SPHERA PUBLICA
Revista de Ciencias Sociales y de la Comunicación
Número 7 (2007). Murcia

Communication in Public Relations: The Achilles Heel of Quality Public Relations

***Dr. Betteke van Ruler*[1]**
University of Amsterdam
a.a.vanruler@uva.nl

Resumen

Al examinar la literatura sobre relaciones públicas, parece obvio que todas las grandes aproximaciones a esta disciplina reconocen la comunicación como el medio para "hacer" relaciones públicas. En la mayoría de estas aproximaciones, incluso, se ha considerado como un aspecto vital que requiere una utilización específica. Sin embargo, la comunicación, como concepto clave que debe ser definido y discutido, ha sido poco analizado. Esto podría ser, en buena medida, porque la mayor parte de los estudiosos parecen mostrar una visión no comunicativa de la comunicación.

Palabras clave

Teoría de las relaciones públicas, teoría de la comunicación.

Abstract

Examining the literature on public relations, it becomes obvious that all major public relations approaches recognize communication as a means to "do" public relations. In most approaches it is even seen as a vital aspect that needs to be used in a certain way. However, as a key concept that needs to be defined and discussed, communication is largely overlooked. This could very well be because most public relations scholars seem to hold a non-communication view of communication.

Key words

Public relations theory, communication theory.

1. Introduction

In the 2003 ICA conference, one of the panel sessions was on the question whether "what should be the key concept of public relations." This was because many leading scholars in the field were in favor of the concept of relationship as a key concept in public relations and were changing their focus into research on relationships; it was made explicit by Ledingham and Bruning (2000), who in their widely discussed reader stated that the concept of relationship should even replace the concept of communication "since professionals seem to perceive that *the production and dissemination of communication messages* (emphasis added, BvR) is the answer to every public relations problem" (p. xi). Recent volumes of public relations journals clearly show that scholars have indeed incorporated relationships as the key concept; the important textbooks reveal that communication theory is not seen as important for studying public relations.

In this paper, I want to challenge the idea of relationships as the (only) key concept in public relations and delineate the concept of communication. First, because I am a communication scientist and I study public relations from a communications perspective. Secondly, because a research project in Europe showed that what one researcher would call "relationships" is what another would call "communication" (van Ruler et al., 2004). It therefore makes little sense to talk about replacement, if ever, before defining what these concepts could mean. Thirdly, because I am not convinced that all public relations is solely about relationships, at least not as it is meant by common relationship theory, which is concerned with relationships between human beings (see van Ruler & Ver?i?, 2005). But even more essential arguments can be made. Many practitioners, as well as professional associations, are altering their professional names into something incorporating "communication" ("corporate communication", "communication management", or just "communication"), and universities tend to follow this trend, developing programs in "corporate communication" or "communication management." It would be rather odd to remove the concept from theory building if it is seen as so important in practice and teaching that it is even becoming part of the naming. Most important, however, is my final reason and that is that–although there is a lot of communication we should not define as

public relations–public relations is impossible without communication. Or, to be more concrete, public relations develops through and in communication and has no other means than communication. Consequently, the risk of not communicating well is best be seen as the Achilles heel of public relations. Naturally, one could say public relations is impossible without, for example, some paperwork, but that does not make paperwork a key concept in public relations.

My answer to that would be that communication is an extremely complex process that needs to be analyzed and handled with well-defined theoretical notions, and should therefore be seen as a key concept. Yet, well-founded theoretical notions on communication are largely overlooked in most public relations approaches. It could very well be that the reason for denying the role of communication as a key concept is a lack of understanding of what communication is and how it works.

Though all scholars in public relations take notice of communication as important in public relations, in most approaches the concept lacks critical study or is not defined at all. Paraphrasing Toth (1992: 12), I will claim that the most obvious contribution to be made by communication scholars to the research of public relations is the much richer delineation of what is meant by communication–which in my view is the heart, the blood, and the energy of public relations–and how communication can build relationships and trust, but break these as well.

To deliver my theoretical thoughts on communication as a key concept or even the Achilles heel of public relations, I will first investigate how we can articulate the role of communication; secondly, I will analyze the main schools of public relations thought in its approaches to public relations and to communication. Finally, I propose what should be seen as the key to quality public relations–namely, the management of quality communication processes in the context of organizational and societal processes, i.e. communication management.

2. Communication revisited

To unravel communication, we need to find some core concepts that are helpful in the discussion of the container term "communication" with regard to public relations. Rosengren (2000) suggests that, above all,

communication can be said to be about the process of the creation of meaning. Meaning involves questions such as, How do people create meaning psychologically, socially, and culturally? How are messages understood? and, How does ambiguity arise and how is it resolved? "Communication does not happen without meaning, and people create and use meaning in interpreting events" (Littlejohn, 1992: 378). The crucial question, then, is what kind of meanings of whom are created by whom and what are its implications for the interpretation of the world (for an overview, see Littlejohn, 1983: 95-113). From this question, two dimensions of communication derive: the character of meaning and the direction of the communication process. These two dimensions will be used here to structure communication theory.

Meaning can be explained as the "whole way in which we understand, explain, feel about, and react towards a given phenomenon" (Rosengren, 2000: 59). At first sight, the use of the concept of meaning would focus on so-called interpretive theories, but this is not necessarily the case; it depends on what is meant by "meaning" (Preyer et al., 2003). According to Langer (1967), meaning has two dimensions: a denotative and a connotative one. The denotative meaning of a phenomenon is the meaning one can find in a dictionary. It is overt, being the inter-subjectively shared signification of a word. The connotative meaning refers to all personal feelings and subjective associations of a symbol. A dog is denotatively a four-legged domestic animal. But for some, the word *dog* has connotations of fear while for others it contains connotations of tenderness. Many communication scientists stress that the connotative meaning is what drives cognition and behavior (see, e.g., Berlo, 1960; Littlejohn 1983, 1992; Rosengren, 2000; Thayer, 1987). However, in public relations theories, connotative meaning seems to be largely ignored or considered to exist only on the addressee's end.

Regarding the direction of the communication, J. Grunig's models of public relations represent a first classification of insights into this aspect. He distinguished PR models that stress a one-way model of communication and models that emphasize a two-way model. Shannon's model (Shannon & Weaver, 1949) is a widely used one-way model of communication in which the transmission of signals through a (radio) channel is described. By contrast, an example of a two-way model of communication can be found in Wiener's cybernetics theory (1948), which

showed how communication processes can be seen in terms of action and reaction.

