Guest editors:

Liz YEOMANS
Corina DABA-BUZOIANU
Loredana IVAN

Contents

Qualitative Research in Communication

Varia

Qualitative Research in Communication

Liz YEOMANS*
Corina DABA-BUZOIANU**
Loredana IVAN***

Qualitative Research
in Communication. Introductory Remarks

The 20th century's epistemological turn in social sciences (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Punch, 2013) acknowledged the importance of qualitative research methods. The need for this turn was also pointed out by Habermas (1979), who noticed that the way data was collected in social sciences affected the analysis and data interpretation. Research gained a comprehensive character and proposed a phenomenological approach of reality (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Willig, 2008; Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). Nowadays, we notice a "more confident community of scholars" whose earlier endeavors had "opened up the study of cultures, meanings, symbolic performances, and social practices" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. xi). Qualitative research tends to become the dominant methodology in communication (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011), and could be considered a feature of the epistemology of communication. It can be noticed from the contributions in this special issue on qualitative research in communication, that interest in qualitative studies is flourishing. Researchers are responding to the theoretical, epistemological and methodological problems and to questions raised by how people and organizations relate to complex social, global and technological developments.

The current special issue aims to underline the importance of qualitative research conducted in communication and to shed light on its particularities. It does so by focusing on applied qualitative methodologies in various areas of communication. The five papers selected for the special issue were initially presented at the second Qualitative Research in Communication (QRC) conference, hosted by the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration in September 2015. The second QRC conference, was testimony to the interest in qualitative research across continents. Three international keynote speakers: Professor Bryan C. Taylor (University of Colorado, Boulder, USA), Professor Kim Sawchuk (Concordia University, Canada) and Professor Eugene Loos (University of Amsterdam, Netherlands) brought their experience and insight to the opening session. The papers presented at the conference were clustered around the broad themes of ageing, communication and technology; digital explorations; approaching media texts and practices; communication and the emotion economy; and reflexive insights in qualitative methodologies. This special issue reflects some of that richness and diversity of interest with contributions from the sub-fields of gaming studies, media theory, public relations and ageing. The research strategies adopted by

* Leeds Beckett University, Leeds, United Kingdom; l.yeomans@leedsbeckett.ac.uk.

** National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, Bucharest, Romania; corina.buzoianu@comunicare.ro.

*** National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, Bucharest, Romania; loredana.ivan@comunicare.ro.

authors are similarly diverse: phenomenology, case study, critical discourse analysis as well as qualitative analysis used in a mixed-methods approach. It is worth mentioning that authors acknowledge their concern for generalization in the context of using qualitative methods and thus express their preference for mixed methods.

It may seem to the reader that the qualitative approach of the social reality of the papers in this issue are diverse. Bryan C. Taylor's paper addresses qualitative research considering globalization. Taylor argues that local communities of social science researchers are negotiating the internationalization of their disciplinary identities. Also, in this paper the author notices the efforts of researchers in respect to the internationalization of potential resources of qualitative research methods. The paper belonging to Liz Yeomans and Martina Topic addresses engagement and empathy discourses using a case study approach. By using critical discourse analysis, Yeomans and Topic reveal that corporate communication relies on early understanding of engagement as a cognitive behavior based on instincts and persuasive communication. The paper shows that in the analyzed case, people are seen emotional driven and easily manipulated and customers' engagement tends to be measured through liking on Facebook and re-tweeting on Twitter. Ana Adi's paper combines automated online data collection with qualitative observation, aiming to identify the themes, practices and influencers sharing messages about public relations on Twitter using the #publicrelations hashtag. Adi inquires the social media dialogical features and suggests that future research should look into Twitter charts for exploring conversation on public relations. Still in the social media area, but also taking into account printed and online media, Francesca Arcostanzo and Alice Pulvirenti's paper bring some empirical evidence on the existence of an audience-oriented commercial logic which drives online news production. Arcostanzo and Pulvirenti suggest that future research on the way social media had changed communication should start with investigating how people get informed. Based on in-depth interviews and drawing of the existent literature on videogame plot evaluation, Tulia Maria Caşvean argues that videogames genres are a "playing contract" built upon multiple perspective. Thus, Caşvean's paper points out that while videogames genres are built player-centric in the industry, for scholars they are considered tools for examining and comparing games.

