

**REFRAMING PUBLIC RELATIONS VIA
DIALOGUE AND DIPLOMACY TO BUILD
RELATIONAL VALUE FOR BUSINESS AND
SOCIETY IN THE GLOBALISING WORLD**

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1. INTRODUCTION

“The prevailing world view sees public relations as persuasive and manipulative. A replacement is proposed; a symmetrical view that sees the purpose of public relations as managing conflict and promoting understanding”

James Grunig, (1989)

“Public Relations needs a paradigm that features it as being capable of adding value to the full functioning of society” Robert Heath (2006)

This author has worked with and observed many approaches to business and public relations all over the world, not least in the transition countries, now benefiting from and influencing globalisation.

The author has long advocated that the relationship between business and society should be articulated and clarified, particularly the moral basis of capitalism and that multi stakeholder partnerships on global issues, based on dialogue and sustainable relationships, should be the norm rather than the exception.

It is thought that corporate responsibility makes good business sense and there is recognition that governance in the era of globalisation is the responsibility of multiple actors, especially given complex global problems requiring business, civil society and governmental institutions to work together.

Most practitioners in public relations believe that defending and managing reputation is a key objective. However, it was to be hoped that the more manipulative, spin-based approach to the marketplace and public policy communications would be replaced by balanced relationships with stakeholders based on two-way communications.

While there is some evidence that organisations are using a mix of approaches to communications for the purpose of information and persuasion on the one hand and understanding and collaboration on the other, a leading world view remains ‘press agency’ or ‘journalist in residence’, not least in emerging countries, with spin the preferred practice of Western governments.

The practice remains fragmented and there lacks an over-riding theory of public relations (PR). The body of knowledge is 25 years old but the growth has been ethnocentric, focused on the US, to a lesser extent Europe and largely based around management and business thinking. NGOs and governments hardly use the pedagogy, PR is seen as largely tactical, shallow and pejorative. It seems insufficient merely to translate American textbooks for use in other parts of the world, particularly emerging countries, or to undertake country by country studies without reference to other contextual aspects.

The aim is to re-frame public relations beyond 'just another public relations exercise', to develop more of a relational, dialogic, ethics-based approach to help organisations and society adapt, resolve conflict, create greater understanding and build partnerships to solve global issues.

Social change has given PR in some cases a seat at the top table ('dominant coalition') but can it use the cutlery, and does it have the table manners?

A key issue is defining the discipline, difficult in a highly fragmented field. While academics tend to address public policy issues relevant to advancing harmony, practitioners spend the bulk of their time dealing with other dynamics, such as the marketplace and mass media, so this gap needs narrowing. It is important to ask what roles public relations play in society and does it add value, both to organisations and society? Are PRs merely 'spin doctors', and if 'corporate or business diplomats' what does that mean in relation to PR pedagogy and philosophy?

Mass media rationale can limit the vision to an interest in message design and dissemination, to achieve publicity and promotion. Carried to extremes the mass communication view embraces 'the engineering of consent' and other self-interested outcomes as the underpinning principles of the discipline.

However there is an emerging vocabulary embracing terms such as relationships, trust, social capital and mutually beneficial relationships that an organisation needs to enjoy a 'licence to operate'. A term closely linked to relationships is 'community'. By helping to discover and articulate the best facts, values and policies, PR should help build mutually beneficial relationships that foster the well-being of community through the creation of social capital. Instead of seeking to control publics the paradigm of the discipline has come to feature strategies fostering trust and building community. From an academic perspective

PR is challenged to define itself as a professional practice stressing commitment to and the quality of relationships, a sense of social cohesion. If such a role is valuable within a country, how much more so in the globalising community?

This will have implications, not just for the practice, but also for teaching and research in the field. Relationships resulting from dialogue is a well-established theme in the academic literature, but what is less well understood is the nature of publics and the dynamics of their inter-relationships.

