austrian (Austrian Airways), FEDRA (Federal Ministry, Belgium), Aposta (The Portuguese Post Company). As for the branches of multinational companies, these are: Horizon.Live - GDF Suez (France, issued in Belgium), Raiffeisen (Austria, issued in Romania), Stellar - Astellas (Japan, issued in the UK).

Analysis of the results

The results of each magazine profiles and national indexes are analysed by calculating the Pearson correlation index. The magazine's result on each dimension is compared to the national index of the specific dimension and a hierarchy according to the results is established. First of all, I will look into the correlation index results for each magazine and establish at which extent it matches the Hofstede country profile; then I will compare magazines and countries to each other and see if they follow the hierarchy proposed by the Hofstede national indexes.

Austria –Austrian Airlines Magazine (private organisation, airlines company). Austria scores according to Hofstede's index, very low on power distance, high on individualism and very high on masculinity and uncertainty avoidance. The Austrian Airlines magazine fully confirms the results of Hofstede's research (correlation index of 0.967). It shows slightly higher levels of power distance (a lot of articles dedicated to individual employees' profiles, achievements and statements, much more than to management), individualism and uncertainty avoidance. However, the most interesting dimension is masculinity, the only one where the recorded results are lower than the country index, the company projecting an image of being more feminine (oriented to CSR and well-being). The magazine has a very high number of articles about business (market, competition) but also on internal rules and codes, generating a high score on uncertainty avoidance as well.

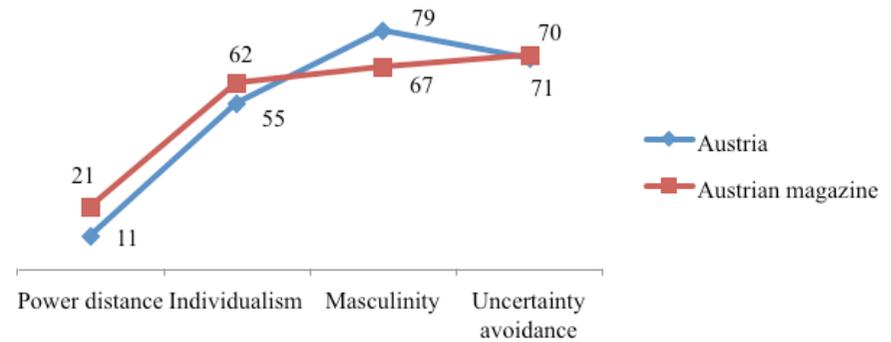


Figure 1 – Austria country profile versus Austrian magazine profile

Belgium – FEDRA (public organisation, ministry). According to Hofstede's index, Belgium is expected to show rather high power distance, very high individualism, rather high masculinity and very high uncertainty avoidance. The magazine reveals a moderate correlation index (0.68) where power distance is rather low compared to the Hofstede score but also to other countries' score. The Belgian magazine has a high number of articles dedicated to employee surveys and feed-back requests which lead to this score; however, the number of management portraits overruns the ones dedicated to employees. Concerning the individualism dimension, FEDRA shows a score relatively close to Hofstede's index, confirming this tendency (many individual employees' profiles and far less team profiles). The masculinity level is slightly lower than the country index, as the magazine demonstrates an increased appetite for articles related to personal life and corporate social responsibility. The uncertainty avoidance dimension scores only half of its country level, but the overall number of articles on this dimension is rather low.

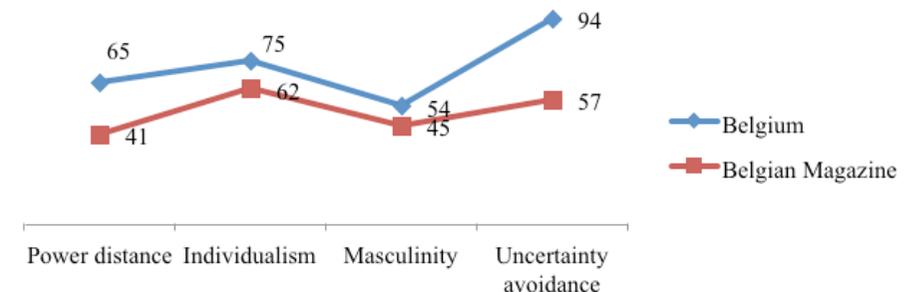


Figure 2 – Belgium country profile versus Belgian magazine profile

Belgium/ France – Horizon.Live, GDF Suez Benelux and Germany (former Belgian public company in the energy field, now privatized with a French company, edited by the Belgian office). France and Belgium have similar Hofstede indexes (correlation 0.91), however, France tends to show slightly higher power distance, slightly lower individualism, lower masculinity and slightly higher uncertainty avoidance. Horizon.Live appears to be closer to the Belgian culture (correlation index 0.68) than to the French one (0.51) especially in terms of power distance and individualism results. The masculinity dimension places the magazine closer to the French culture, as it offers a high exposure to both CSR initiatives and events/activities encouraging cooperation amongst employees. The uncertainty avoidance scores a low level due to an important number of articles focusing on innovation. Interesting enough, both Belgian magazines, FEDRA and Horizon.Live show similar correlation levels to the Belgian culture.

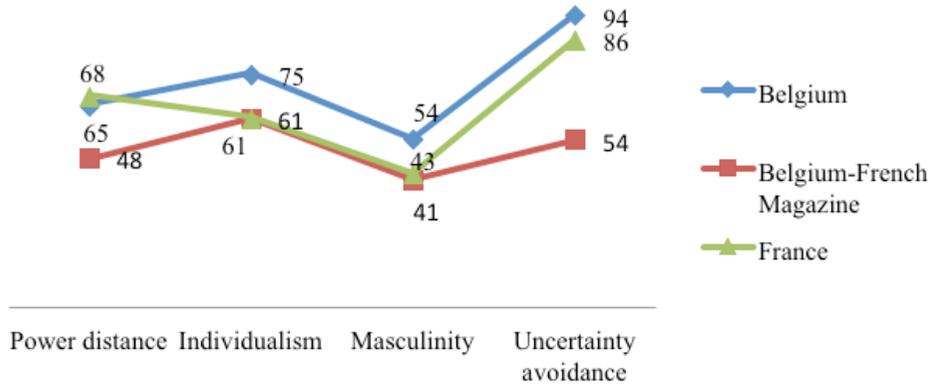


Figure 3 – Belgium and France country profile versus Horizon.Live magazine profile

Portugal – Aposta (public organisation – post services). Portugal, according to the national index, should score high levels of power distance, very low levels of individualism and masculinity and very high uncertainty avoidance and it reveals a high correlation index (0.86). The Portuguese magazine shows slightly lower levels of power distance and masculinity. As for individualism, its level is higher than the national index, due to an increased number of articles comprising interviews and management profiles. The uncertainty avoidance is lower, but the overall number of articles on this dimension was also lower than the rest of the dimensions.

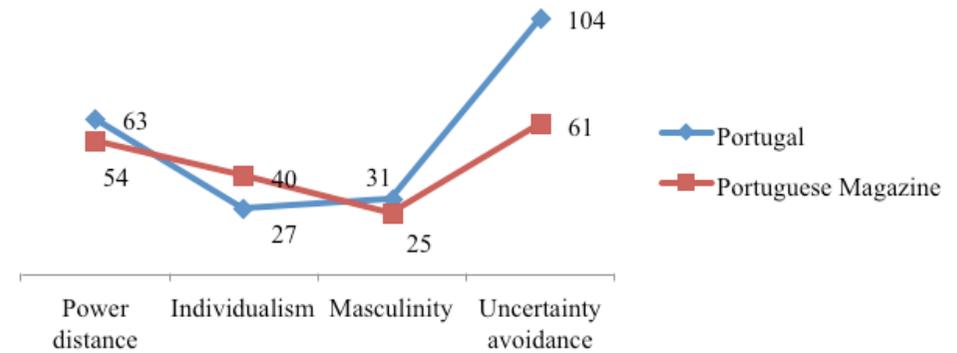


Figure 4 – Portugal country profile versus Portuguese magazine profile

Romania/Austria – Raiffeisen Bank (former Romanian Bank privatized with an Austrian bank). The Romanian and Austrian cultures display important differences in terms of national cultures amongst the magazines analysed (correlation -0.45): Romania – high power distance, Austria – low power distance, Romania – low individualism, Austria – high individualism, Romania – low masculinity, Austria – very high masculinity, Romania – high uncertainty avoidance, Austria – very high uncertainty avoidance. The results show that in terms of power distance (a lot of articles are dedicated to management, but employees contributions are also highly valued through feed-back and articles drafting requests) and individualism (many individual profiles, but as many team profiles are present), scores of the magazines can be placed in the middle of the two countries cultures. As for masculinity, definitely, the magazine almost replicates the Romanian score as the company covers extensively CSR related activities and events based on cooperation. As for uncertainty avoidance, there are fewer articles on the topic, and the overall level is matching the Austrian one. The correlation index brings Raiffeisen closer to the Romanian culture with a moderate correlation (0.49) and it shows a very loose correlation to the Austrian one (0.24). However, it is noteworthy to say that the Romanian results were assumed by Hofstede, but more recent local studies have not confirmed them (power distance – 33, individualism – 49, masculinity – 39, uncertainty avoidance - 61) (Luca, 2005, 6). If compared to the Romanian results derived from the latest researches in 2005, the correlation to Romania is 0.90 (using the new index, Romania and Austria would be much closer with a 0.56 correlation index compared to -0.45 the correlation between Romania's Hofstede score and Austria's).

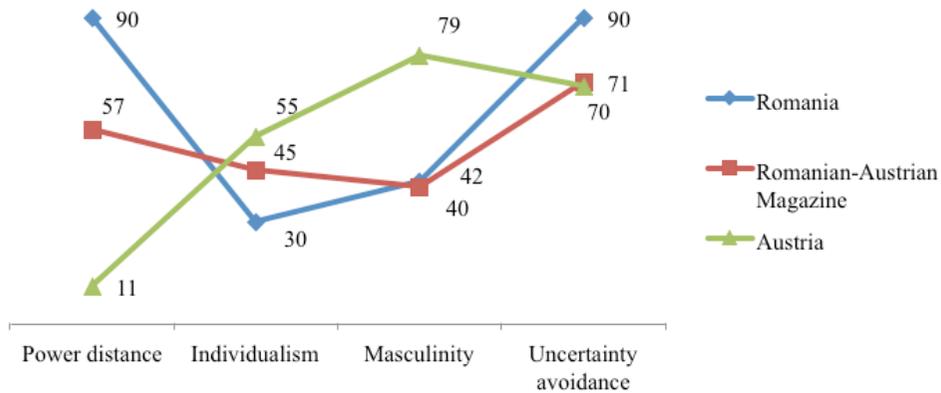


Figure 5 – Romania and Austria country profiles versus Raiffeisen magazine profile

UK/ Japan – Astellas (Japanese pharmaceutical multinational, magazine produced by the British branch for the European employees). UK and Japan should show high culture differences (correlation -0.335) – low vs. higher power distance, very high individualism vs. rather low individualism, high vs. low masculinity and high uncertainty avoidance. The results of the magazine analysis on all dimensions bring Stellar obviously closer to the British culture (0.90 versus -0.57 - Japan). The differences noticed refer to a lower level of individualism than the UK, masculinity and uncertainty avoidance - lower than both cultures (but nonetheless, closer to the British score). It is noteworthy the Japanese influence generating more articles dedicated to management than expected, and less articles on individuals. The magazine also shows great interest in CSR and volunteering activities. The uncertainty avoidance is the dimension which benefits from the most reduced number of articles.

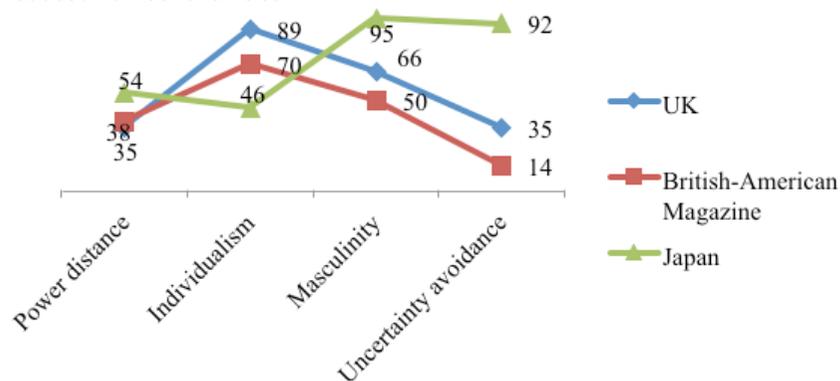


Figure 6 – UK and Japan country profiles versus Stellar magazine profile

Discussion of the results

Internal communication, both strategic and operational is a vector of building corporate image (Halic, 2007, 15) to the internal publics. The image generated by SIC programmes can be considered a self-image of the organisation (Halic, 2007, 16-17) – the image a company wants to project about itself towards its employees. However, it is clear that differences in coverage of image dimensions (financial results, capacity to adapt to the market conditions, competence of management, competence of employees, contribution to society) (Halic, 2007, 16-17) are guided by national cultures and not only. All magazines analysed pertain to large organisations, most of them public or formerly public owned. This choice was made in order to reduce the possibility of bias determined by strikingly different organisational cultures. All organisations would be expected to fit in the role culture (Handy, 1995, in Cismaru, 63-64) characterised by clear hierarchical structures, rules and company codes, well-defined roles.

On the power distance dimension, one can notice that whilst Romania keeps its first position, it shows far lower levels due to the Austrian influence. The rest of the top follows, only Portugal making an exception (placed second instead of France), possibly because of the organisation's specific (very traditional, with a long history on the Portuguese market). The countries display varied scores on this dimension, but most magazines tend to record lower power distance levels than Hofstede's (apart from Stellar which counts on a high number of management profiles). This particularity can be explained as Stellar is intended to all European employees, therefore the need to introduce more managers' profiles to build trust and convey the message and to a potential strong Japanese influence. This dimension benefits from the highest number of articles: over 20 in each magazine featuring managers' and employees' profiles, events dedicated to the two categories, feed-back and employees surveys highlighting that communicating about management and employees can be considered the backbone of organisational image.

Individualism mostly keeps the same order of Hofstede, however, there is a reversed trend between Horizon.Live and Austrian with a very small difference. Individualism also benefits from a significant number of articles in all magazines, focusing either on teams or on individuals according to both national and company culture. As expected, the UK tends to have the highest individualism rate, a little bit above the general average, however, all countries scored similarly and not very far from 50%. This result shows that a balance between portraying individuals and teams is considered beneficial for the employers' image.

Masculinity is certainly one of the most interesting dimensions. Along with power distance, this dimension enjoys the highest number of articles. A possible explanation can reside in the fact they touch two company image indicators (Halic, 28-30): competence of management – power distance and corporate social responsibility – low masculinity. As a matter of fact, all magazines score lower masculinity levels than their respective national index and fully respect the order established by Hofstede indexes. Thus, companies seem to project a more feminine image in their corporate magazines. A reason could be that organisations are aware that in order to be considered a “desired employer” and to make out of their employees brand ambassadors they need to cover more of their well-doing (Sauter, Hess, Weigley, 2012).

Uncertainty avoidance is also an intriguing dimension – the one which has enjoyed a lower number of articles in all magazines except from Austria and where the country order is not respecting Hofstede’s results. Firstly, all magazines score much less in this respect (We are Austrian – exception), projecting an image of innovative and creative organisations. This result can be explained if related to the company image building function of internal communication: capacity to adapt and respond to the market is one of the sub-indicators of company image (Halic, 2007, 28-30). As for the order, Austrian comes second and surprisingly, there is a very high number of articles dedicated to the economic environment evolution, competition, but also internal codes and procedures. I would assume the change is related to the industry sector – aviation, where safety is a core value. The Romanian magazine comes first possibly due to the same reason: it pertains to the banking sector, which is by definition risk adverse. Aposta depicts itself as less risk-adverse than Portugal (being placed first by Hofstede), possibly because it activates in post and telecommunications – a very dynamic field, forcing the company to adapt to the market conditions. Belgium can be found on the fourth position also due to the specific of the organisation – a ministry. GDF SUEZ sits on a position closer to France and not Belgium, because of its belonging to one of the most adaptive and evolving sectors – energy. Astellas occupies the last position, as expected, according to Hofstede index for the UK and company type (private) and sector (pharmaceutical). Due to the fact that in this particular case, the difference between the two cultures is so significant, I assume that the company sector plays a more important role in defining the attitude towards risk than the national characteristics.

Referring to Stellar, Raiffeisen and Horizon.Live, one can state that potentially, the middle scores achieved on some dimensions are pinpointing to a bolder assumption, that organisational magazines can be key drivers of a “third culture” (Casmir, Asuncion-Lande, 1990, 294-295). Consensus on all dimensions of whether the results are perfectly matching any of the two profiles (culture of origin or local branch culture) has not been reached and correlations are quite close to both cultures, which means that neither of the two cultures has imposed itself. The corporate magazine becomes much more than an image vehicle, it contributes at the creation of the “third culture”, enhancing intercultural communication, harmonising and incorporating at various extents

elements of the original and local culture, but where neither of them is predominant. This is clear in the case of Raiffeisen where the two cultures are very different and the correlations with both are rather low. Therefore, SIC could influence OIC too, as shown in several studies that, for example, during the initial interaction phase of a newly formed multicultural team, “national heterogeneity had a detrimental impact on team functioning. [...] After forming ways to interact and communicate, highly heterogeneous teams appeared to create a common identity” (Earley and Mosakowski, 2000, in Earley & Gibson, 2002, 45). It means that adjustment and harmonising cultures through intercultural SIC tactics can play a major role in improving OIC processes.

Another perspective on the results can be shed by analysing them from the target audience point of view. The Romanian, Belgian and Portuguese magazine are intended to national employees, whereas the Horizon.Live magazine is targeting employees from Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg, Stellar - all Europe employees and We are Austrian is aiming at reaching employees worldwide. This could imply that the issues covered might vary in order to raise the interest of employees from various cultures, markets and back-grounds. Analysing the three magazines, there are several noteworthy observations: whereas Austrian Airways and Astellas show higher power distance levels than their issuing country-offices, for GDF it is not the case. As for individualism, both Astellas and Horizon.Live measures slightly less, whereas Austrian much more. This suggests that the public might not be a key factor in choosing the topics covered, especially because I would have expected more “individual profiles” and “management profiles” so that the magazines become true vehicles of information. The potential influences of the “world-wide” publics in terms of content and format can be observed in Austrian and Astellas magazines. Austrian dedicates a high number of articles to the economic environment and future trends all over the world, but on the other hand it also covers a high number of pieces of news related to the Austrian head-quarters. Astellas includes news from many countries, but mostly internal and also translates several articles in multiple languages being the only magazine to do so.

Therefore, the question is: are PR techniques and tactics universal or are they rather local? The fact that the deviation from the average mean of articles dedicated to each dimension is rather important, one can state that the types of techniques used are the same (events, interviews, profiles, statements, analysis etc). However, their respective proportion is very different, tailored to companies’ needs and communication strategy as no pattern was identified in terms of classification of the most used type of tactic corresponding to a specific dimension. Referring to the “third culture”, it appears that techniques of excellent public relations and SIC tend to be global and they originate from the North-Western society. However, the way their content and what is considered to be desirable in different national cultures and companies varies according to the organisational culture or field of activity.

Conclusions and limits

According to the research, one can draw the following conclusions (hypotheses confirmation):

1. If the magazine is issued by a local company, SIC will mirror the national culture – the hypothesis proves true in most of the cases. However, there are exceptions showing that the company field of activity can influence the results. This is the case of uncertainty avoidance dimension, where companies want to score as being more innovative, due to the high competition on the labour market and standards set by “the most desired employer tops” (Sauter, Hess, Weigley, 2012). The same desire to project a good image also may alter the results in terms of masculinity and individualism (great companies to work for strive for good work environment and conditions). Companies tend to project themselves more caring for the employees and environment, but also encouraging team spirit.
2. If the magazine is issued by the branch office with a different culture from the headquarters, the internal communication techniques contents will mirror the issuing culture. This hypothesis proved only partially true, as there was no pattern on dimensions or definitive influence of the two cultures (if looking at Raifeissen magazine, it is clear that the correlation with the Romanian culture is low and to the Austrian even lower). However, it is interesting to spot that the magazine’s culture is closer to the issuing country profile, especially in the case of Horizon. Live and Astellas.

Following this study, SIC being culture-specific is beyond doubt. Firstly, even if tactics of SIC appear to be culture-free, their content is influenced by national culture, as much as our personal expectations of the way a corporate magazine should look like. Therefore, in international competitions, if judging a national corporate magazine coming from a culture different of their own, the jury would use their cultural lenses and possibly favour in an unconscious manner the material which is culturally closer to them.

Secondly, if being in charge of delivering SIC programmes, transposing international initiatives issued by the head-quarters would always involve a tailoring and harmonising process to the local conditions. A simple translation of a corporate magazine in different languages seems far from an effective strategy.

Thirdly, all three international magazines addressing multi-national employees do not appear to make a difference in terms of choosing topics and the perspective to present them. The magazines still show an obvious link to the national culture of the issuing office. More research to reveal the various interests of publics from different cultures is needed when publishing materials intended at heterogeneous audiences.

The limits I can identify to this research are linked to: language (I only analysed magazines where I could understand the language they were written in), thus the limited number of countries and the reduced number of magazines – one per country/ company. The fact that all magazines pertained to big companies is both an advantage and a disadvantage. On the one hand, as previously stated, using a quite homogenous basis of companies with high probability of having similar company cultures (role culture) was considered a strength of the research, because it minimised the bias derived from important differences in organisational cultures. On the other hand, a research analysing smaller companies might conclude with different results, as company culture might be more salient than the national one. Furthermore, it would be interesting to test other cultural dimensions of different culture models to see if the results apply, as the Hofstede index results’ validity has led to contradictory discussions over time especially in the case of some countries (see the discussion on the assumption of the Romanian index).

In conclusion, the article feeds into the series of academic researches on PR in European nation states and beyond, revealing the influence of culture on strategic internal communication. It can be integrated in studies of both national/ organisational culture in Europe and beyond, but also in the series of international public relations and communications. For business, the research shows that the simple translation of magazines from the international headquarters and distributing them is not a panacea. The corporate magazine is not just an image vector, it is also a powerful vehicle of national culture values (in the case of national organisations), or a catalyser for building the “third culture” in multinationals. The dilemma of communications and PR professionals in multinationals and consultancies gets an appropriate answer: “think global” – draw the lines of SIC in accordance with business objectives and organisational culture, but “act local” – tailor the contents of SIC and harmonise the culture of origin with the host culture.

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Corporate Magazines

- Aposta, Portugal, July-August, 2011
- Fedra, Belgium, April, 2012
- Horizon.Live, Belgium, January, 2012
- Raiffeisen, Romania, July, 2012
- Stellar, United Kingdom, Summer, 2012
- We are Austrian, Austria, February, 2011

Annex

Table 1 – Hofstede country indexes versus magazines results on dimensions

Dimensions	PT	Aposta	BE	FEDRA	Horizon.Live	FR	RO	Raiffeisen	AT	Austrian	UK	Stellar	Japan
Power distance	63	54	65	41	48	68	90	57	11	21	35	38	54
Individualism	27	40	75	62	61	61	30	45	55	62	89	70	46
Masculinity	31	25	54	45	41	43	42	40	79	67	66	50	95
Uncertainty avoidance	104	61	94	57	54	86	90	71	70	71	35	14	92

Table 2 – Correlation between Hofstede country indexes and magazines results

Country - Magazine	Correlation index
Portugal – Aposta	0.865263249
Belgium – FEDRA	0.681218953
France - Horizon.Live	0.514463425
Belgium - Horizon.Live	0.683548377
Romania – Raiffeisen	0.497642123
Austria – Raiffeisen	0.245276991
UK – Stellar	0.907820676
Japan – Stellar	-0.578988301
Austria – We are Austrian	0.96746214

 8

Media Relations under Pressure: What's Left in Times of Change?

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1. NEW CONTEXTS FOR MEDIA RELATIONS

The media environment is changing. With the rise of digital media newspapers, magazines, radio, and even television stations are struggling. By providing free content, new digital media challenge traditional business models in the media industry. Journalism as we used to know it seems to have taken a serious hit. In June 2009, David Schlesinger, editor-in-chief of Reuters News, said in a speech on rethinking journalism in the age of twitter: “So what can we do to survive, or more fundamentally, to stay relevant? I think the only path is to embrace the change and embrace the new. Longing for the ways of the past will not work.” The structural changes of traditional media on the one hand and the rise of social media on the other hand have not only put journalism under pressure, but media relations as well. Like journalism, media relations have to adapt to new realities that challenge principles and practices. At the same time, they can profit from new digital channels to address new digital publics.

Media relations have always been considered one of the most important, if not the most essential part in the field of public relations. Mass media have been, and still are, agenda setters that public relations (PR) address as gatekeepers and mediators to convey organizational messages to a wider audience. Media coverage on an organization is an elegant and effective way to get public awareness and receive acceptance. If journalists report on an organization, organizational events or issues they provide credibility as well as relevance. Within the context of the new media landscape, usage patterns of traditional media have changed. At the same time attributions of relevance and credibility are shifting. New digital media complement, some even supplement the traditional media. They challenge traditional business models as circulations drop and the advertising market gets smaller. With traditional media on the defense, media relations' impact on news coverage is likely to increase in the short term. When editorial staff is reduced and time pressure on journalists rises the chances of PR material shaping the news are rising. But in the long run, if print media, radio, and television loose in reach and reputation, PR will no longer profit from relevance and credibility. Although efforts and expenses for effective media relations may decrease, it no longer can gain from traditional media's additional benefits for PR.

In recent years, more and more authors argue that a “new era of media relations” (Waters et al. 2010: 242) has begun. The discussions are about a loss of importance as well as the search for a reorientation in times of structural change of the public sphere and massive turmoil in the media system. Changes take place particularly in traditional journalism and its functions. Some practitioners report that media relations as a field of PR are losing in relevance—at least in their traditional form. Others are convinced that media relations will remain at the core of PR, even gaining in relevance by using new channels to address traditional journalists as well as new forms of journalism. They both argue with the formation of new media. Their perspectives only differ on whether to conceptualize social media relations as a new field for PR or an extension of traditional media relations. Both perspectives do not fully address the fundamental change that is taking place in relationships between organizations, journalism, and the public. The “interplay between journalists and PR practitioners” has changed, as Waters, Tindall and Morton (2010: 241) remark. There are new arenas and new intermediaries to public opinion. Traditional media relations' strategies and patterns have to adapt to new communication channels and to “new” journalists. Traditional journalism has remained the same, and nonetheless has to be addressed different by media relations. Nowadays, it for example uses social media as research channels, adapts work routines and processes or reports cross-media.

How do current developments affect media relations as a PR discipline? Are media relations still “the same” despite new contexts or do we have to adapt, maybe even redefine the term and concept itself? What is left in times of change—and what is new? The aim of this paper is to present new theoretical perspectives on media relations. This will be argued with regard to two research areas: On the one hand, in PR research there are theoretical frameworks addressing the fundamental role of PR for organizations. With regard to media relations, a transfer however is still missing. On the other hand, journalism research analyzes the current change using fruitful system-theoretical approaches. Especially those concepts that explain the difference between traditional and “new” social media are relevant for media relations and their theorizing.

The paper addresses three questions emerging from current challenges and developments in public sphere and media system:

- What role do media relations (still) play within PR? If the media system is changing and particularly the traditional journalism loses in importance while at the same time being subjected to fundamental functional change, there are direct consequences for media relations. This applies on one hand to their quantitative importance, and on the other hand to the status they hold in public relations—e.g. the goals pursued and the services provided.

- How do media relations deal with different areas in journalism and new media segments on the Internet? Journalistic content, editorial organization and working methods are becoming more diverse. Various types and genres appealing to specific audience groups are active in various public spheres, and fulfill specific accomplishments. They have therefore different meaning with regard to media relations, create different opportunities and risks, and must each be addressed in a specific manner.
- How does the relationship between media relations and journalism develop? The increasing professionalization of media relations on one side and resource cuts in the newsroom on the other side seem to influence the balance of power in favor of the media relations. In any case, the type of collaboration and the quality of relationships between journalists and media relations experts are in motion. For example, long-term relationships are established by so-called media partnerships. However, in the long run such developments curtail the role of media relations: When the relationships between media relations practitioners and journalists become even more closely connected and borders dissolve, media relations' attractiveness decreases. Only independent media, to which the public can ascribe credibility, are helpful to public relations.

To answer these research questions, we analyze functions that traditional and new forms of journalism provide for PR—and are used by it. Based on a functional model of traditional and participatory media, characteristics and principles of each context are identified in order to analyze their main functions that can be used by PR. These functions help to discuss strategies, principles, and practices of media relations, on a basic theoretical level as well as in a more operational point of view.

2. Media Relations and their Relevance for PR

For a company it is important to gain public presence. PR aims at influencing how a company is discussed in public or by publics. In this regard, media relations are a PR discipline that offers a comparably economical and effective way to address the public sphere. It is about initiating (preferably positive) media coverage or mitigating possible negative effects. Traditionally it is journalism in the role of a gatekeeper who selects and decides who or what issues gain access to the public sphere. Rather an active communicator than a passive transmitter, journalism shapes messages, frames topics and evaluates statements as well as actions of actors. It thus creates shared reality for its audiences. By media relations, organizations try to get attention for the organization itself, for its topics and representatives. Media relations also have another advantage: By means of traditional media an organization can address large audiences that could not easily be reached by other media. While owned media can be used to address specific publics mass media still is one of the most effective ways to reach the broad majority of the population.

PR's main objective as understood by functional approaches is to get public awareness for an organization and its issues and to gain trust. PR strives to contribute to organizational goals by gaining public trust, building legitimacy and securing the "licence to operate". Due to its close link to an organization and its goals, contributions on the micro level (e.g. for individuals or groups outside the organization) as well as on the macro level (e.g. society) are no primary task of organizational PR (Hoffmann 2011: 73). A spokesperson of a company has to represent the interests of her or his organization. When in conflict with the information interests of publics, it is the organization's interest that has to prevail.

As strategic communication PR represents the interest of an organization—a fact the public is well aware of. As a result, PR is perceived as targeted communication on behalf of an organization and mostly critically examined by publics (Hoffmann 2011: 65).

PR neither has the credibility nor direct access to the broad majority of the population like journalism does, which serves public information interests independently and objectively and, thus, has different functions. Nevertheless—in order to achieve its goals—PR has to reach relevant publics and gain attention for its contents (public attention). It has to get the audience's interest (relevance). Not least, the audience has to perceive a message as being credible (credibility). All three criteria depend on issue and situation. The major challenge, however, remains. In order to overcome it, PR can and does rely on media and journalism. Therefore, media relations are one specific and prominent field of PR.

Organizational messages gain attention, relevance and credibility when they are selected and reported by the media. They profit from the credibility that audiences attribute to independent media, which check facts and assess corporate messages. PR does not have to conceal its interest-based goals in this approach. But in media relations, PR professionals can only partly influence on what, when, and how the media report. In this context, media relations adapt to journalistic principles and routines like news value and adequate timing, and establish relationships to journalists. Regarding the relationship between journalists and PR practitioners, Hon and Grunig (1999: 24) state: "Savvy media relations experts know [...] that good relationships with reporters are ones in which both feel they have some degree of control over the reporting of the organization [...]. Both parties trust each other to help them do their job; indeed they have a communal relationship so each helps the other even though they may get nothing in return."

To sum up: By media relations, PR can profit from journalism's credibility and overcome its own restrictions. Media's main functions—to receive attention, relevance, and credibility for messages—are key to media relations' important role in corporate communication. But with the media landscape changing, the reach of traditional media declines while at the same time new publics form in digital media. New media offer to get attention, relevance, and credibility for organizations and their messages in wider publics, too. Will media relations be as important in the

years to come as they have been in the last decades? How do they (have to) change regarding, e.g., their function, form, and processes due to social media?

3. Journalism and its Relevance for PR

PR values journalism due to its impact on public opinion. What journalists report is publicly perceived as relevant and credible. With PR messages, relevance and credibility are not readily associated. As a representation of organizational interests, PR lacks the independence that journalism has to offer as it was described in chapter two. What are the specific characteristics of journalism? Journalism offers exclusive values for society in general (macro level) and for individual publics in particular (micro level):

“Journalism researches, selects, and presents issues that are new, fact-oriented, and relevant. It creates a public forum by observing society, by presenting these observations via periodical media to a mass audience and, thus, constructing shared reality. This constructed reality offers orientation in a complex world”, describes Klaus Meier (2007: 13) the main characteristic of journalism.¹

To create public attention is one of the main services or so called “functions” of journalism. Journalism structures public issues by deciding what actors are presented with what messages. As gatekeepers, they select who or what topic will get public awareness. Journalism creates a public forum in which topics that are relevant for society are discussed. On the one hand, mass media address broad audiences. When PR content is reported on in mass media, it, thus, has the possibility to get a broad public forum. On the other hand, journalists report for specific audiences—for example economic publics or topical experts—thereby offering access to specific publics. From a PR point of view, mass media are “the vehicle to reach an audience” (Fortunato 2000: 482).

Journalism offers two main benefits for the general as well as specific publics: observation and validation (Neidhardt 1994: 22 f.):

(1) Journalism observes society. It selects incidents or topics that are relevant for its audiences and reports on them in adequate scopes and timeframes (theme selectivity). To present the main aspects, it stresses the more important elements of a topic (fact selectivity; Kohring 2004).

(2) Journalism validates information by critically examining facts, rationales, and public reasoning. Regarding facts, it carefully verifies whether data and descriptions are valid (information accuracy).

Regarding rationales and reasoning, it evaluates how coherent and reasonable a line of argument is and comments on it in broader contexts. Journalism thus offers assessments (information assessment).

By observation and validation journalism offers its audiences knowledge, insights, and guidance. Thus, it contributes to forming public opinion and societal orientation. These four contributions constitute the specific information quality of journalism and its high level of credibility.

Traditionally, these particular benefits or functions are closely linked to the particular organizational and normative framework of professional journalism: Full-time journalists work together in editorial teams with a high level of specialization and division of labor. They commit to ethical standards, and to professional norms like currentness, relevance, diversity, and independence. Using standardized routines and procedures, information of varying quality is transformed into the journalistic output (Karlsson 2011: 281, Kovach & Rosenstiel 2007). The processes of gathering, processing, and distributing news are controlled centrally and result in complex, self-contained media content. They refer to a particular editorial concept and result in media products defined as a bundle of information focused on the special needs of its audience. Therefore, traditional media’s output can be marketed with a clear focus—provided that business models are efficient. In the world of traditional media, journalists are the gatekeepers that PR and media relations have to address. The framework of traditional media relations is quite clear: Relevant media can be identified and selected easily. Professional norms and editorial routines of journalism are well known.