As some of the papers in this issue point out, online communication has a significant role in the current development of qualitative methodologies. Several scholars mentioned that the development of the communication technologies and the wide spread of the internet have transformed the way qualitative research is being conducted, especially in communication (Mann & Stewart, 2000; Daymon & Holloway, 2001). Therefore, we expect to see in the future a significant body of research using qualitative methodologies in online communication.

References

1. Daymon, C., & Holloway, I. (2001) *Qualitative Research Methods in Public Relations and Marketing Communication*, London and New York: Routledge.
2. Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. (1994). *Handbook of qualitative research*, Thousand Oaks: Sage.
3. Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research*, (pp. 105-117). Thousand Oaks CA: Sage.
4. Habermas, J. (1979). *Communication and the evolution of society*, Boston: Beacon Press. Lindlof, T. R., & Taylor, B. C. (2002). *Qualitative communication research methods* (2nd edition). Thousand Oaks, Sage.

5. Lindlof, T. R., & Taylor, B. C. (2011). *Qualitative communication research methods* (3nd edition). Thousand Oaks, Sage.
6. Mann, C., & Stewart, F. (2000) *Internet Communication and Qualitative Research. A handbook for Researching Online*, London: Sage Publications.
7. Punch, K. F. (2013). *Introduction to social research: quantitative and qualitative approaches*, Sage.
8. Willig, C., (2008). *Introducing qualitative research in Psychology*, London, Open University Press.

Bryan C. Taylor*

Yours, Mine and Ours: Theorizing the Global Articulation of Qualitative Research Methods and Academic Disciplines

Abstract

Two current forms of globalization are inherently interesting to academic qualitative researchers. The first is *the globalization of qualitative research methods* themselves. The second is *the globalization of academic disciplines* in which those methods are institutionalized as a valuable resource for professional practices of teaching and scholarly research. This essay argues that patterns in existing discussion of these two trends create an opportunity for innovative scholarship. That opportunity involves reflexively leveraging qualitative research methods to study the simultaneous negotiation by academic communities of *both* qualitative methods *and* their professional discipline. Five theories that serve to develop this opportunity are reviewed, focusing on their related benefits and limitations, and the specific research questions they yield. The essay concludes by synthesizing distinctive commitments of this proposed research program.

Keywords: globalization, academic disciplines, qualitative methods

1. Introduction: The Globalization of Qualitative Research Methods

Within the past two decades, a growing number of scholarly voices have testified to the global circulation of qualitative research methods among social science disciplines (see Taylor and Lindlof, 2013). Consistently, those voices address how this circulation creates new challenges and opportunities which affect disciplinary practices of teaching and research, and stimulate a search by disciplinary members for new forms of community which may support their response.

In this process, commentators navigate an overlapping series of discourses through which social scientists have conceptualized the relationship between qualitative methods and contemporary globalization. In the first discourse, qualitative researchers have engaged globalization as *an urgent confluence of changing conditions* – principally, destabilizing flows of material and symbolic phenomena across traditional geopolitical boundaries – which has affected their chosen objects of study, and provoked revision of their existing theory and methodology. In a second discourse, critical researchers have sought to *de-colonize historical traditions of qualitative research* which have contributed to the hegemony of modern Western culture, and inhibited the development of authentic knowledge and voice among indigenous peoples. Currently, these researchers also defend the integrity of qualitative methods against a powerful backlash by neo-liberal institutions seeking to reestablish positivist protocols for the production of knowledge claims.

* University of Colorado-Boulder (USA); bryan.taylor@colorado.edu.

In this essay, I am concerned with a third – and growing – discourse in this series. Here, social scientists conceptualize qualitative research methods as *commodities circulating in global economies of academic knowledge and practice.* Here, we are concerned with the provenance of qualitative methods as artifacts developed among American, British, and European scholarly communities during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. We seek to understand the various forms of "supply and demand" which have structured the global flows of qualitative research, and which have produced marked inequity between higher educational institutions located in North America and Europe, and those located in the global East and South.