Describing two-way models, J. Grunig (1976) initially followed Thayer (1968), who drew a distinction between synchronic and diachronic views about the concept of communication. In more recent publications, J. Grunig (1992, 2001) described his two-way models as either symmetrical or asymmetrical, derived from Watzlawick et al. (1970) (personal communication, May 2004). Thayer was concerned with the development of meanings in messages over time (dia-chronic means literally "through time"), whereas Watzlawick et al. were concerned with people's socially related behaviors, and, more specifically, doctor–patient behaviors, when communicating. Although Watzlawick et al. used (a)symmetry in a different way, J. Grunig and his co-researchers Dozier & Ehling define asymmetry as a communication model in which a linear causal effect in the addressee is predicted and evaluated. Dozier and Ehling (1992: 176) state: "The presupposition is asymmetrical, for it conceives of communication and public relations as something organizations do to–rather than with–people". Symmetrical public relations is characterized "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" (J. Grunig, 1989: 29). As J. Grunig explains it, symmetrical communication entails that each participant in the communication process is equally able to influence the other. In fact, J. Grunig thus propagates a two-way in stead of a one-way persuasion model. In his most recent work, J. Grunig (1992, 2001) claims that one-way models are always asymmetric, since the sender is concerned only with the transmission of his message, not taking into account the addressee.

Thus, in J. Grunig's theory of public relations, we can find three distinct accounts of how communication works. These are one-way asymmetrical, two-way asymmetrical, and two-way symmetrical. It is, however, unclear what is meant by one-way. Does this predict the existence of a receiver or not? If so, what is the difference between one-way asymmetrical and two-way asymmetrical? If not, then what is meant by one-way?

In the search for a more precise way of distinguishing between these concepts and for other public relations scholars who dissect the concept

of communication in public relations, the Belgian communication scientist Fauconnier (1990) is helpful. He claims that, in practice, many are concerned solely with expression. He promotes instead a scientific concept of communication in which one is not only concerned with the way in which a message is expressed, but also how this affects the addressee (p.74). Communication which is limited to expression is, of course, a kind of one-way model, but without any concern for the destination of what is expressed. The only concern is in relation to the expression itself, or "the emission". This equates what J. Grunig calls an asymmetrical one-way model of public relations, since he describes this as a practical, unscientific, view of communication which implies that there is no need to do any kind of research, nor to segment target groups in a methodical way, or to know anything about potential receivers, let alone about different publics (Grunig, 1989). This is, therefore, best be seen as an "un-addressed process", so to speak. This suggests that communication had better be described here as an "emission" rather than as a one-way process, because there is no consideration whatsoever for the destination of what is expressed. As soon as one starts to take account of the effects of the communication process, for example, in terms of the "intended reach of the message transmitted," then attention is focused on some kind of effect. Questions arise such as "Did the predefined target group notice my message?" and "Did I reach any of the predefined target groups?" Communication as emission is fully sender-oriented, in so far that effects play no role at all, not even at the clipping level. In this view, communication is seen "as a magic bullet," as Schramm (1971) cynically described it.

In the 1960s, Bauer (1964) concluded that there are two different views regarding the idea of effects. The first of these, which he describes as the social model, "held by the general public, and by social scientists when they talk about advertising, and somebody else's propaganda, is one of the exploitation of man by man. It is a model of one-way influence: The communication does something to the audience, while to the communicator is generally attributed considerable latitude and power to do what he pleases to the audience" (p.319). Bauer called his second model "the scientific model of communication as a transactional process in which two parties each expect to give and take from the exchange approximately equitable values" (p.319). Although this scientific model

allows for influence, it does not follow a linear causal model. Bauer stated that, while research shows that the scientific model is by far the more adequate of the two, it is the social model that is dominant in practice.

Bauer's social model of one-way influence is equivalent to J. Grunig's two-way asymmetrical model, while the two-way symmetrical model reflects Bauer's scientific model. Bauer, however, talks about one-way influence in his social model because of the presumed linear causality. It is questionable whether we can use "two-way" to describe the social model, as the addressee is seen as an object who is able only to receive or, possibly, answer the speaker's questions. The addressee is not a full participant in the two-way process, which is why I prefer to describe J. Grunig's two-way asymmetrical model as "controlled one-way" communication; it enables us to differentiate between communication as emission, as a controlled one-way process, and as a two-way process.

However, this still leaves the concept of influence undiscussed. Early communication theories focused on communication as a one-way process in which a sender acts on an addressee, but what this "act on" was remained a matter of debate. Some theories view communication most of all as a transmission process, a flow of information in which a sender disseminates a message by revealing its meaning through symbols. The focus is on the flow of information (Shannon & Weaver, 1949) and this information is seen as "objective," thereby implicitly focusing on the denotative side of meaning. A typical definition within this scope of communication is: "Communication is the transmission of information, ideas, attitudes, or emotion from one person or group to another (or others)" (for an overview of these views on communication, see Littlejohn, 1992; McQuail & Windahl, 1986). Other theories view communication as an attempt by a sender to produce a predefined attitudinal change in the addressee–that is, a change in the (connotative) meaning of the situation as perceived by the latter. A well-known theory of this type is the Two-Step Flow theory, which predicts that mass media inform certain people, who on their part act as opinion leaders, influencing the meanings perceived by others. The focus here is on the flow of influence (Lin, 1971). It is obvious that there is no flow of influence without a flow of information, but a flow of information is not necessarily also a flow of influence, at least not in such a way that the sender can predict how it will be interpreted by the addressee (Nillesen, 1998). However, as long as in-

formation is seen as objective, there is no need to differentiate between information and influence. The former view of one-way communication can be called a transmission model; the latter, a persuasion model. The transmission view is concerned with the transfer of a message in order to influence the addressee without emphasis on altering feelings and emotions, while the one-way persuasion view is about changing the addressee's behavior. The transmission model focuses on the transmission of (denotative) meaning, while the persuasion model emphasizes the one-way synchronization of (connotative) meaning.

Most recent approaches to communication view it as a fundamental two-way process which is interactive and participatory at all levels. This involves the paradigmatic change of a sender–receiver orientation into an actor orientation, in other words, a process in which all actors can be active and take initiatives. That is why the emphasis nowadays is on communication as a process in which meanings are created and exchanged by the parties involved.

Once again, there are two different views on this two-way process. For some scientists, the key to communication is the fact that it creates meanings inter-subjectively (see, for example, Putnam & Pacanowski, 1983). The key word in this approach is *dialogue*, which in ancient Greek means "a free flow of words and its interpretations." This fits the diachronic view of communication, as Thayer (1968, 1987) holds, stipulating that communication is an ongoing process of learning in which meanings develop. For others, this process goes further and actually creates a shared meaning–a new denotative or overt meaning, i.e. "consensus" (Schramm, 1965; Susskind et al., 1999). The first view refers to communication as an ongoing process of co-creating of (connotative) meanings, while the second view emphasizes communication as the co-creation of a new (=denotative) meaning, which is normally called "consensus building". This equates the two-way symmetrical model of J. Grunig. It is striking that in these approaches consensus building is seen as a rather rational process in which emotions get no place and alternative meanings are ignored. Noelle Neumann (1974) showed that alternative meanings go "undercover" as soon as they may not be heard, and explode sooner or later.