4. Functional Equivalents of Journalism

One important change that is ongoing in the media system is that traditional journalism is challenged with regard to new forms of communication and information. On the Internet, there are various platforms of gathering and exchanging information apart from traditional journalism. So-called participatory media can be compared with traditional journalism (Neuberger & Nuernbergk 2010). Under certain circumstances, they are able to provide similar benefits for their users and the society in general. When users exchange ideas on different topics in forums, blogs, and on social networking sites, they constitute digital public spheres. They collect, select, and evaluate information and thus offer value for their users by delivering relevant and evaluated, in some sense verified informations.

On the Internet, publics are formed without traditional media’s mediating. This development, however, is not new. Public spheres have been shaped by small-group media or face-to-face interactions before (Neuberger 2008: 33). Unlike the situation in traditional media the Internet, however, offers the means and “place” for publics to form, become visible, and gain in size. Over time digital publics can become larger and more influential, e.g. by networking: “The common claim that the Internet generates a ‘fragmented’ public (cf. Holtz-Bacha 1997) is [...] hardly accurate.

¹ Original quote in German, translated by the authors.

Rather the opposite might be true: The Internet initially creates an integrated public, which includes different layers of public in one medium”, stresses Neuberger (2008: 33). This relates to both stages: ahead of and after traditional publicity (pre-media and follow-up discussions).

Although there is a large range of forms and topics in participatory media, they—at least in part—can be described as functional equivalents of professional journalism. Moreover, participatory media go beyond traditional journalism in making follow-up-discussions on media content visible and granting all users the opportunity to participate in public debates. Thus, like traditional journalism, certain forms of participatory media can create public forums, provide their audiences with orientation, and offer attention, relevance, and credibility for corporate contents. For instance, in participatory media credibility through adherence to professional codes of journalism can be replaced with credibility that results from sharing a common concern, as Russel (2001) argues. However, compared to traditional journalism, participatory media work differently. While journalists refer to professional standards, follow complex newsgathering and editorial processes, and have extensive resources at hand, users in social media networks generate content by collaborating. In a continuous process comments are posted, contents are shared and edited. Many participants shape a story. Reporting and exchanging information become an open process. Individual contributions of users are linked in different forms and range—both within a single blog or social media network and across different platforms.

Furthermore, the norms and modes of communication differ between traditional and participatory media. Journalism communicates in the classical mode of objectivity and neutrality. It is bound to professional standards whereas network communication complies with the rules of everyday communication and social relationships. Participatory media operate in the network mode of subjectivity and authenticity. The single acts of communication are driven by personal experiences and evaluations of the users. Participatory media are based on dialogue on an equal footing rather than on omniscient reporting.

	professional journalism	participatory media
classical mode <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • objectivity • neutrality 	I traditional journalism journalism conducted by professional journalists in their official capacity in traditional or digital media	III citizen journalism journalism conducted by amateurs in traditional or digital media, e.g., community newspapers, micro-blogs
network mode <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • subjectivity • authenticity 	II open journalism (journalism 2.0) professional journalists engaging in a dialogue with audiences by opening the editorial workflow for user input and comments	IV social media sphere individual or collaborative content production without a journalistic approach in social media, e.g. in communitys

Figure 1: Journalism and its functional equivalents in new media

The emergence of participatory media with its possibilities of network communication has consequences for PR and media relations. The participation and networking of many participants provide observation and validation as two key benefits for PR. Public opinion is no longer shaped only by professional journalists. Users, who select, validate, and examine events and issues, also shape it. Media relations can draw on participatory media in addition to or even instead of journalism so as to gain attention, relevance, and credibility for their contents. But in order to benefit from this chance, suitable concepts and instruments are so far needed.

How can the new possibilities for PR in the new media environment with participatory media complementing traditional journalism be described in more detail? The assumption is that traditional and participatory media are not independent. With the changing media landscape boundaries between traditional journalism and other, more participative forms of content production become blurred. Network communication is influenced by both the content and the professional standards of traditional media. Vive verca traditional journalism adapts to the emerging participatory media, e.g. regarding professional routines and practices. Hybrid forms of traditional journalism and participative media emerge in various constellations and media formats. Hence there is a wide range of terms used to describe the phenomenon, e.g., participatory journalism, network journalism or amateur journalism (Fröhlich et al. 2012: 1043).

Depending on the type of media (professional journalism or participatory media) on the one hand

and the mode and norms of communication (classical or network) on the other hand four fields that are relevant for media relations can be distinguished (see figure 1). In this matrix, traditional journalism (field I) and the social media sphere (field IV) describe the pure types: professional journalism traditionally operating in the classical mode and participatory media basically communicating in the network mode.

(I) Traditional journalism still plays an outstanding role in electronic media and the press but also on the Internet. Due to formalized processes and extensive resources in editorial departments, journalists reporting for traditional media including their Internet presences can recognize relevant topics effectively and research them systematically. Although the main characteristics of traditional journalism are still valid in this field digital media do change the routines of gathering and processing news on an operational level.

(II) Fundamental changes take place when professional journalism adapts the network mode of communication used by participative media. Besides subjectivity and authenticity transparency becomes an important norm within journalism (Karlsson 2011: 279). Journalists engage in a dialogue with their audiences by opening the editorial workflow for user input and comments. Due to the open process, we propose to refer to this form as open journalism. Thus, editorial departments are no longer a “black box” to the audience. Journalists are well aware of the audience’s expectations, interests, and feedback. Journalism is rather an open process with users contributing to newsgathering and reporting than one-way communication as in mass communication (Mast 2012: 449).

(III) Within participatory media there are media formats that adapt the classical mode of communication based on the norms of traditional journalism. As a form of newsgathering and reporting by amateurs who have no or merely basic journalistic training it can be called citizen journalism. “Amateur journalists” commit themselves to journalistic standards and codes. Outside mainstream media, they report for official community magazines or city journals. On the Internet, citizen journalism can be found in weblogs or on interactive portals where users collaboratively cover topics according to journalistic criteria.

(IV) All participative media that do not refer to the traditional journalistic mode of communication belong to the social media sphere. In social networks a lot of content either traces back to traditional media or it concerns events and aspects of private space, which are not relevant to the general public. Nevertheless, social media are more than a means for private communication. Network communication so far includes primarily private exchange, identity management, and relationship management. But there is a lively exchange between traditional and social media. Content from the social media sphere gets coverage in traditional journalism and thus gains a

broader audience. Vice versa social networking sites pick up media coverage. They discuss, comment, and add new information. Thus, they validate information in a collaborative process thereby adding to journalists’ work in their professional role.

Nowadays, traditional journalism still dominates public agenda setting (Kiouisis et al. 2007: 151). But the network mode of communication and participative media are gaining in relevance. Social media platforms are both an important source of information for professional journalists and a prominent subject of media coverage, e.g. regarding “shitstorms” created in social networks. Traditional and open journalism on the one hand, citizen journalism and the social media sphere on the other hand—although the concepts partially overlap, they represent four different public forums that could be relevant for media relations.

5. Consequences for Media Relations: What’s Left, What’s to Gain?

The question where traditional journalism ends and new kinds of public spheres begin is important for journalistic practice as well as theory building. Current changes have a direct impact on the identity and prospects of the discipline. From a PR perspective, a clear understanding of notions and distinctions is important, too. But regarding media relations, traditional journalism is not an end in itself. It is a means to access the specific functions that so far only mass media could offer: attention, relevance, and credibility for organizational messages through observation and validation by professional journalists.

Nowadays, there are participatory media and social platforms offering those very functions in new kinds of public spheres. The main question is no longer if it is professional journalism or citizen journalism, open journalism or social media sphere. Rather it is which public sphere addresses an audience that is relevant for an organization, and if this public sphere is perceived as offering credible orientation. More and more such platforms are other than traditional journalism.

(I) Traditional journalism = traditional media relations?

Nevertheless, traditional journalism will still play a crucial role in the years to come. Its ability to address large parts of the public as well as setting the agenda is unmatched by new forms of journalism or social media so far. Additionally, PR practitioners perceive traditional media as more accurate, credible, more truthful, and ethical than social media and blogs (Wright & Hinson 2010). Media relations shaped their programs and instruments to address editorial routines, production processes, and professional norms of traditional media. But traditional journalism as displayed in figure 1 has changed (Bajkiewicz et al. 2011).

So have media relations by adapting to new journalistic routines. They offer content for different kinds of media, e.g. pictures, footage, audio files, and interactive charts accompanying a press release. They adapt to shorter production processes and times of journalists, e.g. with pull communication via online press rooms (Reber & Kim 2006, González-Herrero & Ruiz de Valbuena 2006) or social media releases (Steyn et al. 2010). There are also new instruments that redefine the relationship between media relations specialists and journalists, like e.g. media catching (Waters et al. 2010, Tallapragada et al. 2012): Based on the LISTSERV technology, journalists address a large number of PR practitioners with e-mail requests looking for information or contacts: “Rather than having practitioners contacting lots of journalists, broadcasters, and bloggers in hopes of gaining media placements, thousands of practitioners are being contacted at one time by journalists and others seeking specific material for stories, blog postings, and web sites with upcoming deadlines” (Waters et al. 2010: 243). As traditional journalism has adapted to new technologies and media, so has PR.

(II) Open journalism = open media relations?

Open journalism is an extension of traditional journalism. Professional journalists engage in a dialogue with their audiences using similar elements as participatory media. As two-way communication between a journalist and her/his audience or as dialogues about media content among users themselves it refers to the network mode. It is communication on equal terms, based on subjectivity and authenticity. As a result, the editorial workflow opens up for a systematic user input. An open process offers a direct contact to users, readers, listeners, or watchers. It can be used for research as well as direct user contributions in the process of reporting. For media relations it is important to understand these new work flows and contact points of journalism. They bear chances as well as risks.

So far, a high percentage of traditional media coverage—both offline and online—is initiated or influenced by PR material (Schweiger & Jungnickel 2011). Through open innovation, journalists generate ideas on subjects in direct contact with the audience. Thus, it is to be expected that media relations’ impact on what topics traditional and new media choose for coverage will sink. At the same time, journalist-user interactions create new opportunities for media relations. Media relations specialists could follow these discussions in order to monitor issues, gain insights in what users perceive as relevant and what attitude towards these subjects exist. This insight could lead to topical ideas for media relations as well as to the possibility to anticipate issue trends.

(III) Citizen journalism = new publics for media relations?

In citizen journalism, amateurs assume functions that were traditionally performed by professional journalists. They base their work on journalistic standards and strive for journalistic quality, e.g. reporting in non-professional online newspapers, weblogs, or on twitter. Public journalists have become an important public for media relations as accreditations of bloggers as journalists show. Especially in local reporting, areas of special interest and specific situations public journalism can be an important extension of traditional

media. Such “social media influencers represent a new type of independent third party endorser who shape audience attitudes through blogs, tweets, and the use of other social media” (Freberg et al. 2011: 90).

Media relations can be described as a discipline of PR addressing journalists. In this regard it addresses not only traditional (professional) journalists but also public (semi-professional or lay) journalists. The grid of journalism and its functional equivalents can be extended by this notion of media relations (see figure 2). Despite extension of the notion the instruments of media relations remain the same. Both publics can be addressed by a press release, press conference, background discussion etc. due to their journalistic role.

What’s left of media relations in times of change? The hypothesis can be put forward that media relations in their traditional sense have lost in importance paralleling traditional journalism’s loss in reach. But when expanding the definition to new journalistic publics in new media that fulfill classic functions of journalism the scope of media relations could be broadened. It is no longer the professional, full-time journalism that defines media relations. It is the journalistic function that media can provide for the organization.

	professional journalism	participatory media	
classical mode <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • objectivity • neutrality 	I traditional journalism journalism conducted by professional journalists in their official capacity in traditional or digital media	III citizen journalism journalism conducted by amateurs in traditional or digital media, e.g. community newspapers, micro-blogs	> media relations addressing professional journalists or amateur journalists who base their work on journalistic standards in a journalistic role
network mode <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • subjectivity • authenticity 	II open journalism (journalism 2.0) professional journalists engaging in a dialogue with audiences by opening the editorial workflow for user input and comments	IV social media sphere individual or collaborative content production without a journalistic approach in social media, e.g. in communities	> social media relations addressing individuals or groups in their private role in social media

Figure 2: Media relations in a new media environment

(IV) Social Media apart from journalism = no task for media relations?

Social media offer journalists the opportunity to follow news and user discussions, too. In the social media sphere users select, present, and edit content. This content could affect organizations directly or mediated through mainstream media. Journalists monitor these new forms of public sphere in order to catch news, ideas, and trends for their own coverage. From a PR point of view, Lariscy et al. (2009: 314) argue: "Social media can be used for agenda building, as journalists look to these third-party 'general population' sources in writing their stories and certainly public relations practitioners have begun engaging social media content authors with this in mind." Are wikis, weblogs, social networks, communities or video platforms relevant for media relations, although they are not necessarily journalistic media or platforms? The functional approach proposed so far has shown that some social networks provide similar functions as traditional journalism. Media relations can use social media to gain attention, relevance, and credibility for its messages. The focus of social media differs from traditional journalism in two regards: Firstly, their functions refer to specific digital publics instead of the general public. Secondly, social media perform their functions in a different way. Thus, classic instruments of media relations cannot be applied. Similar to open journalism the social media sphere is dominated by subjectivity and authenticity. But there are no standardized production cycles. Publication is a continuous process in which every person or group could participate. There are no editorial offices and no journalists, and journalistic quality criteria are of minor or no importance to those who participate in the individual or collaborative content production online. Instead it is the sum of all subjective, authentic contributions that leads to the three functions that are relevant for media relations.

The social media sphere is a relevant "place" to be for PR. PR practitioners address new media „as a means of reaching beyond the media“ (Bajkiewicz et al. 2011: 331). For a company it is important to have a presence in new digital media. It can communicate with publics that form in social networks or simply use social media as a platform for dialogue. Social media are important for media relations, too. As mentioned in context with open journalism, discussions in social media often precede media coverage when journalists use social networks for research. But media reporting as well can inspire content in social media that is individually or collaboratively generated. Therefore, the notion of media relations could be expanded.

When media relations address publics that contribute to content production in the social media sphere or to user generated content in the context of open journalism it can be called social media relations (see figure 2). Social media relations communicate with publics who offer relevant functions in a network mode. Addressing subjectivity and authenticity social media relations are based on dialogue. They present information, put it into context, and discuss it with users. Social media relations moderate a dialogue with all those publics in the social media sphere that could offer specific functions identical or similar to mass media. By personalizing issues in tweets

or posts, users add personal relevance to organizational messages and grant organizational legitimacy to the information or opinion that is communicated (Smith 2010: 333). Although it does communication with non-journalists, it affects traditional journalism as well as civic journalism. Professional journalism, lay journalism and social media sphere are increasingly linked. Classic forms of media relations and social media relations are similarly bound together. They need to be coordinated and integrated as "new media relations".

To sum up: The hypothesis is that the concept of media relations should be more specifically analyzed. With new forms of journalism, the rise of social media, and their interconnectedness new possibilities of participative or collaborative content production are emerging. Media relations are no longer a field of PR only addressing professional journalists working in traditional media. It addresses public journalists, too. When communicating with authors in the social media sphere, the field can be broadened. It is social media relations that extend traditional media relations from a functional point of view. Within this new understanding of media relations there is need for theory building. What models can describe the concept? Which communication patterns and instruments emerge? How are power and resources allocated between traditional and social media relations?

6. Conclusion

This paper discusses the ongoing changes in media system describing how new forms of communication and information on the Internet challenge journalism and especially media relations. A functional approach is presented that integrates traditional as well as participatory media into the concept of media relations. On the one hand, media relations in a classic sense remain focused on traditional journalism and its adaption to new principles and practices formed through the Internet. But their scope has widened: Media relations address public journalists, i.e., amateurs reporting according to journalistic standards, too.

On the other hand, there is a new form that could be named social media relations. They communicate with publics who arise in journalistic contexts like open journalism using elements of participatory media or in the social media sphere. Social media relations address individuals or groups communicating in and by digital networks. Similar to traditional media, they can provide an organization with attention, relevance, and credibility with their audiences. Additionally, they offer new opportunities for relationship management and dialogue through PR.

Addressing PR's need for credibility the two models of media relations can be described in more detail: While media relations profit from professional reporting according to journalistic standards, social media relations are based on the authenticity of content and communication context. Media relations address journalists in their professional role in order to reach media audiences. In social media relations, the ranking of those target groups is exactly the opposite: Social media relations directly address users of social networks in order to get the attention of journalists who research subjects in the social media sphere in a second step. While traditional media and their audiences can be identified easily, to identify and describe publics in the social media sphere is rather difficult. Additionally, it is difficult to identify key media who could generate relevance and credibility as digital audiences are mostly segmented.

To address a selected group of gatekeepers and opinion leaders as it is possible in traditional media, is a difficult task in the social media sphere. Another challenge is to change principles and practices of media relations themselves. Speaking with one voice has become difficult, and authorization of every statement is in times of social media almost impossible.

New forms of journalism and participatory media have broadened media relations' scope. To build relationships with professional journalists, public journalists, and users contributing in the social media sphere, media relations have to adapt.

Traditionally, media relations have addressed general, special interest, and specialized media. Nowadays, they face a wide variety of new publics with different stakes and interests in the organization. Figure 2 has shown that it is no longer the professional role that defines media relations. It is the function that a journalistic or journalistic-like public can provide for PR. The question, what's left of media relations in times of change has to be reformulated. It must be: What's possible now?

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9

Strategic Communication: A Planning Model Applied Across Four Cases

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ABSTRACT

Strategic communication is an evolving concept in academe and in militaries around the world. The purpose of this study was to develop and analyze strategic communication for Multi-National Forces Iraq, a United Nations military force of 40 countries that comprised Multi-National Forces Iraq (MNF-I) during the period of 2007 and 2008. This study is an extension of a study done for the U.S. Army War College in 2007 that developed a viable, qualitative measurement tool to assess the relationships with the media for U.S. Army public affairs.

Essentially this study was a multiple case study that included documents, participant observation, and direct observation in strategic communication planning. Four separate strategic communication plans were developed and partially implemented by public affairs staff for each of these commands. These staffs included personnel from Iraq, Morocco, Egypt, Australia, and England, and joint forces personnel from the U.S. Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marines. Development and implementation of these plans relied on current theory related to strategic communication in the military as well as the civilian academic field of public relations. Such theory included strategic communication and planning, leadership and negotiation, and evaluation (civilian and military) of the relationship strategies of trust and transparency (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000; Rawlins, 2007) to the appropriate elements of a strategic communication plan (Wilson & Ogden, 2008).

The study presented in this paper investigates the evolving field of strategic communication planning in the field of public relations as it applies to the U.S. military in Iraq and Kuwait and Afghanistan during the period of 2007–2008. Strategic communication is defined in the commercial or private sector for academia by Hallahan, Holthausen, Van Ruler, Vercic, & Sriramesh,. (2007) as “the purposeful use of communication by an organization to fulfill its mission” (p. 3). The terms commercial sector or private sector are used here because there is a difference between how strategic communication is defined for the private sector and for the military, or public, sector. A 16 March 2010 report to the U.S. Congress from President Obama stated, “Different uses of the term strategic communication have led to significant confusion . . .

By strategic communication(s) we refer to: (a) the synchronization of words and deeds and how they will be perceived by selected audiences, as well as (b) programs and activities deliberately aimed at communicating and engaging with intended audiences including those implemented by public affairs, public diplomacy, and information operations professionals.” This definition was created, in part, as a response to the February 2010 release of the Department of Defense’s (DoD) Quadrennial Defense Review Report that called for strengthening key support capabilities for strategic communication.

As part of the U.S. government’s integrated civilian-military efforts to interact effectively with a variety of audiences and stakeholders, DoD will continue to improve key capabilities that support strategic communication. . . . Effective strategic communication also requires the orchestration of multiple lines of operation. Chief among these are policy implementation, force employment, information operations, public affairs, civil affairs, and public diplomacy and engagement. . . . The President’s forthcoming report to Congress on U.S. government strategic communication will outline a common vision of interagency collaboration in this area and define the Administration’s position on this issue. (p. 26)

As this statement on strategic communication highlights, both the federal government and DoD view information operations, public affairs (relations), and public diplomacy differently but considers them all part of strategic communication (Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2006). Information operations includes information technology, cyber-warfare, and psychological operations. It could be compared to the two-way asymmetrical communication of Grunig and Hunt (1984). Public affairs is more the traditional public relations in the civilian world and could be compared to the public information and two-way symmetrical models of these authors. Public diplomacy also envelops those latter two models but is concerned primarily with the DoD/State Department confluence.

This paper integrates private and public sector definitions of strategic communications into a narrower, process model to help determine if strategic communication plans created by the military are accomplishing the objectives or affecting the audiences it is intended to reach.

Literature Review Strategic Communication and Planning

Searching for more applicable private sector definitions of strategic communication led to Argenti, Howell, and Beck (2005), who defined it “as communication aligned with the company’s overall strategy, to enhance its strategic positioning.” In 2006 Botan wrote about strategic communication and the differences among the terms grand strategy, strategy, and tactics. He defined strategic communication as planned communication campaigns that begin and end with publics (meaning research on those publics). He described grand strategy as strategy minus the tactics and grand strategy involving policy, alliances, values and goals. Strategy takes place at the planning level, the maneuvering of ideas, argument, and persuasion. He defined the tactical level as operational, the carrying out of the plan, the actual practices or products of communication. Botan also said that every tactical communication is judged on its content and the relationships surrounding that communication because the relationship of the parties involved in the communication is the basis for belief in that communication.

In military use, the term strategic usually refers to the highest levels of command and to large, overall military campaigns. The term operational refers to a specific military action to accomplish a specific objective, as in taking a city or piece of ground. The term tactic is usually the specific action or actions of smaller units in accomplishing the operational objective. Thus, the term strategic communication as used in the private sector is confusing for the military, as mentioned earlier, because the military differentiates between strategic communication and public affairs at the operational or publics’ level. Public affairs normally address civilian publics in the United States. Its mission is to educate and inform much like the public information model of Grunig and Hunt (1984). But strategic communication also includes information operations and psychological operations where the publics are opposition forces or people. The mission of these operations is to change behavior of opposition forces. In the traditional public relations sense in the academic or civilian world, communications planning or strategic communication is considered acting at all three of the military levels of strategic communication. Ideally, it would occur at the highest or leadership levels of an organization and be carried out at the lowest or tactical levels. It educates and informs publics but the most effective public relations changes behavior. Strategic communication sets measurable communication objectives and considers the long-term effects on key publics or strategic stakeholders while constantly scanning the organizational environment for issues that might affect the organization (Grunig & White, 1992).

In the seminal article on strategic communication in the inaugural issue of the International Journal of Strategic Communication in 2007, Hallahan et al. covered the origins of strategic communication from a number of fields. Strategic communication as defined by them fits more under the changing of behavior and psychological operations in the military. They addressed the term strategic as well citing its origins as coming from warfare, the art of war. Hallahan et al. also focus on the term communication and the process of communication that is the key ingredient for this study.

The authors define communication “as the constitutive activity of management” (p. 27). Under the article’s section on management, they write of the focus on rational decision-making using the SWOT Analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) as part of the process of goal setting, strategy formulation and implementation, and evaluation (Porter, 1985). They later cite Mintzberg (1990) about environmental scanning of stakeholders, issues management, and the integration of the communications functions. In 1994 Mintzberg defined strategy as a plan for a future course of action and then broadened that definition to include strategy as a pattern, or consistency in behavior over time. This consistency is usually a combination of deliberate and emergent strategies. Deliberate strategies are realized or fulfilled while emergent strategies are realized but not expressly intended. These emergent strategies include the influence of stakeholders incorporating the concept of relationships from Botan, 2006; Hallahan et. al.; Hon & Grunig, 1999; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000).

Steyn (2007) agreed with LTG Petraeus and accorded a higher role to strategic communication but does not equate communication management to strategic communication. In fact, she says that public relations assists an organization to adapt to its stakeholder environment by serving both the organization and the public interest. By acting socially responsibly and building the mutually beneficial relationships on which it depends to meet its objectives, an organization gains trust and builds a good reputation with its stakeholders. Steyn describes several functions of strategic communications but by operationalizing public relations strategy as deliberate, she combines several elements of planning. This is a process that, among other elements, emphasizes drawing a stakeholder map, thinking through the consequences of organizational goals on those stakeholders, and addressing those consequences by deciding what should be communicated (themes) and what should be achieved by this communication (setting deliberate objectives).

Leadership and Negotiation

Admiral James G. Stavridis (2007), spoke about strategic communication in the following terms: Effective communication requires leaders of an organization to take an early and persistent role in deciding how ideas and decisions are shaped and delivered. Certainly in the national security context, a leader can improve the effects of operational and policy planning by ensuring communications’ implications of that planning are considered as early as possible in the process. If planning is done in that fashion, then it is likely that the communications associated with it will indeed be strategic in its effects. (, p. 4)

This quote adds further to the planning and leadership aspects of strategic communication as well as negotiating how these ideas are shaped and delivered. Argenti (2005), Plowman (1995, 1998), and many others in the field of public relations have argued for public relations having

a seat at the management decision table so that the ideas discussed in the previous section of this paper have a better chance to make it in final strategic communication plans. As far as negotiating these types of ideas, Putnam (1994, 2004, 2009, 2010) argues for transformation of the process communication so that situations are seen in different ways, meaning for the purposes of this study, that strategic communication needs to resolve the real problems. There is not just conflict solution by conflict resolution, meaning that the problem remains permanently solved. Indeed, when Grunig (1989) defined symmetrical public relations further (research-based public relations that results in change by both the organization and its public), he said it meant “the use of bargaining, negotiating, and strategies of conflict resolution to bring about symbiotic changes in the ideas, attitudes, and behaviors of both the organization and its publics” (p. 29).

The study for this paper then would claim that strategic planning, leadership, and negotiation play strong roles in creating strategic plans, and that operationally, the management process of communication (Hallahan et al., 2007) leads to strategic communication plans that include action plans, goals, objectives stakeholders or key publics, communication tactics, and measurable outcomes or evaluation. Many textbooks in the public relations field have versions of such plans (e.g., Austin & Pinkleton, 2001; Broom & Dozier, 1990; Smith, 2005; Wilcox & Cameron, 2009; Wilson & Ogden, 2008).

Strategic communication in the private sector conveys deliberate messages through the most suitable media to designated stakeholders at the appropriate time to achieve the desired long-term effect. It is the process of creation to bring three factors in balance: the message, the communication channels, and the key publics (Boeckstette, 2008). In order to do this, strategic communication looks at the stakeholders who have consequences for the organization or environmental scanning; it considers the goals of the organization and its long-term effects. (Grunig and White, 1992; Wilson & Ogden, 2008). The specific campaign plan developed in this paper is based on the strategic communication and planning literature. It will use a strategic communication plan based on Wilson and Ogden’s (2008) work for basic structure and an operational definition of strategic communication developed by Plowman (2006) for the 96th Regional Readiness Command (USAR) while serving as the public affairs officer for that command. Plowman’s definition of strategic communication is as follows: “the management of communications between an organization and its key stakeholders on a long-term basis to meet measurable objectives in a realistic timeframe.” This definition, for purposes of this paper, is more bounded and operational, meaning evaluation is built-in to get at meaningful consequences or results.

In both academic and military definitions, note the similarities of terms, as in stakeholders, or target audiences. The author includes the term long-term (Wilson & Ogden, 2008) because it helps guarantee that stakeholders will remain loyal in a mutually beneficial, long-term relationship.

From the negotiation literature, that relationship is called principled negotiation or a win/win (Fisher, Ury, & Patton, 1994) and is also the symmetrical definition of from public relations (Grunig, 1989). The investigator's definition assumes that strategic communication is a communications plan that includes themes, messages, and products. It also includes objectives that are measurable so that they can be evaluated within a certain timeframe.

This literature review, then, resulted in the following strategic communication planning matrix, Figure 1.

Figure 1. Matrix model for a strategic communication campaign.

Publics/ Research	Goal	Measurable Objective	Communica- tion or Message	Communica- tion Tactics	Metric or Evaluation of Objective
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In a typical communications campaign, a benchmark of stakeholder perceptions and their expectations for the relationship of both parties must be established to be able to measure change in that relationship at a later point in time. Along with a stakeholder benchmark, a goal should be set to achieve that future change. To operationalize the goal or make it measurable, realistic, measurable objectives must be set that can be achieved within a reasonable amount of time in a strategic communication campaign. After a goal has been set, the self-interests of both the organization and its stakeholders should be determined so that they might be combined in short communication messages. These would include primary messages and then secondary messages that would include facts, quotes, and other substantiating information to support the primary message. These secondary messages are often called talking points. Specific communication products or tactics can then be determined to reach these publics through various communication channels. Finally, metric or evaluation criteria that restate the benchmark objectives can be used as post-test measures to assess the amount of change after the specified time period of the original objectives. A chart like Figure 1 would be created for each stakeholder. A scale of 1 to 10 could be used for many of these cells, with 10 being high. For example, it could measure the degree of mutual influence attached to stakeholder expectations or communication tactics.

This proposed strategic communications model, then acts as the research question for this particular study. Does the military in the case of the four strategic communication plans examined comply with the exemplar of a good plan? The method will critique that compliance. Also evaluated will be the leadership and negotiation factors involved in creating those plans.

Method

This method is a combination of multiple-case studies (Yin, 2009) and ethnographic methods that rely substantially on participant observation and direct observation. The author was a public affairs officer in the U.S. Army and served for a year in the military commands from which the case studies were drawn.

Case Studies

In 1989, Fortner and Christians described case studies as a favorite qualitative tool because they allow in-depth probing of a single phenomenon or situation. In 2009, Yin defined a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 13). Multiple case designs are almost always advisable because they allow for more confirmability (Yin).

Evidence collected in case studies typically comes from six sources. Evidence from four of these sources will be used in this study: documents (meeting notes, strategic communication plans, minutes, internal documents, and news clippings that help corroborate evidence from other primary sources); archival records (diaries, organizational charts, PowerPoint presentations, and so on); direct observation (site visits to observe environmental conditions and relevant behaviors); and participant observation (observer becomes active member of the organization when researcher wants to perceive reality as an insider, but subject to biases of involvement) (Yin, 2009).

One of the strengths of case studies arises out of a necessity to understand complex social phenomena. Stake (1994) said that case studies actually were not a methodological choice but a choice based on the object to be studied, the natural setting to be explored. This case study is explanatory, in that it is used to explain what happened in the four cases and how it applies to strategic communication, leadership, and negotiation. It is the preferred method when how or why questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on explaining a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context (Yin, 2009).

Another of the strengths of case studies is their use of triangulation. Triangulation refers to a process of gathering perceptions from multiple sources of data and then comparing the data to clarify meaning (Flick, 1992). Bias in this study was controlled for by triangulation. Triangulation of theory occurred in the literature review. Triangulation of patterns and themes occur using constant comparative analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1994) among the four sources of data.

Both strength and a weakness of case studies is generalizability. Case studies are generalizable to theoretical propositions but not to populations. Cases do not represent a scientific random sample where any part of a given population is likely to be chosen. The goal is to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) rather than generalize frequencies (statistical generalization) (Yin, 2009).

Sources of data. There were three organizations within the military involving four strategic communication plans. One was an army command with forward and rear headquarters in Kuwait and Atlanta, Georgia. Two were under the Communications Division of Strategic Effects for Multi-National Forces-Iraq, and the fourth was under Task Force 134, the command in charge of detainee operations in Iraq.

Results

The patterns and themes for this study were presumed to follow those outlined in Figure 1, the model of strategic communication developed for this study and leadership and negotiation. Differences will be noted in the discussion.

Kuwait

The first strategic communications plan was developed in Kuwait. A new commander was assigned just before Christmas. Most of the planning cell was at the rear headquarters in Georgia. The commander wanted to get his tenure underway as soon as possible so came to Kuwait while most of the information operations personnel were on leave for Christmas. Although a member of the public affairs section, the author was asked to begin an outline of a strategic communications plan since that was part of his civilian expertise. The commanding general himself approached this officer. The officer (the author) then worked with the information operations cell in Kuwait to develop the rudiments of a plan.

Four officers were interviewed by the author from public affairs, information operations and strategic effects. The commander's initial guidance was used as well as current lines of operation, meaning supporting functions at the base of operations in Atlanta connecting to the forward force in Kuwait and its mission, objectives, desired effects of the command, and the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan. The core problem was defined as strategic stakeholders not recognizing the command as a headquarters designated to fight a war when that may be its next mission. The goal derived from that problem was for strategic stakeholders to begin to recognize the command as a war-fighting headquarters. The measurable objectives for the strategic communication plan were to finish the

transformation of the command and rebalance its capabilities into war-fighting status within six months, and to improve its reputation to conduct joint and combined full-spectrum operations by 30% within six months. The strategic key stakeholders were leaders of the command; soldiers of the command; Central Command leadership (the unit's higher headquarters); joint staff, meaning the Navy, Marines, and Air Force; other commands' (meaning Iraq-based units) liaison officers; and the Secretary of the Army and the Chief of Staff of the Army.

The slogan accompanying strategic communication themes was, ". . . Always First in the Warfight!" The themes or messages for the transformation and rebalance objective were two: (1) We have transformed and are more than capable to be deployed anywhere in the world as a joint task force, and (2) We have the right elements forward, with control of the right support units to deploy from either the main headquarters in the United States or forward from Kuwait. The message for the improved reputation objective was as follows: We have the capability of conducting operations intelligence; maneuver, fires, and effects; operational protection, sustainment, command and control, and modular (a hybrid of these).

For evaluation, the desired end state or outcome was that the command improves the image of its capability to operate a war-fighting headquarters—transformed, rebalanced, and prepared for future operations. Tools used to measure that evaluation included conducting interviews with selected members from among the strategic key stakeholders to gauge the rate of change of their perceptions over the time period of the campaign; conducting a comparative analysis with and across those stakeholders groups to see if perceptions had changed; and working with the inspector general to conduct an internal command climate survey to determine the above as well. This author transferred to Iraq before these plans were completed. But, before that, happened, more officers from the strategic effects division were sent to Kuwait and the strategic effects cell started to develop its own version of the unit's strategic communications plan.

