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Abstract

This article builds on earlier conceptual analyses that have contrasted public relations with diplomacy and public diplomacy at conceptual and applied levels, to consider further the theoretical and global issues of public relations' diplomatic work for states and organizations in the context of globalization. A key feature of such work is its intercultural nature, at the organizational, ethnic, and state levels. The discussion draws inspiration from a range of disciplines including public relations, international relations, strategic studies, media studies, peace studies, management studies, cultural studies, and anthropology. Linking public diplomacy to public relations usefully reconnects public relations to power, which has largely been ignored by dominant organizational-management approaches to the subject.

Keywords

public relations, public diplomacy, diplomacy, propaganda, public communication, power

Literature

Within the literature on diplomacy, the broader concept of public diplomacy has become more common and attracted increasing attention as a field that is not limited to interstate negotiation. In particular, there has been increasing interest in public diplomacy's relational and communicative aspects (Cowan, 2008; Jönsson & Hall, 2003; Kelley, 2009; Nye, 2008; Ronfeldt & Arquilla, 2009; Snow & Taylor, 2009;

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Zaharna, 2009). Others have sought to explore analytic approaches (Cull, 2008) or to integrate it with other disciplines (Feldman, 2005; Gilboa, 2008).

Within the newer discipline of public relations (PR), efforts have also been made to compare and contrast the concepts of PR, diplomacy, and public diplomacy (L'Etang, 1994, 1996b, 2006c; Signitzer, 2008; Signitzer & Coombs, 1992; Signitzer & Wamser, 2006; Yun, 2006). Increasing convergence between the fields is apparent through the focus on relationship management (Fitzpatrick, 2007). Instrumentalism is apparent in some contributions (Fitzpatrick, 2007; Seong-Hun, 2006). Others categorize literature through discourses (Wang, 2006a) or explore levels of analysis (Signitzer & Wamser, 2006). Commentators suggest that knowledge of PR concepts would be useful to public diplomacy theorists and practitioners (Fitzpatrick, 2007; Signitzer, 2008; Wang, 2006b), although I believe that PR practitioners can learn from theories of diplomacy and public diplomacy (L'Etang, 2006). I am aware of only one PR scholar (Szondi, 2009) who has infiltrated diplomacy literature. It is certainly hoped that initiatives such as this special issue will bring together scholars from different disciplines productively and facilitate further conversations and collaborations.

Introduction

PR bears strong connections to and similarities with diplomacy in a number of ways. Both are responsible for official institutional communications with other organizations and relations with wider groups or publics and are responsive to public opinion and media coverage. At a functional level, it can be argued that PR is part of the practice of diplomacy responsible for international communications and media relations as well as cultural diplomacy, which aims to enhance personal relationships between representatives of the host and target countries. It can be argued that diplomacy (political, economic, informational, cultural) is part of organizational strategic PR and that skills of diplomacy are important to effective PR. Diplomacy and PR include overt and covert aspects; entail surveillance (issues management), secrecy (confidential information, commercial and organizational secrets), and crisis management; and engage in information wars (Taylor, 1997) and psychological operations (the values of which are quite apparent in the early PR issues management literature and present in campaign planning models). Finally, PR and public diplomacy may both be seen as euphemistic terms for propaganda, from which practitioners in both areas have endeavored to distinguish themselves. In public diplomacy (Kelley, 2009),

One of the longest-running debates . . . involves to what extent it should employ propaganda techniques to influence foreign public opinion, or more broadly, whether propaganda should be related to public diplomacy at all. Some would submit that propaganda and diplomacy are mutually exclusive styles. (p. 75)

PR practitioners and academics generally try to consign propaganda to the historical past or as the preserve of a handful of nefarious “bad apples.” But in the 1950s and 1960s, some British PR practitioners acknowledged the overlaps and debated whether propaganda was the overarching strategic concept, for which PR was a supporting technique, or whether this hierarchy should be inverted. In short, the concepts are fundamentally intertwined, although work that explores these intersections in depth is scarce (L'Etang, 2006, 2008).