We pursue this inquiry for at least two reasons. The first is that it may encourage the development of more equitable structures of global knowledge production, and more flexible and innovative methodologies capable of engaging the complex manifestations of global flows (e.g., migration and pandemic; Flick & Rohnsch, 2015). Beyond these purposes, however, this inquiry arises because the global institution of qualitative research has sufficiently matured so that it is now willing and able to investigate its increasingly diverse components. Moved by curiosity to explore their international community, qualitative researchers are developing enhanced understanding of themselves as professional actors engaged in local situations, negotiating the opportunities and constraints afforded by available resources for addressing their unique needs – activities which, in turn, shape the evolving conditions of their work. In this sense, qualitative researchers are reflexively mobilizing the spirit of qualitative inquiry to better understand the global cultures of qualitative research.

2. The Globalization of Higher-Educational Institutions and Academic Disciplines

Within the sphere of post-industrial higher-education, of course, this curiosity is not limited to methodological communities. It is also an urgent matter for colleges and universities, as they assess the threats and opportunities generated by contemporary globalization for their traditional revenue streams and operations (Becher & Trowler, 2001). Within this increasingly "borderless" environment created by the end of the Cold War and the ongoing modernization of economies and societies in regions such as South Asia and Eastern Europe, higher-educational institutions are increasingly undertaking massive, strategic –and often-traumatic – change programs. These programs are stimulated by interrelated trends, such as defunding by state governments, the growing centrality of techno-science and intellectual property for international markets, and the emergence of various economies of 'knowledge,' 'affect,' 'experience,' and 'risk' which have revised (i.e., instrumentalized and commodified) the value conventionally attributed to higher-educational learning. Related campaigns range from defending against competition by both local, for-profit operators and global mega-universities, to more opportunistic ventures (particularly among U.S. institutions; see Kleypas & McDougall, 2012), such as selective development of courses and programs for online delivery (Umpleby, et al., 2009); opening of new campuses to deliver programs in foreign markets; partnering with industry in research ventures; organizational restructuring; intensifying managerial oversight and budgetary efficiency, and recruiting growing numbers of foreign students created by the regional emergence of aspirational, middle-class cultures.

This evolution in the relationship between higher educational institutions and their central authorities creates a volatile mix of constraints and opportunities for their disciplinary units.

My focus here is on the process (parallel to that occurring among qualitative researchers) in which maturing academic disciplines seek to understand the diverse limbs and organs of their increasingly-international bodies. Here, related projects seek to inventory and map the total manifestations of a discipline's professional knowledge and practice. They consider how these manifestations alternately sustain and vary the ideal attributes of a discipline's "tribal" identity (i.e., as unique and cohesive), manifest as distinctive qualities of its official structure and culture (Becher & Parry, 2005). These elements include: external boundaries with other disciplines (e.g., loose and cosmopolitan vs. rigid and provincial); relations with prominent stakeholders such as industries, professions, publics, funding agencies, and policy-makers; epistemological orientations; theoretical traditions; prioritized research programs; methodological practices; pedagogy, curriculum, and degree offerings; forms of self-governance and development (e.g., professional associations); and internal structuring of sub-fields (e.g., hierarchical vs. egalitarian). Frequently, these investigations are conducted within the context of particular nation-states and global regions, and focus on the correspondence between disciplinary trajectories and the historical development of associated social, economic, and political institutions. Ultimately, such projects cultivate a narrative sufficient to represent the integrity of "the global discipline." Ideally, such accounts serve strategic narratives of disciplinary identity and interest – for example, as a legitimate, effective, growing enterprise entitled to increased investment of scarce resources.

3. Statement of Purpose

Although I have so far depicted the globalization of qualitative research methods and academic disciplines as-if parallel trends, they in fact overlap. This is because the social science disciplines form a principal, durable medium for the globalization of qualitative research methods. In turn, the "migration" (Flick, 2014) of qualitative research methods creates a prominent "boundary object" or "contact zone" through which the dispersed members of global disciplines may approach or avoid idealized states of mutual understanding and increased coordination (Lamont & Molnar, 2002). This overlap yields at least four (admittedly fine-grained) distinctions among related research narratives. First, those narratives may depict the *general history and character* of qualitative research, as it is practiced within a broad *interdisciplinary enterprise*, located in a *specific state/region* (e.g., Adam & Podmenik, 2005; Weil, 2005; Torrance, 2014). A second genre depicts *interdisciplinary* qualitative research following a *specific topic or program*, as conducted *either* globally (e.g., Charmaz, 2014), *or* within a *specific state/region* (Knoblauch, et al., 2005). Third, researchers may portray the qualitative research traditions of a *specific discipline*, as it is located in a *specific state/region* (e.g., Konecki, et al., 2005). Finally, they may study of the role played by globalizing qualitative methods in the development of a *specific discipline,* emerging in a *specific state/region*.