The analysis outlined here of differences in communication theory reveals at least two dimensions of the communication model, namely,

the degree of involvement of "the other" in the communication process and the treatment of meaning. We have found three positions on involvement: communication as emission, communication as a controlled one-way process, and communication as a two-way process. Two positions, denotative and connotative, have been identified with regard to meaning. If we place these dimensions into a three-by-two matrix, we can find at least six different models of communication, of which the magic bullet approaches are seen as a pre-scientific approach to communication, from the earliest beginning of communication science, and the linear causality approaches as well as the information-as-objective-approaches as outdated (see figure 1).

	Focus on denotative meaning, information as 'objective'	**Focus on connotative meaning, information as 'subjective'**
Communication as an undirected emission process (magic bullet)	Communication as an expression of information to all concerned	Communication as form of self-presentation
Communication as a controlled one-way process (linear causality)	Communication as transmission of meaning to target groups	Communication as a one-way synchronization of meaning in target groups
Communication as a two-way process (transaction)	Communication as consensus-building with publics	Communication as diachronic co-creation of meanings of involved actors

Figure 1. Six communication models, defined by differentiations in the process of meaning creation, usable for defining communication in public relations.

3. Major concepts of Public Relations

We do not know much of what general managers and specialists in public relations exactly do when they "do public relations" and what their intentions are, let alone what the effects are. But we do know that, more and more, what is considered to be public relations is seen as important– although it is not always called that (J. Grunig, in press; L. Grunig et al., 2002; van Riel, 2001; Fombrun & van Riel, 2004; van Ruler & Ver?i?, 2005). Looking at common practice in public relations, cynics would probably say that public relations is most of all gaining the attention of journalists for products, services, policies, and ideas of their clients, by using tricks and spin (Davis, 2002). There is no doubt that this

kind of service is (a form of) communication, and this is certainly part of public relations practice. However, public relations scholars have different ideas about what public relations is. I will review some basic schools of thought which I think cover the academic field of thinking about public relations, and analyze the view on the concept of communication in these schools of thougt.

3.1. The relationship approach

The state-of-the-art handbook *Handbook of Public Relations* (Heath, 2001a), the widely discussed Ledingham-and-Bruning reader (2000), Cutlip, Center and Broom's widely used handbook (2000), Grunig, Grunig and Dozier's latest overview (2002) as well as recent volumes of public relations journals and textbooks–all these show that most of the academic public relations community now consider public relations as a management function concerned with building relationships with publics (stakeholders) in order to preserve or reduce conflicts and build trust, by using a definition of public relations such as "the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends." Broom et al. (2000: 3) lamented that although relations are so important in public relations, the public relations literature hardly deals with relationships and how they can be measured. They claim that the unit of analysis should be the relationship itself, instead of individual and public opinions. Ledingham and Bruning (2000: xi) agree with Broom et al., noting that in public relations the emphasis is too much on message production and dissemination, failing to address the relationship itself and how to build long-standing relationships with important publics. They suggest therefore that the relationship is a key concept, rather than communication: "Communication efficiencies are of no use to measure public relations," they claim (p.xiii).

Since Ledingham and Bruning argue that organizational and interpersonal communication theory are needed to build a relational approach to public relations, it is obvious that they do not deny that there is communication in public relations and that communication theory is important. It is therefore surprising that they argue that communication should no longer be a vital concept of public relations. But "means are con-

fused with ends" they claim (p. xi). For them, relationships are the end of public relations, while communication seems to be only a technical means and would probably best be seen as a (reasonably simple) building block in producing beneficial relationships if used properly. "Recently," they say (p.xii), "the role of the "journalist in residence"–offering advice on ways to get an organization's name in the press–has been supplanted to some degree by that of the "expert prescriber"–a public relations counselor who advises client companies on matters of public policy. Nonetheless, many organizations still view public relations primarily as a means of generating favorable publicity. Their rationale for public relations is found not in the management of reciprocal relationships between an organization and its publics, but rather in "the credibility" attached to information that has been examined by reporters (through) third party endorsement by the media," they note (Ledingham and Bruning, 2000: xii).

Obviously, Ledingham and Bruning argue against what Grunig and Hunt (1984) called a publicity model of public relations; and they appear to equate that with communication in public relations. That would mean that they view communication as an emission; if that is the case, their ideas about communication are pre-scientific.

Arguing from a relationship approach to public relations, Broom et al. (2000: 16) state: "It would be difficult to overstate the importance of the communication linkage in organization relationships." Walton (1969) suggested that communication is "the most significant factor accounting for the total behavior of the organization," and that "the dynamics of the organization can best be understood by understanding its systems of communication" (p.109).".

Broom et al. repeat Ehling in the classic treatise *Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management*, edited by J. Grunig (1992). Ehling (1992: 633) stated that "the primary end state of public relations is the maximization through communication of the difference between cooperation and conflict such that cooperation becomes the prime benefit." But Broom et al. argue that it is relationships between organizations and stakeholders that must be central to a theory of public relations and organizational effectiveness, presenting a model to measure relationships. They, too, seem to view communication only as a means that managers can choose to use with a pre-fixed beginning and a pre-

defined effect. More recently, this model has been refined by many researchers.

J. Grunig (1989, 1992) developed the two-way symmetrical model of public relations for excellent public relations to contrast it with asymmetrical public relations. The two-way symmetrical model is without any doubt the most widespread approach to public relations in the academic community all over the world. In an overview of his work, J. Grunig (2001: 28) writes, "Symmetry means that communicators keep their eyes on a broader professional perspective of balancing private and public interests. Their job consists of more than argumentation of 'a wrangle in the marketplace'." They must listen as well as argue. But this does not mean that they do not argue or attempt to persuade. This is why J. Grunig in his recent work suggests that excellent public relations can be asymmetrical in its practice as well, as long as it is symmetrical in its overall intentions (Grunig, 2001; see also Grunig et al., 2002). He calls this a mixed motive model of public relations in which balancing of interests between organization and stakeholders is the basic philosophy.

Since "symmetry" was a term that was widely criticized, he recently suggested that the best term for symmetrical public relations is "dialogical public relations" (Grunig, 2001). J. Grunig wrote that he borrowed the term "dialogical" from relationships literature and makes no reference to any communication theory, although in communication theory, too, this is a basic concept. Habermas even sees dialogue as the only form of social interaction that can be called "communication" (Hetebrij, 2000), and it is certainly becoming more and more central in organizational communication theory (Barge & Little, 2002). According to J. Grunig (2001), the variables in dialogical public relations are the intentions of the communication partners (symmetry and asymmetry), the direction of the communication process (one-way and two-way), the type of communication form used (mediated or interpersonal communication), and the extent to which public relations practice is ethical. Different studies proved that excellent public relations was both symmetrical and asymmetrical and both mediated and interpersonal, but always two-way and ethical, according to J. Grunig (p.30).