In this article, I explore further the idea of PR as a form of diplomacy in the context of globalization. My approach is informed by my career experience at The British Council in the 1970s and 1980s. My interest in discourse ethics, rhetoric, and the role of power in communication leads me to question some of the normative theory, which has dominated the PR field to date.

I begin with some definitional discussion and highlight some problematics. I proceed to sketch out the PR discipline, and its paradigms, and then comment selectively on contributions that relate PR to diplomacy, nation building, and globalization. I conclude by arguing that the integration of public diplomacy concepts with PR can usefully foreground important issues of power that have been neglected or sidelined in much of the PR literature.

Public Relations, Public Diplomacy, and Cultural Diplomacy: Power and Influence

PR is the occupation held responsible for the “management” or improvement of organizational relationships and reputation. It encompasses issues management, public affairs, corporate communications, stakeholder relations, risk communication, and corporate social responsibility. PR operates on behalf of many different types of organization both at the governmental and corporate levels, to small business and voluntary sectors. PR practitioners have an intercultural role, both between organizational cultures and within increasingly multicultural contexts. PR arises at points of societal change and resistance.

PR is the discursive and relational function present in public communication processes, visible and invisible. Power has political, economic, cultural, and religious dimensions, and elite status that facilitates media access. Relationships with, and ability to influence, local, national, and international media agendas are of crucial importance in shaping public discourse. Recently, PR practitioners have been defined in Bourdieu's term as “cultural intermediaries”¹ (Curtin & Gaither, 2005, 2007; Hodges, 2005, 2006). It has also been remarked of diplomats that (Hamilton & Langhorne, 1995)

they have traditionally been perceived as intermediaries. . . . The value of a diplomat lay not in any specialist knowledge he might possess, but in his ability to communicate, negotiate and persuade. (p. 232)

In short, diplomats operate as rhetors, a modern example of ancient Greek sophists that Plato so condemned in *Gorgias* for their lack of expert knowledge of what it is they advocate, their skills lying simply in persuasion (L'Etang, 1996a, 2006b).

Public diplomacy can be defined as an activity conducted by nations (stateless and otherwise), organizations, which operate globally (national sporting bodies, tourist bodies), global organizations (corporations such as Nike and nongovernmental organizations [NGOs] such as the International Olympic Committee, World Health Organization, and the Catholic Church), and international political organizations advocating change (Greenpeace). Public diplomacy includes interpersonal debate and negotiation between professional diplomats ranging from international treaties, reparations, commercial and trade agreements, economic and development aid, and ecological practices to framework agreements for educational and cultural exchanges. All entail a range of promotional and persuasive strategies and techniques in addition to media relations. State diplomacy can, of course, be backed up by military force; cultural diplomacy tends to be characterized by long-term "hearts and minds" campaigns aimed at developing emotional bonds with overseas domestic publics to gain their identification and sympathy, for example, exchange of persons and overseas arts tours and exhibitions. This is done to influence public opinion directly through personal experiences such as educational and cultural exchanges and not just through the media. Work of such organizations (The British Council, Goethe Institute) is comparable to religious campaigns (Tilson, 2006) in terms of time frame—often over several generations. In the case of former colonial nations, cultural diplomacy can be seen as a form of community PR or even, where linked to development agendas, as a type of country social responsibility.

Governments build national and cultural identity through tourism and sport as forms of public diplomacy and internal PR as well as external PR or diplomacy directed at *intermestic* publics (international domestic publics; Hill & Beshoff, 1994). The use of sport for diplomatic ends has been noted by a number of authors in relation to prestigious events such as the Olympics, often used to brand or rebrand countries (Chehabi, 2001; Hong & Xiaozheng, 2002; Horton, 2008; Manheim, 1990).