In order to re-frame public relations for relevance and credibility, issues of power and influence need to be addressed head-on, particularly given the growing power of private sector corporations on the international stage. But the question is begged, does the Western paradigm of PR, based primarily on individualism and rationalist assumptions work in Africa for example (the least well-served continent in terms of PR). Can African organisations or indeed organisations from other emerging regions leap-frog the mistakes of the West? And does PR have a role beyond its largely managerial mindset, helping civil society and more broadly the community?

This is particularly important given the Anglo-Saxon history of PR and the dearth, despite some recent progress, of research in the emerging countries, to assess whether the evolving definitions of PR are subscribed to in some of these parts of the world, indeed whether a new approach would help or hinder them. Most international public relations appears to be exporting skills and experience learned in the home country. It is certainly true that there are cases of large multinationals cooperating with civil society in Africa on solving societal and environmental issues and phrases such as ‘business diplomacy’ and ‘corporate responsibility’ are used to describe this collaboration, but is PR at the head and heart of this endeavour, or is it constrained by its own heritage and baggage? Key issues for PR remain its identity, boundary conditions and legitimacy.

Joseph Stiglitz, the former World Bank Chief Economist, believes that there is nothing wrong with globalization that can’t be fixed by communities working together to solve global problems, thus ensuring the economic system is based on values and informed citizenry, (Stiglitz, J. 2006). Before he died Sumantra Ghoshal reminded us that most management theory is non-moral and against societal interest (Ghoshal, S. 2006).

The need for corporations to play a broader role is also supported by stakeholder theory, one among several models for interpreting corporate responsibility (Donaldson, T. 2002). “We cannot divorce the idea of a moral community or a moral discourse from that of the value creation of business.” (Freeman, RE. 1994). The key point here is that healthy relationships with stakeholders underpin long-term financial performance. Some believe that the moral vacuum in economics, the mantra that corporate responsibility is socialism in disguise, and the close link between public relations theory and the rationalist Western strategic management model means public relations “has purchased passage” on a sinking ship (Wilson, L. 1996).

This paper will review first what the literature reveals, flesh out some key concepts, which could form the basis of a credible and relevant philosophical underpinning, based on dialogue and diplomacy, thus helping move towards the objective of a more holistic body of knowledge, and greater practical relevance, spurred on by the globalising world.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

“The literature of public relations is asymmetrical”, Sriramesh. K (2004)

“We need to bring into our literature new theory from other disciplines to enhance the conceptual understanding of our field” Gower, K. (2006)

The author reviewed literature from corporate responsibility, stakeholder theory, relationship marketing and management, and is also aware there have been other influences on PR from mass communications, sociology and psychology which will need to be reflected on during the course of future research. Indeed, much of the academic thinking in PR has incorporated models and ideas from these disciplines, one of the big debates being whether public relations is a social science, part of marketing, or a management discipline.

There are many descriptive studies, country by country, with limited and confused concepts, press agency being the one universal model. There are international versus global approaches, global generic principles versus specific country applications. There is consensus that it serves a strategic management, as well as a technical role, that to be effective requires top management commitment and while linked to it, is not subordinate to marketing. The main debate has been about one-way versus two-way communication, as well as whether it is about merely communications or more broadly relationships involving communications. While there has been some research in Europe, most of it has either been based on US studies or originated in the US and the UK has been much influenced by this. The continental European perspective reviews four characteristics – reflective, managerial, operational and educational, but the different studies, whilst significant do not amount to a globally coherent philosophy (PRSA, April 2006).

In Asia, the fastest growing region in the world, the field has been a sleeping giant as far as PR is concerned. Such a knowledge-base would help the scores of multinational corporations entering Asia, as well as Asian organisations expanding regionally and even globally. Knowledge of the relationship between the uniqueness of Asia and PR is very much based on anecdotal rather than empirical evidence.