Research was conducted to develop the original communication's plan, but according the Figure 1, the model, no research was done to expand on the publics named as key stakeholders. Goals and measurable objectives with messages were developed in the original plan along with a metric to measure the end state or objectives. Tactics were not developed since this was a preliminary plan. And, of course, this plan should have followed the model more closely since both were developed by the investigator (author).

Strategic Effects—Iraq

Two plans were developed in Iraq: one in 2007 for the entire Strategic Effects Command. The Communications Division was subordinate to the Strategic Effects Command. The investigator was primarily a direct observer for the plan that was developed in 2007.

Consequently, another communications plan was developed in 2008 for the Government of Iraq (GoI) Outreach Office by the investigator as directed by the commander of the Communications Division.

Communications Division. The purpose of the GoI plan was for Iraqi and Pan-Arab media engagement and outreach and to measure the overall effectiveness of that outreach to that media. There was a research section in the Communications Division that provided research and analysis of localized media through surveys and focus groups of the Iraqi population. Under the situation section of the written communication plan research was conducted on the media relative to Iraqi security forces, economics, and Iraqi-Pan Arab media outlets. The final plan was eight single-spaced pages, so only relevant sections will be excerpted here. The current situation of the plan read:

Reaching populace in Arab Countries and affecting their opinions on the role of Coalition Forces in improving the security, infrastructure, general economic wherewithal, and quality of life in Iraq can be facilitated to a great degree through the Pan-Arab media. According to our cultural advisor and other well-informed sources, opinion leaders can be reached through various Pan-Arab media outlets. Those opinion leaders will, in turn, influence the populace. Those opinion leaders are tribal and religious sheiks, academics, and intellectuals. Most communication to the sheiks is by word-of-mouth through senior followers who use the media. Academics and intellectuals gain their information more directly from the media, but then all opinion leaders communicate directly to their followers or students.

The related difficulties to reaching these opinion leaders is through the distortion caused by the media channels, either through translations or innate bias (sectarian influences) of particular mediums, distrust of spokesperson with one another and by the populace.

The core problem and the accompanying goal were:

Not engaging Pan-Arab media and related target audiences effectively enough so that the Coalition Forces are perceived to be here to provide stability and assist the Iraqi people to re-build their country.

Desired strategic communication effects:

Goal: Increase Pan/Arab acceptance of our GOI Outreach messages as far as trust and transparency.

Objective 3: Increase relationship factor (e.g., bias factor) with Pan/Arab media by 20% in three months.

Note the use of the term strategic communication effects. As in the previous section, strategic communication is part of strategic effects and that is the umbrella term developed in the U.S. military for public affairs, information operations, psychological operations, civil affairs, and so on. Also, note the use of the terms trust and transparency. Those were the current terms in use to denote that MNF-I was in Iraq only to promote enough stability and security in the country to be able to withdraw, as was seen by the almost complete drawdown of troops in Iraq from a high of some 160,000 in 2006–7. Also included here are objective 3 of 4 objectives because we were attempting to measure the intangible relationship of trust and transparency with the Iraqi/Pan Arab media.

The ensuing key stakeholders or publics were actually called target audiences by the command, more of an advertising term, but these audiences included the Iraqi Pan/Arab media. They would normally be considered a communications channel for messages, but in this situation, they were considered a primary audience since the campaign was targeted at them.

There were two themes or messages, one being the trust issue and the other, transparency with seven secondary messages or talking points for the first, and five other secondary messages for the transparency message.

There was one strategy serving both objectives: Through a series of engagements with editors and reporters of Pan/Arab media, the Communication Division's commander and other GoI Outreach members as well as GoI representatives would work to convince them of the objectives above.

There were 11 tactics to accomplish the above strategy, and, to the investigator's knowledge, 10 of those were actually implemented.

An execution matrix or engagement plan was then developed as a checklist of who was responsible to carry out the tactics. That matrix began with the target audience, and then a principal or lead person was designated to accomplish the tactic. After that, the tactic was listed and then in the final box a timeline or deadline for execution of the task was listed.

Finally in the plan, evaluation objectives or metrics of assessment were determined for each original objective. For example, the earlier objective listed was, "Increase the relationship factor with Iraqi/Pan Arab media by 20% in three months." The research ister section was then to conduct a survey or focus groups with the Iraqi/Pan Arab media to measure any change in media bias. Questions were vetted for trust and transparency between our division and the Iraqi/Pan Arab media.

As far as analysis of this plan, there were no differences between the model in Figure 1 and this plan. The plan did, however, add background and a situation analysis as well as an execution matrix.

Strategic Effects. The purpose of this plan was to synchronize efforts of public affairs, information operations, public diplomacy, and engagements in the Joint Campaign Plan in support of the MNF-I commander's intent. It was also to synchronize subordinate public affairs and information operations engagement efforts with MNF-I. It was organized by purpose; then by strategic communication themes, objectives, plan structure, and then implementation of the plan. The themes were centered on security, economic development, political governance and service.

The objectives were to reinforce the legitimacy of the GoI; reinforce the perception of Iraqi Security Forces as the only legitimate military force in Iraq; disrupt illegitimate military forces in Iraq; disrupt non-diplomatic, non-economic influence by other nations in Iraq; and increase the support for the coalition force's mission in Iraq among the American people.

The strategic communication plan was further broken down into public affairs objectives, information operations objectives, and engagement objectives; then it was broken down again into tasks, themes, and messages for public affairs, information operations, and engagement.

To use or implement the plan, five steps were identified: the event; the targets or stakeholders; the tasks; the themes and messages; and then develop the synchronized plans for public affairs and information operations. For example, in identifying the targets or enemy stakeholders for Al Anbar targets, the plan named the Sunnis, Sunni insurgents, Al-Qaeda and Iraqi Shia insurgents, and Pan-Arabia countries.

The investigator could not break the tasks down for security reasons, but the tasks for public affairs were to inform, while tasks for information operations were to influence and disrupt. And, then desired end states were listed for each of the tasks.

Themes and messages were separated out, with themes being broader, and messages were in support of the themes. These themes were also put in a number of matrices. One matrix was the major strategic communication themes compared against the final strategic effects or outcomes. Again, the themes were security, economic development, political governance and services. For example, the strategic effect of a representative government that promotes national unity was paired with the themes of political governance and services. Strategic communication themes were also put in a matrix with strategic communication objectives. All four themes applied to the

objectives of reinforcing the legitimacy of the GoI, disrupting illegitimate military forces in Iraq, and increasing support for the coalition's mission in Iraq among the American people.

The difference between this plan and Figure 1 was more extensive, because it separated out public affairs and information operations, providing information versus changing behavior. Publics were researched. There was no overall goal although objectives were delineated. These objectives were not measurable, however. But the objectives were quite detailed down to the public affairs, information operations, and engagement levels. Tasks were listed in conjunction with extensive themes and messages. The themes corresponded to primary messages in the private sector while the messages were normally considered secondary messages in support of the theme or primary message. Specific tasks were listed that could equate with communication tactics. Three separate subordinate plans were developed in support of the overall strategic communications plan because of the high command level for Iraq and the separation by military doctrine between public affairs and information operations. So, one purpose of this plan is for close coordination between the two. The situation of multiple plans made such plans even more complicated, however.

Detainee Operations. With three months left in his tour, the investigator was transferred to Detainee Operations to assist the public affairs section because of the importance of this command, being the successor to those units that were responsible for the Abu Ghraib detainee abuses. The strategic communications plan had been completed, but a new commander took over a week after the investigator's arrival so an evolution of the plan was necessary to comply with the new commander's intent.

The initial plan was published in early 2008 and revisions began later that year. This plan had an overview and purpose, the purpose being to demonstrate to the citizens of Iraq and the great Muslim Umma (the Islamic community) that MNF-I was dedicated to establishing an alliance with moderate Muslims and empowering them to marginalize violent extremists. It also included the key elements of a mission statement of core values and principles that included the rule of law, security, care and custody, education, engagement, dignity, cultural relativism, and transparency.

The next section was on targeting and used the term key audiences instead of key publics or target audiences as is more typical in public relations. Those key audiences included the military members of the command; internees and their families; tribal chiefs and Sheiks; the Iraqi people and their leaders; the Middle Eastern Islamic Community; coalition nations, United Nations partners, and non-governmental organizations; and communities the military belonged to in the United States plus U.S. national decision makers.

After this section the plan included Target Areas of Influence, or “targeting modes that include traditional news media and interpersonal transactions that encourage supportive behavior. Target Areas of Influence was the term used for influential or intervening publics in private sector literature. Those target areas were command leadership, Iraqi news media, Pan Arab or Middle Eastern news media, Arab religious and academic influencers, senior coalition and United Nations and non-governmental leaders, and Western news media.

At the end of the plan was a statement that detailed communication campaigns to address specific key audiences that would be reached with themes relative to each target to achieve objectives. There also followed from the preceding sentence two matrices that lined up the operating principles above as communication themes in relation to the key audiences.

Under this same succeeding commander, while the investigator was part of the operation, these key audiences were refined to include coalition leadership; Gol; the U.S. Congress; general Western, Iraqi, and Pan/Arab peoples; detainees and detainee families; NGOs/UN/International Red Cross; and service members and service member families. Multiple desired effects were then developed for each of these audiences. For example, for Gol, the desired effects were for Gol to (1) support and fund selected detainee operations programs, and (2) assume administration and control of detainee operations programs.

Several engagement tactics were then listed. For the Gol those tactics included briefings and facility/program tours. The target nodes included for Gol tactics the U.S. Congress, MNF-I leadership, and the Western/Pan Arab/Iraqi media.

Comparing this plan to Figure 1, then, research was conducted on publics, there were no goals but there were many non-measurable objectives. The term used in the command was desired effect. Themes were drawn from the extensive operating principles. In fact, the overview, purpose and principles could all be considered part of the background, the more common term that the public relations field is familiar with. Engagement tactics was the term used for communication tactics, and the term end state was used and developed later to mean “evaluation of objectives.”

Leadership and Negotiation

Leadership and negotiation issues were evident throughout the development of each of these plans. All the plans were developed by officers at the major and lieutenant colonel levels, and then the chain of command was followed upward in group and individual meetings through the colonels who headed major sections, and then on to the decision-makers, the generals in command.

Leadership was appreciative of initiative to develop such plans, although the doctrinal confluence for public affairs and information operations within strategic communications was being developed at the same time. Decisions were being made based on the current situation for operations. So, there were jurisdictional issues that arose as to who was in charge of what; the lack of background on the part of many officers, especially up the chain of command for strategic communications; and even personality conflicts that arose as a result of the leadership styles of some senior officers. Two of the generals involved exhibited strong authoritarian personalities, leading by fear more than by skill or example. This type of personality was not very open to the influence of public affairs in general. Others were new to their positions or were put in their positions from other specialty fields of the military without any background in communications. In Kuwait, one general considered public affairs as providing information only without any analysis even though public officers often had news information before the intelligence cell. In Iraq, so many qualified personnel already had served previous to 2007 so there were a number of untrained officers in place. The personality of one officer was so acerbic that few personnel could work with him. Detainee operations was interesting because the leadership styles of the two commanders were almost polar opposites. One commander used public affairs to its utmost capacity, believing that winning meant winning in the public arena and with the media. But, this attitude occurred when problems with detainee operations were at their highest. As internal changes were made to better manage the detainee population, the ensuing commander, who avoided the media spotlight, was tasked with toning down the public profile of Detainee Operations by the commanding general in Iraq.

Conclusion

This study attempted to establish a model of strategic communication planning that would cover all sectors of society, meaning the private or commercial sector as well as the non-profit, governmental, or military sectors. That model was refined into Figure 1 based on the literature in strategic communication and strategic planning. The literature on leadership and negotiation was reviewed as well because those issues were strongly observed as affecting the resulting strategic communication plans. The model was generic enough that the four cases fit, for the most part, within it.

Terminology was the reason for large difference among the plans. The plans were different among the plans and different from private sector terminology. Much of the military terminology is based on terms of art already in use by the military, such as strategic, operational and tactical, engagement, end state, and desired effects, among others. But according to the counterinsurgency manual, the new counterinsurgency situations and the operating pace in Iraq and Afghanistan was outstripping existing doctrine, so that doctrine and current practices are being developed at the same time (Counterinsurgency Manual, 2007).

For the first cell in the model, research was done on key publics in three of the four strategic communication plans. One plan even included the equivalent of intervening publics or influentials that could influence the primary publics. In addition, background was covered in two of the plans and situation analysis was covered in one. As part of research, one plan specifically named a core problem but two others discussed this term as the purpose. Two of the plans listed goals, and they all listed objectives, although in two of them the objectives were not measurable. End states, strategic effects, desired effects, and evaluation were all included, however, to gauge the result of the campaigns. Themes, messages, and tactics were listed in all of the plans. Two of the plans listed secondary messages or talking points in military parlance. Although the term talking points is also predominant in many private sector plans, Wilson and Ogden (2008) refer to these talking points as secondary messages. Tasks was the term used in one plan to refer to communication tactics. Several of the plans had versions of what was often called the execution matrix. The private sector could learn from this. Wilson and Ogden use what they call a communication confirmation table, but the table does not designate the point of contact or person responsible for seeing the tactic is carried out as does the execution matrix. Most of the military matrices included objectives or desired effects and the end state or evaluation metric of the objectives.

The investigator was surprised and pleased that the Communication Division of MNF-I had a Media Analysis and Assessment Section to conduct both quantitative and qualitative primary research. Previous leadership had the knowledge and negotiating power to institute research section.

Negotiating in the changing combat environment was a challenge, especially when the majority of the negotiation was from subordinate to superior in the military. Despite these challenges in leadership and negotiation, however, it was the investigator's opinion that doctrine and practice in strategic communication was changing incrementally as the operations moved forward. Another facet of strategic communication was also evident—namely, institutionalization of the practice across changing personnel in organizations. The military is especially susceptible to the difficulty of sustaining institutionalization of the function because personnel had relatively short periods of residence before transferring to another unit. In Iraq and Kuwait tours of duty were even shorter, ranging from three months to a year for the most part. In a yearlong deployment, for example, the investigator served six months in Kuwait, three months with the Communications Division, and spent the final three months with Detainee Operations.

Limitations

This study was limited because of the mandatory location of the investigator by the U.S. Army, but that this was also a strength for the study because he was exposed to strategic communication in multiple situations and locations. The study also was limited by the military rank of the investigator

and access, although good, was limited by his position within the organizational structures. The study also was limited by the short time periods involved.

Future Research

This study was obviously a snapshot in time and place that cannot be reproduced so future research could focus on cases in the private or public sectors that occur in a more regular manner. Research also needs to continue in the evolving field of strategic communication in both private and public sectors for both the United States and internationally. Excellent results of such research could arrive at a common definitions and functions of strategic communication across all of these sectors.

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Communication challenges in virtual communities viewed through the lenses of dialogue, learning and technology

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ABSTRACT

This paper outlines characteristics and challenges of communication in virtual communities. Hence, it addresses the relevance of the BledCom 2004 theme: New concepts and technologies for public relations, public affairs and corporate communication. In particular, the paper focuses on virtual communities of practise, characterised by interaction that is mainly for the participants' own interests, and for collective learning. The paper identifies challenges of communication in these contexts through the lenses of dialogue, learning, and communication technologies. The paper emphasises the crucial role of dialogic, even emergent communication for the processes of learning and innovation. Successful discussion threads have an inspiring opening initiative and questions that are presented have a vital role in the way in which a conversation proceeds. Based on the results of a pilot study that was conducted, the paper argues that the seeds of innovation are produced in virtual communities through free flow of ideas, and their refinement to change and renewal, even innovations, takes time. Moreover, it cautiously claims that the quality of relationships, trust and engagement, advance the process of innovation.

Keywords: CMC (computer-mediated communication), corporate communication, innovation, learning, virtual communities

We started our study of virtual communities in 2011 when a comprehensive research project, named Innovation Practice, was initiated by the Department of Business at the University of Eastern Finland. Our multidisciplinary project aimed to answer the following research question: How are the seeds of innovation generated in virtual communities of practice (VCoPs), currently used by education and business professionals? Our study focused on Finnish and global virtual communities where professionals exchange development ideas in the field of their interest. More specifically, the communities of our study are the Finnish group, Social media in teaching and learning (Sometu) and the global LinkedIn group, Higher Education Teaching and Learning (HETL). In 2012, we conducted a pilot study with the Sometu web discussion threads, to see how these seeds of innovation develop in and through web-based discussions. In this paper, we focus on the role of communication and dialogue in these processes.

It is widely accepted that virtual environments allow employees to develop their skills, communication and networking abilities (e.g., Issa & Kommers, 2013). Virtual communities have been studied from different viewpoints over the past ten years. These viewpoints include community building (Gunawardena et al., 2009), knowledge creation and sharing (Kosonen, 2009; Lämsä, 2008; Zakaria et al., 2004), motivation to participate (Baytieh & Pfaffman, 2010), the role of trust (Birchall & Giambona, 2008) and learning (Franceschi et al., 2009; Johnson & Levine, 2008; Manninen et al., 2007; Oliver & Carr, 2009; Passiante & Andriani, 2000). Nevertheless, there seems to be a gap in research that combines theories of learning, communication and innovation in an effort to understand how professionals generate innovations in virtual communities, and how the emergence of these communities changes work and organisations.

The purpose of this paper was to examine the forms and roles of dialogue in virtual communities, because communication, or dialogue, is a prerequisite of all learning, and thus quite essential. The social constructivist view considers learning a "conversation", meaning that learning is connected to the interaction between learners, and between learners and teachers. Moreover, technology adds a new dimension to learning. Computer-mediated communication provides real opportunities for conversation and, therefore, enables the development of metacognitive, problem-solving and critical-thinking skills (Romizowski & Mason, 1996).

Based on the results of our pilot study, we argue that: the more emergent dialogue is fostered and encouraged in discussion threads, the more they contribute to the development of new ideas and even innovations among the participants and their organisations.

Theoretical Framework

Virtual Communities

Virtual communities are internet-based communication forums or social networks, where interaction is based on computer-mediated communication (CMC; see Lakkala, 2010; Manninen & Nevgi, 2000; Romizowski & Mason, 1996). The members share an interest in a certain topic and interact within certain boundaries (Kosonen, 2009). Common examples of virtual communities are discussion forums, group work templates and learning platforms (Marchi & Ciceri, 2011; Zakaria, Amelinckx & Wilemon, 2004). In this study, we use the term virtual communities of practice (VCoPs) to describe internet forums, where participants engage themselves into deep interaction and collaborative learning on a voluntary basis, fulfilling, therefore, the definition of 'community of practice' (Wenger, 2003).

Virtual environments are increasingly important for the learning, innovation and the productivity of organisations. Emerging literature on virtual environments identified both benefits and problems with this scenario. Benefits include, for example, possibilities for organisations to share resources and to develop new solutions for emerging challenges. Virtual environments can create opportunities on a scale that no single member can achieve independently. The tension generated among diverse, geographically dispersed groups can be an important source of creativity and innovation (Ilon, 2011). Advantages of virtual environments include the agility of a small company, resources of a large company, concentration on partners' core competencies and the ability to globalise (Lin & Lin, 2001).

Scholars have also pointed out that there are some challenges associated with virtual communities. Bosch-Sijtsema and Sorge (2003) found questions of expectations and trust to be problematic. According to Ilon (2011), virtual communities are often hampered by problems of communication, conflict and productivity. Hay (2008) emphasised that virtual environments tend to perpetuate geographies of oppression, for example, through the predominance of the English language and reliance on technologies that favour wealthy nations and institutions. Wenger, Trayner and De Laat (2011) noted that communities sometimes become closed, inward-focussed and blind to new possibilities. Issa and Kommers (2013) discussed the risks of virtual environments, including questions of privacy, security, workload and reputation.

Dialogue, Learning and Technology

In this paper we examine virtual communities through the lenses of dialogue, learning, and technology. We consider these three elements inseparable and intertwined in the context of professional virtual communities.

The lens of technology involves technological solutions utilised to form a specific virtual community. Technology enables these communities and is a means to an end, not an end in itself. Our study focused on computer-mediated communication (CMC). Delayed communication is known to facilitate thinking and reflection (Manninen & Nevgi, 2000). Moreover, virtual communities can improve learning dynamics and a sense of belonging (Annese & Traetta, 2012). On the other hand, lack of face-to-face cues may eliminate interpersonal affections like warmth and attentiveness (Bosch-Sijtsema & Sorge, 2003).

The lens of learning is essential for our context because interaction and collaborative learning characterise virtual communities of practice (Wenger, 2003). In line with social constructivism, we acknowledge the significance of social interaction in all learning and we consider learning as a collective and participatory social process (Cole & Engeström, 1993). Learning is also related to the quality of relationships. Online learning ability can be promoted by, for example, a positive climate of trust and commitment (Lin, Chiu, Joe & Tsai, 2010).

The lens of dialogue is the main focus of this paper. Different communication strategies found are, for example, information, persuasion, consensus-building, and dialogue (Kantanen, 2008; van Ruler, 2004). Information strategy refers to a one-way, monovocal, systematic information delivery. Persuasion strategy implies propaganda and advertising, or presenting a corporate point of view to the others in a favourable way. Consensus-building implies that convergent dialogue is about building bridges and finding common ground. Dialogic communication refers to two-way, multivocal communication, where all ideas are valued and communication is not just a tool to reach goals, but it is also a means of producing new realities. (Kantanen, 2008; van Ruler, 2004.) Convergent dialogue is designed to solve a particular problem or to create a desired consensus, while emergent dialogue generates the unexpected. In emergent dialogue, "ideas conflict, clash, and combine until something new appears" (Hammond, Anderson & Cissna, 2003, p. 146). Emergent dialogue challenges the parties that are involved through participation and empowerment. Elements of emergent dialogue are, for example, immediacy of presence, recognition of diversity, collaborative orientation, vulnerability, free flow of ideas and mutual astonishment (Hammond et al., 2003). We argue that: the more emergent dialogue is fostered and encouraged in discussion threads, the more they contribute to the development of new ideas and even innovations among the participants.

In this study, we examine virtual communities through the three lenses presented above and described in Figure 1.

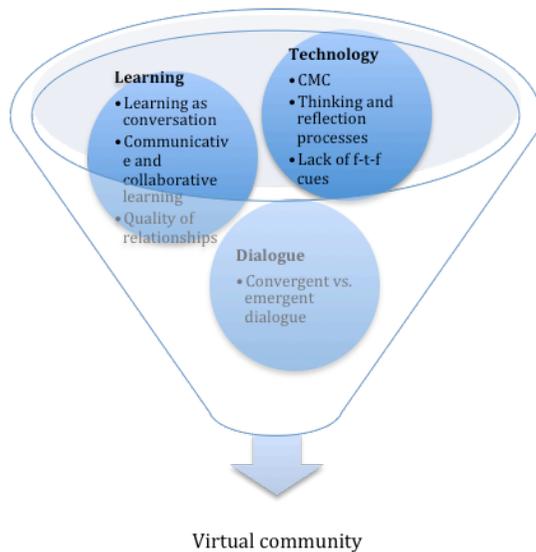


Fig. 1. Theoretical framework of the study

Methodology and Approach

Our first data were collected from a Finnish web-based community, named Social media in teaching and learning (Sometu). This community has 4541 members (September 2012) and it is a professional network where people participate by giving their own names, photos and titles. The majority of the community participants are employed at different educational institutions or in education administration, but private entrepreneurs and business consultants are also involved. The forum administrator accepted our request to use the discussions from the forum for our research purposes, and we agreed to share our conclusions with the forum participants. We first selected all discussions that had at least ten replies to ensure that there was adequate content for analysis. Secondly, we read all these discussion threads to determine whether dialogue was present. Simple question-answer-type threads were excluded. We also considered the number of participants in the discussion, because we wanted more than just two or three discussants to be involved in the threads chosen for analysis. After completing these steps, we had 500 pages of textual data and 35 discussions, of which three were selected for deeper analysis (see Table 1).

Table 1. Discussion threads analysed in the pilot study

Discussion threads and their topics	Time period	Number of participants	Number of messages
Discussion 1: How does a net conversation take off? (D1)	March 2, 2010 to Sept 4, 2010	14	42
Discussion 2: Twitter riot at HighEdWeb conference (D2)	Oct 10, 2009 to Nov 29, 2009	20	93
Discussion 3: Information society capabilities (D3)	April 3, 2009 to April 19, 2009	24	103

Each member of our team conducted the first qualitative content analysis of one discussion thread (D1, D2 or D3), to explore the potential themes. The following example, from the data, is the opening input for Discussion thread D2 “The twitter riot”. The opening input of D2 concerns a situation where, unbeknownst to him, a keynote speaker at a conference receives extremely critical feedback via Twitter:

The rebellion of conference participants against a ‘poor’ keynote presentation became like a trend theme in Twitter during the HighEdWeb conference. Jeremiah Oywang reported this in his Web Strategist blog. During the presentation it started to pour comments [in Twitter] on contents, old slides, too loud music... those who were present at the conference told that the comments described the situation. [...] During the one-hour presentation the speaker himself had no idea what was going on in the background, he was not a Twitter user himself...

The first analysis revealed themes like “question”, “information and idea sharing” and “theme and goal definition”. We discussed the preliminary themes and we found and developed a common list of themes for our second analysis. A total of 15 themes were finally defined. Each member re-analysed the data using the common list of themes.

The third round of our analysis was a theory driven content analysis. We utilised the practice-theoretical approach to classify the 15 themes, using the five cycles of value creation presented by Wenger et al. (Wenger, 2003; Wenger, Trayner & de Laat, 2011). This specific model was chosen because we argue that value creation and participation in web-based communities are closely intertwined. If individuals do not get value, they will not participate (Wenger, Trayner & De Laat,

2011, 15). We presumed that these five cycles should be found in our data if the virtual community and discussions produced seeds of innovation. The cycles of value creation (Wenger, Trayner & de Laat, 2011, 19–21) are as follows:

1. Immediate value: activities and interactions (e.g. helping a member with a difficult case, a tip provided by a colleague, a story about something that went wrong)
2. Potential value: knowledge capital (personal assets: human capital; relationships and connections: social capital; resources: tangible capital; collective intangible assets: reputational capital; transformed ability to learn: learning capital)
3. Applied value: changes in practice
4. Realised value: performance improvement
5. Reframing value: redefining success

Finally, we quantified our qualitative results by calculating the frequencies of each theme in each discussion thread.

Table 2 shows how we conducted the content analysis. In this study, cycle 1 is particularly interesting because the opening initiative largely predicts how the conversation proceeds. Cycle 2 is interesting from the point of view of relationships and reflection. Cycles 3, 4 and 5 are not discussed in this paper in detail, but they are important from the point of view of innovation development.

Table 2. Common themes emerging from the discussion threads

Cycle (Wenger et al.)	Themes	Examples from discussion thread Twitter riot at HighEdWeb conference (case D2)
Cycle 1: Immediate value - activities and interactions	Theme and goal definition	The rebellion of conference participants against a ‘poor’ keynote presentation became like a trend theme in Twitter during the HighEdWeb conference.
	Information and idea sharing	Jeremiah Oywang reported this in his Web Strategist blog.
	Question	What should we do in the future, how can we take into account the real-time feedback and visibility enabled by social media?
	Experience sharing	During the last keynote presentation given by PH, there were quite negative comments on Twitter.
	Opinion	[The] humiliation of others and maybe sometimes unfair mocking of people’s ‘deficiencies’ is something that I just don’t understand
	Apology	I am sorry if my writing hurts [others].
	Criticism	The majority of new social media gurus circulate their PowerPoint slides, and the content of the slides does not seem to have reached the brain of the speaker. However, they are admired because of their colourful pictures and their lists of fancy new tricks.
	Analysis of the phenomenon	Twitter will certainly change the positions of power between the speaker and the audience. Earlier, you could walk out of the room and criticise the presentation to the others face-to-face. Now, the feedback is real-time and can possibly be spread to quite a large audience through social media. At its best, the speaker can utilise the feedback, for example, move on to more interesting topics or pick questions out of the feed. The nightmare is to see more harassment and disturbance, which can be quite distressing for the presenter.
	Deepening the problem	My point is that we should be able to communicate in a straight, respectful but critical and transparent and timely way, whether the medium is face-to-face or web-based.

Cycle (Wenger et al.)	Themes	Examples from discussion thread Twitter riot at HighEdWeb conference (case D2)
Cycle 2: Potential value - knowledge capital	Reflection	I was just on a business trip, and we discussed the theme from the point of view of learning. We talked about the phenomenon itself, direct commenting, and on the other hand the possibility given by this forum to examine the topic, to ponder and to learn.
	Insight	Does the strong visuality (and speed) of social media imply that the ability to listen (to take another person's position and try to understand it) and to hear meanings is weakened and interaction is transferred to tweet feeds?
	Information and idea reception	Pekka, you once again targeted the heart of the matter. Thank you for this pearl of thought!
Cycle 3: Applied value - (potential) changes in practice	Information and idea implementation	I tried to make the decision makers of my workplace ... understand that we must take into account that our events are commented on all over the world online. Maybe we should have our own commentators or at least someone to follow the discussion.
Cycle 4: Realised value - performance improvement	Performance improvement	Content and relevance first, not just the name of the speaker. And the speakers should be briefed quite carefully about the time they have, about the technology, and naturally about the demographics, capabilities and interest level of the audience.
Cycle 5: Reframing value - redefining	Redefinition	The performer and the audience are on the same side, not enemies; the teacher loves his/her students and is not afraid of them or their feedback. All feedback is valued, and it is given in all teaching situations, at all times and directly.

Findings

Some of the themes appeared in all three of the discussion threads. The themes of the first cycle of value creation (activities and interactions), common to all discussions, were “theme and goal definition”, “information and idea sharing”, “question”, “experience sharing”, “opinion”, “deepening the problem”, and “analysis of the phenomenon”. The themes of the second cycle (knowledge capital), also common to all discussions, were “information and idea reception”, “reflection”, and “insight”.

In all cases, the discussion themes concentrated mainly within cycle 1, including experience and information sharing and analysis of the phenomenon. This is understandable, because this cycle can be defined as a type of brainstorming and learning period, where the common theme is defined, questions are asked, information and ideas are shared, and the problem is discussed in detail.

The emphasis in discussion threads 1 and 3 was on experience sharing and on information and idea sharing, while the emphasis in discussion thread 2 was on the analysis of the phenomenon. This was due to the nature of the opening initiative. In discussion thread 2, the frequency of questions was very high, and those questions advanced the conversation remarkably. The emphasis of all discussions was clearly on cycle 1 (activities and interactions) and cycle 2 (knowledge capital).

In our data, discussion thread 2 was the only thread where cycles 4 (performance improvement) and 5 (redefinition of success) were found. Why would this be special? We argue that successful discussion threads, that could produce seeds of innovation, have some common features. For the first, the opening initiative should stimulate discussion. The theme proposed must be topical and it should draw attention. For this, Twitter as a conference backchannel, was an interesting theme for the participants. From our other focus forum, HETL, we know that an opening initiative “do you accept your students’ invitations to connect on Facebook and other social networks?” received 508 replies and the discussion continued for more than seven months. The use of social media tools in different contexts is still a topic that encourages active exchange of ideas and opinions. Moreover, the content of both of these examples is related to the social media etiquette: what is appropriate and what is not.

For the second, the first cycle of conversation has some specific characteristics. Questions facilitate the conversation in a remarkable way. They give space to multivocality and mutual astonishment (Hammond et al., 2003). Once again, it seems to be more important to ask all kinds of questions than to provide exhaustive answers. For the third, both time and active participation are needed. In our example case, almost all of the 20 participants were very active, first defining and analysing the problem together, and then, suggesting their solutions. The conclusions did not develop overnight but through a complicated and mutual process of asking, answering, listening and sharing that took several weeks.

Discussion and Conclusion

This paper examined the challenges of virtual communities through the lenses of technology, learning, and dialogue. The main focus was on dialogue, while technology provided the tools for this particular form of dialogue and facilitated thinking and reflection, as well as learning dynamics and sense of belonging. Learning is typical of virtual communities of practice and, as learning is a collective and participatory process, the quality of interaction and relationships is very important. The paper emphasised the crucial role of dialogic, even emergent communication for the processes of learning and innovation in virtual communities. Based on results of a pilot study that was conducted, the paper argues that seeds of innovation are produced in virtual communities through free flow of ideas, and their refinement to change and renewal, even innovations, takes time. Naturally, also more conventional forms of dialogue, like solving a particular problem together, can contribute to renewals. In this small study, however, the mutual astonishment stage was found to be important to produce change.

Although our dataset is rather small, it provides some guidelines for future research. Our next step is to expand our data with a wider variety of methods and focus more on how the questions of social media use, are discussed in virtual communities. We wish to learn more of how the strategies of information, persuasion, consensus building and dialogue (Van Ruler, 2004) are applied in virtual forums. We also know that the quality of relationships, trust and engagement advance learning and the process of innovation. At this stage we are cautious when stating that our focus community generates trust (Bosch-Sijtsema & Sorge, 2003; Ilon, 2011) and a sense of community (Wenger, 2003) but we wish to produce further results within a few months. It is also important to notice that one challenge of virtual communities is that the participants may not know one another and, therefore, it will be interesting to study how this barrier can be dealt with. Kent and Taylor (1998) presented five principles for building dialogic relationships on the internet: dialogic loop where response is valued, usefulness of information, generation of return visits with dynamic and attractive content, intuitiveness or ease of the interface, and the importance of keeping visitors on the site. Their analysis focused on web pages, but it is astonishing how well these ideas are in line with the social media use of today. Appreciate responses. Provide useful initiatives. Generate attractive content. Make the platform easy to use. Keep in touch. From the practitioners' point of view we know that online communities are among the most important social media tools in public relations today (Verhoeven et al. 2012). Opportunities for dialogue are numerous and, therefore, it is necessary to also develop our knowledge of the characteristics and challenges of virtual communities.

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▶ 11

The faculty goes social

Universities and social media in france:

The case of “UB-link”

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INTRODUCTION

The biggest evolution in PR over the last couple of decades has undoubtedly been the rise of digital. If the 1996 BledCom symposium effectively “[t]ook public relations into the electronic age”, the (r)evolution has been ongoing across different sectors, has included several distinguishable stages, and has irreversibly changed the face of public relations, nearly twenty years on. From electronic marketing to websites, to social media and collaborative content production, digital seems to have progressively become a more-or-less central element in almost every PR strategy, in the US (Wright & Hinson, 2008) and in Europe (Verhoeven, Tench, Zerfass, Moreno, & Verčič, 2012).