However, cultural diplomacy does not come cheap; it comes with a policy agenda and, worldwide, it is the rich nations that can afford such programs. Also, as Dutta-Bergman (2005) has pointed out,

The vision of building civil societies is used as a justification for imperialist invasions of Third World nations—whereas some of these invasions are overtly implemented, others are covertly carried out through persuasive strategies such as grant programs, foreign assistance programs, and democracy promotion initiatives. (p. 268)

For some, capitalist imperialism has been implemented through economic globalization and international "McDonaldization" (Ritzer, 2000, 2002). Globalization has had significant political and cultural effects, raising major PR issues and corporate

social responsibility challenges. Arguments that suggest that contemporary global interconnectedness are purely the consequence of a technological advancement are determinist and flawed because they underplay the political and economic values that support a range of international policy decisions that are partly responsible for reproducing inequity, for environmental damage, and for a rapidly proliferating nuclear arms race. PR may be implicated in these effects as part of dominant structures whose aims and values it espouses and promotes. The PR industry has benefited from closer international connections and the growing necessity for formal international organizational communication (see Miller & Dinan, 2003, for detailed examination of these issues).

Antiglobalization protests and demonstrations are good examples of “active publics” described in situational theory (Grunig, 1994). If PR practitioners are to adopt (and be credited with) a diplomatic role, then it is with these difficult political issues that are the consequence of capitalization that they will have to engage. The way in which relationships with active publics are framed by both sides and interpreted in public debate and the media is obviously paramount in the way negotiation (if entered into) proceeds. Merging PR and public diplomacy perspectives can usefully advance our understanding of relational processes in public communication.

Because political and economic organizations are connected by their representatives (diplomats and PR practitioners), corporate PR is often political. Chains of agents (Mitnick, 1993) form an intermediary class between policy maker/power holder, media, and the wider public. The communication management role beloved and promoted by the dominant paradigm in academic PR speaks volumes within its short self-definition. Political or civil, the aims in practice are the same: controlling information, setting media agendas, framing public issues, shaping public discourse, and gaining organizational political advantage. PR is a global industry made up of concentrated conglomerates unifying advertising, marketing, PR, and lobbying (Miller & Dinan, 2000) and, as a consequence, it has been argued that, in practice (Alleyne, 2003), “distinctions often made between PR, advertising, marketing and even public information are often artificial . . . demarcations often useless” (p. 176). However, the long-running campaign for “PR for PR” (for more on PR’s professional project, see Grunig, 2000; Pieczka & L’Etang, 2001) requires that these distinctions are maintained alongside the crucial, if occasionally artificial, separation between PR and propaganda (see L’Etang, 2006, pp. 23–40, and 2008, pp. 251–270, for detailed analysis and discussion of methodological issues in analysis) as noted above.

Furthermore, the fact that politics suffuses other activities such as tourism, sport, and religion in everyday life demonstrates that a consideration of diplomacy must extend beyond a narrow understanding of political diplomacy between nation-states to include the cultural identity projects of stateless nations (which may be subject to political restriction by the dominant nation-states) and intercultural diplomacy targeted at domestic publics of nation-states and stateless nations (which was defined as *intermestic diplomacy* by international relations academics; Hill & Beshoff, 1994) as well as the diplomacy that takes place between political and economic actors and

organizations. The international mal-distribution of resources means that the inhabitants of wealthy economies travel widely as business/organizational ambassadors or for leisure (tourists or anthropologically inspired travelers). The “world travel imbalance” and the existence of what has been termed an International Business Class² complicates and to some degree dilutes processes of traditional international diplomacy. Diplomacy, including corporate diplomacy, does indeed take place in a “global village” that is also postcolonial and complicated by identity politics and multicultural societies that fracture traditional allegiances and the assumptions on which official diplomacy may operate. The historical process of globalization, which began with exploration and trade, conquest and anthropology, is contributed to by a multitude of tourisms that facilitate immeasurable intercultural experiences. Thus, one can define public diplomacy as a much broader and more complex field than strict definitions might allow.

Governments may conduct public diplomacy internally (within their own borders), using apparently nonpolitical activities such as sport, to try to unify ethnically diverse groups, for example. Global corporations and nations compete for loyalty and identification of consumers, stakeholders, and publics. For NGOs, these developments imply the need for cultural expertise. PR needs a new understanding of its own changing identity and its ability to cope with long-term issues management to cope with the effects of worldwide diasporas and displaced persons, ecological damage, and postcolonial, post-cold war allegiances and the heightened role of religion. Indeed, transnational movements such as religion assume a political role and “question the authority of the modern state to contain [it]” (Meyer & Moors, 2006, p. 5). The relationship between religion, diplomacy, and PR is particularly interesting because

religions, in one way or another, claim to mediate the transcendental, spiritual, or supernatural and make these accessible to believers. . . . It is most fruitful, as a starting point, to view religion as a practice of mediation. (p. 7)