According to Sriramesh (2004), “with globalisation public relations professionals thrust to the forefront of managing relations among peoples of varied nations and cultures must therefore have a multicultural and global perspective”.

Based in Singapore, he has undertaken studies in India and was himself a student of one of the foremost scholars in PR, James Grunig of Maryland. Grunig himself states (2005), “before the 1970s public relations scholars seldom if ever tried to explain the behaviour of public relations practitioners”.

In 1976 Grunig published the first of a number of studies seeking to explain rather than merely describe PR, ending up with the ‘Four Models of Public Relations’ concept (Grunig and Hunt, 1984). These were publicity, public information (both one-way communication), symmetrical communication and two-way asymmetrical communication, the latter using research to determine how best to persuade publics and the former deploying research to engender behaviour change by both the organisation and its publics or stakeholders (Freeman, 1984).

Both research and conceptual development in the theory led Grunig and his collaborators to conclude that all four could be effective depending on the structure/culture of an organisation and its environment and that furthermore two-way communication of whichever type – later called the ‘Mixed Motive Model’ – would almost certainly increase the contribution of PR to organisational effectiveness. “Organisations get more of what they want when they give up some of what they want” (J. Grunig and J. White, 1992), Persuasion in other words can work both ways. Grunig argued that most organisations use a combination of all four models, excepting that there are limits to collaboration as say between Greenpeace and the Nuclear Energy Industry. He concluded that a symmetrical approach could facilitate collaborative processes and relationship building to enhance their reputations as ethical, socially responsible organisations. Companies or governments may have power, but other stakeholders have countervailing power. Recently researchers Yang and Grunig showed that relationship outcomes have a “strong effect on overall evaluations of organisational performance and organisational reputation” (Yang and Grunig, 2005).

Beginning in 1986 and completed in 1995, the multi-year IABC study in Excellence in PR and Communication Management (J. Grunig, 1992 and Dosier et al., 1995) provided evidence to improve the conceptualisation of the model. Teams in the US, Canada and the UK concluded that PR increases organisational effectiveness when building long-term relationships of trust, and that the two-way symmetrical model, either alone or in combination with the mixed motive model, was the most effective. The combination of the practitioners knowledge and support from senior

management in the context of particular corporate cultures were the strongest predictors of the models likely to be practiced. For example, excellent public relations departments seemed to use research and strategic thinking, but also have the knowledge to write press releases. Thus developed a Contingency Model which deemed the middle of the continuum as symmetrical, which they termed the 'win win zone', placing symmetrical and asymmetrical elements at either end of the spectrum. According to Grunig (2001) "this new contingency model is an excellent two-way model of public relations that subsumes the two former models of public relations", which he believed provided an ideal combination of a positive and ethical theory.

More recently his research moved towards the development of relationships as the central goal of PR (J. Grunig and Huang, 2000) in which the literature on interpersonal relationships was helpful and from which dialogical public relations has emerged. He then moved on to elaborate a 'dialogical model' based on four underlying variables – symmetry and asymmetry (collaboration and advocacy), one-way or two-ways. Additional work in India, Taiwan and the US (J. Grunig et al., 1995) added yet another model called the 'personal influence model' where practitioners use connections in political or media contexts. These studies also flagged up a 'cultural interpreter model'.

At the end of all these researches Grunig believed there to be a much better developed theory of symmetrical, dialogic, collaborative advocacy PR that could serve well as a model for research, teaching and practice in the 21st century. Botan (1997) confirmed that a more ethically sound model would be based on dialogue.

A new approach to PR theory needs to adopt a dynamic model of organisations, stakeholders and different types of relationships between the two within the context of communities, either at national or global level. The development of a truly public-centered theory of public relations is a challenge still confronting the profession. For instance, there needs to be a more balanced dialogue representing economics, politics and society.