Although they are not often reputed for their cutting-edge PR, public universities in France are no exception to this general trend. Academics themselves often make extensive use of technology and software, in the form of research and even e-learning tools (Moran, Seaman, & Tinti-Kane, 2011), yet many universities in France have paradoxically been slow to modernize their internal and external PR (Nétange, 2011), notably in relation to their English-speaking counterparts (Barnes & Lescault, 2011; Davis III, Deil-Amen, Rios-Aguilar, & Gonzalez Canche, 2012; Linvill, McGee, & Hicks, 2012). Indeed, PR is frequently underfunded and understaffed in French public universities (Dupont & Desgabriel 2005), traditionally a low priority in a context where competition between public universities, both nationally and internationally, has only very recently become an issue.

In this context, the University of Burgundy (Dijon, France) has become the first French public university to develop its own private social network online. The social platform named “uB-link” was developed and launched in 2011, in a bid to foster links between alumni and current students, and to build an alumni network which would be an asset both for the university and for its alumni. The platform was awarded first prize in the digital communication category by the Higher Education Communication Professionals’ Association (ARCES), in 2012 (<www.arces.com>).

A research project was also set up in 2011, to study and evaluate the effectiveness of the social platform. Financed in part by the Burgundy Regional Council, the research project is due to run over six years, studying three six-month datasets at 2-year intervals, and examining: (a) the cultural dynamics emerging in the various online groups, (b) the impact of online exchanges with alumni on student discourse and use of professional language in interactions, and (c) emerging social practices and uses of the platform.

One year after its launch, the social network has already evolved considerably, and various user practices can be observed. This paper presents the results of a preliminary study focusing on the first six months of activity on the platform (dataset 1, 9th December 2011 - 9th June 2012). Based on the practices observed, internal working documents and interviews conducted with the head of the uB-link project, the university’s community manager and PR director, it discusses how uB-link fits in to the University of Burgundy’s (digital) PR strategy, and the extent to which the emerging practices among users appear to correspond to the initial goals set out for the platform. Finally, it identifies key issues with which the platform is faced, suggesting ways in which they might be handled and outlining a set of good practices for anyone seeking to set up similar private alumni networks.

1. Use of social networks for pr by higher education establishments in france

On 17th January 2013, a “spotted” page was created on Facebook, dedicated to the University of Burgundy: <<http://www.facebook.com/SpottedUniversiteDeBourgogne>>. This page allows students to post anonymous messages, often in rhyme, in which they express their attraction to another student, also described anonymously, who they happened to encounter in a certain place (generally on campus) at a given time, in the hope that the student will recognise him/herself, feel the same way, and react to the message. Less than three months after its creation, on 15th April 2013, the page had received 5199 “likes” on Facebook. On the same date, the university’s official Facebook page displayed a mere 4170 “likes”. What does this suggest about the place of social media in higher education institutions’ PR strategies? How can universities harness these tools to communicate effectively with their students?

Although Mark Zuckerberg and associates started “The Facebook”, in 2004, as a social network aimed at university students, from an institutional point of view, universities, notably in France, have been relatively slow to harness the potential of Facebook and other social networks as PR tools aimed at students, potential students, and other stakeholders. Indeed, the first groups affiliated with French-speaking universities were created by students themselves, and, despite a few pioneering attempts from university PR professionals, it was not until “pages” were introduced in 2008 that the groundwork was laid for universities to begin to establish a solid institutional presence.

In February 2009, six French universities had a Facebook page (source : Com'Campus), with an average of 474 fans. In April 2013, the communication agency Campus Communication lists 70 French Higher Education Establishments (HEEs) with official Facebook pages, and a total just over 340 000 fans, a figure which has increased by 51% in twelve months (Source : Campus Communication). Compared to English-speaking universities, this figure is very small, since the University of Oxford, for example, had a total of over 998 000 "Likes" on its homepage in the same month (15th April 2013): almost three times the total of all French HEEs combined.

Adoption of Twitter by French universities progressed in a more-or-less contemporaneous manner to the development of Facebook pages. The Universities of Nantes and Limoges were the first to set up official accounts in January and December 2008 respectively, before many others in 2009 and 2010 (source: Pegasus Data Project, 2012). In October 2012, the Pegasus Project lists 72 French HEEs with official Twitter accounts, with up to 4663 followers for the pioneering University of Nantes.

Public universities in France are often presented, rightly or wrongly, as the poor relations of their private (often Catholic) counterparts, of commercially-run business schools and of the elitist grandes écoles. Questions of funding are central to this issue, but also the relative size and (until recently) the centralised management system of universities, as well as the professional status and ideals of a majority of academics who work in them. As a result, public universities in France as a whole have often been relatively slow to accept and adapt to a market-driven higher education economy (Beaud, Caillé, Encrenaz, Gauchet, & Vatin, 2010). In this context, PR and communication have not always been universally recognised as key priorities in a public service culture where funding was already stretched. While academic reputation was traditionally established by peer reviewing, the reputation of teaching and courses was often seen as being of secondary importance, since students generally attended their local university, with little notion of hierarchy or classification between institutions.

However, the massive yet progressive adoption of social media by university PR teams in 2009-2010 coincided with a series of major reforms aiming at liberalising the French higher education system, which had progressively been put in place from 2006 onwards (Pallez, Fixari, & Lefebvre, 2011). In a newly competitive context, PR was a way to reach out to students, and, arguably, social media could be seen as a relatively inexpensive and modern tool with which to do this. At first, many PR services simply added social media management to the role of the webmaster or another PR professional (sources: L'Etudiant, EducPros). However, as usage became more frequent and time-consuming, the need for a dedicated social media / community manager has led certain universities to create a specific position, thus professionalising their practices. The University of Burgundy was among the first to recruit a community manager in 2011 (source: Com'Campus).

2. Ub-link: the first social alumni network in a public university in france

Although the University of Burgundy has thus been presented as a precursor in this domain, the appointment of a community manager was not in fact an initiative of the university's PR department, but rather it was linked to the university's desire to develop its own social network. As part of a drive to help students find employment, in 2007 the university had set up a new service dedicated to helping students prepare for and enter the job market (la PlateForme d'Insertion Professionnelle - PFIP), alongside the traditional careers service. Following an audit of available resources favouring contacts between students and professionals, the service highlighted the potential of alumni networks. Although such networks are relatively widespread among engineering and business schools in France, they are much less so among French state-run universities. With the notable exception of a few courses and departments, the University of Burgundy had no developed alumni network and, in 2009, the careers service developed a proposal to create a social network for alumni on a university-wide scale. A preliminary study was carried out by an external consultancy which advised the university on the form that such a social network might take, and provided budgetary and functional guidelines for developing and running the network. An internal document was prepared¹, which presented the project as both pioneering and adapted to modern "collaborative" recruitment practices, in which positions are created and adapted to the skills of candidates with whom the employer has slowly built up a relationship, over the course of various interactions.

The project's main objective was clearly stated as being to favour contacts between students and alumni, notably in order to encourage them to exchange information about job openings, facilitate professional mobility among alumni, and help students gain access to work placements and ultimately long-term employment. Three central practices are identified in the project proposal: networking, exchanging information, and self-promotion. As the preceding discussion suggests, the project originated from the PFIP, which had very little contact with the university's communication department (Service de la communication) during the initial stages. Despite this fact, five secondary objectives were listed in the original project proposal, several of which contained a PR dimension:

- To promote links between the university and local, national, and international businesses, reinforcing the image of the university as a federative source of knowledge and encouraging links between businesses and specialised research teams;
- To provide equal opportunities by ensuring equal access to the alumni network for all

¹ This section is based on the internal document produced by the careers service in January 2010 and on an interview with the head of the careers service, Muriel Henry, in April 2013.

students and alumni of the university, regardless of social differences;

- To promote links between the university's various sites (around the region of Burgundy), and with individuals who may currently be living far away;
- To promote the region of Burgundy and the university through its alumni network;
- To use information and communication technologies (ICT) to build an online community as part of an "electronic public service" initiative.

Since the internal project proposal was written in order to seek permission and funding for the project to go ahead, the decision to include these secondary objectives is likely to have been motivated in part by a desire to foster as wide a support base as possible within the university and its various commissions. Moreover, two further objectives were identified by the head of the careers service, when discussing the project in April 2013. Firstly, the social network was seen as a way to generate reliable and valuable statistical data on alumni employment history and maintaining contacts with alumni, by surfing on the trend for "e-nostalgia". Secondly, the network would be private and hosted by the university itself, in order to protect data integrity and be able to ensure that only legitimate members of the alumni network and university community could gain access to it.

2.1. uB-link as Part of the University's Digital PR Strategy

The position of community manager at the university was created in 2011, and corresponds to one of the main recommendations of the preliminary study into the social network carried out by the external consultants. The university's community manager was thus recruited to run the alumni social network, though the position was attached to the web office of the communication service rather than the PFIP. On arriving in her post in April 2011, the community manager was asked to develop the university's presence on the digital networks, while preparing the launch of the alumni social network in December 2011².

At that time, the university had an institutional web portal, run by the full-time webmaster, and was encouraging the different faculties, services and departments which had developed their own websites to join the portal by producing a new site based on the template provided by the university. The webmaster had very little time to dedicate to social networks. An institutional Facebook profile had been created, before being taken down by Facebook for infringing its guidelines about the use

of profiles (reserved for private individuals). Several internal bodies in the university had developed Facebook pages independently, and there was also an official Twitter account, with no posts.

The community manager thus went about creating an official Facebook page (in August 2011), a "hub" on the French professional social network Viadeo, named "Training and Working in Burgundy" ("Se former et travailler en Bourgogne", September 2011) and developing the Twitter account. A second phase of the digital network strategy involved creating a YouTube channel and Google+ account for the university in early 2012. A Pinterest account was opened later in that year.

The choice of social networks resulted from ongoing discussions between the community manager and PR director of the university, and corresponds to an evolving digital strategy. Facebook occupies a major role in this strategy. Aimed at students, alumni and university staff, the page <<http://www.facebook.com/univbourgogne>> had 4170 likes on 15th April 2013. Information about upcoming events on campus, concerning students and researchers, including cultural and sporting events, is regularly posted (three posts per day on average in March 2013). The vast majority of posts provoke comments and exchanges. Viadeo is used to target professionals, through the hub ("Se former et travailler en Bourgogne", 379 members on 15th April 2013), and through the less-frequented page dedicated to the university (<<http://www.viadeo.com/fr/company/universite-de-bourgogne>>). According to the community manager, Twitter is used to target students, researchers and journalists, and is becoming more and more important (1617 followers and 3153 tweets on the page <<https://twitter.com/univbourgogne>> on 15th April 2013). Posts contain news and links to external websites, that of the university or other social networks. If Twitter is used to relay news, YouTube and Pinterest are used mainly to host videos and photos respectively, which are then relayed on Twitter, Facebook and uB-link. According to the community manager, the Google+ account is yet to be fully developed and currently exists in order to "occupy the space" rather than as an independent social network with its own targets and logic.

The university has thus progressively deployed a digital strategy across many of the major public social networks, at the same time as it has developed its own private social network, uB-link. Moreover, to a certain extent, the university's presence on public social networks should be seen as complementary to uB-link, since all of the networks are used in conjunction with one another. Thus news from uB-link is posted to Facebook and Twitter, YouTube is used to host videos posted on uB-link, and so forth. As well as using them to post information aimed indirectly at promoting the university, the community manager sees public social networks, and notably Viadeo, aiming at business professionals, as a way to drive traffic to the university's own private network, in a bid to increase traffic and interactivity on uB-link. Compared to the former, however, she distinguishes uB-link within the digital strategy by the fact that it is private, and, for her, "a careers tool aiming to help students promote their CV", rather than "a commercial communication tool used to promote the university".

² This section is based on an interview with the university's community manager, Caroline Chanlon, in April 2013, and on her initial audit of the university's presence on social media (in the form of a Powerpoint presentation created in June 2011).

2.2. The Interface

uB-link is based on Drupal, an open-source Content Management System (CMS). The platform was developed by a digital PR agency based in Dijon, which also has a contract for maintenance and upgrades. It is hosted locally by the University of Burgundy, which also owns all of the rights to use and develop the system. It is run as a private social network, meaning that only authorised users can access and edit contents. There are four main types of users on the platform: alumni, students, personnel and companies.

All alumni of the University of Burgundy are encouraged to join the social network. They may be contacted directly through an invitation or may discover the network themselves. They must identify themselves with their full name, date and place of birth, and this information is used to authenticate their alumni status against university records. Alumni are life members of the network, unless they delete their account. Current students are also invited to join the network, identifying themselves with their university login details. All new students in September 2012 were required to join the network during the administrative enrolment process. Students automatically become alumni on completing their course. Students and alumni have the same rights on the network.

The social network is open to university staff, who are entitled to remain members only as long as they work at the university. Staff members may act as community leaders, and in practice these are a mix of academic and administrative staff, some of the latter having had this function included in their job description. The final category of members is companies. Companies do not have access to the whole network, but are allowed to enter information about themselves and post job or placement offers. An individual member may grant a specific company access to his/her profile when applying for a job or placement.

Figure 2.1 shows the graphical user interface of the platform, with the main user functions. This is the landing page and home page of the site, publicly visible. All of the information displayed has been selected by the community manager. Some elements are directly accessible to non-members, such as the student guide, promotional video, and social network links. Others, such as the discussions, job offers, and all of the links along the top menu, require the user to create an account or to log in first. Once the member is logged on, the graphical user interface remains identical, but the member can navigate between pages, for example to read discussions in the different groups (named “communities”), join a community, consult and apply for job or placement offers, consult resource documents, search for members, resource documents, job or placement offers, or companies in the database. Members can also consult the diary of upcoming events, recent news published on the network, and, in the menu “My uB-link”, they can edit their profile, send or reply to messages to or from other members, and see lists of their communities, contacts and favourites.



Figure 1: The Public Landing Page of uB-link (https://ub-link.fr/)

3. Research methodology

This research project adheres to the methodological approach that Robert Kozinets (2009: 8) defines as “netnography”: “netnography is not an individualistic approach examining the personal posting of messages on the Internet, or their aggregate. Netnography’s focal topic is collective. Netnography examines groupings, gatherings, or collections of people. Its level of analysis is thus what sociologists would call the ‘meso’ level: not the micro of individuals nor the macro of entire social systems, but the smaller group level in between.” The netnography carried out by the authors at the University of Burgundy is centred on three aspects of uB-link:

1. cultural dynamics within the online communities;
2. practices developed by members, linked to the interface and architecture of the platform;
3. dialogical construction of professionalization processes through interactions between students and alumni.

These three aspects are to be studied over a period of six years, from the network’s launch in December 2011 until December 2017. The temporal dimension will be examined by comparing the activity during three datasets corresponding to six-month periods, taken at two-year intervals: dataset 1 corresponding to period t (the first six months starting from the launch of the network), dataset 2 at t+2 years, and dataset 3 at t+4 years. In this way, the project aims to look at the way user practises, but also the platform itself, evolve during the first six years. During each experimental phase, three types of analysis will be conducted, in order to examine the object from different angles:

- semiotic / discourse analysis of the platform (architecture, discourse, socio-technical forms and norms)
- analysis of online behaviour (interactions, navigation: “netnographic” analysis - Kozinets 2009 - including ethnography, social network analysis, discourse analysis, analysis of navigation data)
- questionnaires and/or semi-directive interviews with targeted users (representations of practice)

By confronting the implicit socio-technical / discursive forms and norms linked to the platform itself, the activity of users and the representations of selected informants, the project aims to build up a complete picture of the way in which the social network is used, by confronting different types of data (Kozinets, 2010, p. 98). In accordance with the principles of netnography (Kozinets, 2010, p. 75), the researchers are also active users of the platform.

Users’ online behaviour is studied using various analytical tools. Google Analytics has been incorporated into the site, and is used as a source of much background data concerning (evolutions in) global navigation practises. A specific tool has been developed in house to capture and extract the navigation data (including conversation contents) from the platform. This data can then be analysed manually, with statistical data-mining tools such as SPSS, or a Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) package.

Since the data studied is not publicly available (though it is freely available to all members of the private network), it was necessary to notify the French Data Protection Commission (CNIL) about the project, and obtain the users’ consent to consult and process their data. The system of “implied consent” as defined by Kozinets (2010, p. 143) has been put in place. During the inscription process on the network, users are asked to check two boxes, one to agree to the general terms and conditions of usage of the site, and another to give consent for their data to be included in the research project. Only anonymous data from users who have actively ticked this box is made available to the researchers. Since data is made anonymous from the beginning, selected informants (identified by their user-ID key) are then contacted by email by the community manager (rather than by the researchers) in order to ask them whether or not they would accept to take part in an interview about their use of the platform.

The figures presented in the following section are derived from Google Analytics, and exclude mobile versions of the site. As such, they should be considered as conservative estimates, since they do not take into account users on mobile platforms (iOS, Android), or who have not enabled cookies on their browsers. Comparison with the figures recorded by the Community Manager in her logbook (monthly inscription, group membership, number of elements posted) show that the numbers presented here are consistently lower (by between 1-13%) than the official figures recorded. This may also be partly explained by differences in the dates on which the official figures were obtained and the dates used in this study (systematically the 1st of the month for full calendar months). It is important to bear in mind that Google Analytics identifies a user connecting from two different computers, for example at the university and at home, as two separate (unique) users. While this has no incidence on the figures for the total number of visits or on the members having joined a group, it must be taken into account in measurements of the number of unique visits to a given group, for example. The figures presented here should thus be taken as approximate estimates, with ‘real’ figures being up to 13% higher in exceptional cases.

4. Use of the platform over the first 6 months (9th december 2011 - 9th june 2012)

The platform uB-link was made accessible to the community and officially launched on 9th December 2011. A launching ceremony was organised for the various official partners, local companies, alumni, journalists and members of the university staff. Over 100 people attended. One of the objectives of this event was to publicise the network and encourage a large number of people to sign up from the outset. Figure 2 shows the number of members who subscribed to the network over the first 6 months. The number of students subscribing (out of a total of over 20 000) was more clearly affected by the launch promotion than the other categories. A recruitment drive carried out over the social networks and aimed at alumni, in April 2012, also appears to have had a significant impact on the recruitment levels for that month. According to these data, the total number of full members of the network (excluding companies) for the period studied is 2043 (978 alumni, 930 students and 135 staff). The number of subscriptions tails off progressively over that time. The subscription rate of companies is slightly more stable over the six-month period.

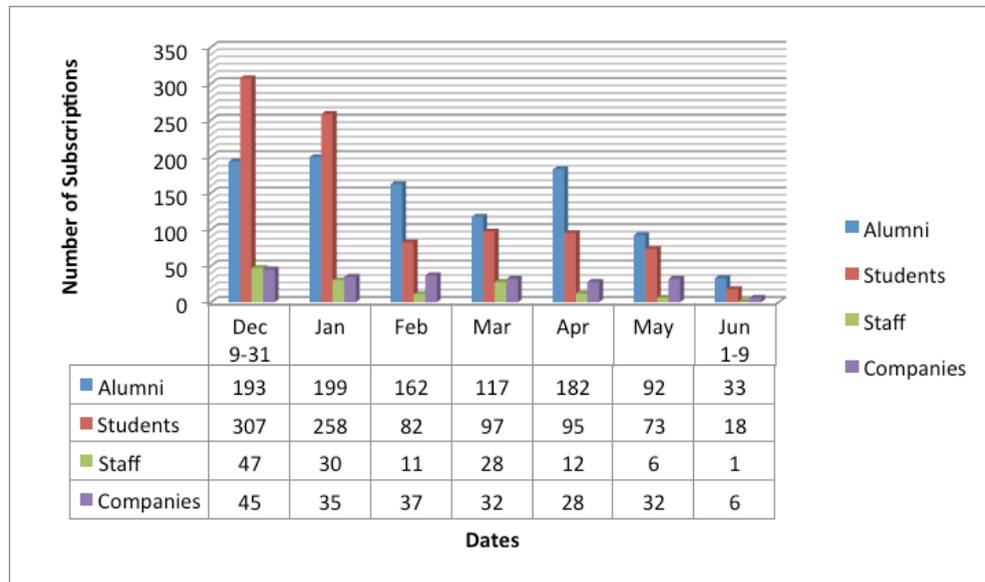


Figure 4.1 : Number of subscriptions to uB-link during the first 6 months

4.1. Frequentation.

Visitors to the platform remained an average of 7.3 minutes and visited an average of 8.9 pages. Time spent on the platform rose oscillated from a low of 6.3 minutes in the period 9th-31st December to 7 minutes in the period 1st-9th June; with highs in January and February (8.4 and 9.1 minutes respectively). Predictably, the number of pages visited fell from an average of 12.2 to an average of 6.1 over the six months, as users explored the site to begin with, and concentrated on what interested them as they became more experienced. Conversely, the average time spent on a page rose regularly from 35 seconds in the period 9th-31st December, to 1 minute 22 seconds in the period 1st-9th June.

According to Google Analytics, over 60% of visitors visited the platform only once during the first six months. However, it should be remembered that this figure includes users having visited the platform with a different computer or even web browser, and so the real figure is likely to be considerably lower. On the other extreme, and if we exclude the community manager and colleagues working on the platform (4 users with over 100 visits), there is a group of around 65 users who visited the site between 25 and 100 times during the period studied, viewing a combined total of over 21 000 pages, and who thus appear to constitute a central user group.

4.2 Sources of Traffic

During the period studied, visitors arrived on the site notably from the university's main website (<www.u-bourgogne.fr>), which in itself was the origin of 3990 visits, or 16.2% of the total. One of the reasons for this high rate may be the gif banner advertising the social network, placed on the website (and also on the university's other websites) during this period, meaning that users could use the homepage of any university website as a shortcut to access uB-link.

The second and third sources of traffic are both social networks (Viadeo produced 1867 visits and Facebook 1249). In both cases, an advert for uB-link was present on the university's page, and members were encouraged to join the private network. An emailing campaign (the link inside an email sent) was responsible for a further 384 visits, followed by university-run websites belonging to faculties and institutions. 96 visits originated with Twitter, only 60 with Google.fr searches (the first search engine in the ranking), 43 with LinkedIn, 12 with YouTube and 5 with Google+.

This ranking tends to show the effectiveness of promotional activities carried out both on university websites and the two major social networks used, notably in light of the relative absence of search engines as sources of referral traffic in this first period.

4.3. Communities

One of the main objectives of the social network was to bring users together inside communities where they could build relationships and exchange career advice and information about recruitment practises. A total of 8 “communities” were created in December 2011, and 20 others during the period studied (8 in January, 7 in February, 3 in March and 2 in April). The communities are of three types: specific to a particular faculty or department of the university (e.g. the Faculty of Law); specific to a particular group inside a faculty (e.g. the students of a particular Master’s degree); or thematic and transversal (e.g. “Recruitment Practises”). The communities created in March and April are notably of the second type. All members can access all communities and read the discussions. However, in order to post a comment in reaction to a discussion, members must first join the community in question, which they can do freely and with instant effect. Members of a community can choose to be updated by email concerning new posts. The largest community, a thematic group dedicated to professional networks, attracted 136 members (of whom 7 left before the end of the period studied). This was the only group with over 100 members. A large majority of groups had under 50 members during the period observed.

A total of 96 discussions were posted on the communities, generally by a moderator or the community manager. A majority of these received no comments from users. The most commented discussion received 12 comments. Each discussion was viewed between 1 and 175 times, with the average being 26.3 visits to the discussion page in total over the six month period studied. During the period studied, most users did not join communities nor did they seek in significant numbers to participate actively in discussions on the platform.

4.4. Job and Placement Offers

One feature which appears to have been more attractive to users, however, is the “jobs and placements” section. The list of offers received 6324 pageviews for a total of 200 job and placement offers, of which 106 were created in January and February. Visits to the page containing offers were also highest during these two months (1568 and 947 visits respectively). These figures do not take into account members clicking on offers presented elsewhere on the platform (a selection is present on every page), those consulting them directly without passing through the “jobs and placements” page, or even members clicking on links posted on the university website or other social media sites.

4.5 Networking and Direct Interactions

A second feature of the platform which was relatively widely-used was the possibility for users to search for (and connect with) other members of the network. This basic function, found on virtually all social networking sites, was used 6717 times in the six-month period, and 1390 requests to

connect were sent to 497 users. An average of 2.8 requests were received by each of these users, who make up just under 25% of the total number of network members. Once connected, users can send direct messages to one another, although this function (available from January 2012), was only used 265 times in the six months studied. The platform also offers users the possibility to invite entitled non-members to join uB-link, by sending them a pre-formatted email. However, the corresponding page was only visited 49 times during the period studied. Overall, it would thus appear that members are keen to search the network for other members, but that only a minority of them “connect” using the platform, and that most prefer other forms of direct communication.

4.6. Other Features

Two remaining main features of the platform are resource documents and the diary of upcoming events. The resource document index page was visited 1208 times, and 157 searches for resource documents were carried out, using the search tool. Concerning the diary, 68 searches were carried out on corresponding the search tool, and each event posted was viewed an average of 12.3 times (from 38 maximum to 2 minimum).

5. Discussion

The results presented above, based on Google Analytics data, allow us to identify certain general trends in the use of the uB-link platform, although they lack depth, notably in terms of insights into the possible differences in practises between the different categories of user. It will be possible to take these factors into account over the coming months, thanks to the data extraction tool currently being finalised by the research team, which will allow them to exploit data used in social network’s own database, but also through interviews with targeted users. Despite these current limits, a tentative preliminary analysis of the results can be presented here.

Our observations of the first six months of activity on the social network allow us to identify some areas in which it appears to have been more successful than others, in meeting the objectives identified by the university (*supra*). The creation of a secure, private social network dedicated to students and alumni is well under way, in the sense that a social network implies a functional technical infrastructure, but also membership and active participation. The technical infrastructure, though perfectible and likely to go on evolving, is perfectly functional, and the number of members continued to grow over the period studied, albeit at a declining rate. The platform also contributes to reinforcing links between the university and local companies, indirectly through the presence of alumni members in the companies themselves, and directly insofar as it provides them with a tool through which to publish job and placement offers. The “jobs and placements” section received

on average over 1000 visits per month during the six months studied. It was thus one of the more successful features of the platform, along with the networking function (search for members), which also attracted more than 1000 monthly visits on average, even if these searches do not necessarily lead to members getting into contact through the platform.

If the network thus appears to have been successful in some of its more 'utilitarian' dimensions (searching for acquaintances, jobs and placements), it has been less so in other areas, and notably regarding communities and discussions. It appears important here to differentiate the concepts of "community" and "network", as distinguished in the original document of intention produced by the careers service. Whereas the network may be considered to be a group of interconnected users, a community, on the other hand, is built on social relationships slowly fostered through interactions between members. A network, offering various functions to users, may be launched with pomp and splendour and aim to attract the masses, but an online community generally develops organically, typically originating in social interactions around a theme. Unlike a network, as Robert Kozinets points out (2010, p. 8-9), a community often tends to remain small and intimate:

a certain minimum number of people must be involved in order for an online group to feel like a community. We might presume this to be about 20 people at the bottom end. There may also be a maximum number, for efficiency of communication, as proposed in anthropologist Robin Dunbar's number, often held to be between 150 and 200 persons. Some online communities are, of course, much larger than this. However, we often find larger communities splitting in order to maintain the close atmosphere of a community.

Seen in this light, it is hardly surprising that the communities and discussions on uB-link have not appeared to encounter immediate success among members. On the other hand, if we consider the university and its various faculties and institutes to already constitute existing communities of sorts, the communities recreated on uB-link can be seen to bring together "real-life" acquaintances, at least for some members. Yet pre-existing relationships, notably hierarchical ones between staff and students, might also be construed as a complicating factor for online exchanges, especially when communicating in one's own name, where the fear of being judged by various parties, including one's peers, may constitute a barrier to free expression. Nevertheless, the existence of a small group of active users might be interpreted as a sign that a "community" is emerging on uB-link, but it is necessary to examine more closely the members of this group and the nature of their interactions on the platform, in order to clarify this point.

6. Conclusion: good practises and recommendations for future evolutions

When seeking to build a social network or online community of any kind, it appears important to take into account both organic and technical aspects. Robert Kozinets (2010, p. 31-2) suggests that there are two interrelated dimensions which contribute to social cohesion within an online community. The first is the interest of members for the central subject or theme that the community has been set up to discuss. The second is the social relationships within the community itself. The central theme is thus a critical element: it is what makes individuals want to join the community in the first place. In the case of uB-link, the motivating factor is the promise of a private alumni network, centred around possibilities for professional networking, exchanging information, and self-promotion (supra section 2). Users need to find a specific advantage of belonging to uB-link (as opposed to other professional networks, such as Viadeo or LinkedIn). The network can possibly build on the possibility of connecting with a larger number of alumni than on other networks. It offers exclusive resource documents, job and placement offers, and information tailored to students and alumni of the University of Burgundy.

However, the second factor is equally important, if the network is to develop into a community or set of interconnected communities. Members need to feel that they are a valued part of a community, in a certain role and in a relationship with other members. This feeling of community, based on respect of that community's norms and history, only develops through interactions over a sustained period of time, suggests Kozinets:

Regardless of the medium or exact pathway to participation, the theory suggests that, over time and with increasingly frequent communications, the sharing of personal identity information and clarification of power relations and new social norms transpires in the online community – that social and cultural information permeates every exchange, effecting a type of gravitational pull that causes every exchange to become coloured with emotional, affiliative, and meaning-rich elements. (Kozinets, 2010, p. 28)

It is only through sustained interaction, he explains, that the desire to interact becomes stronger, that the “lurker”/“newbie” gradually becomes an “insider”/“maker”, to adopt the terms of his typology of online participation:

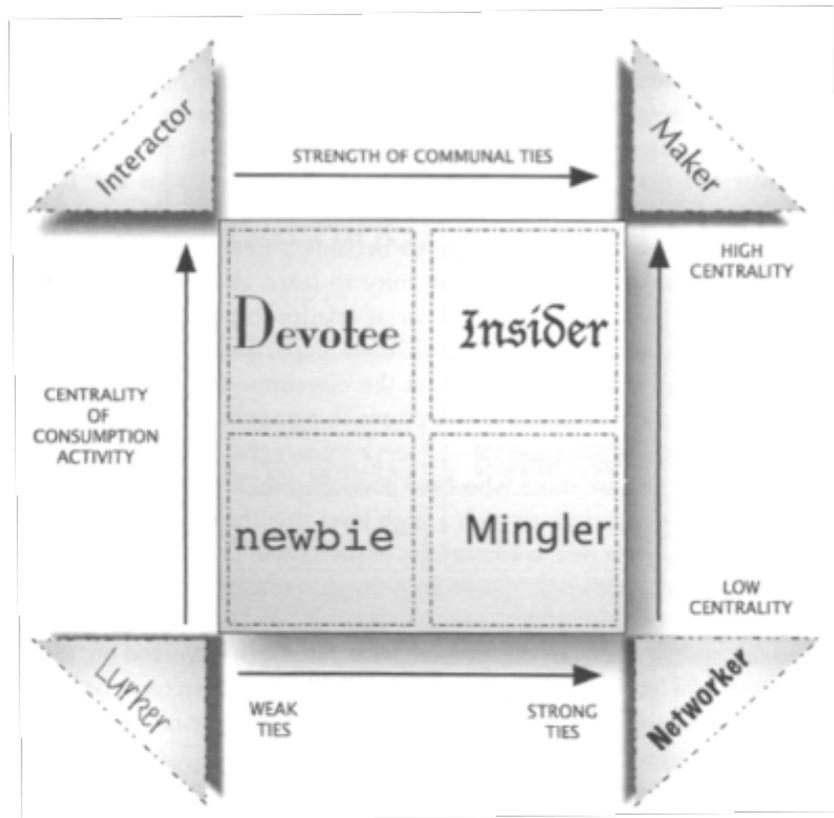


Figure 6.1 : Types of Online Participation (Kozinets, 2010, p. 33, © Sage Publications)

It would thus appear critical for uB-link, if it is to develop into a community or set of communities, to encourage such online participation among members, if possible linking it to the central concerns of the network. The fact that multiple groups/communities have been set up on the platform, linked to questions of recruitment (transversal groups) or corresponding to existing communities within the university itself, thus seems a positive first step. A crucial question will be the extent to which members subsequently feel motivated to participate in these communities, which in turn is linked to how and by whom they are moderated. Indeed, although the network has been set up

structurally over the first six months, it now appears all-important for uB-link to go about fostering a sense of community. Based on our observations, there are several ways in which this might be encouraged:

- Personalise the relationship with and between alumni, for example with a concept of “class reunions” including IRL meetings, or by inviting alumni to come and talk to current students on the same course. Invite experienced alumni to become “experts” in a certain field, affiliated to one or more communities, to whom students or other members can address questions.
- Introduce a notion of seniority within the network and increase the symbolic / functional importance of contacts: include a ‘contact count’ or ‘seniority level’ to help identify connected and experienced, contributing members. Introduce ‘suggested contacts’ based on course history and centres of interest.
- Reinforce the value of the network for members by creating more exclusive advantages compared to other professional social networks, e.g. commercial offers for alumni, alumni magazine, alumni card...
- Extend the network of moderators/opinion leaders by inviting active members to moderate or contribute to communities, or to become “experts” (supra).

Although six months can be a very long time in the fast-evolving world of social media, it is also very short from the perspective of an alumni network whose objective is to become a long-term service, developing and consolidating professional links between individuals and across generations for many years to come. From the point of view of the research project, these preliminary analyses enable us to identify general trends of usage on uB-link, and identify what appear to be central questions for its development. By subsequently deepening these preliminary observations through further data collection and analysis, before comparing them with the second and third datasets in 2013-14 and 2015-16, we hope to come to a better understanding of the dynamics of online community construction and evolving user practices, both within uB-link and on social networks more generally.

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Web 2.0: Stakes of the E-reputation for Public Relations Professionals

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ABSTRACT

A new concept, the “e-reputation”, has recently emerged following the enormous growth of Web 2.0 sharing tools. Given the importance of this phenomenon within social media, we will observe and analyze the issues therein with respect to public relations. We draw a qualitative narrative of the e-reputation from a sample of North American organizations presently active in social media. In addition to a review of relevant literature, we also conduct semi-structured interviews with public relations professionals and community managers. This allows us to observe the many ways that professionals affect the e-reputation of their organization and analyze the impact these activities have.

Keywords: using social media; communication; public relations management; semi-structured interviews; community managers; issues concerning e-reputation.