It cannot be denied that communication is important in J. Grunig's public relations model and that he holds the view that public relations

is about communication with the aim to control and build mutual trust (2001: 30). He laments only certain ways of communicating, not to communication itself as a basic concept of public relations. Yet, it is still true, as Toth (1992: 9) already stated, that J. Grunig does not enrich his theory by studying the concept of communication thoroughly. He totally overlooks the connotative side of meaning as a – at least complicating – aspect in his symmetrical model. He even does not define communication in his textbooks and overviews. Examining his texts, it is obvious that he and his fellow researchers focus on communication as exchange of information about interests of rational human beings–organizations and its stakeholder groups, for instance–in order to negotiate agreement (Ehling, 1992; Grunig, 1989). This approach to communication is based in the so-called balance models (Littlejohn, 1987, 1992), started by Heider (Littlejohn, 1983, 1992) and developed by Newcomb (1953). The concern is with the degree of consistency which might exist between two persons in relation to a third person or object. Heider dealt with the cognitive processes internal to either of the two participants in a relationship, while Newcomb focused on the communication process between the two. Newcomb assumed that the communication process is the essential function of enabling two or more individuals to maintain simultaneous orientations to each other and towards objects in the environment.

Communication is thus a learned response under strain and we are likely to find "more" communication activity (seeking, giving, and exchanging information) in conditions of uncertainty and turbulence (McQuail & Windahl, 1981: 21). The key aspect of this model is the relationship between A and B, which is related to a communication process about X (something out there). Newcomb (1953) postulated a "strain to symmetry," resulting in a widening of the area of agreement by engaging in communication. That is to say, where there is balance, each participant will resist change, and where there is imbalance, attempts will be made to restore equilibrium.

The premise in all balance models is that people will always search for consistency (Stappers et al., 1990). McLeod and Chaffee (1973) modernized these models into the so-called co-orientation approach, combining balance models and certain aspects of symbolic interactionism, with emphasis on interpersonal communication and communication be-

tween groups, both two-way and interactive. Broom and Dozier (1986) used this co-orientation model as a basic model for public relations, but they changed the McLeod-and-Chaffee model in sofar that their interest is not symbolic interactionism, but the accuracy/congruency of the interpretations of issues between stakeholders and organization. If there is no congruency, dialogue should help both parties to develop a congruent (i.e. denotative) interpretation. J. Grunig confirms this idea of co-orientation and congruency (2001) but does not explain this in terms of a communication model.

3.2. The reputation approach

Another widespread approach to public relations is corporate communication (Argenti, 1994; Dolphin, 1999; van Riel, 1995, 2001), more recently also often referred to as "reputation management". Van Riel is one of the most prolific authors in this area, claiming that a good corporate image (reputation) is critically important for managers to survive. In doing so, he implicitly builds on the public relations books of founding father Edward Bernays (1923, 1955) who claimed that public relations is basically a means of "engineering of consent." This is what J. Grunig criticized as a two-way asymmetrical model of public relations.

The way to manage corporate image (reputation) is to define a desired corporate image and a desired organizational identity and develop "corporate communication," which van Riel (2001: 5) defines as "the orchestration of all instruments of organizational identity (communications, symbols, behaviors) in such a way that a positive reputation is created or maintained by groups with which the organization has a dependency relationship." Corporate communication has two basic modalities, organizational and marketing communication. Marketing communication is linked to sales directly, but organizational communication is also linked to sales–although indirectly–since it influences reputation and reputation influences sales. These two modalities have to be coordinated and steered. In previous work (e.g. van Riel, 1995) van Riel focused on influencing the image by well-planned communication campaigns; nowadays he concentrates on influencing all aspects of identity, such as communications, symbols, and organizational behaviors (van Riel, 2000, 2001, 2002). Van Riel does not describe what he means by communica-

tion and gives no definition at all, but it must be a basic concept since it is even used in the title of his conceptual framework. Still, he does not use communication theory much, but relies on psychological and organizational theories. His definition of corporate communication shows that he has in mind a persuasion model of communication, in which the emphasis is on the synchronization of meaning in target groups, in other words, what Berlo calls a social model of communication (Berlo, 1960). The differentiation between communications, symbols, and organizational behaviors stems from Birkigt and Stadler (1986), who see these three as elements for the self-presentation of an organization. Noncritically cited by van Riel, with communication they mean "the sending of verbal or visual messages" (van Riel, 1995: 32), and this is seen as the most flexible corporate identity instrument: "The flexibility of communication lies in the fact that more abstract signals can be transmitted directly to target groups. A company can, for instance, inform its target group directly that it is innovative. If the same message were to be conveyed only by the behavior of the company, the process would be much longer and more laborious" (p.32). This is best described as a transmission model of communication.

Although reputation management is often studied from a financial or marketing perspective, many authors claim that communication is important in building reputation. Deephouse (2000), for example, describes that managers' communications are essential in building a positive reputation; Smidts et al. (2001) report the importance of managers in building a positive communication climate, which in turn is important for organizational behavior. And organizational behavior is seen as the key to reputation.

In his more recent work, van Riel replaced image for reputation as the goal of corporate communication. He does not explain why, but it could very well be because reputation has an economic connotation (it comes from Latin and means "calculate" or "determine") and therefore probably fits managers' jargon better. His colleague in the Reputation Institute, Fombrun, explains that reputation is "capital" which should be seen as "a form of intangible wealth that is closely related to what accountants call 'goodwill' and marketers term 'brand equity'," and shows that a good reputation is a financial good (Fombrun, 1997). Reputations are partly a reflection of a company's identity, partly the result of man-

agers' efforts to persuade us of their excellence (p.11). He defines reputation as "a perceptual representation of a company's past actions and future prospects that describes the firm's overall appeal to all of its key constituents when compared with other leading rivals" (p.72). Although Fombrun does not take communication into account at all, it is obvious that for a perceptual representation of a company's acts and prospects, communication is needed. So, communication must be of some importance in reputation management. The fact that he sees no need to define or study it, suggests that he has a rather simple view of communication.

To sum up, in the reputation approach we find complete faith in the power of communication to reach certain predefined causal effects in cognitions and behaviors. Communication is no longer seen as a magic bullet, but a bullet it still is–and meaning problems are completely overlooked. Dervin (1991) would call this a non-communication approach to communication and most communication scholars would call it outdated.