On the international front, way back in 1992, Carl Botan argued that the tremendous growth of PR was uneven, concentrated mainly in the US, and from his researches emerged the ethno-centric model versus the poly-centric model. The latter in which the host country exercises a high degree of autonomy and in the former the international programme is based on a standardised home-country approach. He argued that neither model would work perfectly in most situations. At that time with

the multinationals tending to be headquartered in New York or London, the conceptual lens tended to be transnational rather than international in approach. With the emergence of more private corporations headquartered in China, India or Russia, and with the impact of 24/7 television and the Internet, this model is obviously out of date. Failure to recognise underlying differences in assumptions, not only risks failure to achieve business results, but also failure to use PR as a “lens for better understanding how organisations in other cultures use communication to adapt their relationships to relevant publics”, Botan argued. He developed a PR matrix involving four factors – level of national development, primary clients, legal-political context, and history of the practice which has to some extent been picked up by more recent scholars. The key question remains, can a truly global as opposed to a country by country approach be developed with the same generic principles used in different countries.

D. Vercic, L. Grunig and J. Grunig, (1996) proposed nine (consolidated) generic principles from the Excellence study. They tested the application of these principles in Slovenia, confirming the validity of this generic model, while accepting the existence of contextual variables requiring specific applications.

Sriramesh and Vercic (2001) identified five environmental variables – political ideology, level of economic development, activism, culture and the media environment, in operational terms collapsing these variables into three – the infrastructure, the media environment and societal culture, that could be used by PR practitioners alongside the ten generic principles to design strategies, specific to a given country. Apart from culture which has seen a few studies linked to PR, very few have linked the other variables with economic level of development being a crucial variable when undertaking PR in an emerging country or from an emerging country. In this way the PR profession can become truly strategic as a result of becoming multicultural. The researchers implied that PR should not just be used for relationship management but for conflict resolution, its processes being valuable well beyond their traditional domain.

There is possible scope here for an evolving model about the role of ethics, relationships and communications excellence, showing PR making a broader contribution in the world. The literature argues that globalisation will be a catalyst for a deeper and broader approach to public relations. “Public relations like most

strategic relation will likely grow in importance as the information society develops” (Botan, 1997).

PR is beginning to pick on the experience of ‘relationship marketing’ (Morgan and Hunt, 1994) and a recent work (Ledingham and Bruning, 2000) has developed a relational approach to the study and practice of PR. Indeed, the definitive practitioner text on PR (Cutlip et al., 2006 updated) devotes a whole chapter to the link between communications in the context of relationships between different stakeholders. The ethical approach developed in stakeholder theory has spilled over into management thinking. “This new moral contract of creating value for society...is also a more efficient basis for protecting and growing their companies” (Ghoshal and Moran, 1999).

However there is little cross-fertilisation of PR theory in other related disciplines and as James Grunig has noted “public relations as a scholarly discipline therefore appears to be fragmented and not unique as a discipline. The professional practice of public relations appears to be equally fragmented. Practitioners have no common body of knowledge, nor even a common set of skills”. Yet as Van Ruler and Vercic (2005) argued “today...corporations are not only confronted with legal regulations, but also demands by public discourse and NGOs that transcend the scope of their legal constraints”.

Other key concepts to have emerged in the literature more recently are community, communication ethics, collaboration and concurrence. Kruckeberg and Starck (2001) developed a community building theory of PR, arguing there should be a new measure of corporate success seen in terms of public purpose. This is supported by Laurie Wilson (2001) who has argued for relationships to be centre stage with corporate success, based on the quality of such relationships in the community.

Part of the debate about PR as a developing field of study concerns how it can assist organisations to engage with stakeholders ethically, a key question being who is the practitioner’s master – the organisation (or client) or society, given the “boundary spanning” role (Gregory, 2005). She points to the continental European perspective which emphasises the “public good”.

Pressures of globalisation have spurred on companies to collaborate with each other and Grunig (2000) believes a prerequisite for the profession and professionals is

to agree a set of values based around collaboration, thus introducing the needs of stakeholders into strategic decisions.