The interplay between individual values, organizational culture, organizational policies, and complex cultural and intercultural dynamics is crucial for PR practice, but there have been few empirical efforts to uncover multilayered relationships at organizational local, national, and international levels. Some notable exceptions are, however, beginning to emerge (Edwards, 2007; Hodges, 2006). Thus, our understanding of PR *in* diplomacy, as well as PR *as* diplomacy, is to some extent limited and, in some cases, may be stereotypical.

Nevertheless, the consonance between diplomacy and PR work adds to a broader understanding of the strategic communication role internationally, nationally, and culturally as part of power relations. This has had implications for both PR and diplomacy that are both functional and critical. The relational turn in public diplomacy noted by Snow (2009) and exemplified by Zaharna (2009) suggests a growing interest from public diplomacy theorists in dialogue, transparency, trust, and commitment. As Zaharna

pointed out in his comparison of linear versus relational approaches, “public diplomacy is as much a communication phenomena as a political one” (p. 86).

The Public Relations Discipline and Its Paradigms

PR literature has a corporate and technocratic bias, despite the significance of the political aspects of organizations—the way in which they exercise power both through elite networking in the international business and political spheres as well as through economic power. Since the 1970s, PR research has been dominated by U.S. efforts to develop a “scientific” discipline that delivers applied theory that can help PR practitioners be more effective in their work. PR work in this context is concerned with organizational reputation and communication management (of stakeholders and media) and conducted at a strategic level, employing managerialist language and techniques. The dominant paradigm that has emerged is based on systems theory, combines functionalism with normative theory, and has produced a great deal of quantitative research. The concept of “excellence” was adopted from management literature and applied to PR to suggest that morally good and effective practice may be facilitated by participative organizational structures, an ethics of equity and diversity, and principles of symmetrical communication that would enhance dialogic interorganizational or organization–public relationships based on mutuality (Grunig, 1992). In addition, a somewhat crude historical model of PR history based on the U.S. experience was used to devise a typology of practice. This model was progressive, suggesting that PR developed through various stages from propaganda and publicity toward more dialogic approaches. This model was then generalized as a global blueprint for analyzing PR. In 1989, U.S. theorist Pearson made a crucial intervention by introducing Habermas’s Theory of Communicative Action and this framework has subsequently been used to bolster the normative and prescriptive model of symmetrical communication to justify the existence and presumed morality of the occupation (Pearson, 1989a, 1989b, 1990, 1992). This approach to thinking about PR has been extensively globalized or colonized as a dominant framework despite the fact that PR appears to have developed differently in various cultures. Substantial efforts of the academic discipline have been greatly focused on justifying practice and developing ideas that might help practitioners work more ethically than they are assumed to have been doing—ethnographic work in the field remains rare.

Within the dominant paradigm, a number of approaches have developed: work roles, feminist, relational, communitarian, and rhetorical. Roles research (most recently articulated in Dozier & Broom, 2006) has focused on the functional distinction between organizational managerial and technical level dichotomy; liberal feminism has driven studies of women’s careers in the United States (Hon, 1995; Toth & Grunig, 1993); relational approaches have argued that balancing the interests of the organization and its publics is achieved through focusing on the quality of relationships (Ledingham, 2006; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000); the communitarian approach suggests that PR should focus on community building to overcome alienation (Kruckeberg & Starck,

1988; Kruckeberg, Starck, & Vujinovic, 2006); and the rhetorical approaches have argued that advocacy and persuasion are permissible within the context of a dialogue and that symmetrical communication may be achieved through the public contest of ideas (Heath, 2001, 2006; Toth & Heath, 1992). Of these, the rhetorical and communitarian seem the most useful for a consideration of public diplomacy. The communitarian approach suggests integrated bottom-up solutions that engage stakeholders and the wider public (similar to community approaches in health promotion literature). The rhetorical approach implies advocacy, argument, and persuasion but also language as an instrument of power used in efforts that limit others' perceptions, discursive tactics that might be defined as propaganda. However, the assumptions that appear to be embedded in some rhetorically inspired analyses tend to assume consensus as a shared goal, rather than persuasion or domination. The communications of nation-states and stateless nations, which entail the development, enhancement, and promotion of national identity and values, may be referred to variously as PR, propaganda, psychological operations, political warfare, or terrorism, depending on the subject position of the reader. As Weaver, Motion, and Roper (2006) made very clear, our discursive practices are ideologically and culturally grounded in socio-historical contexts and power.