The relational and reputation approaches are the dominant perspectives on public relations. It has become obvious that communication–although seen as an important tool for public relations–is not seen as a complex and dynamic process in which different actors play a role and meaning(s) are co-created. Yet, there are some alternative approaches in which communication is much more central and seen from a more modern and communication scientific point of view.

3.3. The rhetorical approach

The first alternative we should mention is the rhetorical approach to public relations (Toth & Heath, 1992; Ihlen, 2004). Although not very widespread, it is a well-respected approach, forming the basis of many of the chapters of *Handbook of Public Relations* (Heath, 2001a). In the rhetorical approach to public relations, communication plays a pivotal role. "Rhetoric can be thought of as a one-way flow of information, argument, and influence whereby one entity persuades and dominates another. (…). In the best sense, rhetoric should not be thought of as monologue, but dialogue. By featuring dialogue, we opt to emphasize the dynamics of rhetorical exchange by which interested parties seek to induce agreement and action" (Toth & Heath, 1992: p.xi–xii). Toth is one

of the few public relations scholars who suggests that communication is to be seen as the basis of public relations (Toth, 1992: 3), since "public relations IS communicating" [capitals in the original, BvR], although communicating in a certain way.

In his 1994 book *Management of corporate communication*, Heath argued that for developing relationships, comparable zones of meaning are to be constructed, meant as comparable "social realities," in order to be able to coordinate efforts (p.45). In 2001 he follows the same line, arguing that "shared meaning" is a vital outcome of public relations and the constituting variable of relationships. Shared meaning is constructed through dialogue (Heath, 2001b: 31), which he sees as "statement and counterstatement that constitute the process and shape the content of rhetoric" (p.32).

We could say that in the rhetorical approach, relationships are not built through communications but in communicating. This brings communication to the center of public relations, seen from a transactional model of communication. Communication is part of the rhetorical approach, focusing however, on interpersonal and organizational communication; the societal function of communication in shaping public opinion and public sphere is largely overlooked.

3.4. The societal approach

In Scandinavian and German approaches, public relations is often treated from a societal perspective. Kückelhaus (1998) describes three approaches to public relations: product oriented, marketing oriented, and societally oriented. The product orientation could be equated with the one-way emission model (called "publicity model" by Grunig & Hunt, 1984), while the marketing orientation could be equated with J. Grunig's asymmetrical two way model. However, the societal perspective cannot be equated with J. Grunig's two-way symmetrical model since the societal approach uses the society at large as unit of analysis and considers its social structure and institutions as the basis and the outcome of public relations. This implies that the main interest is not the corporation or organization itself, but its place in society at large (i.e., in the social structure). In this respect, society is seen from the perspective of what in German is called *Öffentlichkeit* ("in public"). *Öf-*

fentlichkeit does not mean "public" as in publics, audiences, etc., but it means "public sphere," and more specifically, "what is potentially known to and can be debated by all" (Hollander, 1988). *Öffentlichkeit* is an outcome, and therefore a quality of the public communication system in society (Ronneberger & Rühl, 1992) and journalism, advertising, and public relations all play a role in developing or destroying the quality of this public communication system. Consequently, the public sphere cannot be seen as the aggregation of individual views (see Price, 1992: 2), but has a dynamic of its own and as such creates a symbolic reality.

According to Kückelhaus, the societal orientation is the dominant approach in German public relations theory building. Unfortunately, German theories are hardly published in English and, consequently, hardly known in the English research tradition. It is also dominant in Scandinavian research, but they hardly report in scientific journals. An essential aspect of public relations is its concern with issues and values that are publicly relevant and publicly debated, in other words, relating to the "public sphere," as the Danish scholar Jensen (2000) argues. Ihlen (2004), from Norway, combines the rhetorical approach with a societal approach and shows how public relations is an actors' play in a public battlefield of meanings, thereby contributing to "the" public meaning, e.g. to social reality. In this societal approach, public relations serves the same kind of (democratic) function as journalism does; both contribute to the free flow of information and its meanings, and to the development of the public sphere in size ("How many people are involved in public life?"), in level ("What is the level at which we discuss public matters?"), and in quality ("What are the frames used in the debates?"). This echoes what Carey (1975) called a cultural approach to communication (communication produces cultural identity). In many European countries, theory building in public relations is closely related to journalism, not because the practitioners must deal with journalists, but because of these overlapping functions in society; the emphasis is on a transactional model of (public) communication. Obviously, communication plays a central role in this societal concept of public relations, concentrating on mass communication; the latter should not be equated with mass-mediated communications, but can best be understood as the "public communication system."

3.5. The community approach

At first sight this societal approach comes close to the community-building approach developed by Kruckeberg and Starck (1988; see also Starck & Kruckeberg, 2000) and reported, for example, by Leeper and Leeper (2000). Kruckeberg and Starck (1988) defined public relations in a normative way, as the social conscience of an organization that is able to contribute to the mutual understanding among groups and institutions and brings harmony to private and public policies. In such an approach, public relations is more focused on "how to behave" in order to be a decent citizen than on producing society itself. In the European sociological approaches described above, legitimation is used to describe how an organization, as the exponent of one of the institutions in the social system, co-produces public policies and thereby the empirical realization of institutions, and, ultimately, society itself. An organization is legitimate as long as there is no public discourse concerning its legitimation. The societal approach is therefore a fundamental empirical approach and not a normative one, unlike the community approach.

Nevertheless, in the community approach, too, (some forms of) communication are seen as important as a means to build community. Kruckenberg and Stark (1988: 62; they also refer to Carey) claim that communication should be seen, not as "doing something to someone else", but as "doing something with someone." In their view, public relations should abandon "the transmission model of communication, that is, principles rooted in persuasion and advocacy rather than principles based on social involvement and participation." So, Kruckeberg and Starck, too, advocate a certain form of communication to be adopted in public relations theory. They even state that "The public relations practitioner's role as a communicator, and more specifically as a communication facilitator, should be his or her highest calling" (p.112). But they do not explain how this communication role is rooted in communication theory.

4. Public relations as communication management

The communication theories outlined in section 2 stress that it is important to see communication as a basic notion in public relations in or-

der to investigate which concepts fit the dynamics of public relations and what its parameters are. The literature on public relations shows that communication is mentioned in all approaches, implicitly or explicitly, and is typically seen as a facilitator. Moreover, in most approaches it is seen as a vital concept as long as it is used in a certain way. Given this centrality of communication, it is worrying that some authors propose to remove communication as a central concept and that many authors obviously do not consider it as a central concept that needs a scholarly, communication scientific approach. It is striking that it is obviously not important enough to study what the possibilities and constraints are.