Heath (2000) believed that rhetoric is a clash of perspectives, each perspective clarifying, modifying, or confirming other narratives in search of concurrence.

Culture is another key concept. As early as 1992 Sriramesh and White had argued for societal culture, including corporate culture, to be integrated into the PR pedagogy due to its significance to human communication and relationship building. This has still not happened with the literature still predominantly American and only rare mentions of the phrase 'culture'. With globalisation PR people, academics and practitioners will need to sensitise themselves to cultural diversity and compare and contrast US theory and practice with how it is practiced elsewhere together with research needed in many of these countries based on an environmental variables framework referred to earlier.

In their literature review for the Excellence project, Sriramesh and White (1992) discussed whether PR is culture-free or specific based on Hofstede's (1984) four cultural dimensions of power/distance, uncertainty/avoidance, masculinity/femininity, and individualism/collectivism, and later added inter-personal trust, deference to authority and long-term orientation. Despite the studies in Korea, Japan and India (1999), and the study on Slovenia, there are no studies that specifically evaluate societal culture and PR despite some work on corporate culture and its link with societal culture and PR (Sriramesh and White, 1992), it is insufficient to inform the body of knowledge beyond an understanding that a participative culture is more likely to allow for strategic PR and that even in collectivist cultures excellent communications can be undertaken by a leader who reaches out to external stakeholders in a symmetrical or dialogical fashion.

Whereas the Excellence Project provided the conceptual link between PR and environmental variables, providing the foundation for various studies around the world, further research needs to be done, not least to link the role of inter-personal trust with culture and relationships. The notion of relationship building is related to inter-personal trust, though this has not yet been recognised in the literature, nor has culture, even though conceptually it appears logical.

A recent paper (Hodges, 2006) attempts to explore PR practitioners as cultural intermediaries. In it, she argues that while the international studies have typically used US models, they are among a number of approaches for explaining how PR is

practiced in other countries, let alone conceptualised. She worries there may be an over-emphasis on the capitalist marketplace and the structure of the practice in the private sector. She has developed a model called the 'Public Relations Practitioner Culture' (PRPC) to capture the circuit of 'cultural intermediation' between the structure of the society, the occupational level within the society and the network and identity of the practitioners. She advocates rather than codes of practice the industry should more clearly articulate and establish its current functions and potential for meeting human needs within different cultural contexts. Her study thus links back to other scholars in the international field and to the other notions of community and collaboration, as well as reinforcing the "cultural interpreter model".

A definitive work on culture (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 1993) compares US values of self-interested, quantitative short-termism with the more community or relationship-bound approach of Asia, thus making it all the more important to study cultures outside the Anglo-Saxon West. This is all the more important given the need of the PR profession to develop more 'third-culture' professionals who transcend national boundaries becoming agents of change by dint of time spent in countries outside their own cultures. Given that recruitment and training of these kinds of people is the number one priority of the practice, it would seem that linking cultural variables to global excellence in research outside Western countries would be a useful addition to the body of knowledge. But "obviously many practitioners and scholars of public relations are capable of philosophical thought, but few seem to develop basic philosophical theory to undergird their discussion of public relations" (Pearson, 1989).

What will happen to continue the general theory building in public relations, bolstered by the work of the Grunigs and the ground-breaking 1992 IABC Excellence Study, examining best practices? Given that theory and practice have parted ways, it is thought that new paradigms must be explored and research developed to improve practice (Toth, E. 2006).

The fields of dialogue and diplomacy need further explanation in the context of globalising public relations, and public relations role in the broader society. Some theorists argue that "the future rests within a theoretical diaspora. If PR can enter a new era of effectiveness, the invaders waiting to trespass on our turf will be repelled". (Watts, R. 2006). Never more so given the need to build relationships that do not exist and manage more complex ones that do in the global environment.