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INTRODUCTION

Referred to as the “digital image” of an individual or an organization, the concept of the “e-reputation” emerged from the explosion in use of sharing tools on various Web 2.0 platforms. Heiderich (2009, online) defines the e-reputation as “the act of influencing perception [...] and legitimizing [a subject matter] to a wide audience, executed by controlling individual and collective behaviour of Internet users, in our society of mainstream social networks.” Given the importance of this particular phenomenon, which results in “conversations” over social media, we are keen to observe and analyze the professional and organizational issues therein as they apply to the field of public relations. We use a qualitative narrative to describe its use in a sample of North American organizations who actively participate in social media. We employ semi-structured interviews with professionals in public relations, thought leaders and community managers. We also analyze constitutive documents such as policies governing the use of social media (Dubois, Pelletier, Poirier, 2011), action plans for crisis management (Bloch, 2012), and comment management processes (Charest, Gauthier, Grenon, 2011) in the Observatory of Social Media in Public Relations (French: OMSRP). This allows us to observe the methods used by communication professionals on Facebook and Twitter and analyze their impact on the e-reputation of organizations.

Concepts: Context and Definition

The word reputation comes from the Latin “reputatio”, meaning “evaluation”. It refers to a social assessment that depends not only on the self-created “identity” of a person or organization, but also its perception in the eyes of others. In social media terms, e-reputation is an extension of the digital identity “abstracted from the sentiment of comments and opinions published on the Internet, most notably in social networks” (Balagué, Fayon, 2011, p. 75).

In general, reputation is built from interactions or “conversations” from individuals, whether solicited or not, (Bonneau, 2011) and who have an opinion concerning a particular aspect of the organization, either its image or its actions. In other words, it is built from the “communicative actions” (Habermas, 1987) of organizations.

Careful management of social media communication can build “sympathy capital” for organizations (Maisonneuve, 2010) or “the amount of antipathy which increases or decreases depends on its past behaviour” (Bloch, 2012, p. 133). Managing this sensitive communication, which if not done properly can lead to a communications crisis, assumes that communication professionals (in this case, community managers (Stenger, Coutant, 2011)), need to develop the skills to favourably influence these online interactions and minimize the risk of a potential crisis (Heiderich, 2011). For Roux-Dufort (2003), crises are not random events, but processes that develop over time, stemming from the continued failure to act on warning signs. In the same vein, Libaert (2010, p. 9) defines crisis as “the phase reached after prolonged errors, jeopardizing the reputation and stability of a company”.

Balagué and Fayon (2011) point out that the onset of a crisis is often the catalyst that prompts a company to acknowledge the existence of and develop a policy for the “e-reputation”. Detecting early warning signs of these dysfunctional situations, anticipating and preventing the risk of adverse opinion to protect its e-reputation (Bloch, 2012) is an absolute necessity. “Any organization, whether private or public, regardless of its size or industry is potentially subject to a major crisis that could undermine its reputation, or even - as the two are often related - make it disappear,” according Libaert (in Heiderich 2010, p.V).

In the context of sensitive communication, managing the e-reputation is a major challenge for organizations. Community managers fill the critical role of managing these delicate situations to the best of their ability (Bloch, 2012). In addition, professionals must carry out this responsibility within a limited amount of time. Sometimes, the reaction time is so short that it is virtually impossible for managers to react to a conversation (Motulsky, Breduillieard, Cordelier, 2011).

Given the important role that public relations professionals fill in managing sensitive communication in social media, what are the fundamental foundations or models on which to base a method of delicately managing e-reputation? What important guidelines should communication professionals follow?

Theoretical foundations of e-reputation and sensitive communication

In 1984, the American researcher Grunig established the theoretical foundations of one of the most important contributions in the field of public relations, according to the research community. The Theory of Excellence in Public Relations, more commonly known as “two-way symmetrical communication” since 2002. “This model identified two factors essential to the profession, communications and relationships, and laid the groundwork for what would become standard Web 2.0 practice twenty years later” (Charest, Bédard, 2013, p. 37).

This Excellence Model is can be broken into three other types of professional practice models: development, public information, and two-way symmetrical communication. Two-way symmetrical communication is characterized by the use of persuasion, as the exchange of information is not equal between the two communicating parties.

Originally, adoption of Grunig’s Excellence Model into communication policies was slow, as it involved “an organization listening to the needs and interests of the public, [replacing] the use of persuasion with understanding, making for a fair exchange for both parties” says Bérubé (2012, p. 32). “The demonstration of the benefits of this model has earned him international recognition, as evidenced by ISO 31000” (Bérubé, 2012, p. 35).

This stance on dialog thus confers the role of “community manager” in the communication process upon relationship professionals, to establish a reciprocal exchange as the basis for trustful “relationships”, Grunig’s second important model factor. According to the author, the two-way symmetrical communication model should be applied to establish these relationships. In an perfect work, this would be the type of communication pattern practiced by PR or community managers in the “conversations” found in social media.

Relationship management

The central concept of “relationship” has been a fundamental theory in public relations, relationship management. Developed by Ledingham and Bruning in 1998, this theory is based on five indicators: level of trust, openness, involvement, investment and commitment. Kugler (2010, p. 18) describes the characteristics of these indicators as follows:

- Level of Trust: The organization does what it said it would.
- Openness: It shares its plans for the future with the general public.
- Involvement: It contributes to the well-being of the community.
- Investment: It participates financially.
- Commitment: It is actively involved in improving the well-being of its community over a long time horizon.

For Boussicaud and Dupin (2012), the last indicator, commitment, must be an objective for organizations using the SMART model (Specific, Measurable, Ambitious, Realistic and Timely). The purpose of this model is specifically to “avoid making promises it could not hope to keep in order to placate the masses. Any period of calm gained would be short and would only serve to mask an impending crisis” (p. 56).

“Communication” and “relationship” factors during a crisis

These two important factors of Grunig model are turned upside down during a communications crisis in social media. According to Bloch (2012, p. 27) it is an “asymmetric communication [model] or crisis 2.0 [which gives] organizations or internet groups the means to overcome their small size and threaten a company’s long-term reputation”. The author argues that companies communicate in three main types of environments: symmetrical, uneven and asymmetric.

- Symmetrical (may the best man win): A clear debate between two parties.

- Uneven (the strong get stronger): One of the players has a significant advantage over the other in terms of resources or means.
- Asymmetric (the ends justify the means): One of the players seeks to compensate for his inferior resources by using surprise and all methods at his disposal. (Bloch, 2012, p. 28, 29).

The goals of the last two strategies, characterized by an asymmetric situation, are to either stigmatize the behaviour of an organization or render it dysfunctional. The main target of their tactics is public opinion. While this kind of strategy has existed for a long time, it takes on new life with the invention of Web 2.0. Traditionally, influencing public opinion required control of the media and relayed by opinion leaders with abundant skills and resources. However, social media has changed the situation completely: public opinion can now be influenced on these new media platforms by people with very little means or training.

Sensitive Communication Strategies to build e-reputation: Digital Darwinism

During the crisis lifecycle, each phase of the process must have its own communication strategy. Roux-Dufort (2003) identifies four phases of a crisis: the warning signs, the trigger, the acute phase, and finally the recovery or capitalization of the crisis. The author insists that it is “the sum of vulnerabilities and ignorance” which provides the fuel for a potential crisis (Heiderich (2010, p. 9). With the emergence of social media and the speed with which viral content can ruin a reputation, organizations must prepare for crises by identifying potential risks as early as possible in the process and developing communication strategies to minimize the damage along the way. A good starting point for these organizations is to rethink their internal structures to better manage their external communication.

To this end, a 2001 study by the Altimeter Group shows that 76% of the crises they observed could have been avoided or minimized if the companies had invested internally (<http://bit.ly/Qqojkv>). “Thinking that social media are new communication paths doesn’t makes sense if it is impossible to implement the actions.” Organizations therefore have no choice but to “adapt their internal structure to facilitate the communication process” (Boussicaud, Dupin, 2012, p. 61). “Adapt or die”, said Brian Solis in his book *The End of Business as Usual*, which comes from the theory of Digital Darwinism (<http://bit.ly/ynXw3a>). However, this is often where the challenge lies.

Identifying authoritative contacts who are able to provide a coherent response, ensuring that no element capable of sabotaging internal efforts be put in place and ensuring that

community managers can express themselves quickly as in charge and without hierarchical barriers, are all issues that should be considered and dealt with ahead of time. And as always, “the beginning is more than half of the goal,” as asserted by Aristotle (Boussicaud, Dupin, 2012, p. 62).

In addition to a adapting new guidelines for the communication process, the drive to use them must be also instilled in the organization’s culture. An implicit strategy of this is developing proper social media usage models as a guide for community managers on how to respond to the occasional public unrest. For example, Boussicaud and Dupin (2012) presented a social media model to Intel divided into three parts: ensuring integrity in their online presence through disclosure, protecting confidential data with openness and honesty, and finally, using common sense to prevent conversations between the organization and the public from spiralling out of control (p. 65-66).

To this end, Charest et al. (2011) of Observing Social Media in Public Relations (the OMSRP) (<http://bit.ly/XLnt6d>) from Laval University have developed a strategic process of responses and comment management that takes these factors into account. From the beginning, the editorial policy must be well defined, followed by a social media usage policy. Once these management tools are in place, the responsibility to provide customer service and manage the social media presence should be entrusted to the communication professionals reporting to the public relations senior management. The process first takes into account the guidelines on content that can be posted or excluded (such as removing abuse) on these platforms, a method of ranking comments (positive, neutral or negative) and recommending which action (if any) to take for each and how quickly. In the event of a sensitive subject or disgruntled user, the OMSRP recommends answering instantly or within an hour, while at the same time attempting to direct the person away from the organization’s social media platforms. Bloch (2012) recommends avoiding the risk that the community manager and customer service become disconnected.

It is necessary that the two work at the same time. While the community manager normally directs a disgruntled customer to contact customer service to manage the problem, he should not do this while the latter is unreachable or takes three weeks to respond by mail. When the crisis results from “organized” users [...] it is no longer an isolated event, but an attack on the company (p. 176).

The situation becomes even more delicate where the organization must be ready to face any eventuality in order to manage the situation with regard to its most important issue, its e-reputation.

Crisis management in social media

Although there are more-or-less sophisticated tools and processes available to organizations, it is more important is to identify ahead of time the key people to form a crisis response team when an event escalates. Just like a board of directors, the crisis response team includes subject matter experts who have authority, expertise and answers regarding the problem at stake, a communications manager, and of course executives from the highest levels of organization, though not necessarily the President “in order to allow sufficient strategic distance. The latter will be kept informed and will validate major decisions, but without integration to the team”, said Libaert (2010, p. 38). At the very least, to manage Internet crises effectively, “sensitive topics must be prevented from being picked up by the mainstream media”, says Bloch (2012, p. 175). The Festival d’été de Québec learned its lesson in February 2013, during its online ticket pre-sale for the next season. The problem was apparently resulted from poor forecasting of the high demand from users (70 000 in a few hours) trying to take advantage of the pre-sale. The organizers failed to “reserve” capacity for increased traffic on their website, which would have entailed significant costs. Having either “ignored” or taken the risk of not having the capacity required for this major surge, the site became congested and went down for several hours. This sparked the fury of the Internet, who turned to Facebook and Twitter to voice their frustrations. The mainstream media reprinted the comments they left, which made headlines for a few days. This in turn significantly discredited the general reputation of the organization.

Very early in the process of a crisis on the Internet, is recommended to identify the main voice of the frustration. Knowing what it is, what it says, who the key players are and its history will identify the “natural” hotspots of crisis, which can then be addressed ahead of time (Bloch, 2012, p.178). This will avoid having to deal with the unnecessary risks caused by “group think”, or group decisions, which are based on a subjective or incorrect assessment of the situation and in turn are likely to involve individuals seeking unity in protesting a wrong decision (Boussicaud, Dupin, 2012, p. 71).

Finally, learning how, when and where to speak has a profound effect on how events unfold. Twitter is the perfect tool to concisely manage urgent information and effectively reach the large number of journalists and opinion leaders with a large presence on the platform. However, any mistake from the community manager can instantly become a “meme”..

In summary, community managers need to be listening to each viewpoint in a transparent and respectful way, and by doing so will facilitate two-way symmetrical communication.

Methodology

The methodology uses various data collection techniques. In the first step, a review of the literature was conducted on the e-reputation in the field of public relations, management of sensitive communications and crisis and relationship management. In addition, 16 semi-structured interviews were conducted with community managers active in social media working in public and private organizations in the province of Quebec. Participants were recruited through websites, social media groups and word-of-mouth, as community management is a relatively small and interconnected business.

Recruitment took place during the period of December 2012 to mid-February 2013. Four pre-studies took place in early December 2012 to validate the methodology and research tools. These interviews were then included in the study because of the lack of change in the makeup of the pre-study and the quality of information received. The interviews were conducted between mid-December 2012 and mid-February 2013. They were conducted by videoconference or in person and were captured with the software Cam Recorder and a Web HD Pro C920 camera. The consent form signed by the participants and the registrations were kept confidential in accordance with standards approved by the Ethics and Research of the Université Laval.

The interview structure was created from the following four elements:

1. Management tools used to perform the day’s activities, evaluate its presence on social media and its rank its use therein. We, among others, believe in social media usage policy (Dubois et al., 2011), and strategic list of answers for comment management (Charest et al., 2011).
2. Strategies to use in sensitive communication situations for each of the four stages of a crisis lifecycle (warning signs, trigger, acute phase and recovery) according to the theory of Roux-Dufort (2003).
3. The socio-demographic profile of the community manager and a description of their organization.
4. The importance given to the five indicators of theory of managing relationships of Leindgham and Bruning (1998): level of trust, openness, involvement, investment and commitment. The importance of these five criteria was then coded in a grid on a Likert scale from 1 to 5 (1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest).

We note that all participants have at least 18 months experience in community management, are employed in communications or marketing, and had all previously managed at least one episode of sensitive communication on social media. The group consisted of seven women and nine men, three-quarters were between 25 and 34 years old, three were between 35 and 44 years old and one was between 18 and 24 years old. Three quarters of the participants had a bachelor’s

degree, and another third had a master's degree. Two thirds of the community managers had also studied communications, public relations or marketing. Others were trained in other fields such as history or administration. Participants managed active communities in a wide variety of organizations. In total, 6/16 had worked in public administration, 6/16 in agencies or on their own, 2/16 for universities and the remaining 2/16 in a non-profit organization. They managed communities with between approximately 1000 and 50 000 users. Almost all participants used Facebook and Twitter (15/16 in both cases), half of them used YouTube and a quarter used a blog.

Results

During the semi-structured interviews with community managers, we were able to test the application in the professional practices of the model outline in the Theory of Excellence in Public Relations established by Grunig (2002), and the weight they placed in the Theory of Managing Relationships by Ledingham and Bruning (1998). The balance of power in the relationship established between two communicating parties when sensitive communication or a crisis occurs, as well as process and relationship management tools were also taken into account. This was in order to analyze the impact of these practices on their organization's e-reputation.

The existence of power

Grunig's Theory of Excellence in Public Relations (2002) argues that, in a two-way symmetrical model, communication relies on a fair exchange between two parties based primarily on understanding and effective relationship management. Despite making efforts to maintain a relationship of trust as in the two-way symmetrical model, the question remains as to whether there is an uneven balance of power between users and the community manager, which can lead to a two-way asymmetric model, or crisis 2.0 (Bloch, 2012).

The case studies of sensitive communication all started with comments from one or more users on a social media platform, which served as a trigger for sensitive communication, according to the different steps of Roux-Dufort (2003). Comments were most often related to a problem with the website or social media organization (4/16), related to an act of the organization outside of social media (6/16) and related to an issue outside the organization (5/16), as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Case Studies of Sensitive Communication

Warning Signs	Occurrence (in 16 cases)
Situation predicted by the organization	11
Active preparation for the situation	5
Trigger	
Protests on Facebook (in connection with the website or the activity of the organization on social media)	4
Protests on Facebook (problem outside the web, but in connection with the organization)	7
Reviews on Facebook (disagreement on an issue outside the organization)	5
Reviews on Twitter	4
Acute Phase	
Do nothing	3
Moderate comments	7
Answer questions	7
Solve a problem related to the organization's web presence	2
Solve a problem outside the web, but in connection with the organization	4
Publish an apology or an appeal for calm and respect	8
Internet research led to the crisis	5
Establishment of a crisis	5
Recovery	
The crisis is set by the organization	8
Positive messages of users	4
The crisis itself dies and falls into oblivion	8
Capitalization	
Created or updated management tools	6
Learning through community manager	8
Learning by the organization	6
The crisis demonstrated existing methods were appropriate	5

Most situations took place on Facebook, but four also involved the use of Twitter. We note that sensitive situations on Twitter were generally less intense than on Facebook. Community managers also claimed that they often had easier situations on Twitter, as the platform is based on immediacy, where comments are in their own thread, instead of leaving a trail on the organization's page. This comes back to the ideas of Bloch (2012) when he recommends the use of Twitter as a priority for community managers in crisis management.

Thus, it appears that users actually have more power than community managers, because they can:

- Create sensitive situations by posting messages on social media;
- Quickly rally other users to their cause;
- Publish content beyond the control of the organization.

We can nevertheless qualify this power relationship, by realizing that the power of Internet users often depends on their number. Thus, in the eight case studies with an incident of the sensitive communication, the situation died down after the community manager either chose to ignore a user's comment or delete the abusive/hateful comments. We note that in all cases where the comment was deleted, the decision was based on the netiquette outlined in the organization's social media usage policy and posted on its social media platforms (Dubois et al., 2011). This is intended to ensure a civilized management of communication and preserve the organization's e-reputation. Thus, the organization usually has some control, either by blocking the user or by removing the comment. However, these techniques cannot be used after the message gets out to a wider audience, when the damage may already be done.

Despite the existence of this power struggle, it is worth mentioning that the community manager nevertheless has some control. In half of the cases, the sensitive situation is resolved after the moderator takes certain actions; whether answering the questions of the community, posting apology messages, or moderating vulgar comments, as shown in the diagram of comment management in Charest et al, (2011). In four such cases, users took the time to thank the community manager for the manner in which the situation was handled. This professionalism indicates that establishing feedback methods and interacting with users are good tools to better manage crisis situations.

The importance of "Openness" and "Level of Trust" in relationships

During the interview, the community managers noted the importance they attached to the five indicators of Ledingham and Bruning (1998) on social media, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Importance of relationship management indicators

Importance/ Criterion	Openness	Level of Trust	Implication	Investment	Commitment
Very high	11	8	4	1	3
High	5	6	7	2	8
Medium	-	2	5	11	5
Low	-	-	-	2	-
Very low	-	-	-	-	-
Total	16	16	16	16	16

At first glance, it appears that "openness" is the most important indicator for the majority of community managers, as 11 gave it a ranking of "very high" and 5 gave a ranking of "high". Some have said that openness was the primary reason for their presence on social media. We note, however, that many qualified their position on openness by explaining that, although openness and honesty were values placed on these platforms, it did not mean that the organization had a responsibility to distribute content which did not benefit it.

In second place in terms of importance was "level of trust", with 8 participants who ranked its importance "very high", and 6 "high." However, community managers did not qualify their position on level of trust, as with openness. They often explained that the credibility on social media of their organization depended largely on its level of trust, which came from the accuracy of its statements and the confidence placed in it by its community.

Lastly, the "implication", "investment" and "commitment" indicators generally received a ranking between "average" and "high". While they were not rejected by community managers, they were not viewed with the same importance. In general, these three indicators were seen as useful for increasing the size of the community or building support, while the openness and level of trust were instead seen as the main pillars of a community on the web.

However, we also note that despite its importance, commitment is left in the background by most community managers, who do not necessarily have vision or long-term goals for their use of social media, contrary to the actions prescribed by Boussicaud and Dupin (2012).

Warning signs, communication guidelines and learning

As Heiderich (2010) and Roux-Dufort (2003) remind us, crises are generally better managed if action is taken before they occur. The same is true for social media, but community managers often have significantly less time to react than a traditional public relations officer. In the case studies, 11 community managers recognized warning signs, but only five took action to prepare for managing sensitive communication.

We note that in the five cases, the community managers also established a rudimentary crisis response team, or at least consulted and involved several colleagues to help resolve the sensitive situation. According to Bloch (2012), a good way to prevent a crisis is to quickly identify opinion leaders in the community and seek out these individuals. Again, only five community managers led such actions. Recall that an organization must integrate these leaders into its organizational culture and adapt a matching internal communication structure to manage their presence on social media and survive, according to Boussicaud and Dupin (2012) and as advocated by Brian Solis in the Digital Darwinism theory drawn from the paradigm Adapt or Die (2011). However, less than half of the community managers interviewed had adopted new internal communication structure.

On the other hand, if we look at case studies focusing on the recovery and capitalization (after the acute phase of a crisis according to Roux-Dufort (2003)) of a crisis lifecycle, we note that in six cases the situation taught the organization a lesson. Of these six cases, the situation led to the creation or updating of management tools of social media (i.e., the development of netiquette or a Terms or Use policy).

This shows that in less than half of the case studies, the organization capitalized on the situation to improve its use of social media. This suggests that a culture of adapting and change is gradually beginning to be understood and put into practice within the internal communications departments of organizations.

Finally, we note that three quarters of the community managers felt that their organization had sufficiently integrated social media into its culture. We note that these comments came from community managers themselves, and should be considered biased opinions compared to other professionals in the organization, if they had been part of the study.

Management tools for sensitive communication or crises

Developing tools is a good way for an organization to prevent a crisis, either by monitoring methods or copying standard practices on social media. An inventory of the tools used by community managers is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Management tools

Monitoring Tools	Occurrence (out of 16 interviews)
Tweetdeck	9
Google Alerts	12
Hootsuite	8
Radian 6	3
Assessment Tools	
Facebook Statistics	13
Google Analytics	10
Document Management	
Governance plan	1
Policy or strategy for using social media	12
Management scheme comments	3
Editorial calendar	14
Ethics charter	5

It should be noted that the monitoring tools used by most participants are Tweetdeck and Google Alerts. These tools are both free, while Radian 6 is used mostly by private organizations, like agencies. The majority of community managers we met worked from a strategic policy for social media use (12/16). An editorial calendar is also a firmly established professional practice (14/16).

Some tools however are still not widely used, despite their relevance. This includes a code of ethics governing social media use and strategic documents of responses, for comment management. The tool is very useful for both organizations with only one community manager, who may be absent, or for a team of several community managers working together on one account for the same organization. Organizations, in addition to the designated community manager, must standardize their social media communication. These new methods, in addition to the internal communication structure proposed by Boussicaud and Dupin (2012), are likely to respond to these new needs of social media use.

As a final point, only one community manager indicated the use of a forward looking governance plan in their policies governing social media use. According to the manager, a plan with a clear policy governing communication management on social media with regards to the strategies and actions to take is an essential tool for strategic planning, just as a comprehensive communication policy is needed in any organization.

Conclusion: Discussion, limitations, and validity

Discussion

The results of the survey of the importance of “openness” and “level of trust” to community managers in their professional practice of social media, seems to indicate the relevance of at least two of the five indicators outlined by Ledignham and Bruning (1998) in their Theory of Relationship Management (the other three being involvement, investment and commitment). In addition, community managers who want to prove that they manage relationships with openness and honesty tend to apply the two-way symmetrical model developed by Grunig in 1984.

Most community managers also said that building a strong community was more important than a large reputation on social media. This once again demonstrates a desire to “connect” with users, as said by Solis (2011). We note though, that some community managers who work for governments do not seek to establish this type of relationship and prefer to use social media as a news feed, due to the nature of their organization.

However, when it comes to a having a true two-way symmetrical dialog, an organization must have listening devices in place in order to adapt to its audience or quickly identify leaders in a sensitive situation. In short, it must be on the lookout for warning signs (Heiderich, 2010; Roux-Dufort, 2003). To this effect, even if the monitoring tools are in place, we find that usually, little effort is made to examine the needs of the community, especially during a sensitive situation. Often, community managers operate on instinct, which is made worse by the fact that most participants in the study had no specific targets for their use of social media, as proposed by Boussicaud and Dupin (2012).

Nevertheless, some participants have made efforts in this direction, and attempted to identify the thought leaders in a sensitive situation and work with them. Usually, these are cases in which the situation was not only fixed, but that the users praised the community manager for his work. In light of this observation, we can assume that the community managers who best managed sensitive situations are those who have listening mechanisms already in place and seek to develop relationships of equal footing. This balanced relationship between the two parties is essential for symmetric communication, and it is assumed that the community manager can combat the balance of power of the Internet, by adapting to the user and staying alert for warning signs.

In another vein, it is interesting to note that during this research, several community managers chose to do nothing and ignored the comments, hoping that the situation would resolve itself. However, doing nothing still sends a message to users, raising questions about the long-term usefulness of this practice. According to the feedback management processes developed by Charest et al. (2011) at the OMSRP, negative comments should be deleted if they are aggressive or vulgar, or should be used as a starting point to start a conversation with the user, either publicly or privately.

Limitations and validity

The study is based on a wide variety of cases in the type of organization, the extent of sensitive communication situations, and the media on which they took place. This choice for diversity in these parameters, as well as in the selection criteria of participants, is voluntary. This helped create a diverse body of research and analysis of practices in a multitude of contexts and situations. However, this diversity does make it difficult to draw comparisons between the case studies. It was possible to make observations based on the type of sensitive communication and the type of organization, but they are difficult to generalize. Nevertheless, the objective of the research was not to generalize practices, but instead to explore.

In spite of this method, a dichotomy presented itself depending on whether the severity of the communication situations was minor or major. In minor cases, the situation came down to one or a few negative comments on a social media platform and presented little risk to the organization. In many of these situations, the community managers did nothing. In contrast, situations which presented major risks for the organization were because of a high volume of negative comments, the importance of the users in question or the issues for the e-reputation of the organization.

To better generalize a trend, it could be interesting to limit the study to one type of sensitive situation. However, it should be understood that major situations are rare within a smaller population like Quebec. Thus, although the study was initially limited only to major situations, it was necessary to expand the scope of the study, and also to de facto exclude several types of organizations where sensitive situations are less frequent, such as small organizations or public governments, where social media is used more for posting content than managing a community.

In the same vein, we also note that the study has yielded little data on the use of Twitter in sensitive situations, mainly because most studies were conducted either exclusively or primarily on Facebook. Just as with the limited data of major situations, we must understand that sensitive situations developing exclusively on Twitter are equally limited, and restricting the study to only these situations would have an impact on the diversity of the case studies. Moreover, Twitter does not have a high adoption rate in Quebec (CEFRIO, 2012: Online). Remember though, that Twitter is becoming an indispensable tool for sensitive situations, given its ability to respond rapidly and in real-time (White, 2011; Bloch 2012).

As for the results, we could be surprised that three quarters of the community managers interviewed stated that their organization had sufficiently integrated social media into its culture. However, this bias is naturally explained by their daily work in social media. In many cases, the community managers were practically the only people within organization to use social media, and had lots of freedom from senior management. Can we really say, however, that these organizations had indeed integrated social media culture?

Finally, when analyzing the importance of indicators of Ledingham and Bruning (1998), the participant's answers, though complex, were coded on a Likert scale. Even though it was easier to observe trends, there was also a loss of information from using this scale. To overcome this limitation, the repeating patterns in the results were included with the presented results.

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▶ 13

Advocating for the Strategic Behavioral Management Model by a ‘Soft Infrastructure’ of Global Stakeholder Relationship Governance: Beginning with Generic Principles and Specific Applications, Employee Communication and Integrated Reporting

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INTRODUCTION

Is there an inherent contradiction in considering the concept of a generic (able to operate in any circumstance), systemic (spread throughout, affecting society as a whole) and situational (specific combination of circumstances at a given moment) approach (system of guidelines, methods, principles, and rules ¹) to the practice of public relations: intended as the planned and aware activity by an organization to create, maintain, develop effective relationships with its influential publics to improve the quality and accelerate the implementation time of its decisions ²?

The paper attempts a somewhat rational response to this dilemma by:

- a) evoking some of the more relevant constitutive elements of the least practiced of the two prevailing public relations models (the symbolic interpretive and the strategic/behavioral stakeholder governance ones ³);
- b) analysing employee relationships and internal communication, considered as an ever growing and relevant part of public relations practice;

- c) extending the analysis to corporate reporting as an ongoing, integrated, multi-channel and multi-stakeholder process reporting organizational behaviors and intentions aimed at stimulating and facilitating stakeholder dialogue;
- d) advancing the concept of a ‘stakeholder relationship infrastructure’ as a material, conceptual and operational system integrating the two paradigms of generic principles and specific applications and global stakeholder relationship governance, and concluding that the strategic/behavioral stakeholder governance approach to public relations is more effective, forceful and responsible than the currently dominant and prevailing symbolic/interpretive one.

The paper illustrates the current status of my analysis but also summarizes, is inspired by, adapts, and interprets the substance of selected on line conversations related to these developing issues recently posted by reputed scholars and professionals in the www.prconversations.com blog. This, also to advance the idea that active and publicly accessible on-line collaboration amongst scholars and professionals can strongly accelerate the development of the existing body of knowledge. It goes without saying that I have extracted from those conversations the discourses I deemed more relevant to my thinking, and therefore I take full responsibility for potential misunderstandings or unintentionally biased selections, for which I apologize in advance.

The context:

The dominant paradigm in public relations practice today is (as Jim Grunig defines it) the “symbolic-interpretive” approach... the idea that the role of public relations is to craft messages that influence the interpretation that members of stakeholder publics hold in their minds about the behaviors of organizations. In this paradigm, the professional contributes to manage the meaning attached to the public’s interpretation of that behavior and this includes popular concepts such as image, identity, impressions, reputation, and brand. In this approach, most of the operational emphasis is on publicity, media relations, and media effects and interprets public relations prevalently in terms of unilateral messages and campaigns.

In day-to-day professional practice, the alternative and much less frequently adopted, paradigm -the ‘strategic/behavioral stakeholder governance ⁴’ one- is beginning to increase its legitimacy

1 The descriptions of the terms generic, systemic, situational and approach are from wikipedia.

2 The only relatively new aspect of this definition of public relations is the explicit connection to the organization’s decision making process and -maybe even more importantly- the idea that effective listening and understanding of stakeholder expectations enhances the much needed acceleration of the time of implementation of those decisions.

3 The two approaches have been recently rationalized by Jim Grunig (see this in his comment here <http://www.prconversations.com/index.php/2013/04/three-wise-men-homage-to-a-public-relations-paradigm/#comments>)

4 I prefer the use of the term ‘governance’ to that of management, used by Jim Grunig to avoid the, popular amongst managers, notion that an organization controls its stakeholders. This is certainly not the case, and is definitely not so in Jim Grunig’s intentions, I am sure. As I explain later in this paper, an organization’s active stakeholders decide themselves to be so. Of course, the organization can well decide not to develop relationships with any stakeholder group. But this is a legitimate decision that lies in the responsibility of the organization.

and adoption in the more aware and attentive organizations. In this approach, the role of the public relations professional is to: a) listen-to and monitor specific stakeholder publics and general societal expectations of the organization; b) interpret such expectations with management and participate in the organization's decision making process as well as in the operational implementation of those decisions; c) to involve stakeholder publics by enacting a policy/process of continued integrated multi-channel and multi-stakeholder reporting, thus facilitating and incentivating their access and active feedback; d) to ensure that each management function is coherently enabled with, and supported by, coherent communicative competencies, resources and skills with the aim of creating direct constructive relationships with each priority stakeholder group; e) to globally adopt and constantly adapt an aware and programmed generic principles and specific applications relationship policy ⁵.

a) Employee relationships and internal communication

The Stockholm Accords (2010) ⁶ indicates the alignment of external and internal communication as an essential part of any aware and effective communicative organization (a communicative organization recognizes that even the most empowered public relations director cannot realistically hope to directly 'manage' more than 10% of an organization's communicative behavior. The communication leader of the organization, in this context, plays two fundamental and strategic roles:

- a 'political' role in supporting and providing the organization's leadership with the necessary, timely and relevant information which allows it to effectively govern the value networks as well as an intelligent, constant and conscious effort to understand the relevant dynamics of society at large;
- a 'contextual' role which implies the constant delivery of communicative skills, competencies and tools to the members of those value networks so that they may improve the quality their relationships thus creating more organizational value ⁷).

The text of the Accords says that the professional's operational role in performing this specific function is to:

5 This interpretation of the approach has many analogies with Jim Grunig's but is also different. In a recent lecture at Boston University he described the model with the following terms: Public relations participates in strategic decision-making and organizational governance to help manage the behavior of the organization. Public relations is a bridging activity to build relationships with stakeholders rather than a set of messaging activities designed to buffer the organization from stakeholders. Emphasis is on two-way and symmetrical communication of many kinds to provide publics a voice in management decisions and to facilitate dialogue between management and publics.

6 The full text, the various phases of the collaborative process as well as a glossary of the Stockholm Accords can be perused here www.stockholmaccords.org

7 From the Accords glossary

Oversee the development and implementation of internal and external communications to assure open listening, consistency of content and accurate presentation of the organization's identity. Research, develop, monitor and adjust the organization's communicative behavior. Create and nurture a knowledge base that includes social and psychological sciences. Manage and apply research to implement evaluation and measurement programs for continued improvement. ⁸

In planning and implementing relationships with internal and border publics (not only employees but also , consultants, suppliers, volunteers and others required to fulfill the organization's purpose ⁹), the 'communicative organization' prepares ad hoc programs and activities –today often involving a 'change management' effort- by initially clustering this 'universe' by applying selected sense making indicators -from Carl Weick: making sense of what we see and hear- to ensure that those identified groupings be motivated to voluntarily and actively participate in a 'relationship space' -physical and/or digital- provided by the organization to allow a better understanding and interaction with factors such as:

- how the internal community comprehends, accepts, communicates and achieves the organization's strategy;
 - how – and how well – organizational leaders and internal influencers collaborate and communicate with stakeholders;
 - how knowledge and policy are being shared;
 - how processes and structures are identified, developed and enhanced;
- and, most importantly:
- how the organization's reputation depends largely on the actions taken by internal stakeholders¹⁰.

In identifying relevant indicators, these could traditionally relate to:

- a) the publics's contractual relationship with the organization (blue, white collars, management...);
 - b) traditional market segmentation (identifying segments with similar needs, wants, or demands i.e. behavioral, demographic, psychographic, and geographical ...),
 - c) adoption and adaptation of the generally accepted digital influence approaches (i.e. influencers, activists...),
 - d) adoption and adaptation of the generally accepted concepts of niches, of tribes...
- Each of these approaches may be investigated by ad hoc questionnaires and/or focus groups.