Toth (1992: 3) argued that communication is underdefined in J. Grunig's approach to public relations. According to her, communication is too much seen as the transfer of information, "as opposed to the more global rhetorical sense that with communication we transform our culture." The review of public relations literature shows that this is the case in both dominant approaches of public relations. Communication is very important but hardly explained in these public relations approaches and meaning is seen solely from its denotative side. Approaches that are oriented at communication as transaction and show a constructionistic view on communication, can be found only in the less popular "schools" of public relations such as the rhetorical and societal approaches.

The influential publication of Pavlik (1987), *Public Relations, What Research Tells Us*, shows us why communication is seen as a marginal or even a removable concept in public relations. In the summary of his final chapter, *Beyond Common Sense*, Pavlik writes (p.119):

"It may take more than communication to manage a relationship. Communication can accomplish only so much in today's society. It no longer has the power to influence public opinion the way it could in the days of P.T. Barnum or Ivy Lee. The role of communication today is more often limited to building mutual understanding (which is often of vital importance). Instead, relationship management may require corporate action of change."

According to Pavlik, producing understanding for decisions made by the organization is the only possible end of communication if getting others to think as you like them to think is no longer possible. In this view, communication is something that managers do to accomplish something

else (cf. Conrad & Haynes, 2001: 53). It is striking that for Pavlik, organizational decision-making is obviously not a matter of communication. This is, again, an instrumental approach to communication but also a questionable one for public relations–not least because in theories of organizational communication, decision-making is seen as a communication process itself, in which meaningful decisions are constructed (Deetz, 2001) and in which, most of the time, organizational communication is seen as part of public relations/corporate communication.

Decision-making is judging options and choosing one. Indeed, decision making is a communication process in which meanings are constructed and reconstructed, in which power is enacted and all kinds of communication roles are played. This varies from information and persuasion to dialogue and negotiation (van Ruler, 2004).

In the last century a substantive change occurred in the way in which people interact–at least in the countries in the West. Sociologists talk about a cultural shift from a "command" to a "negotiation" economy. At least since the second half of the twentieth century, consultation and negotiation have become normal in all cases involving social differences. This can be seen as a process of democratization that may be changing through time but has no end-state. This process remains open for the future and applies equally to individuals and organizations. Codes and norms of business conduct are changing, and so is communication in the business context. These changes are reflected in management science in the development of theories of organizational learning under supportive and coaching management (Argyris & Schön, 1978). In communication science, this cultural shift brought a paradigm shift from a sender–receiver orientation to an actor orientation (Bentele & Rühl, 1993; Putnam & Pacanowsky 1983; Thayer 1987).

In most recent public relations literature, the role of organizational action and decision making is mentioned but hardly discussed. Management is the process through which organizational work is done (Stoner & Freeman 1992) and organization action and decision making are the typical responsibilities of managers. Mintzberg (1973: 54-99) showed that managers are almost constantly engaged in communication: most roles of managers are communication roles, all roles have communication aspects and these must be managed well. Today's "negotiation economy" makes the communication aspects of these roles even more important

than they used to be when Mintzberg first described them. It is also changing communication strategies in use and it certainly needs a transactional view on communication in respect to decision making and managing (van Ruler, 2004). Nevertheless, in all recent approaches to public relations, it is mentioned not only to "communicate/argue about the plans and aims of the organization" (which is obviously communication, one-way or two-way) but also to take into account how the (people in the) organization behave in strategic decision-making, as well as in daily practice. This would mean that identity building ("how are we doing what we do and why") is becoming equally or more important than image building ("how are we seen by certain key publics") or gaining mutual understanding ("do our stakeholders agree on our policies"). The question, then, is how identity is built. Identities are an expression of the self and performed in conversation, argues Szwarniawska (2000: 275). "What we achieve in conversation is positioning vis-à-vis other people, and against the background of a plot that is negotiated by those taking part in the conversation." Identity is therefore produced, reproduced, and maintained by communication, by forms of interpersonal communication, and by forms of mass communication. Communication, then, is the construction of identity and, therefore, reality. This is indeed a different view on communication than "production and dissemination of information messages" or "influencing people", and it also differs from "gaining mutual understanding"–all these are still functionalistic views on communication. Here, communication is seen as producing identity, which is a constructional view on communication (van Ruler & Vercic, 2005). But it is hard to find any of these considerations about communication in the mainstream public relations approaches.

That communication is not seen as a sufficient concept of public relations may be due to the assumption that public relations is just seen as communication with (or even towards) outsiders or employees about decisions made or to be made, and not the process in which decisions are being made. This is a narrow-minded view of communication in public relations and it makes no sense. There is no evidence that communication in public relations should be limited to the communication processes with employees and stakeholders before or after decisions have been made. This shows that in public relations the traditional sender–receiver model is still dominant; the manager is the

sender and the employees or other stakeholders are the (more or less obstinate) receivers. It is beyond the "communication-as-mystery" model which many practitioners adhere to (van Ruler, 1997), but it is still far too limited a position on the role of communication in the context of organizations. Since most public relations scholars preach that the critical factor is decision-making and it is obvious that decision-making is to be seen as the final link in the chain of communication processes itself, we had better conceptualize public relations as *management of the processes of meaning creation* (=*communication*) *in order to build relationships/reputation/public trust/legimation*. In that case, public relations is fundamentally "management of communication processes in the context of organization"– i.e. communication management. If we see public relations as communication management, we create the space to study the process of meaning creation in the organizational and the organization-related societal context, first by challenging the question whose meaning is created by whom and what meaning means, then by finding out under what conditions what kinds of meanings are created.

Bibliography

ARGENTI, P.A. (1994): *Corporate communication*. Burr Ridge, IL: Irwin.

ARGYRIS, Ch. & SCHÖN, D.A. (1978): *Organizational Learning: A Theory of Action Perspective*. Reading: Addison-Wesley.

BARGE, J. KEVIN & LITTLE, MARTIN (2002): Dialogical Wisdom, communicative Practice, and Organizational Life, *Communication Theory (12)*, 375-397.

BAUER, R.A. (1964): The obstinate audience: the influence process from the point of view of social communication, *The American Psychologist*, *19,* 319-328.

BENTELE, G. & RÜHL, M. (Hg.) (1993):. *Theorien öffentlicher Kommunikation* [Theories of Public Communication]. München: Ölschläger.

BERNAYS, E.L. (1923): *Crystallizing Public Opinion*. New York: Boni and Liveright.

BERNAYS, E.L. (1955): *The Engineering of Consent*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

BERLO, D.K. (1960): *The Process of Communication*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

BIRKIGT, K. & STADLER, M.M. (1986): *Corporate Identity: Grundlagen, Funktionen, Fallspielen*. Landsberg am Lech: Verlag Moderne Industrie.