From the literature it is clear that for corporations and other institutions working globally to truly benefit from public relations theory and practice, not only is more international research needed to test the generic-specific principles and variables, as well as cultural models, but to frame PR around the key concepts of dialogue and diplomacy, thus adding relational value, both to business and society.

3. PUTTING RELATIONSHIPS BACK INTO PUBLIC RELATIONS

“Effectively managing organisational-public relations around common interests and shared goals over time results in mutual understanding and benefit for interacting organisations and publics”, Ledingham (2003)

The focus of PR theory has recently shifted from communication to relationship management (Grunig, J, 2001) (Ledingham, 2003) linking communication ethics, collaboration, concurrence, culture and community. Common to all the above concepts is the notion of relationships as being central to the PR function. Recently the role of journalist in residence, offering advice on ways to get an organisation’s name in the press, has been supplanted by the ‘expert prescriber’ advising organisations on matters of public policy and beyond. For most organisations, however, not least corporations, the rationale for PR is found not in the management of reciprocal relationships, but the credibility attached to information, examined by journalists via third party endorsement.

With many different definitions, a poor image and much misunderstanding by ‘dominant coalitions’, PR is a field that seeks a theoretical framework to guide its practical application. One of the most interesting areas therefore for development is relationship management. “The management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and the publics on whom success of failure depends” (Cutlip et al., 1994).

The notion of relationship building brings with it an opportunity for theory building and cross-discipline integration (Ledingham and Bruning, 2000). However, the PR literature is replete with reference to relationships that neither define the concepts nor indicate how to measure it (Broom et al., 1997). A review of the literature in other fields also fails to explain it, nor has any PR research been identified which uses relationships as the unit as analysis.

Ferguson (1984), reviewing nine years of research published in Public Relations Review challenged the profession that “a paradigm focus for the field would greatly enhance the probability of producing theory development”. Of course the Excellence study referred to the need to be able to measure relationship outcomes, particularly in the long-term, with indicators such as trust, satisfaction and

commitment, later added to by others (Huang, 2000), adding to the body of knowledge of cross-cultural scale who talked about 'favour' (exchange of gifts) and 'face' (impression management), drawn from her own cultural context. Ledingham and Bruning (2003) contend that if goals are developed around relationships and communication is a vehicle to help achieve these goals, the importance of measuring communications processes may be less helpful than the impact on relationships with its inevitable link to variables such as reputation and responsible behaviour. The authors have identified eleven dimensions of organisational public relationships, and of these 'trust' is the one consistently identified, as it is also a key factor in relationship marketing (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). But, again, it is a complex concept short on definition.

For example, as distrust is not present in many theorists' views of relationships, this gap has been addressed by Welch (2006), who reflects that it too lacks definition, despite the many charts of decline of trust. Edelman's Sixth Annual Trust Barometer (2005) revealed falling trust in business suggesting a 'trust void', yet this is not recognised in the academic literature, as managers in practice need to manage trust and distrust simultaneously. Her research reveals that rather than simply considering distrust, it should be defined as a dimension separate to trust, rather than just a lack of trust, providing a twelfth dimension to Ledingham's (2003) eleven dimensions of relationships.

So relationships could be considered to be the glue that underpins all of the C concepts referred to earlier that could form the basis of grounding PR theory in terms of credibility and relevance so long as the thinking moves beyond its Anglo-Saxon heritage with a more multi-cultural balance.

Practical PR has recently drawn a link between the vision of the organisation and its values, important for linking internal and external communications. The stakeholder approach links an ethical aspect to achieving responsibility, reputation and governance underpinned by relationships. This could be the way PR more clearly defines itself and becomes strategic.