Review of related literatures indicates a predominance of studies in the first, second, and third categories. This output has been influenced by various scholarly calls: by individual figures such as Alasutaari (2004), who has advocated for the development of a "spatial" narrative to offset the homogenizing logic encoded in "temporal" narratives of qualitative methods evolution; by international conferences such as the International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry, held at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign (http://icqi.org/); and by academ-

ic journals such as *Qualitative Inquiry* and *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* (http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs), which regularly publish related studies and special issues. In response, qualitative researchers from global "peripheries" such as Ibero-America (Puebla, et al., 2006) and Asia (Hsiung, 2012) have documented how "their" methods have historically developed through interactions occurring within and between specific networks of actors, knowledges, texts, and practices – which have, in turn, been influenced by overarching conditions such as enduring religious-ethnic conflict (Schubotz, 2005). These accounts typically depict "glocalized" encounters between a hegemonic, Anglo-American core tradition, and localized articulations of national / regional culture, (inter-) disciplinarity, and higher-educational institutionalization. These encounters produce distinctively "hybrid," "creolized" – and sometimes idiosyncratic – configurations of qualitative research methodology (Angermuller,2005).

The vast majority of these accounts involve case studies which review related archives and contemporary literatures, employing relatively informal (and even impressionistic) methodologies such as portraiture and "cartography" (Valles & Baer, 2005; Eberle & Elliker, 2005). A second, much rarer, genre involves *empirical study* of qualitative research communities. These studies report on recent strategic initiatives by (inter-)national bodies seeking to inventory geographically-specific, (inter-)disciplinary networks of qualitative researchers, and to consolidate the resources supporting their productivity (e.g., Eberle & Elliker, 2005; Henwood & Laing, 2005). These studies largely use survey and data-base methods to establish similarities, differences, and trends in the methodological practices of these groups, and to assess their implications for stakeholder relationships.

Collectively, these projects provide valuable insight into the global dynamics of increasingly mobile qualitative methodology. Nonetheless, we may discern two gaps in this literature, which create opportunities for extending and innovating current discussion. The first gap involves the relative lack of narratives studying the role of *methodological* globalization in the development of *disciplinary* globalization. Here, we may investigate precisely *how* the global diffusion of research methods influences the local development of academic disciplines. A second – and somewhat ironic – gap involves a lack of studies utilizing the resources of *qualitative methods themselves* to investigate these dynamics. Here, empirical researchers can leverage means such as participant-observation and interviewing to more richly depict the evolving communal meanings and practices associated with glocalized articulations of methodology and disciplinarity. In this process, they may continue to improve the historically "pitiful and poverty-stricken" body of qualitative research on "actual everyday life in academic institutions" (P. Treichler, in Fiske, 1992, p. 167).

4. Theoretical Overview

We are now able to specify our proposed object of study. It is the 'glocalization' of qualitative research methodology, as that phenomenon manifests within specific intersections of three historical and cultural contexts: those of national/regional identity, academic-disciplinary identity, and higher-educational institutionalization. This proposal assumes that the ongoing globalization of *both* academic disciplines *and* qualitative research methods are articulated in these manifestations. More innovatively, it assumes that qualitative methods may *themselves* be utilized to investigate these articulations as significant matters of disci-

plinary culture and professional development. This proposal finds support in Goodall's (1999, p. 487) account of academic communities as organic phenomena, animated by a pervasive, sensitive relationality:

[They] exist within a complex web of families, friendships, departments, academic institutions, cities and states, educational hierarchies, professional organizations, and world histories, all of which can and do influence … our identities, our understandings, our professional and personal goals, what and how we write, how we live… A change in any one strand of this intricate web necessarily means changes in some, if not all, of the rest. Everything is connected.