BROOM, G.L., CASEY, S., RITCHEY, J. (2000): "Concept and Theory of Organization-Public Relationships", in LEDINGHAM, J.A. & BRUNING, S.D. (ed.) (2000), *Public Relations as Relationship Management. A Relational Approach to the Study and Practice of Public Relations* (pp. 3-22). Mahwah NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

BROOM, G.M. & DOZIER, D.M. (1986): "Advancement for Public Relations Role Models". *Public Relations Review, 7*(1), 37-56.

CAREY, J.W. (1975): "A Cultural Approach to Communication", (2), *Communication, 2*(1), 1-22.

CONRAD, C. & HAYNES, J. (2001): "Development of key constructs", in F.M. JABLIN & L.L. PUTNAM (eds.), *The New Handbook of Organizational Communication. Advances in Theory, Research, and Methods* (pp. 47-77). Thousands Oaks: Sage.

CUTLIP, S.C., CENTER, A.H. & BROOM, G.M. (2000): *Effective Public Relations*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

DAVIS, A. (2002): *Public Relations Democracy. Public Relations, Politics and the Mass Media in Britain*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

DEEPHOUSE, D.L. (2000): "Media reputation as a strategic resource: an integration of mass communication and resource-based theories", *Journal of Management*, *29*(6), 1091-1112.

DEETZ, S. (2001): "Conceptual Foundations", in F.M. JABLIN & L.L. PUTNAM (eds.), *The New Handbook of Organizational Communication. Advances in Theory, Research, and Methods* (pp. 3-46). Thousands Oaks: Sage.

DERVIN, B. (1991): "Information as non-sense; Information as sense: the communication technology connection", in H. BOUWMAN, P. NELISSEN & M. VOOIJS (eds.), *Tussen vraag en aanbod* [Between offer and supply] (pp. 44-59). Amsterdam: Cramwinckel.

DOLPHIN, R.R. (1999): *The Fundamentals of Corporate Communications*. Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann.

DOZIER, D.M. & EHLING, W.P. (1992): "Evaluation of Public Relations Programs: What the Literature Tells Us About their Effects", in J.E.

GRUNIG (ed.), *Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management* pp. 159-184. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum.

EHLING, W.P. (1992): "Estimating the Value of Public Relations and Communication to an Organization", in J.E. GRUNIG (ed.), *Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management* (pp. 617-638). Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum.

FAUCONNIER, G. (1990): *Mens en media* [People and media]. Leuven, Belgium: Garant.

FOMBRUN, Ch.J. (1997): *Reputation. Realizing Value from the Corporate Image*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

FOMBRUN, Ch.J. & RIEL, C.B.M. van (2004). *Fame & Fortune. How successful Companies Build Winning Reputations*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

GRUNIG, J.E. (1976): "Organizations and Public Relations: Testing a communication theory", *Journalism Monographs*, nr. 46.

GRUNIG, J.E. (1989): "Symmetrical Presuppositions as a Framework for Public Relations Theory", in C.H. BOTAN & V. HAZLETON Jr (eds.), *Public Relations Theory* (pp. 17-44). Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum.

GRUNIG, J.E. (1992): "Communication, Public Relations, and Effective Organizations: An Overview of the Book", in J.E. GRUNIG (ed.), *Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management* (pp. 1-28). Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum.

GRUNIG, J.E. (2001): "Two-Way Symmetrical Public Relations: Past, Present, and Future", in R.L. HEATH (ed.), *Handbook of Public Relations* (pp. 11-30). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

GRUNIG, J.E. (in press): "Conceptualizing Quantitative Research in Public Relations", in B. van RULER, A. TKALAC, & D. VERCIC (eds.). *Public Relations Metrics: Research and Evaluation*. Mahwah: Erlbaum.

GRUNIG, J.E. & HUNT, T. (1984): *Managing Public Relations*. New York: Hilt, Rinehart and Winston.

GRUNIG, L.A., GRUNIG, J.E. & DOZIER, D.M. (2002): *Excellent Public Relations and Effective Organizations. A Study of Communication Management in Three Countries*. Mahwah: Erlbaum.

HEATH, R.L. (1994): *Management of Corporate Communication. From Interpersonal Contacts to External Affairs*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

HEATH, R.L. (ed.) (2001a): *Handbook of Public Relations*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

HEATH, R.L. (2001b): "A Rhetorical Enactment Rationale for Public Relations: The Good Organization Communicating Well". In: R.L. HEATH (ed.). *Handbook of Public Relations*, pp. 31-50. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

HETEBRIJ, M. (2000): *Communicatief management. Tussen macht en communicatie* [Communicative management. Between power and communication]. Alphen aan den Rijn: Samsom.

HOLLANDER, E. (1988): *Lokale communicatie en locale openbaarheid. Openbaarheid als communicatiewetenschappelijk concept.* [Local communication and local public sphere. Public sphere as communication scientific concept]. Nijmegen: Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen.

IHLEN, O. (2004): *Rhetoric and Resources in Public Relations Strategies. A Rhetorical and Sociological Analysis of Two Conflicts over Energy and the Environment*. Oslo: Unipub A.S (Ph.D. dissertation).

JENSEN, I. (2000): *Public Relations and the Public Sphere in the Future.* Paper presented at the 7th International Public Relations Research Symposium, Bled, Slovenia, July, 7.

KRUCKEBERG, D. & STARCK, K. (1988): *Public Relations and Community. A Reconstructed Theory*. New York: Praeger.

KÜCKELHAUS, A. (1998): *Public Relations: die Konstruktion von Wirklichkeit. Kommunikationstheoretische Annäherungen an ein neizeitliches Phänomen* [Public Relations: Construction of Reality. Communication Scientific Perspectives for a recent phenomenon]. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag.

LANGER, S. (1967): Mind: An Essay on Human Feeling. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press (cited in S.W. Littlejohn (1992). *Theories of Human Communication*, pp. 67-70.Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

LEDINGHAM, J.A. & BRUNING, S.D. (ed.) (2000): *Public Relations as Relationship Management. A Relational Approach to the Study and Practice of Public Relations*. Mahwah NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

LEEPER, K.A. & LEEPER, R.V. (2000): *Creating Community as Social Responsibility: A Case Study,* paper presented at the International Communication Association, Acapulco, México, June 1-5.

LIN, N. (1971): 'Information flow, influence flow and the decision-making process', *Journalism Quarterly*, *48*(1), 33-40.

LITTLEJOHN, S.W. (1983): *Theories of Human Communication.* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

LITTLEJOHN, S.W. (1992): *Theories of Human Communication*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

McLEOD, J.M. & CHAFFEE, S.H. (1973): Interpersonal approaches to communication research, *American Behavioral Scientist*, *16*, 469-499.

McQUAIL, D. & WINDAHL, S. (1986): *Communication Models. For the Study of Mass Communication*. London: Longman.

MINTZBERG, H. (1973): *The Nature of Managerial Work*. New York: Harper & Row.