4. BUSINESS DIPLOMACY: A POTENTIAL STRATEGIC MODEL IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBAL BUSINESS SOCIETY RELATIONSHIPS

“It’s thinking ahead, ...involves skilful analysis of the context...combined with astute networking and relationship building”

Marjery Kraus, Foreign Policy Magazine (Jan/Feb, 2006)

The competence of diplomacy drawn from the international relations literature and common practice – building relationships, negotiating opportunity, brokering success is surely the means by which, especially companies, become involved in the public policy minefield and form partnerships with other stakeholders to solve global issues. This is especially true in a world of more stakeholders and given the growing power of the private sector, and accompanying broader societal environmental, and even political responsibility.

The domain of traditional diplomacy, whether political (hard) and cultural (soft), particularly in the latter case where diplomats are involved in cultivating public opinion is quite similar to the growing role of public relations, dealing with civil society groups (the gap between the state and the individual). Successful global enterprises align their operations with fundamental and universal values, for example human rights, labour relations, environmental standards and transparency. Once soft, these issues have now become hard. With cultural sensitivity part of their armoury as well as public diplomacy in a world of 24/7 media coverage, diplomatic skills are key to business leaders’ success along with their PR advisers as trustees of the intangible assets of the corporation, adding human rights and climate change to the list of issues they must help resolve. Niall Fitzgerald, former Unilever CEO, now chairman of Reuters, sums it up – “I believe our generation of business leaders will be judged on whether they positively contribute to resolving the two great issues of our day – Africa and climate change” (Thompson. R, 2006).

Indeed, Jacquie L’Etang (1996) has argued that existing traditions in international relations can be applied to public relations. She traces a number of related functions in PR and diplomacy, such as representation, counselling and intelligence gathering. The dialogue metaphor in particular implies a degree of objectivity, the difference perhaps between spin and corporate diplomacy. In addition both practices play boundary-spanning roles, whether organisational or national,

attempting to bridge cultural and other environmental gaps, and their roles have converged in terms of their management of public opinion. She cites Tim Traverse-Healy, a leading PR guru, documenting a number of international examples of politicians and governments, achieving credibility and influence with foreign publics through careful media management. “International competition between states is comparable to commercial competition between business organisations in one national setting” (1998), although increasingly business has assumed an economic and political role, the two becoming entwined. There is a study in the literature (Signitzer and Coombs, 1992) which compares and contrasts Grunig’s four models of PR, with a variety of diplomatic approaches, focusing on how public diplomacy can be used to exert influence on foreign audiences using persuasion. This could be likened to corporate responsibility. In the process trying to ascertain whether the short-term policy goals versus long-range approach is one-way or two-way communication, propaganda or truth. But in the IR literature, diplomacy is not seen as a field of study, rather a technique similar to marketing’s view of PR.

Certainly the international relations theory exemplified by Wight (1994) moves from the realist through the rational to the revolutionary strands of thought. Thus, the realist position overlaps with both press agency and asymmetric models, the rationalist with public information and asymmetric models, while the revolutionist position has similarities with the symmetrical model.

It is possible that by comparing diplomacy with PR and its convergence could assist in a re-think of the concept of organisations and boundaries, both dealing with inter-penetrating relationships and over-lapping stakeholders in a global goldfish bowl continually undergoing transformation. The level of openness appears to be central to many of the conceptions of dialogue (Burchell and Cook, 2006). According to them this openness is what primarily distinguishes the process from debate, media or negotiation. The intention is not to advocate but to inquire, not to argue but to explore, not to convince but to discover. They argue that dialogue is a way of transcending conflict and developing social capital via socially responsible practices. Of crucial importance is the relationship between international society and the state, the status of corporate actors in these contexts and the perception of these by PR practitioners and theorists. It is clear that irrespective of the impact of globalisation, whether economic, technological or social, especially on private sector corporations which have been thrust centre-stage, not least in developing countries, PR needs to

link its historical models and concepts to more clearly delineate its role and value. But there is no doubt that globalisation could become a catalyst, not only forcing PR to develop its global practice, but also to help move forward research on creating a more holistic body of knowledge.