What phenomena might such a study consider? Existing discussions suggest potential units of analysis. Foremost are the *meanings and practices* by which the members of a local academic community negotiate the simultaneous globalization of *both* their discipline *and* qualitative research methods. Here, we are drawn to the collective enactment of change, as potential innovations of local-disciplinary tradition are identified, promoted, voluntarily incorporated, and/or externally imposed (Becher & Trowler, 2001, pp. 95-102). We consider how various characterizations of qualitative methods – as 'fashionable fad,' 'legitimate option,' 'valuable asset,' or 'inevitable requirement' – are constructed and circulated among community members. We ask what pragmatic, moral, and political work such attributions *do* in reproducing and transforming disciplinary cultures. We investigate how academic communities orient to the globalization of qualitative research in managing their local disciplinary orthodoxy – including "methodological fortresses … which … provide defensive bulwarks against external criticism" (Somekh, et al., 2005, p. 2). We may consider how these changes manifest for disciplinary members at the level of their lived experience, as they engage in ongoing sensemaking and narration of their own and others' evolving identities. Such narratives may depict forms of membership characterized by qualities such as desire, ambition, commitment, vulnerability, competency, wisdom, and resistance. As a result, finally, we may better understand how different social science disciplines uniquely appropriate the affordances of methodological traditions (Somekh, et al., 2005).

Beyond this framing, the use of qualitative methods for such a project presupposes a theoretical agenda that can adequately guide the collection and analysis of related data, and ensure the production of relevant, credible findings. To that end, I review below five theoretical traditions which serve this purpose. In sequence, they include: *the diffusion of innovation; the sociology of generations; speech, discourse, and interpretive community; community of practice;* and finally, *Bourdieu's theory of academic habitus*. I focus here on elaborating their distinctive premises and claims, their benefits and limitations for this project, and the research questions they yield.

4.1. The Diffusion of Innovation

As famously developed by communication scholar Everett Rogers (2003), our first theory focuses on the mediated relationship between producers and consumers of innovative knowledge, practice, and technology. Drawing on historical case-studies of Western-provided aid and development, this theory emphasizes how the decisions of societal members to adopt novel belief-systems and commodities, made in response to their producers' persuasive campaigns, hinge on several factors. These include relevant cultural norms and psychological predispositions (e.g., tolerance of uncertainty and risk); demonstrable affordances of the innovation (e.g., cost, simplicity, and effectiveness); exposure to informative and influential communication by

friends, family, and community members (e.g., serving as 'opinion leaders'); and subsequent attribution of the relative benefits and liabilities of adoption (e.g., opportunity cost). The theory typifies adopters and the phases of their decision processes, corresponding to a rising, S-shaped curve. It depicts growing stages of learning and participation, leading from awareness, interest, and evaluation, to trial and adoption. Its spectrum of adopter profiles ranges from adventuresome and highly-educated 'Innovators' to isolated, orthodox, and fearful 'Laggards.' The theory foregrounds the interdependence of mass media campaigns and interpersonal networks (e.g., in producing peer pressure), as well as the degree of similarity displayed between communicators, as factors influencing the rate and extent of ultimate adoption. The theory's enduring contribution has been to elaborate the contingency of communal learning, and the consequentiality of imitative behavior (Dearing, 2006).

For our purposes, the benefits of this theory include its depiction of community members confronting change, and collaboratively negotiating their responses. It emphasizes the communication networks through which they are informed and influenced in forming these responses. It indicates the role of communal norms, values, and beliefs in shaping members' perceptions of apparent risks and opportunities surrounding adoption. It emphasizes the role of key individuals and groups in alternately facilitating and impeding adoption, and proposes a threshold of adoption (i.e., critical mass) at which point the innovation may be deemed normalized.

Relevant limitations, however, include the theory's provenance in aid, development, and marketing contexts, which may limit its effectiveness for studying relatively-autonomous and highly-educated professionals deliberating potentially-optional and incremental change in their intellectual traditions. Its relatively objectivist ontology, further, may not support interpretivist analysis of the process by which academic communities *selectively construct multiple, competing*, and *contested* artifacts. Similarly, its modeling of adoption phases may prematurely promote a logic of necessity and inevitability, obscuring the complexity of partial and ambivalent accommodations. As well, the theory does not primarily model adoption conducted amid the simultaneity of changing contexts. Finally, its etic invocation of influential factors and decision-making types potentially conflicts with the emic commitment in qualitative research to empathic understanding and inductive explanation of participant experience.