It is significant that the United States, the most powerful country in the world, which exemplifies capitalism, competitiveness, and free-market values, has driven the growth of corporate PR worldwide. There, the growth of PR can be traced to leaders' fears of democratization and their consequent desire to control internal (domestic) public opinion (Ewen, 1996). U.S. dominance is reflected in global ownership of corporate communications agencies (Miller & Dinan, 2000). PR activities typically cluster around centers of power and processes of change. Power imbalances generate advocacy (attack–defense spirals), resistance, and conflict; power balances may produce stalemate and suspicion. Power frames the communication climate and the tactics of communication aims, objectives, and techniques. Awareness of power distribution shapes parties' expectations of each other and of future communicative relationships even before they begin.

The expansion of organizational PR after the end of World War II can be interpreted variously as a modernist project; as U.S. diplomacy or expansionism; as an outgrowth of the corporate-industrial-military complex; as governmental public opinion control; as an adjunct of democratic practice in terms of citizen education (public information campaigns); as a consequence of democracy and a free market; or as the consequence of, or as the trigger for, globalization.

Public Relations for Nations

At the strategic level, nation-states, stateless nations, freedom fighters, and terrorists have all engaged in activities that one can define as PR if we understand PR as advocacy, relationship management, and media relations. Their diplomacy may be peaceful or violent, political or civil, open or covert. It might also be defined as

propaganda. Nation building is clearly hegemonic because it is in the hands of the political class who need to be challenged to provide space for participatory debate. The quality and authenticity of this debate is altered by the newer class of semiprofessional communicators paid by commercial and noncommercial bodies to represent their interests, principally by lobbying and the provision of "information subsidies" (Gandy, 1982, 1992), thus raising the price of entry into the public discourse zone (public consultation exercises, media analysis). Direct action may gain media coverage but is a risky strategy in terms of gaining sympathetic public opinion, especially if violence is involved. The relationship and economic and political interdependencies between the political and communications classes (media and cultural intermediaries such as PR) are crucial to an understanding of the exercise of PR power in culture (Edwards, 2006) and in reproducing or countering dominant or conventional discourses. PR may be a key source for media, hence its implied role in brokering power and, indeed, representing power, which explains its consonance with diplomacy. Richards's (2004) analysis distinguished between *power-based PR* used to communicate strength and *values-based PR* concerned with reputation and adherence to values and standards because "simple strength may be central to the language of international affairs, and diplomacy [but] it is not part of the language of modern PR techniques" (p. 173). This dichotomy bears similarities to the contrast drawn between *realpolitik* and *noopolitik* (informational soft power; Ronfeldt & Arquilla, 2009; Xifra, 2008).

However, "the language of international affairs" and political international relations is managed by directors of communication and political PR practitioners, as are the sound-bites of politicians. Such a close alliance between power and managed communication could be defined as propaganda rather than PR. In any context, PR explains and justifies the organizational self in context-appropriate language that takes account of the prevailing relationships and rules of engagement. Power-based PR may be most obvious in international relations but is also present in organizational internal (employee) relations. Values-based PR is most obvious in corporate social responsibility (CSR) and cultural diplomacy. However, processes of defining national and organizational values are increasingly complex in multicultural postmodern contexts in which there are intrinsic tensions between local culturalism and globalism. Such tensions are tremendously challenging for PR and diplomatic representatives, for example, does The British Council define "Britishness," and if so, how?