NEWCOMB, T.M. (1953): "An Approach to the Study of Communicative Acts", (60) *Psychology Review 60*(6), 393-404.

NILLESEN, A.B. (1998): *Een queeste naar voorlichting. Communicatiewetenschap en de eerste stap op weg naar een theorie van voorlichting* [A search for Enlightenment. Communication science and the first step towards a theory of "voorlichting"]. Nijmegen: KU Nijmegen.

NOELLE-NEUMANN, E. (1974): "The Spiral of Silence", *Journal of Communication*, *23*(2), 43-51.

PAVLIK, J.V. (1987): *Public Relations. What Research Tells Us*. Newbury Park: Sage.

PREYER, G., PETER, G., & ULKAN, M. (2003): *Concepts of Meaning. Framing an Integrated Theory of Linguistic Behavior*. Dordrecht/ Boston/London: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

PRICE, V. (1992): *Public Opinion*. Newbury Park: Sage.

PUTNAM, L.L. & PACANOWSKY, M.E. (eds.) (1983): *Communication and organizations. An interpretive approach*. Beverly Hills: Sage.

RIEL, C.B.M. van (1995): *Principles of Corporate Communication*. London: Prentice Hall.

RIEL, C.B.M. van (2000): "Corporate Communication Orchestrated by a Sustainable Corporate Story". In: *The Expressive Oganization. Linking Identity, Reputation, and the Corporate Brand*, pp. 157-181. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

RIEL, C.B.M. van (ed.) (2001): *Corporate Communication. Het managen van reputatie [Management of reputation]*. Alphen aan den Rijn: Kluwer.

RIEL, C.B.M. (2002): "Defining Corporate Communication", in P. SIMCIC BRONN & R. WIIG (eds.), *Corporate Communication. A Strategic Approach to Building Reputation* (pp. 277-294). Oslo: Gyldendal Akademisk.

RONNEBERGER, F. & RÜHL, M. (1992): *Theorie der Public Relations, ein Entwurf* (Theory of Public Relations, a design]. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag.

ROSENGREN, K.E. (2000): *Communication, an Introduction*. London: Sage.

RULER, B. van (1997): "Communication: Magical Mystery or Scientific Concept? Professional Views of Public Relations Practitioners in the Netherlands", in D. MOSS, T. MacMANUS & D. VERCIC (eds.), *Public Relations Research: An International Perspective* (pp. 247-263). London: International Thomson Business Press.

RULER, B. van (2004): "The communication grid: an introduction of a model of four communication strategies", *Public Relations Review 30*, 123-143.

RULER, B. van & VERCIC, D. (2002): "21st Century Communication Management – the People, the Organization", in P. SIMCIC BroNN & R. WIIG (eds.), *Corporate Communication. A Strategic Approach to Building Reputation* (pp. 277-294): Oslo: Gyldendal Akademisk.

RULER, B. van & VERCIC, D. (2005): "Reflective Communication Management, Future Ways for Public Relations Research" in P.J. KALBFLEISCH (ed.), *Communication Yearbook 29* (pp. 239-274). Mahwah: Erlbaum.

RULER, B., VERCIC, D., BUETSCHI, G., FLODIN, B. (2004): "A first look for parameters of public relations in Europe", *Journal of Public Relations Review*, *16*(1), 35-63.

SCHRAMM (1965): "How communication works", in W. SCHRAMM (ed.). *The process and effects of mass communication* (pp. 3-26). Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

SCHRAMM (1971): "The nature of communication between humans", in W. SCHRAMM & D.F. ROBERTS (eds.), *The process and effects of mass communication* (pp. 3-53). Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

SHANNON, C.E. & WEAVER, W. (1949): *The Mathematical Theory of Communication*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

SMIDTS, A, PRUYN, A. & RIEL, C.B.M. van (2001): "The impact of employee communication and external prestige on organizational identification", *Academy of Management Journal, 44*, 1051-1062.

STAPPERS, J.G., REIJNDERS, A.D., & MÖLLER, W.A.J. (1990): *De werking van massamedia. Een overzicht van inzichten* [How media work; an overview of insights]. Amsterdam, NL: Arbeiderspers.

STARCK, K., & KRUCKEBERG, D. (2000): "Public Relations and Community: A Reconstructed Theory Revisited", in R. HEATH with G. VASQUEZ (eds.), *Handbook of Public Relations* (pp. 51-59). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

STONER, J.R.F. & FREEMAN, R.E. (1992): *Management* (5th ed.). Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.

SUSSKIND, L., McKEARNAN, S. & THOMAS-LARMER, J. (eds.) (1999): *The Consensus Building Handbook. A Comprehensive Guide to Reaching Agreement*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

SZWARNIAWSKA, B. (2000): "Identity Lost or Identity Found? Celebration and Lamentation over the Postmodern View of Identity in Social Science and Fiction", in M. SCHULTZ, M.J. HATCH & M.H. LARSEN (eds.), *The Expressive Organization. Linking Identity, Reputation and the Corporate Brand* (pp. 271-283). Osford, NY: Oxford University Press.

THAYER, L. (1968): *Communication and communication systems in organization, management and interpersonal relations*. Homewood Il: Richard D. Wirwin Inc.

THAYER, L. (1987): *On Communication, Essays in Understanding*. Norwood NJ: Ablex.

TOTH, E.L. (1992): "The Case for Pluralistic Studies of Public Relations: Rhetorical, Critical, and Systems Perspectives", in E.L. TOTH & R.L. HEATH (eds.), *Rhetorical and Critical Approaches to Public Relations*, pp. 3-15. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

TOTH, E.L. & R.L. HEATH, R.L. (eds.) (1992): *Rhetorical and Critical Approaches to Public Relations*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

WATZLAWICK, P., BEAVIN, J.H. & JACKSON, D.D. (1970): *The pragmatische aspecten van de menselijke communicatie* [The pragmatics of human communication]. Deventer: Van Loghum Slaterus.

WIENER, N. (1948): *Cybernetics or control and communication in the animal and the machine*. New York: Wiley & Sons.

Note

1 Betteke van Ruler (1948) is professor of Communication and Organization at the University of Amsterdam and a member of the Amsterdam School of Communications Research (ASCoR). Prior to that she was an associate professor in communication science and communication management at the Free University of Amsterdam. From 2002 to 2004 she also held a funded chair at the University of Twente, focusing on professionalism of communication management. She earned a Ph.D. in Social Sciences from the University of Nijmegen. Her research is concerned with the influence of public relations on journalism and the "mediatization" of organizations, the practice of communication management, and the relationship between communication and organization. Van Ruler is vice-chair of the Public Relations Division of the International Communication Association (ICA), and President of the European Public Relations Education and Research Association (EUPRERA).