According to the Commission of Public Relations Education (IPR, 2006) “Public Relations is now arguably becoming a global profession in an increasingly connected world where mutual understanding and harmony are more important than ever”.

The key point about diplomacy in the context of corporations helping fill the leadership brought about by globalisation is that business leaders are not traditionally trained in diplomatic skills, which is where public relations can help build a series of dialogues, leading to negotiation, leading to conflict resolution, and balanced relationships between “actors”. Given that corporations are unique in their ability to mobilise resources globally, and business diplomacy reflects the growing business role in politics and society, the question is how public relations and related disciplines help corporations balance self-interest with the common good.

5. FUTURE IMPLICATIONS FOR GLOBAL PUBLIC RELATIONS THEORY AND PRACTICE

“For public relations to make its maximum contribution, not only to its client organisations but also to a rapidly changing world that demands appropriate relationship and community building, public relations practitioners must know who they are and what they believe, before they can help organisations define and defend themselves”

Kruckeberg (2000)

At the start of the 21st century global mass communications and inter-dependent regions are expanding into a global economy dominated by inter-locking corporations and other stakeholders, bringing on a new set of challenges for PR. The ability to successfully navigate and negotiate cross-culturally will be the key to successful PR practice on the global scale. PR should now be able to transcend its media image and traditional advocacy role in favour of a win- win ethics-based relationship approach within the context of a global community, building unity rather than social fragmentation, but there is a gap with the practice and the body of knowledge needs to be brought up to date. Other regions of the world such as Africa have hardly been explored at all in terms of research and what studies there have been in Asia have shown Western scholars how social, political and economic contexts influence the practice of PR.

Way back in 1996 Kruckeberg charged public relations professionals with the task of serving as cultural and ethical interpreters, especially corporations in the future of globalisation. All PR exists to conserve a consistent reputation and building relationships. Achieving these goals in the global arena is more difficult due to culture, language, regulatory environments, political, economic and legal systems, including the level of development and the media landscape. Managers should not assume that international work is just an extension of domestic, anymore than international PR is so different it needs a separate operation. A team leader should be well versed in international issues and events, skilled in cultural integration and knowledgeable about strategising. Macmillan et al. (2004) argued that an Executive Director should be charged with exploring (‘sense making’) governance, reputation

and responsibility, with relationships linking them together. But does this executive exist and if so is it likely to be a PR person?

Even so, the broader question remains that the ramifications of communications technology may have accelerated globalism, and with it multiculturalism, but has it led to a peaceful community, and what is the role of PR in facilitating that? Existing relationships are under strain and everyone is forced into new relationships that are sometimes divisive, not least in the global community with the tectonic plates shifting to Asia. Kruckeberg (2000) believes that practitioners may be called upon to define their corporations socially and be keepers and reconcilers of their values and belief systems, and the key, he argues, is global professionalisation. This professionalism will take the practice away from the functionary role of a corporate 'gun-slinger' or 'Samurai warrior' to providing PR with a philosophical foundation and world-view.

By the beginning of the 20th century the world was connected by telegraph with communication times falling from months to minutes. By the end capitalism seemed to have vanquished its rivals, as celebrated by Francis Fukuyama in 'The End of History and the Last Man' (1990). What TV and the internet have done is sensitise us to global issues and produced a global civil society (Bhagwati, 2004). Globalisation may always have been with us, it is simply that technology has speeded up the process. PR practice in theory and development may have come a long way, but is only now beginning to recognise the gaps in its body of knowledge, both in terms of research at international level and drawing on scholarship from other disciplines. This provides an opportunity for PR to truly play its role around relationships, using dialogue and diplomacy. We need to work hard to connect PR to the larger concerns with how organisations and their stakeholders relate in a complex global community. Because of change and complexity we need to move more towards a multi-dimensional perspective where dialogue and diplomacy is deployed. This could provide an opportunity for public relations practice to play a more strategic role, adding relational value to business and society.