The public diplomacy and PR of anti-establishment actors must also be considered. Richards examined terrorism as a tactic to gain media coverage, to mobilize support, and as a political catalyst (Richards, 2004). Such activities have ranged from the Red Brigades, Symbionese Liberation Army, and the media "communiqués" of the Front de Libération de Québec (all from the 1970s) to the more recent events such as the iconic 9/11 (which has had a considerable effect on the literature and practice of diplomacy and public diplomacy), not to mention various examples of state terrorism, which may be justified on grounds of counterinsurgency. These critical incidents have substantial media currency and are used to instigate change as one terrorist remarked (Fontal, personal communication, October 1990, cited in Irvin, 1992),

The media? Well no reporter can ignore a terror incident . . . in which there are killings. . . . They can't ignore this. . . . In the 70s when we started hijacking planes . . . the Palestinian movement . . . were trying to publicise their cause and were asking for media to cover the cause. What they did in Munich [at the Olympics] . . . they did it for the newspapers . . . because during that time, before 1982, there was only one side of the story presented. Nobody mentioned us. Nobody knew who are the Palestinians. We were just numbers . . . we had no face, no clothes. (p. 78)

However, as Paletz and Schmid (1992) pointed out, media coverage achieved through terrorism frames subsequent coverage and may inhibit political relationships and lead to spiraling violence to achieve media impact. The requirement for performance and spectacle was noted by Richards who highlighted the significance of media events in contemporary postmodern cultures (see Marriott, 2008).

Conceptual Links Between Public Relations and Public Diplomacy

It was Signitzer and Coombs (1992) who first suggested that PR perspectives could usefully contribute understanding to the way in which "nation-states, countries or societies manage their communicative relationships with their foreign publics" (p. 138). Later, I conducted meta-analysis on key concepts and their usage in relation to the assumptions of the dominant paradigm in the field. This had a dual purpose: to contribute to the understanding of PR in society and to comment on the politics and ideology of the PR field. I had also noticed that one or two practitioners referred to themselves as "corporate diplomats," a term that might imply aspiration to a particular international class of influence. Subsequently, I noted the discourse of the International Public Relations Association (IPRA) as specifically diplomatic and ambassadorial linked to the ambitions of some practitioners for a higher status (L'Etang, 2006). I identified some common functions in the practice of PR and diplomacy: representational (rhetoric, oratory, advocacy), dialogic (negotiation, peacemaking), advisory (counseling), intelligence gathering (research and environmental scanning, issues management) (L'Etang, 1996b), intercultural communication, and public opinion management (p. 17). I argued that it was in the interests of organizations to play down their own political role while highlighting those of their opponents described as "activists," "single-issue publics," or "social activists" in a process of *Othering*. The emergence of such groups justified the existence of PR personnel seen as responsible for the management of organizational reputations largely as reflected in the media. The PR role was to compete, and beat, other media sources to the position of "primary definer" of a public issue.

This led me to analyze the assumptions on which PR and diplomacy are conducted, and to help me do this, I mapped a theoretical framework of diplomacy developed by the international relations British academic Wight in the 1950s to illustrate that there

were some overlapping operational assumptions between diplomatic and PR practices. Wight's framework proposed three sets of underpinning assumptions: Realist, Rationalist, and Revolutionist. The Realist approach (also referred to as Machiavellian) assumed that in a world driven by power and greed, interests would necessarily collide and that the use of intelligence, inducements, and pressure would maximize the chances of success. On this account, the individual state competed with others and there was no sense of international society or an international system of states. The Rationalist model (drawing on the concepts of Dutch diplomat Grotius) was based on building relationships through truthfulness and promise-keeping based on concepts of mutuality in which international society was recognized as important (L'Etang, 1996b). This model included paternalistic concepts of trusteeship and reciprocity (e.g., to justify colonialism). Finally, the Revolutionist model (drawing on Kant's *Perceptual Peace*) was based on the assumption that international society, made up of individual sovereign states, formed a moral and cultural whole but whose moral authority derived from the will of individual peoples. In this way, the public interest was served by a world order in which the influence of nation-states was limited. However, such arrangements still raise questions over power. As has been pointed out in Peace Studies literature, big-power vetoes limit democracy, even though, at the same time, democratic ideals may be publicly espoused (Galtung, 1996).

The assumptions of Realism fed into the discipline of Strategic Studies, those of Revolutionism into Peace Studies. This points to the importance of reflexivity and transparency in public diplomacy and PR practice and theory building.