8 From the Accords final text

9 From the Accords final text

10 From the Accords final text

However, I believe that each member of this internal/boundary 'universe' owns a personal, a professional and a territorial profile...; and -on the other hand- each communicative organization also owns a distinctive industry profile and, obviously, a specific corporate profile.... This leads to the identification of five different profiles that combine and interact to form that very relationship 'space' that the internal communicator creates, enables, facilitates and nurtures inspired by the material consequences of the relatively new concepts of 'network society' and of 'value networks' that, again belong to the above mentioned Stockholm Accords (In the network society, the traditional and consolidated strategic planning process from the late seventies of the 20th century, based on Michael Porter's value chain, mostly linear and material, is at least integrated by another planning process based on value networks. This recognizes that a substantial part of the value created by the organization is generated today from fuzzy (nonlinear) and immaterial networks that normally disrupt the distinction between internal and external publics. Members of these networks play specific and value added roles defined by their relationships rather than by their formal position. The generated value is based on the quality of the relationships that exist between members of each network and on the quality of the relationships which exist between the various networks ¹¹).

Furthermore, by assigning a value to this 'clustering' effort, I can also investigate the quality of relationships within and amongst these very networks, on the basis of the four traditional trust, commitment, satisfaction and power balance indicators.

This implies that the internal communicator is required to master specific competencies and skills such as:

- mapping the above mentioned five profiles;
- mapping networks, cultures and subcultures;
- mapping the specific territory (adopting the legal/institutional, economic, political, active citizenship, socio cultural and media systems indicators).

All this enables the creation, monitoring and constant updating of an ad hoc employee relationship dashboard.

And finally, this ensures that whatever content is developed to argue the organization's position may be adapted to attract the attention (and to an acceptable extent ¹² satisfy the expectations) of , and stimulate dialogue-with, very specific stakeholder groups.

11 From the Accords glossary

12 I would like here to underline that the listening to stakeholder expectations process in no way implies that management needs in any case to satisfy those expectations. No red stakeholder carpet here. What I mean is that by correctly interpreting stakeholder expectations management not only improves that quality of its decisions but also can prepare in advance for stakeholder behaviors and thus reduce time consuming resilience in implementation.

Within this operational relationship "space," a given employee populace of a given organization can be "clustered" into at least the five "profiles" listed above. Each of which, obviously, intersects with one another.

According to each specific objective the employee relations professional wishes to achieve, the related contents and available tools and channels may be differently mixed and deployed in each situation.

This is not—as some may think—an "easy way out," as it would imply the use of professional skills and competencies that today are not normally in the internal communication practitioner's domain

To take one common example, with one clear and specific change-management project, the employee communicator is presumably well versed with the organization's sectorial and corporate cultures and will focus attention on those mission and values, inasmuch as they impact on the specific objective being pursued. S/he then identifies the specific employee populace involved in that objective, listens to their opinions and expectations related to the pursued objective and integrates these findings into the personal, professional and territorial profiles.

All this knowledge, in turn, creates an overall communicative infrastructure ¹³ that enables a flexible adaptation of multiple contents, releasable through an ever-growing list of tools and channels selected on the basis of priority indicators. For example: interactivity, flexibility, time impact, credibility, reach and so on.

A suggested approach to evaluate the effectiveness of this effort is that, once the universe and the specific groups are identified, the quality of existing relationships and of the prepared communication contents be pre-tested with samples from each 'group' focusing on:

- trust in the relationship
- satisfaction with the relationship
- commitment to the relationship
- power balance or control mutuality in the relationship

as well as:

- credibility of source (if the primary source is deemed not credible by the intended cluster, then the communicator may decide to select another primary source or change/abandon the program before implementing it)

13 The idea of infrastructure is explained in the final part of my paper. Suffice it now to say that this typical 'hard' term is used here to imply that also 'soft' practices like internal communication have 'structure' that hold other elements together.

- credibility of content (if the content is deemed not credible by the intended cluster, then the communicator may decide to modify the content or change/abandon the program before implementing it)
- familiarity of content (if the content is either entirely unfamiliar or entirely familiar then the communicator may decide to either modify the content or change/abandon the program before implementing it).

This double pre-test (adopting the co-orientation approach can also be very revealing) allows to determine and share with management, specific relationship and communication objectives to be achieved in a given timeframe with given resources. Instead, the post-tests following the actual implementation of the program, will give a good idea of where, how and if something went wrong in the process. What is more, this approach to evaluation allows the communicator to negotiate, before the rollout of the program, a well-deserved incentive scheme with management or client, if and when results exceed the negotiated objectives.

This approach to internal communication, in part expressed on the www.prconversations.com blog in a recent interview to the author by Rachel Miller, stimulated some relevant comments and reactions by reputed professionals and scholars ¹⁴.

Sean Williams –amongst other precious suggestions, including citing the excellent paper by Brad Rawlins ¹⁵- suggests that cultural dynamics are a very difficult path to tread, as organizations frequently cast their cultures as ‘aspirational’ and, often, their current state is less positive than stated. Therefore, he adds, it could be less desirable for organizations to explore and openly discuss culture with their employees. Of course, he also says that self-identification or some sort of cultural assessment might well be revealing, but wonders if it can be done quickly and at reasonable cost. Clearly exploring the strength and health of organization/employee relationships is essential but, again –says Williams- the need to use surveys leads to issues of time and expense. Even if it would be very useful to measure not only the self-assessment, but also the differences between that and perceptions of other relationships... He also adds that flexibility and adaptability are urgent requirements and concludes that one really hard thing is the value assessment of the employee communication function — ‘how many things are we doing that add no appreciable value to the organization, when we could instead be enacting a more research-based, more strategic set of tactics that lead to better results...’.

14 The full discussion may be accessed here <http://www.prconversations.com/index.php/2013/02/selecting-stakeholder-groups-for-effective-communication-in-the-21st-century/>

15 <http://www.instituteforpr.org/topics/prioritizing-stakeholders/>

Heather Yaxley instead posits that often internal communicators seem to view employees a bit like an entomologist views insects. Hence, that idea of studying ‘them’ presents both ethical but also conceptual issues. Yaxley prefers Cutlip’s et al idea that ‘effective public relations starts with listening’ and Covey’s principle: ‘seek first to understand, then to be understood’ by ‘empathetic listening’. Rather than researching employees as psychological subjects -she asks- shouldn’t internal communicators be advocating methodologies that are primarily about listening and understanding those with whom we seek to communicate and engage? Perhaps then, management (and the very practitioners) can also come to understand themselves and their role better. She also wonders about the role of ethnography in respect of understanding cultural phenomena and indicates an emerging body of literature around ethnography and PR which might be useful to consider and cites, as an example, the paper by Everett and Johnston: Toward an ethnographic imperative in public relations research ¹⁶.

Also in response to Heather Yaxley, Sean Williams goes on to argue that the methods by which we seek to understand, prior to merely Sending Out Stuff, have so far been applied in distinctly haphazard fashion and many organizations have an anti-intellectual bias in their internal communication, a lack of desire to listen for fear of discovering a need for change. A second item that inhibits listening is the concept that culture is warm and fuzzy. Williams cites one organization where the top leader says, “culture eats strategy for breakfast” and means it. Others see culture as an intangible “something” that is subject to manipulation from above, rather than a state emerging from below. Hence his previous comment about ‘aspirational’ cultures — making statements as regard the desired state as though that state was in place rather than in some future. Finally, he says, there also is the problem of executives who don’t understand communication as a business process, seeing IC instead as Dilbert’s boss once said: “Teamwork is a lot of people doing what I say.”

Stimulated by these considerations I argue that:

- the ethics issue is certainly relevant, but any professional who analyses, studies, interviews other individuals, writes about these studies and decides on how, when and if s/he is impacting employees’ day to day lives, raises ethical questions. If the professional practices transparency it is clear that -at least in public relations, but the author believes that the same applies also to other more mainstream research professionals- this has to do with informing at least the selected interlocutors -before activating any analysis effort- about ‘who I am, who I represent, what my objective is and how I plan to get there’.
- the listening issue is also relevant in as much as every effective communication process today implies that the role of listening is more important than that of expression. But very few scholars and educators are capable of acting on or teaching about professional listening. In 2005 in

16 <http://www.journals.elsevier.com/public-relations-review/> november 2012

Trieste -long before 'diversity' turned into the almost intolerable buzz-word it has become today- the Global Alliance held a World PR Forum dedicated to the issue 'communicating for diversity, with diversity, in diversity'. Behind this was the idea that one-with-one communication is the most effective; that each person is diverse from the other; and that today it is at least theoretically possible to do this. Amongst the most gifted lecturers was Prof. Pieraldo Rovatti (Italian philosopher) the only authentic and authorized interpreter of Franco Basaglia's famous listening practice (Basaglia was Europe's greatest analyst of the 50's and 60's). Forum participants learned how to professionally listen: a)- move out of yourself and your knowledge; b)- collect all that you can from the other you are listening to, in his/her words and signs; c)- obtain from your interlocutor agreement on the assembled sequence and interrelationships; d)- return into your knowledge and yourself and interpret... then check again.

- the issue of the 'aspirational' aspect of corporate culture -therefore unlikely to be discussed between management and employees- appears to be transiting from a one-way-top-down process to a much more engaging left-right-left one, this with specific reference to the Page Society's Building Beliefs¹⁷ work, and Anne Gregory's challenging first part of the Melbourne Mandate¹⁸ (defining an organizations character and values), both of which can be extremely helpful for the employee communicator.

Summing up this part:

It is clear that the specific role of the internal communicator within the 'symbolic-interpretive' approach to public relations -in the best of cases- relies mostly in crafting messages, in adapting or creating channels of communication from the organization to its however segmented employees.

In the context of the 'strategic behavioral stakeholder governance' approach, instead, the role of the internal communicator -again, in the best of cases- relies mostly in identifying and applying situational indicators to listen to the employee populace on issues related to specific organizational objectives, and in involving each resulting cluster in communicating-with programs that create real-life/digital conversation 'spaces'. Thus allowing the organization to improve and evaluate the quality of its relationships as well as of its communicative contents, and accelerating and more effectively implementing the pursuit of its objectives.

b) The integrated reporting process and the Janus approach

Amongst the many elements that have led to the recent and current global economic, social and political meltdown, observers and commentators believe that organizational reporting practices and standards specifically related to listed companies (yet -in my opinion- the argument, even more appropriately, is extendable to most other social, private and public sector organizations) have

grossly misled not only investors, shareholders and regulators (but -by extension of the author's analogy- also citizens, voters, consumers and all other stakeholders) in a reliable assessment and interpretation of the material sources of organizational and societal creation of value.

Limiting the analysis to listed companies, it has been well proven that current corporate reporting standards do not reflect the recent dramatic rise of immaterial (intangible) versus material (tangible) components of value creation. Yet -when considering other social, political or public sector organizations- it is at least as evident that, by enlarge, their reporting standards and outcomes are way obsolete and in large part equally misleading and generally ignored by their stakeholder expectations, who have, in turn, been dramatically driven by the 'always on' and self-empowering force of current global communication technology.

The transition of an organization's reporting from a 'nice to have' (or mandatory by existing regulations) activity, to gradually becoming an essential strategic component of its license to operate as well as of its very legitimacy in markets and society-at-large, has stimulated the quest for a substantial reconfiguration of the organization.

The ongoing governance, economic, social and environmental performances of the organization -when conceived, imagined and implemented as an integrated, sense making, multi stakeholder, multichannel reporting process- fully includes all operational functions across current organizational charts and necessarily involves them in a concerted and collaborative effort.

This process not only leads the organization to adopt a common and interoperable language to allow a coherent evaluation of its general and specific indicators of value creation, but also induces a radical overhaul of its communication worldview aimed at improving the quality of the relationships with all its stakeholders, fully blurring any specific traditional distinction between corporate and marketing, between internal and external, or between advertising and publicity.

Thus the evoked metaphor of Janus, the two faced pagan Roman god, where -in the organization's body vitalized by the same blood circulation system- one head is mandated to ensure the material parts of its value creation, while the other is equally mandated to ensure the immaterial part of its value creation.

All this leads to a reconfiguration of the organizational structure, where the stakeholder/public relations function -if and when empowered by adequate skills and competencies- is the most likely and probable coordinating hub for the creation of that immaterial value and its representation with stakeholder publics and society-at-large.

17 <http://www.awpagesociety.com/news/arthur-w-page-society-unveils-new-model-for-corporate-communications/>

18 <http://melbournemandate.globalalliancepr.org/>

The concept of integrated reporting was ignited only in 2010 by authors Bob Eccles and Michael Krzus in the book titled: 'One Report-integrated reporting for a sustainable strategy' ¹⁹. This book stimulated some of the more advanced and aware components of the global accounting, auditing and public relations professions under the endorsement of the UK's Prince Charles' Accounting for Sustainability ²⁰ and Holland's Global Reporting Initiative ²¹. The concept was then rationalized by South Africa's King3 Report on Governance ²² and subsequently materialized by the Johannesburg Stock Exchange's decision that all listed companies either comply or explain the filing of an integrated report ²³; and is currently being actively advocated and developed at a global level by the IIRC (International Integrated Reporting Council) ²⁴. In this still early phase the IIRC's effort is mostly focused on advocating the need for new reporting standards amongst the investor community, regulators and governments. But, as already mentioned, the implications of the ongoing process are forceful for all other organizations in today's global society.

This concept of integrated reporting is highly relevant for the legitimization and consolidation of the strategic/behavioral approach to stakeholder relations, but is also significant for the future of the currently dominant symbolic/interpretive approach, inasmuch as it is likely that in the near future (and in some countries like Sweden, Denmark, Holland this has become a reality) at least large organizations will be induced by norms and regulations to adopt the integrated reporting process, thus inevitably stimulating a necessary transition to the strategic/behavioral approach.

A highly relevant feature of the King3 Report ²⁵ implies that Boards of Directors take full responsibility for the governance of stakeholder relationships by situationally deciding -issue per issue- which stakeholder groups' expectations and operative options merit -in the interest of organizational and societal sustainability- more attention by management, as it proceeds in defining and implementing its strategies and tactics.

This clear option for a transition from the traditional shareholder to a stakeholder model of corporate governance paves the way for the strategic/behavioral stakeholder governance approach, as it empowers the stakeholder/public relations function to identify, listen to, monitor and interpret stakeholder and societal expectations... while in parallel supplying communicative skills,

19 <http://www.wiley.com/WileyCDA/WileyTitle/productCd-0470587512.html>

20 <http://www.accountingforsustainability.org/>

21 <https://www.globalreporting.org/Pages/default.aspx>

22 <http://www.iodsa.co.za/?page=kingIII> and <http://www.iodsa.co.za/?page=King3>

23 <https://www.saica.co.za/tabid/695/itemid/2344/language/en-ZA/An-integrated-report-is-a-new-requirement-for-list.aspx>

24 www.theiirc.org

25 See chapter 8 of the report

competencies and resources to all other management functions, enabling them to coherently and directly create, develop and improve the quality of their relationships with specifically relevant stakeholder groups.

c) generic principles and specific applications

Management decisions in pursuit of the organization's objectives induce consequences on stakeholders, whose behaviors, in turn, induce consequences on those management decisions. Stakeholder behavior thus creates issues the organization deals with by cultivating stakeholder relationships. The outcomes then induce consequences on the achievement of those objectives as well as on organizational reputation .

It is impossible for an organization to apply whatever generic principles (the characteristics which define excellent public relations), if not in the operational context of specific applications (the implementation of public relations activities within particular contexts ²⁶); while, conversely, the latter cannot be effective unless embedded into the former ²⁷.

Based on the increasingly interrelated dynamics of public relations and the ever-changing environment in which it operates, I suggest five priority generic principles ²⁸, and six specific applications that need to be considered in understanding the operative implications of day-to-day stakeholder relationship practice.

- public relations is a unique management function that facilitates organizations in developing effective relationships with stakeholder publics as well as their overall operative environment;
- the value of public relations can be determined by analyzing the dynamic quality of relationships the organization established with its stakeholder publics, as well as by the improvement of the quality of the organization's decision making process enabled by the listening processes related to stakeholder expectations and environmental scanning;
- public relations serves a technical, a managerial as well as a strategic role;
- public relations is powered by professionals not subordinated to other management functions, who supply, facilitate, enable, distribute and support relationship and communication competencies to all other management functions of the organization;

26 Both cursive citations are taken from Jim Grunig

27 The total interdependence between the two 'horns' of the paradigm is one of my obsessions: all practice cases I have been involved in implementing indicate that this is mandatory

28 These five are not the same as Grunig normally indicates see res://ieframe.dll/acr_error.htm#prismjournal.org,http://www.prismjournal.org/fileadmin/Praxis/Files/globalPR/GRUNIG.pdf

- public relations is two way and tendentially symmetrical, values diversity as a specific added value to the relationship, and is based on a responsible communicating-with, rather than a communicating-to platform.

Specific applications



Embracing this conceptual framework of generic principles and specific applications delivers a number of (strategic) organizational benefits:

- accelerating the institutionalization process for the public relations function within the organization;
- supporting the development of a distributed (central, but also peripheral) managerial monitoring dashboard in each territory;
- affirming stakeholder relationship governance as the overall responsibility of contemporary public relations.

Organizations may understand the need to apply generic principles within their public relations operations on a global basis, but it is more complex, challenging and not fully clear, how they should identify the basic public relations system of a given territory which is correlated to the

specific applications part of the paradigm. To be effective, organizations need to periodically analyse and ‘dashboard’ a territory’s legal/institutional, economic, political, socio-cultural, active citizenship and media system specificities. However, my practical experience of case studies where this is done with satisfaction, suggests that:

- there may be other significant variables within a given territory that need to be considered, leading to a situational approach. For example, the religious system of a territory may need to be considered an autonomous and forceful variable rather than solely as part of the socio-cultural system;
- the correlation and interdependence between the generic principles and specific applications need to be explained in terms of operational mechanisms. Again, these may be ‘situational’ in the sense that, to be fully effective, they need to fit into the organization’s specific culture, sub- and counter-cultures.

Four key questions are:

1. Does the paradigm apply only to public relations?

Potentially, the concept could similarly apply to any other management function or profession with the caveat that relevant generic principles and specific applications be specifically researched. In a recent intense discussion on the www.prconversations.com ²⁹ blog, Heather Yaxley suggested ‘to come at this question from the other direction – which is whether it would be beneficial to start from some generic principles of management and then contextualize these to public relations while the author, agreeing, responded that he had based the concept on his (albeit limited) knowledge of management, its literature as well as his personal experience’.

2. Do the generic principles also need to reflect the unique characteristics of the organization as well as those of the industry in which it operates?

The author believes that ensuring effective public relations practices around the world, organizations need to reflect three sets of analysis related to generic principles: a) the specific practice (PR) and its global principles; b) the organization’s specific and unique characteristics that are globally valid; and c) the industry’s specific and unique characteristics that are also globally valid. Again Yaxley wonders ‘why this would be a specific consideration for public relations. Should we not instead engage with understanding at a strategic level how organizations structure and approach their

29 There are three successive posts on this conversations with many interesting and enlightening comments:
<http://www.prconversations.com/index.php/2013/04/developing-a-worldview-of-public-relations/>
<http://www.prconversations.com/index.php/2013/04/generic-principles-and-specific-applications-in-public-relations/>
<http://www.prconversations.com/index.php/2013/04/three-wise-men-homage-to-a-public-relations-paradigm/>

reputation, relationships, communications etc to reflect their unique characteristics? Rather than looking at PR in isolation' she suggests 'it is more helpful to integrate consideration of PR with the wider operational and conceptual dimensions of organizations. Mintzberg for example has written on developing a worldly as opposed to a global view, which could be relevant.' Agreeing with these suggestions, the author adds that the globalization theory, as it has been practiced by large organizations (including ngo's, universities, transnational public institutions, not only in private sector), has so far failed to move out of an ethnocentric worldview (think global and act local in the best of circumstances).

In his view a situational and intertwined approach could possibly not only apply to organizational public relations, but also to many other fields whose traditional worldviews are increasingly being questioned.

3. Should other territorial systems be analyzed to determine specific applications?

Are there other territorial systems in addition to the six identified? And, should these be situationally identified? For example in some countries religion can well be considered as part of the socio-cultural system, while in others it has such a prominent role to warrant an autonomous analysis. Also the language variable, always given for granted, could well deserve an autonomous role as well, given its specific communicative relevance.

Yaxley points out that 'this thinking seems to connect to the 'boundary spanning'role. Certainly PR can contribute to that, but its lamentable engagement with research seems to counter any claims of expertise in the knowledge and insight field , leading companies to turn to business/marketing functions for such an insight. She also adds the question if PR itself is operating at this level in terms of providing the insight into specific areas such as reputation, relationships, and so on?' The author again agrees on a full interdisciplinary approach, but underlines that he has noticed, in his personal and professional experience, that public relations functions are becoming highly sophisticated in their analytical processes (much more so than consultancies or agencies). Robert Wakefield, professor at Brigham Young University and one of the first thinkers of the generic/specific paradigm twenty some years ago, adds that 'when working on the generic/specific theory two-plus decades ago, I felt transnational organizations should not EITHER concentrate on the central issues of mission, global strategy, etc, OR, let local entities do whatever they wanted, which was what literature of the time suggested. To ensure effective communication all over the world, some combination of the two was needed. Furthermore, I felt it has to be wrong to hire 'local' expertise to worry only about local issues, while central staff concentrated on global imperatives. What a waste of great talent, it seemed to me. When I worked for a transnational, I tried to create as much horizontal teamwork as possible, to get the best minds and thinking contributing to our global strategy in addition to handling their daily local issues.'

I then suggested that 'the first generic principle of public relations should be that the application of the Excellence theory is not effective if not related to the territorial infrastructure... while, the first specific application should be to connect to the general principles. This would close the loop – at least in theory.'

Wakefield goes on to explain: 'when I started thinking of generic/specific, I was thinking that within each organization, there must be "central" or overall principles and values that continually identify and advance the mission and purpose of that organization; but as the organization spreads throughout the world, it also confronts, always and daily, very dynamic and distinctive environmental factors—and thus there is more or less a continual tug-of-war between those two imperatives. Instead, today I would say that organizational PR units must 'think globally AND locally, and act locally AND globally', all at the same time. I also believe, he adds, social media have changed the equation for both levels, for the simple reason that they can instantaneously surpass any one locale and create global problems for an organization no matter where an issue arises. At the 'generic' level, I agree it is important to expand the universals of the field to accommodate the uniqueness of each organization. For example, wouldn't an organization that is highly consumer oriented have different 'general' characteristics than one that is mostly a scientific organization dealing with a much smaller set of stakeholders, or a business-to-business organization?'

Jim Grunig added this important note to the conversation: 'I think the crucial thread to this discussion is the question of whether the generic principles apply at the level of the profession or at the level of the organization. I agree with Rob (Wakefield) that the generic principles were intended to apply to the profession. These generic principles were based on theoretical principles derived from the Excellence study but also on years of research on a number of middle range theories (such as strategic management, roles, models, gender, evaluation, etc.) that we incorporated into the Excellence principles . I still believe that the Excellence principles are generic to the profession. Of course, it is still possible to add new principles or to subtract some of the old ones.... Your conversation also raises the intriguing idea, however, that there might be principles that are "general" to each organization that it should incorporate into the organization of its communication function and its strategic communication planning... I think such general principles should be derived from the more generic professional principles—specifically from the strategic behavioral management model that describes two of the most important generic principles—that public relations should be part of the strategic management of the organization and that communication programs should be managed strategically (ie, developed for specific publics, have specific objectives, and that these objectives should be measured to evaluate the success of the programs). For general principles, then –Grunig adds- I think organizations need to decide the publics (stakeholders if you prefer) with which they need relationships, the problems (ie, consequences) experienced by the publics that make such relationships necessary, and the issues that might result in the relationship... This is where the specific applications come in. One could also attempt such middle-range thinking for each of the other generic principles.'

For example, the organization of the public relations function probably will be different for consumer product companies (where marketing dominates), financial companies (where the stock market or government dominate), non-profit organizations (where donors dominate), government (where ideologically derived publics develop), public diplomacy (where diplomatic relationships must be mixed with relationships with local publics). The symmetrical principle would differ in organizations with authoritarian rather than participative cultures and where the public relations function has been institutionalized as a symbolic-interpretive function rather than a strategic management function. Recently, though I have begun to think about the symmetrical principles in terms of 'relationship cultivation strategies'. Different types of organizations will find different symmetrical cultivation strategies to be 'generally' useful in their public relations efforts.'

Also based on this conversation, I suggest that:

Effective global stakeholder relationship governance of any social, private or public organization today requires a situational and therefore dynamic conceptual managerial approach which defines an overall and global professional relationship infrastructure that includes generic guidelines related to:

- the public relations practice per se,
- the unique characteristics of the sector in which the organization operates,
- the unique characteristics of that very organization,

d) On global stakeholder relationship governance

(this chapter updates, revises and collates selected paragraphs from a recent (2010) paper the author wrote for the Institute for Public Relation's website with the title 'global stakeholder relationship governance' ³⁰)

Only a few years ago any experienced public relations or communication professional working for a New Delhi retail firm would benchmark ³¹ and research activities of direct competitors; the local environment (national, at best), and proceed to roll out a program as coherently as possible with the client's organizational culture, the perceived expectations of the community and his/her own professional experience and responsibility.

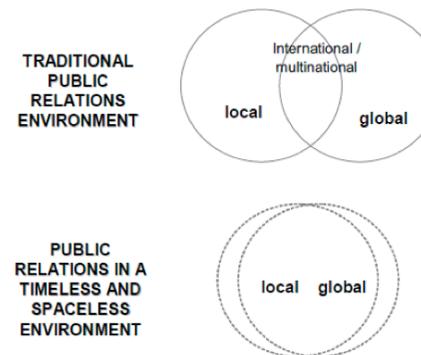
The same would happen in Milwaukee, in Dresden, in Capetown or in Buenos Aires. Similarly, any effective organization actively involved in international operations, with headquarters in any one of those cities, would probably employ a central coordinating manager for international

communication and -but not necessarily - a network of consultancies based in the more relevant countries.

Alternatively, and/or in parallel, that manager would stimulate (and eventually participate in) the selection of local communication professionals by local management. This was business as usual.

As international economic activities have since greatly expanded in every country, a growing number of organizations and professionals have begun to make their way in the transition from traditionally international, to global ³² communication practices..and this because it is today increasingly evident that communication (interpreted here as an organizational management function and practice ³³) may no longer be approached from a local, national, regional or even an international perspective, but only from a global one, even if and when its activities are local.

Porosity and discontinuity in the profession:
why Public Relations today is either global or is not



32 In this context, while international implies at least two nation states involved in the process, the term global is used in the sense that effective practice implies, on the one hand, considering the whole world as a networked scenario, and on the other, its specific impact on each specific territory in which the practice is implemented

33 There are many different perspectives in a conceptual approach to the discipline. This author opts for an organizational, systemic and relational perspective, however recognizing that a societal perspective is highly relevant to a better understanding of the role of public relations in society (i.e. the critical and postmodernist approaches). By definition, an organisation is a relationship system of different subjects who confer resources and competencies to achieve a common aim. To pursue that aim, the organization develops relationships with other subjects whose attitudes, opinions and, most importantly, behaviors impact on its achievement and/or are themselves impacted by the organization's activities. Also, well beyond the mere (but difficult) action of balancing the organization's interest with the often conflicting interests of its various stakeholder groups, the organization needs always to consider as central, in the overall balance of the different interests involved in a specific issue, the public interest (i.e. the existing norms integrated with active citizenship expectations).The public relations function, peer to other management functions, supports the organization in governing those relationship systems.

30 <http://www.instituteforpr.org/topics/global-stakeholder-relationship-governance/>

31 For many, and where rigidly interpreted, benchmarking may become a road to mediocrity: one learns how others have solved their problems, but not necessarily your problems. Of course, benchmarking is very useful, but needs to be handled with care, caution and a critical mindset, as with many other things, including the contents of this paper.

In parallel, contemporary public relations has also come to be interpreted by organizations as relationships with publics rather than, as once may have been, the opposite of private relations (i.e. relations in public).

In recent years, publics have become more and more situational³⁴; they change and fluctuate in search of improbable certainties and points of reference. They aggregate and disaggregate, in relation to the dynamics of an organization's general aims and/or specific objectives.

The increasing pressure of these publics on the organization mandates that organizations at least listen to them, and to better communicate with them. This is the core element of Edward Bernays. Scientific persuasion model, which, in the early twenties of the last century, initiated the dominance of marketing in social, political and commercial developments of western societies. It also changed the essence of the organization so that it may better develop relationships with those publics, whose quality has become an important new indicator of both organizational and societal value.

Since the seventies of the last century, organizations have based their strategic planning on the Porterian (from Harvard Business School's Professor Michael Porter) linear value chain model where phase after phase, value is created by material and predictable actions. The organization, therefore, analyzing the value components of each phase (from procurement to transformation to innovation to marketing to the end user) identifies where improvements in value are needed. In today's network society, mostly driven by knowledge and 24/7 communication, this .value chain.

Model tends progressively to turn into a .value network. model, based on fuzzy and immaterial relationships (as Swedish Business professor Sven Hamrefors has recently conceptualised³⁵) amongst the actors of the networks and amongst the networks themselves.

Thus, the ability to effectively govern relationships, within and amongst networks as well as with society at large, has now become the utmost value, as it reinforces, nurtures and develops the organization's so increasingly important 'license to operate'³⁶.

34 It is important here to acknowledge that Jim Grunig's situational theory of publics dates back to 1966!

35 Please visit <http://www.sverigesinformationsforening.se/in-english/research-statistics/business-effective-communication.aspx>

36 I much prefer this denomination of what others call reputation, identity, image, for two reasons: a) an Organization's license to operate implies that its concession derives from other sources (in our case, stakeholder publics) and is not self driven; b) the other terms used all have different meanings and one of the specific competencies of communicators should be use words appropriately. Identity is the snapshot of an organization (mission, vision, values, strategy and

In the mid 1980s, corporate governance concerns began to emerge in organizations induced by the juxtaposition of the traditional and descriptive anglosaxon shareholder model, with the more normative European stakeholder model.

The growing adoption by organizations of the stakeholder model has since made much progress and very recently the South African corporate lawyer and Supreme Court Judge Mervyn King rationalized in his King 3 Report that relationships with stakeholders have now become a primary responsibility of the board of directors, and that management needs to regularly monitor and govern those stakeholders by reporting specifically to the board in each of its meetings.

This is one reason why most traditional and even innovative public relations practices have now become stakeholder relationships and, as the organization may not manage stakeholders but govern their relationships with them, this paper is dedicated to the art and science of stakeholder relationships governance from an organizational, systemic and relational perspective, recognizing the societal perspective and integrating this with the value network society model of the organization.

The argument is that in absence of such a global and relationship based perspective, a professional communicator is no longer able to effectively perform at any level (local, regional, national, international), and this is mostly due to the embedded interactions between accelerated and diverse social, economic, political and technology dynamics.

It is the stakeholder who decides to be one, and it is not up to the organization to decide who its stakeholders are. Of course, the organization may freely decide to ignore, to involve (i.e. allow access and input) or to actually engage (i.e. actively attempt to include in its decision making processes) some or all of its stakeholders, but this is a management decision.

Also, even a merely local organization may not practice effective public relations if not in the framework of what a growing number of professionals and/or scholars define as the generic principles and specific applications paradigm. This implies the adoption of few generic principles thoroughly embedded in the organization's day to day practice, wherever it may be located in the world. They apply only if and when that same practice is firmly grounded on, and influenced by, the highly dynamic and specific public relations infrastructure of a given territory (specific applications).

communication); Image is what publics perceive of that identity (organizational behaviors and communication); Reputation is what publics say to others about the organization (it is a judgment).

I purposely did not say .country. because the infrastructure greatly varies from location to location even within a same nation. For example, Beijing and the southern territories of China; Lagos or the oil field communities of Nigeria; New York or Nebraska; Milano or the southern region of Sicily.

The identification, the understanding and the practical adoption of this paradigm is the first of the two main subjects of this paper, written with the overall aim of supporting an organization.s and/or a professional's growing need to practice effective stakeholder relationships governance.

In parallel to this first subject, the 21st Century .discontinuity. in our traditional understanding of the concepts of time and space was induced by the acceleration of a globalised environment driven and by 24/7 communication technologies. This has led to the current economic and social turmoil, which have caught national, international or transnational governments, agencies, organizations and institutions with their pants down.. This illustrates their inability to agree on global governance standards, at least for those four tsunamis . the financial, the migration, the climate and the organized crime disruptions which are seriously destabilizing our societies in many areas of the world.

Consequently, the leadership of every social, public or private organization is well aware that its managerial business as usual. approach - justifiably consolidated by 15 years of continued economic growth (at least in western societies)- is no longer viable.

A similar awareness of course applies, at the very least, to those professions who rely on supplying counsel and services to organizations: from legal to accounting, from management consulting, to marketing. to communication and/or public relations.

It is becoming increasingly clear that, in parallel with a continued process of institutionalization of the specific function ³⁷ shown by an unprecedented increase of direct reporting to CEO's in organizations from every corner of the world, the principal contributions of public relations to organizational value rely:

- a) on their ability to collect, understand and interpret to organizational leadership stakeholder and societal expectations, with the result of improving the quality of management decisions, thus helping to accelerate the time necessary for their implementation;
- b) in their ability to ensure that the organization introduce processes to effectively govern stakeholder relationships;
- c) on their ability to facilitate and enable all other organizational functions to govern their respective stakeholder relationship systems.

Therefore, the effective governance of stakeholder relationships is the new global frontier of the public relations and communication profession in which the, however complex and important, process of communication is one, and possibly the most relevant, of the available tools to enable stakeholder relationships ³⁸.

The first ten years of this century have ignited a .new beginning. of the public relations profession in its day-to-day practice, conceptualization and public perception [table 2].

Outlook on the shift towards a new global public relations approach

	PURPOSE	APPROACH	OBJECTIVE	VALUE
20th century practice	Persuasion	Communicating-to audiences	Align audiences to organizational interests by disseminating messages to key-publics	Outcome: Effectively modify publics' opinions, attitudes, decisions and behaviours
21st century practice	Dialogue	Relationships-with stakeholder publics	Improve quality of organizational decision-making processes by listening to stakeholder expectations	Outgrowth: Effectively govern stakeholder relationship systems

³⁷ In October of 2008 Euprera (the European public relations research and education association) held its annual Congress in Milano on the institutionalization of the public relations function. Together with some 60 accepted papers from scholars and professionals from many European and non-European countries, research reports were presented from Italy, the United States and Europe indicating a strong and unprecedented acceleration worldwide of public relations directors from private, public and social organizations reporting directly to the CEO.