The normative implication of the Revolutionist framework suggested that PR/diplomacy should work to minimize the instrumental power of the collectivities for whom they work (or the class that runs the collectivities) to maximize public benefit. PR rhetoric has often articulated the benefits of the role in enhancing human understanding, even peace making (L'Etang, 1996), thus minimizing conflict. In practice, the Revolutionist/Peace Studies framework seems likely to be moderated by prudential self-interest in the same way that idealistic assumptions, aspirations, intentions, pronouncements, and frameworks in PR also seem likely to be trumped.

On the other hand, applying the Revolutionist model to NGO PR appears to sit well with the ideology and values of the dominant paradigm in the PR field: symmetrical, negotiative, win-win management of an organization's relationships with active publics and interested stakeholders, helping organizations to adapt and transform in response to systemic and environmental change. One logical consequence of the Revolutionist framework appears to be the establishment of an institutional supra-organizational power that could act to legitimize the perspectives of publics, stakeholders, and the wider public. Could this be realized in practice or is this simply an *aporia*? Some might argue that it is the media who can discipline or arbitrate public communication to support and maintain a public sphere for communities and social networks, not just for states and capital. This, however, downplays the fact that media institutions are also part of global capital and may be subject to the agenda of media owners (state, private, or public).

Analyzing the assumptions on which diplomacy and PR are conducted is essential to establishing the way in which relationships are set up, or, as Mary Parker Follett (1868–1933; cited in Graham, 1995) pointed out at the beginning of the past century,

Reaction is always reaction to a relating. . . . I never react to you but to I-plus-you reacting to you-plus-me. “I” can never influence “you” because you have already influenced me; that is, in the very process of meeting, we both become something different. It begins even before we meet, in anticipation of meeting. (pp. 41–42)

Follett’s thinking encompassed management, power and authority, communications theory, and conflict resolution, which makes her a highly inspirational source for international relations, diplomacy, and PR. She argued that the notion of compromise was unhelpful because it required that people give up their desires, and instead, she suggested that creative new integrated solutions could only emerge when the ambitions and objectives of all parties were made explicit and transparent (Metcalf & Urwick, 1941). Follett appears to be one of the first, if not the first person, to use and distinguish the terms *power-with* and *power-over* as a way of understanding and overcoming distortion in human communication in order to facilitate interaction (Follett, cited in Graham, 1993):

If your business is so organized that you can influence a co-manager while he is influencing you; so organized that a worker has an opportunity of influencing you as you have of influencing him; if there is an interactive influence going on all the time, power-with may be built up. (p. 23)

There are some similarities here to the human needs approach to international relations, which had communitarian characteristics because it focused “on social relationships as an important object of enquiry” (Rosati, Carroll, & Coate, 1990, p. 170) and proposed the integration of an understanding of individual motivation for social networks that might be useful for PR, “accounting for global actors and structural relationships, while at the same time allowing for the disaggregation of local, societal, regional and global relationships back to the individual” (p. 175).

This line of argument links the private and public spheres, hinting at the concept of public sphere that is not unified but that is “a proliferation of publics, as a contested terrain that ought to be thought of in terms of its multiplicity or diversity” (Meyer & Moors, 2006, p. 12). In such a context, the role and processes of PR and media interpretation and representation become critical because “publics are not bounded entities but rather are involved in continuous processes of construction and reconstruction, of negotiation and contestation” (p. 12).

In terms of contemporary conditions and theses of globalization, the Revolutionist model contains some interesting ideas, because it might be argued that international corporate diplomacy and its agents have created communities of commodified

consumers whose identification processes center on lifestyle choices expressed through purchase of commercial brands at least as much as national identity. The post-modern condition implies fluctuating and alternative meanings, fragmentation, and reinvention. Individuals may engage in a range of identity projects linked to shifting masses and media formations or networked communities participating in social media. The diasporic and hybridist consequences of globalization are realized very clearly in the developed world in the cultural exchanges and discourses of the largest industry in the world: tourism.

Recently, some PR theorists have applied relationship and communitarian approaches to international relations/diplomacy. It has been argued, rather colonially, that (Taylor & Kent, 2006)

if public relations can be used to rebuild communities in the U.S., then it can also be used to create and recreate communities around the world. . . . When communications and public relations are viewed as tools for creating and maintaining relationships nationally, then the nation state emerges as a truly communicatively constructed system. (p. 347)

However, this rather utopic vision ignores distopic realities of hegemonies, nationalism, and aggression. For Taylor and Kent (2006), the nation-state appears as a social, stable good:

The importance of unifying national vision is obvious—it leads to collective action on the part of citizens, it allows a government to conserve resources and focus national energies. . . . The importance of a unifying national vision is obvious—it leads to collective action on behalf of citizens, it allows a government to conserve resources and focus national energies. . . . Relationship building helps to achieve national goals such as mobilization during times of external threat or for national development objectives. (p. 355)

Yet, the suppositions on which this quote is based are surely under question in the context of the fragmentation of identities that has accompanied globalization, and affiliations built on ethnicity and religion in our diasporic world.

Taylor and Kent (2006) promote an idealistic view of PR's potential effect:

Public relations has enormous democratic potential both as a strategic communication function and as a relationship-building function. Through both strategic campaign activities and relational communication activities, public relations can improve citizens' lives and promote democracy throughout the world. Public relations professionals need to look at how communication in general and public relations in particular can be used in all parts of the world to help identify and solve local and national problems. (p. 356)

However, PR is not a panacea for problems caused by national or global inequities, lack of social justice, exclusion, deprivation, environmental pollution, natural disasters, or war. PR in itself does not have agency, which is why trumpeting it as a solution to fundamental structural problems is problematic. Although one should acknowledge that PR is “a communicative structuration force, transgressing the constructed borders in and between organizations and society, that either may reproduce or transform social structures” (Falkheimer, 2006, p. 11), it is given that influence by its sponsoring agents and is limited by operational requirements even as it contributes to the power of the operation. PR can only work as engagement, relationship building, negotiation, mutual problem solving, and “construction of shared social realities” (p. 10) if political, economic, and legal structures, classes, and agents permit. And, as Miller and Dinan (2003) astutely observed, “the role of PR and promotion in [policy processes and governance] is not really about public communication or about public debate (although it certainly impinges upon it) but about private circuits of power and communication” (p. 194).

Conclusion and Implications

There are lines of thought within the PR academy that are sympathetic to ideas already enunciated in international relations (particularly the areas of Peace Studies and Strategic Studies) or in literature on negotiation, organizational communication, and management. But, much discussion about PR in the international context has been about PR finding its place in the world and in academia. However, of much greater importance than the self-images of PR is that PR and media practitioners, communities, and publics gain a critical self-awareness and reflexivity concerning the possible assumptions, motivations, and language practices of those practicing public communication.

Any work that uncovers the processes of public communication in our complex postmodern world, and the role of PR in particular, is useful and beneficial to human understanding of this semiprofession and its potential influences in the pursuit of power. This points to the necessity for an empirical turn in the field not based on normative theory or idealistic stances that elaborate what PR ought to be and do. Untangling and making known the intricacies of PR's relationship to power and revealing the processes and social effects of its contribution to public communication, media shaping, and public understanding are the most valuable tasks that PR academics can now assume.

The continued integration and scholastic exchanges among those in public diplomacy and PR can contribute to a nuanced understanding of these occupations and, most important, place the concept of power at the center of PR practice and scholarship, where it properly belongs.

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Notes

1. There are some issues in the application of this term. As Hesmondhalgh (2006) pointed out, there has been some misinterpretation of the concept by a group of influential cultural theorists (Featherstone, Negus, Nixon, and du Gay) who have equated “cultural intermediaries” with “the new petite bourgeoisie” rather than as a subset within it. Applying the concept to PR is yet more complex because PR practitioners are in fact intermediaries between other cultural intermediaries (media, marketing) and client organizations and stakeholders in their efforts to shape organizational reputation and public opinion.
2. I cannot trace the origins of the term used in this sociological context but I do remember that I first came across it at the European Doctoral School, which ran in Grenoble in August/September 1996, and believe it is attributable to Professor E. Bustamente.

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