For details visit www.euprera2008.com

³⁸ As already mentioned, the Institute of Directors of South Africa has recently issued its King 3 report on corporate governance (from Mervyn King, chairman of the ad hoc commission). Chapter 8 of that report clearly states that the governance of stakeholder relationships directly falls within the role of the board of directors. To access the report (www.iodsa.co.za) and to better understand this author.s point of view visit <http://www.prconversations.com/?p=532>

In the whole second part of the 20th Century, a substantial part of public relations practice consisted in communicating predetermined messages to specific audiences, in the effort to persuade them into modifying opinions, attitudes, decisions and behaviors so that they be so more closely aligned to those desired by the organization (private, social or public). Today, one may see a sweeping transition towards a different practice, focused on the development of relationships (rather than communication) with carefully identified organizational stakeholders (rather than audiences).

These relationships allow organizations to better understand and interpret stakeholder and societal³⁹ expectations, thus substantially contributing to the improvement of the quality of management's decisions, and at the same time, accelerating the implementation times.

By ensuring a permanent stakeholder dialogue, based on contents rather than messages, aimed at convincing rather than persuading, both the organization and its stakeholders reciprocally modify opinions, attitudes, decisions and behaviors in closer alignment with the public interest. This is interpreted as a balanced mix of institutional and generally accepted norms together with the prevailing expectations of society, represented by active citizenship groups (rather than merely those of the organization or its stakeholders).

What this implies is that the quality of effective relationships with stakeholders is based on the dynamics at least four indicators 10 which may be relatively simply measured, before, during and after:

- trust in the relationship by the parties involved;
- commitment to the relationship by the parties involved;
- satisfaction in the relationship by the parties involved;
- control mutuality (aka power balance) in the relationship by the parties involved.

Thus, one of the essential roles of an organization's stakeholder relationship function, wherever it may reside, has to do with ensuring that rather than bending organizational objectives and

³⁹ The organizational, systemic and relational perspective adopted in this paper in no way intends to weaken the force of those critical and post-modern scholars and professionals who are concerned that an exclusively organizational perspective risks to undermine the impact that public relations activities have on society in general. I reiterate this because it is clear that an organization, when solely guided by a process of gathering, understanding and interpreting the often conflicting expectations of its specific stakeholders will certainly improve the quality of its decision making processes and accelerate the times of the implementation of those decisions, but will also risk, in balancing those different conflicting expectations, and in not being sufficiently aware of wider societal expectations (the public interest?). This is why the integration of stakeholder relationship governance process with those of boundary spanning and issues management is so essential.

tactics to satisfy the often conflicting expectations of one or more of its stakeholder publics (which amounts to a biased and instrumentally ungenerous interpretation of the two way symmetrical model conceptualized by Jim Grunig); or simply listening to those expectations to better craft and deliver messages aimed at persuading publics to agree to the former's specific objectives (as the Bernays scientific persuasion model implies);

a responsible organization is effective when it achieves the best possible balance -- on any specific as well as general objectives -- between the three different levels of interests involved in any organizational activity:

- the organization's interest;
- the different and often conflicting interests of its stakeholder groups, and
- the public interest.

Stakeholder Relationships Governance Process: step by step

To effectively assist an organization in governing its different stakeholder relationship systems implies the adoption of a generic scrapbook approach defined as GOREL (governance of relationships), first developed by the author in the mid eighties and subsequently many times adjusted to the ever changing environment⁴⁰.

This has nothing to do with a detailed methodology. Gorel is preferably described as a situational 'scrapbook' approach to the day-to-day practice of global stakeholder relationships which

⁴⁰ In 1984 the author of this paper was CEO and principal shareholder of SCR Associati, then Italy's largest, most reputed and successful public relations consultancy. In the eighties, the market was booming and annual income increased by 20%. Yet, one of the major challenges was that young professionals came in and went (as they do to this day) without capitalizing on a specific and detailed operational process which would allow them to ask themselves .what am I doing?, and formulate an acceptable answer. We decided to dedicate four of our senior practice directors for two months to carefully analyze the last 50 completed programs from a random selection of clients and issues, and identify all the commonalities and differences. Mind you, at that time public relations education in Italy was in its pre-infancy! The result of this effort led to a 'scrapbook approach' to a systemic process focused on the evaluation and measurement of effectiveness, which was then benchmarked with what the very limited global body of knowledge (mostly American textbooks) could offer. We decided to define that process as Gorel (in italian: Governo delle Relazioni). Little did we know that in the 1990s scholars and professionals would subsequently elaborate both the reputational and relationship schools of public relations. For us it was clear then that public relations, as the term indicates, implies the governance of an organization's relationships with influential publics (we did not use the term stakeholders then because in those same months Freeman was writing his first conceptualization of the term). Since that first effort, the Gorel approach has been many times revisited and adapted and will certainly continue to be updated.

enables any professional or always himself that one single good question which rarely arise in our current, intense and increasingly twittered environment: what am I doing?

1. Envisioning

A stakeholder relationships professional -- always and before anything else -- needs to be aware of (when it exists) or contribute to define (when it doesn't) an organization's

- Mission (where are we today? what are we about?)
- Vision (who do we want to be? Where do we want to go in a determined time-frame?)
- Guiding values (which rules are we going to abide to, while transiting from mission to vision?)
- Strategy (how and following which specific operational processes do we plan to get there?)

In management consultancy jargon, this is sometimes called the envisioning process and is a necessary prerequisite for any stakeholder relations program.

This may be approached in various ways and formats, requires time (according to available resources and situational urgencies), but is essential.

It is clear that the more the process of defining and distributing of the envisioning contents are participated and shared inside and outside the organization, the better it is.

2. Active Stakeholders

In itself, an organization is a relationship system of different subjects who bring together resources and competencies to achieve common goals (workers, investors, technicians, researchers, managers). In order to achieve those very goals, the organization also needs to constantly develop and entertain relationships with many other subjects who either bear consequences on those goals, or receive consequences from the organization while it pursues those goals, and/or both. Thus, the organization needs to identify and be well aware of all those subjects who respond to this description, who may be defined as active stakeholders and proceed to attentively listen to their expectations by:

- a) collecting relevant info and data related to positions, policies, attitudes, behaviors related to those pursued goals (and this can be done by desk work; market, social and political research; participant observation; as well as direct involvement in dialogue and conversation.);
- b) understanding the collected data and information without being obstructed by one's prejudices or stereotypes;

- c) interpreting what has been understood from the perspective of the organization and evaluating if the its pursued goals need to be fine tuned, adapted or even sometimes changed in order to ensure that the vision may be effectively pursued. This is where the organization's decision making process may improve and also accelerate the time of implementation of specific and operative decisions, a management variable which has increasingly become one the principal indicators of the quality of an organizational decision process.

It is however important here to underscore that it is not the organization that decides who these active stakeholders are. Active stakeholders decide themselves to 'hold a stake'.. This is because they are aware of the organization's goals and interested in relating with the organization to either support or oppose it. The organization, in turn, needs to involve these active stakeholders, relate with them and supply them with easy access to information; as well as appropriately respond to their opinions, suggestions and voiced expectations and, where possible and convenient, engage with them to co-create both the decisions and their consequences.

This is typically a pull format of relationship cultivation and communication, in the sense that, being aware and interested, it is often the active stakeholder who initiates the relationship by requiring that the organization adapt its strategy in order to reduce the negative consequences and time delays that some of these stakeholder groups might wish to activate.

3. Defining specific objectives

The implementation of any business strategy implies the definition of specific objectives to be pursued in different phases related to different time frames to pursue the planned strategy. If these objectives consider the expectations of (at least some) active stakeholders, it is more than likely that the time of their implementation will accelerate.

4. Involving potential stakeholders

Each of those specific objectives requires the prompt identification of other publics (specific, by each objective), which may be identified as potential stakeholders. In this case, it is the organization who decides it has an interest in relating with specific stakeholders, believing that their opinions, attitudes and behaviors will have consequences on the pursuit of a specific objective.

This is clearly more of a push format of relationship creation developed by communication. The organization -- having thus far formed an acceptable scenario of its active and potential stakeholders -- decides, in the autonomous and responsible judgment of its leadership, to intensify the relationships and to actively engage those stakeholder clusters believed to be more relevant.

This again implies listening to their expectations by:

- a) collecting information, understanding and interpreting it to leadership, so that it might take their expectations into consideration for the implementation of each specific objective
- b) eventually modifying those objectives or even
- c) deciding to pursue them in any case, but being well aware and prepared for the problems the organization will be facing induced by the actions of potentially dissenting stakeholder groups.

5. Relating with issue influencers

An organization's license to operate, its understanding of social issues and general pursuit of both strategic goals and tactical objectives, in the effort to avoid a risky fundamentalist approach to organizational governance, may not limit its role in the 'golden cage' of its stakeholder involvement and engagement processes. Society is more complex, and organizations need to understand the wider environment in which they operate.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, many organizations adopted an issue management approach to policy development, which implied a careful selection of cultural, technical, economic and social issues whose dynamics were not only believed to create consequences on the organization as such, but also had the characteristics of being potentially influenced by an organization's proactive activities. Once these issues are identified, the next step is to identify those subjects (issue influencers) who the organization believes have a direct or indirect power to influence the dynamics of those issues. This, to develop a relational and communicational effort to dialogue with those influencers.

Of course, it is more than likely that many of those influencers will have already been identified within the two preceding stakeholder clusters (active and potential). But not necessarily so, and it would be mistake not to go through this process and identify them. So, we have thus identified a third segment, with whom the relationship building format is very similar to the one adopted with the potential stakeholders, i.e. initially push to attract their attention and, once this has been achieved, by involving and engaging them into a continual dialogue and negotiation.

6. Con-vincing opinion leaders

Finally, the stakeholder relations professional is also required to identify opinion leaders: those subjects believed by the organization to have the power and the means to influence opinions and behaviors of the organization's final publics.

Thus, a fourth specific cluster of organizational publics. Once again, it is likely that many opinion leaders will already have been identified in the three preceding clusters, but not necessarily, so and it is wise to situationally indulge in the entire exercise in order to avoid neglecting subjects that could turn out to be very relevant for the achievement of both the organization's strategic goals and tactical objectives.

It is at this point, and only at this point, by having listened to the specific expectations of these publics, that the stakeholder relations professional is enabled to develop appropriate contents and arguments and to create specific platforms (real or virtual spaces and other mainstream or social media tools) in which these publics may access those contents.

And this is also where the evaluation of the quality of both relationships and communication contents and tools may begin to develop.

7. Contents, channels and 'spaces'

According to the complexity of the issues and the available resources, the professional may now -- also on the basis of this 'scanning' process -- elaborate and create appropriate and specific contents related to the both strategic goals and each of the tactical objectives which are believed would attract single or multiple stakeholder groups into being involved or engaged in an effective relationship.

The term contents is preferred here to the traditional 'messages' for two reasons:

- a) stakeholder relationships are mostly based on conversations and arguments related to complex issues which are not easy to and should not be encapsulated
- b) stakeholder relationships are not based on persuasive and advertising related techniques (or, at least, as advertising is still stereotyped today)

8. Pre-test and the setting of communication and relationship objectives

And this is the time to pre-test the effectiveness of the communication contents as well as the quality of the existing stakeholder relationships.

This, to:

- a) verify whether the ground work has been effectively conducted before beginning the roll out of the elaborated contents;
- b) identify specific communication and relationship objectives to be pursued and whose achievement may be verified

This can be done through a savvy use of social, political and market research tools (according to the context of the prepared contents).

There are at least three indicators related to the effectiveness of communication content, and four indicators related to the quality of relationships which may be usefully adopted.

The first are:

- a) source credibility (i.e. from 1 to 10 if you received content from this source how credible would it be for you?)
- b) content credibility (i.e. from 1 to 10 if your received this content how credible would it be in itself for you?)
- c) content familiarity (i.e. from 1 to 10 analyse this content and indicate how familiar it is for you).

It is evident that if the first indicator is very low then one should wonder if the exercise really makes sense. If the second indicator is very low then one should review the contents. If the third is very high then one should wonder if the exercise really makes sense.

This can fairly easily be performed with sample of the different and identified stakeholder groups and allows one to set specific communication objectives to be achieved over a certain period of time.

The second are:

- a) trust in the relationship (i.e. from 1 to 10 how much do you trust your relationship with x)
- b) commitment in the relationship (i.e. from 1 to 10 how much are you committed to your relationship with x)
- c) satisfaction in the relationship (i.e. from 1 to 10 how satisfied are you with your relationship with x)
- d) balance of power in the relationship (from 1 to 10 how much leverage do you think you have in your relationship with x)

It is also sometimes very useful to adopt a co-orientation approach by also asking the stakeholder representative to indicate how x would reply to the same questions.

By performing this pre test on a representative sample of the relevant stakeholder groups, the professional will not only be able to refine and fine tune the contents and be fully aware of the quality of existing stakeholder relationships; but he will also have sufficient data to set specific objectives to be pursued by the public relations effort in itself, along both the communication and relationship effectiveness lines of action.

Arguably, one may well wonder if this approach to setting measurable objectives is not on the one hand too complex and, at the same time, simplistic. One may also submit that it is more sophisticated than most other generally accepted systems which evaluate financial, marketing, human resource, production or research objectives within an organization which, material or immaterial; linear or fuzzy, are all based on conventions based on the agreement of both the reviewing and reviewed parties, and whose overall purpose is to track the dynamics of a given phenomena.

9. Content roll out

There are many books, manuals, websites, blogs and other resources meant to assist a stakeholder relationship professional in improving operational performance. At the same time, as we have argued all along, specific situations continue to change, while, the only certainty is that one cannot but adopt a situational perspective to this very important part of the process.

It would be a mistake to consider this as 'business as usual', and it would be blatantly contradictory with the very objective of this paper. Even more so, the relatively recent surge of the Internet in general, and more specifically of what we are accustomed to define as social media, implies that we fully acknowledge the existence of a new environment in which communication and relationships are developed and conducted with stakeholders by adopting parameters and processes which are different and which still need to be convincingly conceptualised.

Furthermore, in parallel with allowing the creation and development of relationship with identified stakeholder groups, social media also often determine new stakeholders to be dealt with.

This specific issue related to the digital environment and its consequences on stakeholder relationships also has available manuals and resources to improve professional performance.

There is at least one other relevant concept worth elaborating here, in the context of global stakeholder relations which tends to align the work of the global stakeholder relator to that of an architect.

Ever since the second part of the 19th Century (but some say that this has always been going on and cite many cases.) the creation and implementation of pseudo-events, coupled with the ongoing quest for third party endorsements, have been the building blocks and prime competencies of the public relations profession.

Pseudo-events -defined as such in 1985 by the American contemporary historian Daniel Boorstin in his pamphlet *The Image: what has happened to the American Dream?*⁴¹.- are artificially created and developed by organizations to attract the attention and the interest of specific publics. Often these are journalists and opinion leaders, but increasingly they tend to belong directly to various clusters of organizational stakeholders. Many tens of thousands of these pseudo-events are being held every minute of the day, in every country, for a multiplicity of reasons.. and the stakeholder relations professional is usually involved in their planning and organization.

The overall scope of these pseudo-events, as mentioned, allows for the organization to convene (more or less carefully and selectively) stakeholder publics into one physical space in which a product, a service, an idea may be illustrated; an organization's change programs may be announced and explained; an issue, a policy, an idea or a decision may be argued. And there are many available sources of information and text books on traditional event organization and how an event may be effective. But the Internet, telecommunications and mobile technologies, as well as social media have made possible the creation of virtual events, which are not necessarily tied to a physical place or a specific territory or a determined time-frame.

This very much enhances opportunities for the stakeholder relations professional, as long as s/he keeps well in mind that:

- a) a virtual relationship is certainly diverse from a face-to-face one and has its specific rules and processes
- b) differently from physical pseudo-events, virtual pseudo-events allow participants not only to relate with the 'convening' organization but, more importantly, to relate with each other.

In other words, the relationship process -- rather than moving top-down (when a communicating-to mode is applied) or also bottom-up (when a communicating-with mode is in place) -- tends to move left-right-left, and the 'convenor' is no longer necessarily 'in control' of the conversation.

All this implies that the specific competency of organizing events, so typical of the public relations profession, takes on yet another profile. Namely, the task is creating attractive (at least more attractive than other competitive spaces) real and virtual 'spaces for dialogue and relationships' in which stakeholder publics are stimulated to participate and relate in, between themselves, and with the convening organization.

10. Evaluation and Reset

The GOREL process enters now in its last conceptual phase, before rewinding in a never ending loop. The allocated resources have now been deployed by the professional in the given time and in the process, you will remember, we had also identified, on the basis of the pre-test results, specific communication and relationship objectives to be achieved. It is now time to verify if those objectives have been met. In that pre-test phase elaborated contents, as well as the state of stakeholder relationships had been submitted, with specific indicators, to a sample of different identified stakeholder publics. Now, following the roll out of operational activities, a second representative sample of those same stakeholder groups needs to be involved in a similar analysis related to the status of those indicators.

It is clearly important to avoid questioning the same sample of the pre-test, as it is well known that specific stakeholders selected to participate in opinion research tend to be influenced by these

exercises and therefore the analyst would never be able to know how much a subject having participated in the first sample actually has influenced the final outcome.

So, one should use a different sample, although selected of course from the same universe. Yet, it is also sometimes important for the stakeholder relations professional to understand how stakeholder participation to the pre-test actually does influence the final result. This is because the very research effort is both a relationship tool and channel.

One way out is to divide the second post-test sample in half: question one half of the first sample and add another half of new participant representatives of the same stakeholder groups. Alternatively, when the sample is too small to be significant if so divided, one may expand the size of the second sample. Adopting this method will not only allow the stakeholder relations professional to validate if his overall activity has under/over or simply achieved the defined communication and relationship objectives, but also to understand how much the selected involvement of stakeholders in the active listening process of the pre-test has in fact influenced the final result.

This turns into one more vivid demonstration of the power of the whole stakeholder relationship governance process.

Conclusion

From Wikipedia: An infrastructure can be generally defined as the set of interconnected structural elements that provide a framework supporting an entire structure of development.

Soft infrastructure includes both physical assets such as highly specialized buildings and equipment, as well as non-physical assets such as the body of rules and regulations governing the various systems, the financing of these systems, as well as the systems and organizations by which highly skilled and specialized professionals are trained, advance in their careers by acquiring experience, and are disciplined if required by professional associations (professional training, accreditation and discipline). Unlike hard infrastructure, the essence of soft infrastructure is the delivery of specialized services to people. Unlike much of the service sector of the economy, the delivery of those services depend on highly developed systems and large specialized facilities or institutions that share many of the characteristics of hard infrastructure.

To conclude this paper I advance to the (very...) patient reader the suggestion that global stakeholder relationship governance and generic principles and specific applications form a substantial part of the founding elements of a soft infrastructural worldview of the strategic/behavioral approach to organizational stakeholder relationships, while internal communication and integrated reporting, in coherence with the spirit of the Stockholm Accords and the Melbourne Mandate, as well as the necessary addition of parallel analysis of other specific areas of relationship cultivation practices go to form the hard infrastructure.

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Selling America in the Post 9/11 Era: is Anyone Listening?

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ABSTRACT

Post 9/11, the war on terror and heightened security concerns together with the explosion of social media platforms have presented enormous challenges for the U.S. in conducting its public diplomacy abroad over the last decade. The war in Iraq caused favorable opinion about the U.S. to plummet. Conducting any kind of effective public diplomacy became even more difficult with the abolition of the U.S. Information Agency in 1999, transfer of public diplomacy functions into various offices of the much larger State Department bureaucracy, and the relocation of U.S. embassies to fortress-like buildings far from the center of host country capitals.

A new U.S. administration raised hopes and expectations for peace, understanding and new approaches to international issues. But has U.S. public diplomacy been effective in meeting the challenges of a constantly evolving media and communications environment?

Does the U.S. possess the tools necessary to conduct its public diplomacy in the 21st century? How do we know whether anyone out there is listening? Is the U.S. listening?

This presentation will examine U.S. public diplomacy efforts in a time of great transition, and offer ideas for a possible roadmap for the future.

Post 9/11, the war on terror and heightened security concerns together with the explosion of social media platforms have presented enormous challenges for the U.S. in conducting its public diplomacy abroad over the last decade.

In the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, initial public diplomacy campaigns focused on reaching out to the Muslim world were ill conceived and met with criticism and even ridicule. The war in Iraq caused favorable opinion about the U.S. to plummet. Conducting any kind of effective public diplomacy became even more difficult as embassies were moved to fortress-like buildings far from the center of host country capitals.

A new U.S. administration raised hopes and expectations for peace, understanding and new approaches to international issues. But has U.S. public diplomacy been effective in meeting the challenges of a constantly evolving media and communications environment? Did America respond effectively to the Arab Spring, or is it suffering “battle fatigue” in the public arena? Has the U.S. moved smartly into the new social media environment?

As she was completing her term as Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton offered this criticism of U.S. public diplomacy efforts:

“I think that we have done – and I take responsibility, along with our entire government and Congress and perhaps our private sector – we have not done a very good job in recent years reaching out in a public media way or in a culturally effective way to explain ourselves... You can't be in the arena and expect there to be a change if you're not willing to get off the bench. And from my perspective, that's our fault. We have let a lot of stuff be said about us, believed about us that is contrary to who we are as a people, what we stand for, and what we've done.”

But does the U.S. possess the tools necessary to conduct its public diplomacy in the 21st century?

What is the most effective way to influence the way a country is perceived in people's hearts and minds? What are the best communications tools in an age of information overload where, paradoxically, people can selectively tune out anything they are not interested in. What is the role of citizen diplomacy, and how is it defined? How are results measured in public diplomacy? How do we know whether anyone out there is listening? Is the U.S. listening?

This presentation will examine U.S. public diplomacy efforts in a time of great transition, and offer ideas for a possible roadmap for the future.

As defined by the U.S. State Department, the mission of American public diplomacy is to support the achievement of U.S. foreign policy goals and objectives, advance national interests, and enhance national security by informing and influencing foreign publics and by expanding and

strengthening the relationship between the people and Government of the United States and citizens of the rest of the world.

Public Diplomacy professionals in the U.S. foreign service carry out this work by explaining policies; helping foreign publics understand U.S. society and culture; and providing U.S. policymakers with analysis of foreign public opinion. From 1953 to 1999, an independent government entity, the U.S. Information Agency, was responsible for the conduct of our nation's public diplomacy.

Despite its impressive record of achievement during the Cold War and major role in the post-1989 transition to democracy and free markets in Central and Eastern Europe and the countries of the former Soviet Union, the USIA was abolished in October 1999 and its elements, with the exception of international broadcasting, merged into various bureaus in the State Department.

The venerable USIA fell victim to budget cuts. Why? With victory in the Cold War, the Clinton Administration wanted to show a peace dividend, and the powerful archconservative Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Jesse Helms, demanded it in exchange for Senate ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Meanwhile, the bombings of U.S. Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in August 1998 were ominous warnings of things to come, and combined with consolidation, forced the closure of the remaining stand-alone USIA offices abroad and movement of USIA staff into embassies, which were in turn being moved out of city centers into fortress-like facilities on the outskirts of foreign capitals.

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 have defined U.S. foreign policy ever since. From a public diplomacy standpoint, the key question was, "Why do they hate us?" From a procedural standpoint, the key challenge was articulated by veteran diplomat Richard C. Holbrooke, "How can one man in a cave out-communicate the world's leading communication society?"

The Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs who came into office right after 9/11, Madison Avenue advertising executive Charlotte Beers, thought our public diplomacy efforts should show the Muslim world how great Muslims had it in America, the so-called "Shared Values Initiative." It was a colossal failure. As summarized by University of Southern California Professor Nicholas Cull:

"The problem [with the Shared Values Initiative] was that it answered a question that no one was asking. Muslim hostility to the U.S.A was based not on an erroneous idea that Arab-Americans had a hard time in Dearborn, Michigan, but a fairly accurate idea of American policy in the Middle East."

Professor Cull, Director of the Masters in Public Diplomacy program at USC, posits five key elements of successful public diplomacy:

- LISTENING (emphasis mine)
- Advocacy
- Cultural diplomacy
- Exchange diplomacy
- International Broadcasting

The shared values campaign failed to LISTEN to audiences in the Muslim world, and as a result, failed to develop a successful advocacy campaign.

Several years later in Germany, where I was Minister Counselor for Public Affairs at the U.S. Embassy from 2004 to 2007, we could see that the alienation of Muslim youth made them vulnerable to radical extremism, posing a danger to Europe and the U.S. After listening to the concerns of Germany's Muslim community, we developed new youth exchange programs, facilitated dialogue between Muslim communities and the German government, community leaders and the media, fostering honest and constructive dialogue. Similar programs were subsequently implemented in other West European countries.

Developing creative, targeted public diplomacy strategies became much more difficult in the large State Department Bureaucracy post-consolidation. Where USIA had been an agile, multi-masted schooner that could adjust its sails, speed and direction quickly, it now was relegated to the steerage deck of a large, bulky ocean liner.

The State Department's inspection report on the bureau responsible for near eastern affairs is illustrative: "The Deputy Assistant Secretary [for Public Affairs] has become heavily involved in operational issues, rather than concentrating on big picture planning involving all aspects of public diplomacy; the office director has become involved in many press issues, rather than focusing on the day-to-day operations of the office and bringing the full range of public diplomacy resources to bear on NEA issues."

In other words, the public affairs officers are forced to focus on the urgent task of the day, preparing briefing memos for a principal, or providing press guidance, rather than engaging in the longer range planning and implementation of public diplomacy, to include academic, professional and cultural exchanges and a host of program to foster mutual understanding.

In 2009, President Obama's first speech abroad was delivered in Cairo, directed at Muslim audiences around the world. "A New Beginning" was greeted with great anticipation, and promised many things, including closing Guantanamo, personally pursuing the two state resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; and supporting democracy and human rights everywhere.

Policy Analyst Matthew Wallin recounts that Dalia Mogahed, who helped draft the speech, noted a year later that despite having carried out several of the promises in the speech, such as partnerships in science and technology, addressing health issues like polio and providing loan guarantees, the intended effect was not achieved, and Arab publics felt that not enough had been done.

Wallin points out that a Pew Global Attitudes survey showed a decline by 10 percentage points in U.S. favorability for 2009-2010, dropping from 27% down to 17% in Egypt. The number of Egyptians expressing confidence in Obama dropped from 41% to 31% during the same period. By these metrics, President Obama's speech did not appear to improve the image of the U.S. in the Arab world.

How do we assess the public diplomacy response to the Arab Spring?

To begin with, there was no equivalent to the Support for East European Democracy Act or the Freedom Support Act, both of which established a framework and funding to support democratic transitions in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. A Special Coordinator for Middle East Transitions was designated in September 2011, but staff and resources are spread thin.

One existing mechanism that was used was the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), established in 2002 by the Bush Administration to advance democratic, economic, and educational reform and women's empowerment in the Middle East and North Africa. MEPI programs are directed to 16 countries in the region, as well as South Asia and the Palestinian Territories. Since its inception, MEPI has received about \$640 million. The State Dept. also participates in the G-8 Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative (BMENA), which includes Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Mauritania and Sudan. As of 2010, the MEPI had invested \$44.7 million in BMENA.

Although beset by controversy during the Bush Administration, when it was staffed largely by political appointees, the MEPI office survived the change of administrations, and was well positioned to take on the programs announced in Obama's Cairo speech.

The focus of MEPI is on four exchange projects: Student Leaders, Leaders for Democracy Fellowship, Civil Education Leadership Fellowship, and Middle East Entrepreneurship Training. The latter recruits participants to come to the United States for professional training lasting from 4 weeks to 2 months. About \$41 million has been allocated for such programs between FY 2005 and FY 2009. In addition, there are two scholarship projects: the MEPI Scholarship Program (\$6.4 million) and Tomorrow's Leaders (\$12.2 million), the latter providing scholarships for students in the Middle East to attend American University, Cairo; American University, Beirut; and the Lebanese American University.

A major obstacle to effective PD work in the region is the severe shortage of language qualified Foreign Service officers. In 2007, of 1,000 U.S. employees at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, only 10 had a working knowledge of Arabic, according to the State Department. Of 7,600 U.S. Foreign Service Officers, only 380 are listed as speaking Arabic at the most basic professional level, and we must keep in mind that only a fraction of these will be posted to an Arabic speaking country at any one time. A colleague who was recently in Sudan reported that not one officer in the entire embassy spoke Arabic.

While the State Department has paid lip service to increasing the numbers of Arabic language speakers, lack of resources is cited as the reason for the continued shortfall.

There would appear to be a correlation between good listening and the development of programs that take into account the knowledge gained in that act of listening.

In his book, *Beyond Cairo: U.S. Engagement with the Muslim World*, Darrell Ezell stresses the need for a dialogue based public diplomacy: two way engagement at the grassroots level that takes into account the religious aspirations of Muslim publics in what he terms the "post secular" era, and that goes beyond the Arab world to include Muslim countries in Africa and Southeast Asia. He also points out that it is a mistake to consider the Muslim world, spread over 58 countries with 1.5 billion people, as a homogenous society.

Ezell argues for a new corps of specialists adept in religion and culture to pursue dialogue with key non-state actors, and establish a communication structure for feedback from the grassroots perspective.

How does public diplomacy utilize social media?

British diplomat Tom Fletcher notes, "The world is being changed by the power of the best of old ideas allied with the best of new technology in the hands of a generation with more opportunity than any in history to understand, engage with, and shape their world... The digital revolution has opened up a new frontier..."

The U.S. Government is using facebook and twitter, youtube and blogs, communicating in the host country language as well as English. The U.S. Embassy Cairo page boasts 759,000 "likes" and U.S. Embassy Tripoli 178,000 "likes." Interestingly, the U.S. Embassy Moscow page has only 7,562 "likes," perhaps a result of Russians' reluctance to be associated with the U.S. under the watchful eyes of Putin's Kremlin. Nevertheless, the U.S. Ambassador has 47,000 followers on twitter.

In addition, the International Information Programs Bureau at State has a ten-person Digital Outreach Team that communicates on popular Arabic, Persian, and Urdu blogs, news sites, and discussion groups to explain U.S. foreign policy and counter misinformation. The Digital Outreach Team members identify themselves as employees of the Department of State as they interact on 25 to 30 Internet sites per week. The team posts short comments as well as longer op-ed pieces and translated videos previously produced by IIP.

But what does this really tell us? Do “likes” equal “listening” and is the U.S. listening back? Is this genuine dialogue and engagement or merely pushing out a message using new tools? Tom Fletcher makes this observation: “Twiplomacy comes down to authenticity, engagement and purpose. Twitter is more raw, more human than normal diplomatic interaction: people are more likely to stick around to read your press releases if they know something about you as a person.” The conclusion here appears to be that, for the diplomat in the public square, engagement via social media can be viewed as a means to an end.

Analyst Wallin observes, “At the same time, some would argue that newer, cheaper, and more widely available technology has contributed to the decline of the power of the government message. It is not only easier to create counter-narratives to government messaging, it is easier to drown it out.”

He adds that as of July 2012, the State Department’s official twitter account had over 301,000 followers. By comparison, Britney Spears has about 18.6 million. Of the top 190 tweeters with the most followers, President Obama is the only government affiliate or agency represented.

And twitter can get diplomats in trouble, as happened in Egypt when a U.S. Embassy officer tweeted a link to the comedian Jon Stewart’s show in which he defended comedian Bassem Youssef, called Egypt’s Jon Stewart, and chided the Egyptian government for arresting Youssef. Egyptian officials complained to the U.S. Ambassador, and not only was the offensive tweet deleted, the entire twitter site was shut down, prompting criticism from Egyptian publics. The feed was reactivated after about an hour, reportedly at Washington’s request.

In the new Global Public Square of the 21st Century, a term popularized by CNN program host and foreign affairs analyst Fareed Zakaria, the concept of “citizen diplomacy is generating a lot of buzz. In 2007, the U.S. Center for Citizen Diplomacy was established in Des Moines, Iowa, and defines citizen diplomacy as, “the engagement of individual citizens in programs and activities primarily in the voluntary, private sector that increase cross-cultural understanding and knowledge between people from different culture and countries, leading to a greater mutual respect.” Only 0.27 % of Americans volunteer abroad, and only 0.1% of Americans volunteers in international organizations at home, something the Iowa based U.S. Center for Citizen diplomacy is seeking to remedy.

The State Department has provided a new twist on “citizen diplomacy” in its creation of the Franklin Fellows Program under President Obama, who has stated: “Government does not have all the answers, and...public officials need to draw on what citizens know.” Therefore, he directed the Administration “to find new ways of tapping the knowledge and experience of ordinary Americans – scientists and civic leaders, educators and entrepreneurs – because the way to solve the problems of our time...is by involving the American people in shaping the policies that affect their lives.”

There are about 35 Franklin fellows currently on 1 to 2 year assignments to the State Dept and U.S. Agency for Int’l Development, and over 150 have participated in the program to date. The Fellows are paid by their sending organizations or self-funded.

Together with Citizen Diplomacy, Cultural Diplomacy is an area where the private sector can make a significant contribution. Sending orchestras and dance ensembles on tour abroad is very costly, but the rewards in enhancing mutual understanding though the common language of culture are enormous.

Participating in international exhibitions, especially providing young guides conversant in the host country language, is a traditional public diplomacy tool that has proven its enduring value over decades. During the Cold War, U.S. exhibits were visited by more than 20 million people in the former USSR over a 32-year period. In 2010 at the Shanghai Expo, 7.3 million visitors visited the U.S. pavilion and interacted with 160 Mandarin speaking American student “ambassadors.”

With regard to the evaluation of public diplomacy efforts:

The USIA Director during the John F. Kennedy Administration has been quoted as saying, “No cash register rings when a mind is changed.”

Public Diplomacy is a long-term investment, like putting money in the bank.

Much work has been done over the last decade to develop metrics and criteria to determine effectiveness and results. The primary goal in public diplomacy remains: increasing foreign understanding of U.S. society, government, culture, values and democratic process. The State Dept. utilizes surveys, focus groups, favorability ratings, studies re-tweets and good old fashioned numbers of twitter feeds, and website visits. A favorite statistic is the number of participants in USG exchange programs who are current or former heads of state or government—360 and Nobel Prize winners—54.

Obviously, message flows from policy, and a decade of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, coupled with stalemate over Israel and the Palestinian territories have made the job difficult, but the U.S. must be out there in the international public arena, listening and engaging in dialogue. Based on a review of the past decade, it seems clear that U.S. public diplomacy has not measured up to the task.

In conclusion, I would suggest that the following are needed for the effective conduct of public diplomacy:

1. Increased human and financial resources;
2. A well-trained cadre of specialists, to include fluency in foreign languages, especially the languages of the Middle East and South Asia;
3. A change in institutional culture in the State Department, coupled with a degree of autonomy for PD that allows for creativity in presenting the U.S. in all of its dimensions, and a focus on building long-term relationships;
4. Greater engagement of the private sector in citizen and cultural diplomacy;
5. Smarter use of social media.

These changes could be implemented given sufficient political will and a recognition of the centrality of public diplomacy to America's foreign policy. The critical challenges in the world today require nothing less.

Footnotes:

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Foreign Aid and Hearts and Minds -- The American Experience

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INTRODUCTION

For developed countries, foreign aid has been an important feature of the conduct of foreign policy for at least a century. If your definition of foreign aid is sufficiently broad, you might say that foreign aid is as old as relations between states, and employed just like all tools of diplomacy, to further the interests of those states.

But for the United States, at least, foreign aid has been formal part of its foreign policy organization for only 50 years. The US Agency for International Development, USAID, was established by President Kennedy in 1961 during a period of creative expansion in the number of government institutions designed to supplement the conduct of traditional diplomacy. Some of the institutions from the early days of the Cold War -- the US Information Agency, the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency -- have been disbanded; others, like the Peace Corps, still exist, but receive less attention and play a less prominent role now than in their heyday.

Not so with USAID. After a period in the 1990s when, like other parts of the foreign affairs establishment, it was cut back in terms of staff and budgets, USAID today represents the largest part of a relatively robust American foreign aid establishment. The United States gives roughly \$30 billion a year in non-military foreign aid. By comparison, the United Kingdom, Germany, France and Japan give from ten to fifteen billion dollars each in foreign aid. Critics will find the US contribution paltry in relation to the size of the US economy or the US defense budget. In fact, "paltry" is the word John Kerry used to describe the US foreign aid budget in his first remarks to USAID employees last February after becoming Secretary of State. It is a point the Agency frequently repeats to the public and Congress -- that foreign aid is only one per cent of the total U.S. federal budget. But it is still a large amount.

It is also fair to note that much of the aid that the US gives as technical assistance actually goes to pay American companies that in turn provide the help to foreign governments, NGOs and the like. Until now, a large part of the food aid that the United States provided for emergency humanitarian relief in the wake of natural or manmade disasters provided a substantial subsidy to American farmers. Insisting that American food aid come from American farms, regardless of whether food

might be purchased closer to the site of a disaster, was for many years the best example of foreign aid helping an important interest group back home.

Nevertheless, the American foreign aid program over the past several decades has dwarfed that of any other individual country. More than \$500 billion has been spent by the US Government for non-military foreign aid since World War Two.

And, while in recent years foreign aid has been only one percent of the US federal budget, the impact of foreign aid is quite remarkable.

- More than 3 million lives are saved every year through USAID immunization programs. Oral rehydration therapy, a low cost and easily administered solution developed through USAID programs in Bangladesh, is credited with saving tens of millions of lives around the globe.
- Life expectancy in the developing world has increased by about 33 percent, smallpox has been eradicated worldwide, and in the past 20 years, the number of the world's chronically undernourished has been reduced by 50 percent.
- The United Nations Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade, in which USAID played a major role, resulted in 1.3 billion people receiving safe drinking water sources, and 750 million people receiving sanitation for the first time.
- More than 50 million couples worldwide use family planning as a direct result of USAID's population program.
- Since 1987, USAID has initiated HIV/AIDS prevention programs in 32 countries, and is the recognized technical leader in the design and development of these programs in the developing world. Over 850,000 people have been reached with USAID HIV prevention education, and 40,000 people have been trained to support HIV/AIDS programs in their own countries.
- USAID child survival programs have made a major contribution to a 10 percent reduction in infant mortality rates worldwide in just the past eight years.
- Agricultural research sponsored by the United States sparked the "Green Revolution" in India. These breakthroughs in agricultural technology and practices resulted in the most dramatic increase in agricultural yields and production in the history of mankind, allowing nations like India and Bangladesh to become nearly food self-sufficient.
- Early USAID action in southern Africa in 1992 prevented massive famine in the region, saving millions of lives.

- Eighty thousand people and \$1 billion in U.S. and Filipino assets were saved due to early warning equipment installed by USAID that warned that the Mount Pinatubo volcano was about to erupt in 1991.
- After initial USAID start-up support for loans and operating costs, Banco Solidario (BancoSol) became the first full-fledged commercial bank in Latin America dedicated to microbusiness. BancoSol serves about 44,000 small Bolivian businesses, with loans averaging \$200 each. The bank now is a self-sustaining commercial lender that needs no further USAID assistance.

The list goes on.

So, the United States has given more foreign aid than any other country in history. And, in many respects, as we have seen, there have been dramatic, even spectacular, successes for foreign publics, not just governments, associated with American foreign aid. Yet, among foreign publics in recipient countries, American foreign aid is often as unpopular as it is at home in the United States, where Secretary Kerry has said, “A senator who stands up in today’s world and tries to make the argument for foreign aid probably ought to have a mental evaluation.”

Why is this?

For US donors, an automatic assumption has been that economic and humanitarian aid will yield not only enhanced wellbeing in donor states but appreciation and support toward the United States and its leaders.

That assumption has proven wrong as often as it has been correct, leading to disillusionment in the U.S. with foreign aid programs. Sometimes the failure has been with the programs themselves -- their design or implementation. Sometimes the recipient public has been uninformed or even misinformed about the programs being sponsored.

Consider Pakistan. The United States has given Pakistan more economic and development aid in the last ten years than any other country except Afghanistan. In 2010, American economic aid to Pakistan amounted to \$1.5 billion. Yet only 12 per cent of the Pakistani public has a positive opinion of the United States¹. And this is not the result of disagreement over the U.S. military operation to capture and kill Osama bin Laden two years ago. Pakistani approval of the United States has been low for years previous to this tumultuous event, regardless of the state of bilateral government to government relations, and regardless of who has been in power there.

Or consider Egypt. The United States gives Egypt about \$2 billion per year in combined military and economic aid. Even removing military aid from the total, and considering only economic aid, the United States has given Egypt more aid, for a longer period, than any other country except Israel. And yet only 19 per cent of Egyptians has a positive view of the United States.

It is easy to imagine the change in popular attitudes toward the United States when there is a dramatic and publicized gesture toward an entire population. For example, attitudes toward the United States in Indonesia jumped toward the positive as a result of U.S. humanitarian assistance in the wake of the 2004 tsunami. And, not surprisingly, Indonesians were elated when Barack Obama, who spent part of his childhood in Indonesia, was elected US President in 2008.

But when the message in the interaction is less obvious, when news the aid being offered does not travel widely, foreign aid from the United States may be delivered without fanfare or attention and whatever beneficial social impact may result is often not associated with the benefactor country.

There have been times when the United States has been unable to communicate to foreign publics that they are receiving U.S. aid. For example, during the existence of the USSR, the United States provided humanitarian aid to Russia in the 1920s, provided food as well as military aid during WWII, yet Moscow was determined that there should be no mention of this in the controlled mass media. During Brezhnev-era grain shortages, the importation of grain from the United States was news that could not be referred to in public. Even after the fall of Communism, during the early years of Putin’s administration, the variety of health, educational and economic assistance being provided by the United States was a topic that most Russian media thought it wise not to report on. The United States obliged by doing very little to publicize or brand the assistance being offered. The U.S. apparently believed that the benefits of being allowed to continue to provide a variety of assistance -- to human rights organizations and NGOs as well as hospitals and schools -- outweighed the drawbacks of carrying out the work in relative anonymity.

That era came to a close in 2012, when Putin ordered the USAID office in Moscow to close down, after having done all he could to publicize American support for Russian civil society as a gross interference in Russia’s internal affairs.

Another example of inhibited messaging came in the conflict zones of Afghanistan in recent years. Here there were other, even more existential reasons for not publicizing foreign aid. Having in your possession a bag of grain or seed stamped with an American flag, or with the distinctively American logo of USAID, was inadvisable in many if not most parts of Afghanistan. Thus, out of concern for the safety of aid recipients, the requirement that humanitarian and food aid be labeled or branded as American was often waived. If you recall the scene in the movie “Iron Man,” where

Tony Stark lies wounded on a sack of grain stamped with an American flag -- well, that is about as imaginary as other parts of the film. There are many schools, hospitals and other buildings in Afghanistan bearing the distinct markers as having been constructed or renovated with American aid, but there are many more where the American provenance of funding for the work is left unstated. For this -- and other reasons -- Afghans often express amazement when they hear the dollar value of the U.S. aid program and exaggerate, if this is possible, the amount of US aid to Afghanistan that is lost to corruption.

But what then of other foreign aid that is clearly different, unencumbered by any practical political or security concern?

Many aid professionals will tell you that for years foreign aid programs were often poorly designed. Not just the fundamental problem with food aid that I described earlier, whereby the size of food aid shipments is determined as much by the size of the U.S. crop as the recipient need ². Rather, on a much broader scale, American aid programs were often designed to be carried out by intermediaries -- often American companies -- that wrote the proposals, received the money and carried out the work. Too often, the American aid experts in the field were more involved in the elaborate process of administering the grants and managing the contracts than in doing the actual work of helping foreign nationals.

There are signs that this approach has changed in recent years, partly the result of the slow dawning recognition that without a closer connection to the actual recipients of aid, the US Government will never get value for its money and foreign recipients will not get what they need. Increasingly, foreign aid from the United States is built around the idea of a partnership with a foreign institution in the recipient country which, remarkably, is just as effective as a symbol on sack of grain in conveying to foreign nationals that America is interested in their well being.

As one of America's leading pollsters, Arab-American James Zogby, put it in a recent book ³, American aid to the Arab world had not been carefully considered. During the George W. Bush administration, he met with Bush's top official concerned with attitudes toward America abroad, Karen Hughes:

I had shared Zogby International's polling data with Hughes, pointing out that the United States was mistakenly focusing too much of our aid on the very areas where Arabs were telling us they didn't want our help, and not enough on the capacity-building areas where Arabs did want our help: education, health care, and expanding employment opportunity....the shift toward more demand driven assistance that began during the

second Bush term has happily continued into the Obama administration.

In Muslim Pakistan, there are also signs, after a very difficult period of mistrust, that similar lessons are being applied. Instead of focusing so heavily on military aid to Pakistan, the United States is dedicating more of its funding to enhancing security and earning the support of the Pakistani people through economic and development assistance. By working with the government to address Pakistan's basic needs—improving literacy rates, boosting energy and agricultural production, providing more access to health care, and more—the United States can strengthen Pakistani society and institutions against militant subversion. In doing so we also clearly demonstrate a respect for Pakistan's own needs, moving the partnership beyond short-term cyclical engagement that neglects the underlying causes of the country's instability. But USAID clearly has its work cut out for it.

Less than two months ago, the President of Bolivia ordered USAID to leave the country, charging the US agency with trying to overthrow the government. Since 1964, USAID had spent nearly \$2 billion in Bolivia on education, health, agriculture, food security, alternative development, economic development and environment programs in collaboration with the local government. Yet Bolivia was still among the poorest nations in the Americas, despite USAID's half century of efforts. Perhaps the right course, if we cannot work with a country to achieve success in 50 years, is to stand down until we can figure out how we can.

To enjoy long term political support at home, US foreign aid will need to demonstrate not only economic and political results in donor countries but sufficient popular support among its intended beneficiaries. Use of social media is now being turned to as a way of building influential coalitions among the publics in recipient countries.

For example, in Afghanistan aid providers such as USAID share media skills with recipient institutions so that they can communicate with the Afghan public using text messages, Facebook and other social media. This has helped overcome the security concerns that arose whenever public events were scheduled to acknowledge and promote foreign donations. There will always be an impulse -- a correct one -- to personally appear as donor before a recipient group, with media in tow, in order to connect with the aid recipient and receive an acknowledgement that can then be broadcast via traditional mass media. But the recent terrorist attack in Afghanistan on a delegation from the U.S. Embassy in which a young press officer was killed, as she was attempting to conduct an event to mark a gift of books to a local school, demonstrates the risks in trying to gain publicity for American aid.

In these circumstances, other approaches have to be utilized. In the last five years, the most effective effort to foster understanding and support for donor countries in Afghanistan has come in the form of traditional television programming. One show in particular, called "On the Road," financed by USAID, followed a young Afghan from town to town as he showed practical examples of American foreign aid projects. It became one of the most popular programs on Afghan

² "Aiding Conflict: The Unintended Consequences of U.S. Food Aid on Civil War," Nathan Nunn and Nancy Qian, 2011 paper.

³ Arab Voices: "What they are Saying to Us and Why it Matters," Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

television. Surveys of viewers showed that attitudes toward the United States were positively influenced by this program. The show, now in its fourth season, never shows Americans or other foreigners -- only the results of the foreigners' efforts. This more natural, storytelling approach avoids dry interviews with Americans using interpreters, and focuses instead on Afghans giving examples of how their lives have improved. There are no scenes of Iron Man, and no sacks of grain with the US flag on them.

This is one of the very few examples of USAID creating a distinct program to advertise its accomplishments to a foreign audience. Regretably, U.S. foreign aid professionals have rarely given this sort of sustained communications to foreign audiences a high priority. They need to do more of this. They also need to raise the qualifications of the communications professionals they hire to do this work at their overseas missions.

In Afghanistan and elsewhere, foreign government donor institutions are learning that implementation of foreign assistance programs must include activities to build popular support. Secretary of State John Kerry said as much in that first meeting of his with USAID employees last February:

And what we do to change people's opinions, to change lives, to open up opportunity as a consequence of that is really hard to define to people but...This makes a difference to people's perception of us, to their connection to us, to their willingness to link arms with us and make a difference in other tricky endeavors, whether it's fighting terrorism or narcotics or oppression or resistance to governance.

Framing the mission of America's foreign aid agency in this way certainly broadens the USAID's definition of success. If U.S. foreign aid now is supposed to change perceptions of the U.S. as well as social and economic conditions, there is a lot to do to catch up. Among the indicators and matrices that foreign aid specialists use there will have to be added public opinion as well. For the goal for donors should be, and increasingly is, not only to make progress "on the ground," but in the "hearts and minds" of recipient publics as well.

▶ 16

An Asian History of Australian Public Relations: Exploring the Impact of Globalisation

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates Australian public relations in terms of transnational activity in the Asian region, addressing calls to research the impact of globalisation and to reconceptualise Australian public relations history. The standard history is a narrow conceptualisation of public relations, focusing on its professional development in a national context. Drawing on archival and interview research, I identify significant transnational activity in the Australian public relations industry and education in the 1980s and 1990s. During this period, the Australian industry experienced rapid growth, and the professional association attempted to establish greater social legitimacy and jurisdiction over public relations activity. However, this research suggests that public relations in Australia was largely conceptualised in national terms, ignoring the significant industry and education activity in Asia. The findings point to the need to reconceptualise Australian public relations in global terms, with a particular focus on activity in the Asian region.

INTRODUCTION

The standard history of Australian public relations focuses on its professional development and standing in a national context, and on the history of the professional association, the Public Relations Institute of Australia (PRIA). In these historical accounts, the transnational connections between Australia and countries in Asia tend to be ignored. Despite the shift in power from west to east in a rapidly globalising world, there is limited empirical research into public relations activity across borders in the Asian region. I offer evidence of Australian–Asian interactions in relation to the Australian public relations industry and education, and call for more research into the impact of global factors on the development of a national public relations industry and curriculum.

This paper investigates the development of Australian public relations in global terms, through the foregrounding of transnational public relations activity between Australia and countries in Asia. It develops a theme, Australia–Asia interactions, that emerged from a study examining Australian public relations between 1985 and 1999. This paper is structured in four sections. The first section reviews the literature on globalisation and public relations, and highlights the need to understand Australia's historical relationship with Asia. The historical narratives of Australian public relations are also discussed, drawing on industry and practitioner perspectives. The second section outlines

the research design, and the data instruments and analysis applied in this paper. The third section demonstrates Australia–Asia interactions in relation to public relations, structured around three themes: professionalisation in the Australian public relations industry; Australian public relations education; and Australian practitioners in Asia. This analysis offers initial insights into how ‘Asia’ is conceptualised in industry narratives and in relation to education, yet is ignored in standard histories of Australian public relations, despite evidence of significant activity in the region. The final section discusses the implications for future public relations research, and suggests that the development of public relations in Australia cannot be understood without reference to the broader regional or global context.

Background

Globalisation and Australasia.

Globalisation is a disputed concept, but generally acknowledges that traditional distinctions between national and international are becoming less meaningful (McGrew, 2011). There has been limited research on the impact of globalisation on public relations (Bardhan & Weaver, 2011; Pal & Dutta, 2008). For example, research has explored diverse public relations practices in different countries, but does not usually address regional or global practices (Schoenberger-Orgad, 2009). This paper considers Australian public relations in terms of transnational activity in the Asian region, addressing calls to research the impact of globalisation on public relations (Bardhan & Weaver, 2011; Pal & Dutta, 2008; Sriramesh, 2009a).

Australia has an ambivalent relationship with Asia, although it is geographically located in the Asian region and has strong economic ties and trade links with various Asian countries (Knight & Heazle, 2011). Although its cultural heritage is primarily European, Australia’s identity is increasingly Asian, with more permanent migrants arriving from China (2010-2011) and India (2011-2012) than from the United Kingdom (UK); one in ten of the Australian population has Asian ancestry (Government of Australia, 2012). In using the term ‘Asia’, I acknowledge that is a constructed, homogenising and contested term that refers to a large and diverse region.

Historical narratives of Australian public relations.

Public relations in Australia is generally considered to date from the arrival of General Douglas Macarthur and his public relations staff in 1943. Textbook histories suggest the professional institute transformed the Australian public relations industry in the post-war era from largely a publicity function to a profession (see Harrison, 2011; Potts, 1976; Quarles & Rowlings, 1993; Tymson, Lazar & Lazar, 2008; Zawawi, 2009). However, some scholars have called for Australian public relations history to be reconceptualised, pointing to the existence of earlier public relations activity such as, for example, the pivotal role public relations has played in the promotion of Australia Day since the 19th century (Crawford & Macnamara, 2012), World War 1 conscription campaigns, and 19th and 20th century immigration campaigns (Sheehan, 2007). Few studies,

however, acknowledge the growing transnational activity in the Australasian region.

Australian practitioners and agencies were influential in the development of public relations in various cities in Southeast Asia as early as the 1960s (Sheehan, 2010; Turnbull 2012). Australian public relations consultancy Eric White Associates (EWA), for instance, focused increasingly on Asia from 1964 (Griffin-Foley, 2012). The significance for this study is the dominance of EWA in the Australian public relations industry. Many of the Australian public relations industry ‘pioneers’ and senior members of the PRIA worked for EWA or International Public Relations (IPR), which was established by Laurie Kerr after he left EWA in 1964 (Morath, 2008; “The most powerful man of all”, 2002; Turnbull, 2010). According to Turnbull, “[b]asically everyone who ran a major consultancy in the late 20th century had been an employee of either Eric White or Laurie Kerr and sometimes both” (2010, p. 19). Despite this history of significant regional and transnational activity, in Australia “public relations is adapted to fit local circumstances and processes”, and mostly has a national focus (Motion & Leitch, 2005; Motion, Leitch & Cliffe, 2009, p. 101).

The dominant paradigm for public relations, which emerged from Anglo-American studies, is increasingly recognised and indeed contested. During the mid to late 1990s, there was a significant increase in public relations scholarship in Australia. Nearly a decade later, scholars identified a special issue of the Australian Journal of Communication (Leitch & Walker, 1997) as a catalyst for “greater global openness” in public relations scholarship, and confirmed “the existence of a critical mass of PR theorists in Australasia” (L’Etang, 2009; Petelin, 2005, p. 462). Despite these achievements, Petelin, citing Sriramesh (2004), nevertheless acknowledges that “much remains to be done, especially in connecting with our Asian counterparts theoretically as well as geographically.” (2005, p. 461). In 1999, the Australian-based Asia Pacific Public Relations Journal was first published. However, articles investigating public relations outside an Australian or New Zealand context are in the minority.

Investigating Australian Public Relations

In researching the history of Australian public relations, focusing on public relations in higher education from 1985-1999, I discovered evidence of transnational activity in PRIA archives and industry newsletters. While much of this international engagement was with American scholars and educators and with associations, such as the International Public Relations Association (IPRA) (see, for instance, “IPRA seeks more Australian members”, 1986; “Introducing the Grunigs”, 1996), a minor but persistent theme emerged around industry engagement with countries in Asia. As part of the investigation into Australian public relations, I interviewed practitioners and educators who spent pivotal periods of their careers working in senior public relations roles in various Asian countries. In response to changes in government policies and funding in the late 1980s, Australian universities have become increasingly reliant on revenue generated by international, primarily

Asian, students (Fitch, 2013a). However, the impact of this transnational activity has not been explored in relation to the historical development of Australian public relations, and remains firmly on the margins.

This paper presents evidence of Australian-Asian interactions in relation to public relations in Australia, which emerged from a broader investigation into the professionalisation of the public relations industry. I stress that investigating industry engagement between Australia and countries in Asia was not the primary aim of that research. However, it emerged as a persistent, minor theme and deserves further investigation. I interviewed 14 educators and practitioners about public relations and professionalisation between December 2010 and September 2012. I also researched PRIA state and national council archives. Drawing on these sources, with a particular focus on trade media and industry newsletters, I construct an historical narrative of Australian public relations and its interactions with Asia. However, this narrative is incomplete, and I attempt to avoid reducing the findings to an evolutionary, progressive narrative of the development of Australian public relations. Instead, I offer a thematic analysis that conveys how Asian–Australian public relations has been conceptualised from the Australian industry perspective.

Scope and limitations.

I present this discussion from the perspective of a public relations educator living and working in Australia, and involved in transnational public relations education. I am not an Asian studies scholar or an historian. Therefore, my discussion focuses on conceptualisations of public relations, primarily from the industry perspective, drawing on PRIA archives and participant perceptions. I report findings on the development of Australian public relations education (1985–1999) elsewhere (see Fitch, 2013b; 2013c).

Findings and Discussion

Professionalisation in the Australian public relations industry.

The Australia public relations industry expanded in the 1980s, partly in response to the expansion of the corporate sector and to the increasing institutionalisation of government public relations (Butler, 1998; Fitch & Third, 2010; Ward, 2003). But the industry was dominated by concerns over the poor image and legitimacy of public relations in Australia were prominent during the 1980s. These concerns are illustrated in newspaper articles, trade publications and industry newsletters. Public relations practitioners in the early 1980s were described in one newspaper as “the used car salesmen of the communication world”; however, the article goes on to quote PRIA representatives who suggest public relations is now “respectable” (Dell’oso, 1983, p. 32).

The PRIA, through the establishment of a National Taskforce in 1983, aimed to introduce greater regulation of public relations activity nationally. At that point, the PRIA consisted of state-based

councils that operated reasonably independently of the national council. From 1985 to 1999, the theme of a unified and national public relations industry was prominent in various industry publications and strongly linked with the professionalisation drive of the PRIA. One PRIA state president Bill Mackey reported “the review of membership grading [is needed] in the light of a foreseeable large increase in admissions of graduates from PRIA-accredited courses and the general trends towards increased professionalism” (1984, p. 2).

These strategies, and indeed the professional standing of public relations, are the focus of articles in two feature sections written by high-profile PRIA members in the influential and business-orientated Australian Financial Review in 1986 and 1988. In response to unattributed comments that Australia was ‘advanced’ in public relations techniques and “ranked third in the world behind the US and the UK”, the PRIA president made grand claims for the international standing of Australian public relations, arguing that Australia “has a higher standard of people, better and more effective ideas and techniques” than any other country (MacIntosh, 1986, p. 45). He pointed to the introduction of “accreditation by examination for those practitioners not holding recognised tertiary degrees” as an important PRIA initiative in “improving industry standards” and “improving industry image outcomes”. Education was perceived by the PRIA to play a pivotal role in raising industry standards and regulating membership of the institute, placing public relations education firmly within a professional discourse.

Australian public relations education.

Although the influence of Western public relations education in some Asian countries has been acknowledged (Sriramesh, 2004), the impact of this market-led demand on Australian public relations education has not been explored, other than in a small number of studies regarding the internationalisation of the curriculum and its suitability for a diverse student cohort (Fitch & Surma, 2006; Wolf, 2010). During the 1990s, participants delivered Australian public relations courses in Malaysia, Hong Kong, Singapore and Vietnam, and travelled to India, China and other countries in Asia to discuss partnership arrangements with polytechnics and other education institutions, offering advanced standing or negotiating articulation arrangements to encourage international students to study in Australia.

Participants noted the widespread use of American textbooks in public relations education in Australia from 1985–1999, and the relative lack of Australian textbooks, which confirmed the findings in earlier studies (see Quarles & Potts, 1990; Starck, 1999). Indeed, Starck reported that one educator justified the use of an American textbook “because of the need to service overseas students ... the university reading lists ‘must not be too Australian’” (italics in original, as cited in Starck, 1999, p. 62). Handbooks were produced for the Asian market, but these were practical manuals aimed at practitioners and were rarely set as textbooks (see Macnamara, 1992). Only one textbook, Practising public relations: A case study approach (Quarles & Rowlings, 1993),

now out of print, foregrounded Australia's relationship with Asian countries. This textbook focuses on public relations in Asia, including a whole chapter on the need for cultural competence and a range of Asian case studies, which is unusual. More recent Australian textbooks include a single chapter on public relations in Asia. Significantly, understanding public relations activity in Asia was not part of the formal, written PRIA course accreditation criteria, introduced in 1991. The criteria were drawn from the recommendations in the Quarles and Potts (1990) report, which were based on the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) guidelines. However, the report acknowledged the need to adapt the criteria to local, Australian conditions; the widespread use of American-based textbooks in Australian courses; and the lack of teaching resources and case studies for the Australian context.

Australian practitioners in Asia.

As part of my historical investigation into Australian public relations, I interviewed 14 educators and practitioners; all but one are or were PRIA members. Four practitioners had worked in Asia, and five educators had travelled to Asian countries for teaching purposes or to develop partnerships with local education institutions and public relations associations. I recognise that this sample is not statistically significant; however, in this section I present the perceptions of two participants about the significance of these experiences for their professional development. For example, Bill Mackey managed the EWA office in Singapore for three years from 1973, and acknowledged his lack of management experience when he started and that Australian practitioners working in Southeast Asia were "probably a bit arrogant".

I'd come from a government relations office in Canberra and I went into a commercial office in Singapore and that was a huge jump. Living in another country, trying to understand what they were doing and how they thought and what was important to them and then trying to apply what I knew in that environment was quite an ask.

For Mackey, working overseas enabled him to gain management experience. Mackey was headhunted by Sime Darby, a Malaysian multinational corporation, where he worked in a senior capacity until he returned to Australia in 1980 and joined the PRIA state council.

Kevin Smith's contributions to the public relations industry over five decades were recognised with life membership of the College of Fellows in 2007. Smith worked for the Western Australian state government, before Hill and Knowlton appointed him to be senior advisor to the Indonesian government on the basis of his experience of working with Asian countries. Smith, who had long been interested in education since managing the education portfolio on the inaugural PRIA (WA) state council in 1970, became a university lecturer in the mid-1990s. He acknowledged the significance of Asia for the Australian industry:

I learnt when I was working for Sir Charles [the Western Australian premier], ... that our future is Asia and our future is as a multi-national country, part of Asia and that is just so apparent today looking around the campuses of the university and so on.

Smith stopped teaching in 2011, but recalled how working in Indonesia from 1979-1981 influenced his teaching and perspectives on public relations. When asked if he adapted his teaching materials for international students, Smith replied:

Because I'm internationally oriented, my case histories are not just Australian, I don't concentrate on Australia. I shop around for a good example of whatever and so they wouldn't have felt it was a parochial delivery whereas you might get some Australian students complaining that it's not parochial enough.

In terms of the implications for teaching, he perceived a tension between international and local resources and case studies. Many interview participants identified the challenges in sourcing local, namely Asian, case studies for use in international teaching.

Implications and Conclusion

This research demonstrates the tensions between local, national and international factors influencing the development of the public relations industry and education in Australia. The conceptualisation of public relations in a national context appeared to ignore the significant experience that practitioners gained in Asia and the growing trade and economic links with the Asian region. Instead, US studies and industry associations remained the focus for the Australian professional association and for educators in terms of the curriculum. Despite this finding, industry practitioners and educators perceived Australian public relations as unique. Drawing on Pieczka (2002), I argue that there was an implicit understanding that Australian public relations knowledge was constituted in (Australian) practice, and that senior PRIA members were the repository of that knowledge.

This paper has offered some evidence of Australia-Asia interactions over two decades, in relation to the Australian public relations industry, in an attempt to address calls to investigate the impact of globalisation and transnational public relations activity on conceptualisations of public relations (Bardhan & Weaver, 2011; Sriramesh, 2009b). The narrow focus on the historical development of Australian public relations in the context of the professionalisation agenda of the PRIA ignores potentially significant interactions with countries in Asia, particularly in relation to international trade and education but also in relation to the career development of individual practitioners. Despite these growing trade links with Asian countries, and in tandem, increased regional public

relations activity, these transnational activities had a limited impact on the ways in which public relations was conceptualised by the PRIA. Drawing on public relations scholarship into race and postcolonialism may allow Australian public relations to be reconceptualised, and suggest new ways of understanding public relations as a transnational activity and global practice in the Australasian region.

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4. About BledCom

About BledCom

The primary mission of the international symposia that have been organized over the past 20 years under the aegis of BledCom, is to provide a venue for public relations scholars and practitioners from around the world to exchange ideas and perspectives about public relations practice in all its forms such as corporate communication, public affairs, reputation management, issues and crisis management, etc. Building from this history, BledCom seeks to help establish a state-of-the-art body of knowledge of the field with each annual symposium attempting to widen the horizons of the field by attracting current and new perspectives and state-of-the-art research from public relations and related disciplines. Toward this end, every BledCom symposium seeks to offer a venue for practitioners and scholars to share their conceptual perspectives, empirical findings (adopting any/all methodologies), or case studies related to the field. As an international symposium, BledCom welcomes participation of scholars (including doctoral students) and practitioners from every region of the world so that we can help improve the public relations profession and theory-building to cope with a world that is globalizing rapidly. The symposium is known for its relaxing, pleasant and above all informal atmosphere, where all the participants can engage in debate and discussions with colleagues who have similar interests, and of course, enjoy the delights of the beautiful Lake Bled setting.

5. BledCom 2013

BledCom Programme Committee:

Dejan Verčič

(University of Ljubljana & Pristop, Slovenia)

Krishnamurthy Sriramesh

(Purdue University, USA)

Jon White

(International consultant in management and organisation development, Henley Business School, Cardiff University and University of Central Lancashire, UK)

Ana Tkalac Verčič

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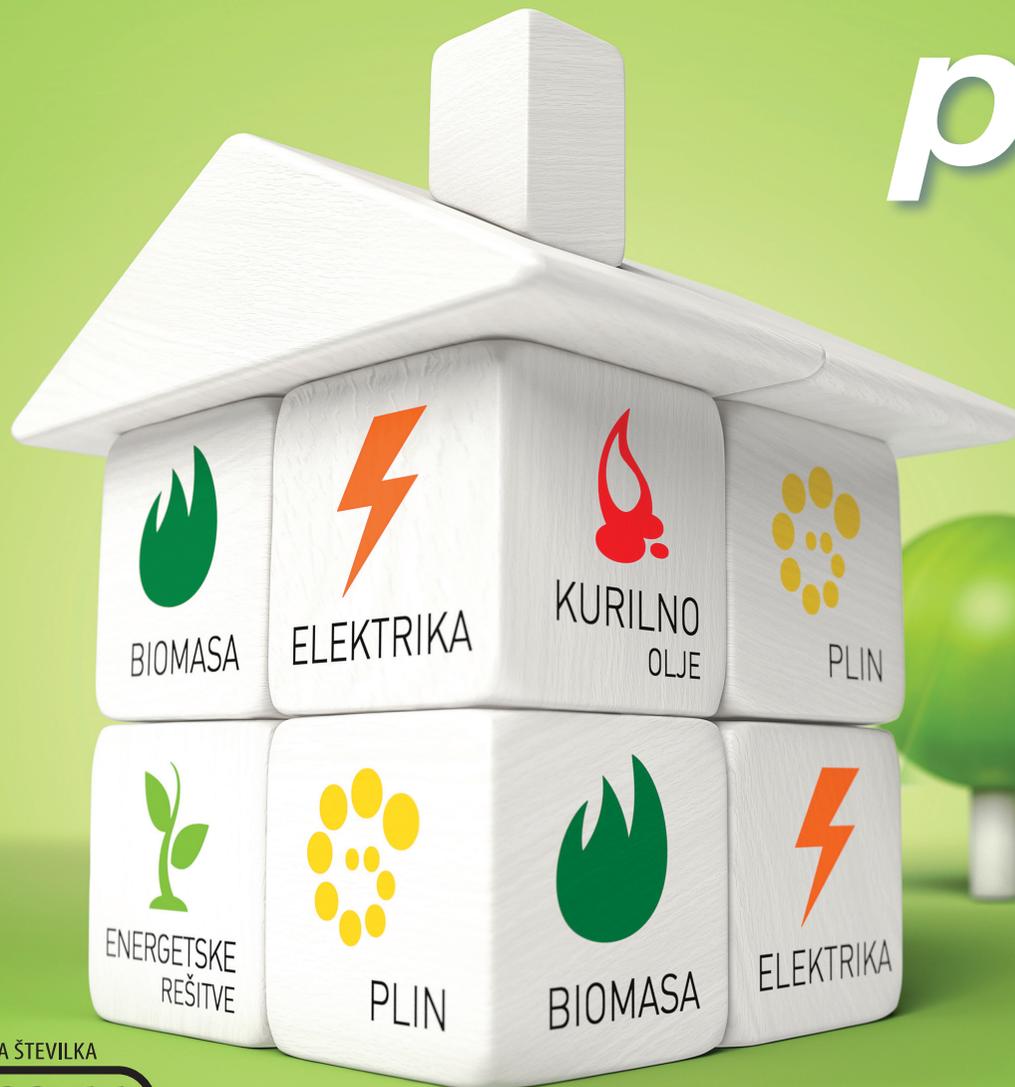


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