Considering these benefits and limitations, research questions derived from this theory would include:

– What are the communication networks through which the members of a local academic community are informed and influenced concerning the potential adoption of qualitative research methods? What are the characteristic patterns of communication in those networks?

– How do the existing norms, values and beliefs of a local academic community shape its members' perceptions of qualitative methods *as* potential disciplinary innovation, and influence their construction of related artifacts?

– How is the adoption of qualitative research methods in an academic community related to its simultaneous adoption of other disciplinary innovations?

4.2. The Sociology of Generations

In his essay entitled "The Sociological Problem of Generations," Karl Mannheim (1952/2009) identified that eponymous gap in existing social theory, raising the issue of how the *temporal* situation of social groups may distinguish their contributions to societal development. Immediately, Mannheim noted that the coincidence of individuals' biographies with-

in a historical cohort does not necessitate their shared membership in a community. Alternately, generational members approach that status as they are organized by their shared location in social structure, which "limit[s] them to a specific range of potential experience … [and] self-expression" (pp. 168-169). Subsequently, while living actors at any given moment all share access to a basic fund of social experience, they are distinguished by their generational "approach" to selecting and utilizing "the accumulated cultural heritage" (p. 170). This archive is institutionalized anew by each generation, as its members' life course yields experiences which first require – and then confirm – their prioritization of available knowledge as tools for successful living.

This condition influences the processes of social change in that mortal humans are continuously entering and disappearing from communities, requiring their "stratified" generations to collaborate in reproducing cultural heritage. The stability of this transition is complicated by the "fresh contact" of new generations with inherited knowledge as a mediated abstraction. This condition encourages – but does not determine – these groups' development of "novel approaches" to engaging cultural tradition, arising from *their* immediate experience of evolving priorities, and from their actualization of potential group identities and interests. This ongoing emergence of "fresh selection," notes Mannheim, "facilitates reevaluation of our inventory and teaches us both to forget that which is no longer useful and to covet that which has yet to be won" (p. 173). The young, in other words, are not bound to conceptualize or utilize cultural knowledge according to the priorities arbitrarily developed by preceding generations. The potential for inter-generational conflict here is buffered as "intermediary" generations oriented to *both* tradition *and* innovation regulate the tempo of change.

This conceptualization, of course, does not presume intra-generational uniformity or consensus. As Pilcher (1994, p. 483) notes in her assessment of Mannheim's theory, "contemporaneous individuals are … internally stratified … by their geographical and cultural location; by their actual as opposed to potential participation in the social and intellectual currents of their time and place; and by their differing responses to a particular situation so that there may develop opposing generational 'units'." Nonetheless, for Mannheim, social actors may be considered generational members to the extent they share a unique, temporal experience of concrete historical problems, an agenda for responding to those problems based on their modification of inherited tradition, and a repertoire of practices for accomplishing that modification.

For our purposes, this theory beneficially clarifies how evolving response by academic communities to the globalization of qualitative research and their disciplines is not necessarily uniform or consistent. Instead, that response may be conceptualized and enacted *differently* – both at any given moment, and over time – by generational groups guided by distinctive premises and agendas. The theory also establishes how change is temporally configured in the forms of collaboration and competition conducted within and between generations, as their members alternately produce, inherit, and modify cultural tradition. Fortuitously, Mannheim's theory has been tentatively applied in at least one study of academic community, focused on stratified conceptions of professional identity and career opportunity among contemporary Australian sociologists (Marshall & Robinson, 2014).

As Pilcher (1994) notes, however, Mannheim's argument is largely theoretical, and does not provide empirical researchers with guidelines for actually studying this process. Appropriately for our proposed project, one solution involves examining the *discourse* of generational members as "the empirical location of knowledge" (p. 493). Additionally, Mannheim is vague concerning protocols for validating related research findings. He implies that re-

searchers must first, characterize a primary generational sensibility serving as a ground for subcultural variation, and second, reconcile that account with known features of that generation's social, political, and economic contexts.

Bearing these factors in mind, this theory yields the following research questions:

– How does the collective response of an academic community to the globalization of qualitative methods and its discipline configure the unique experiences and agendas of its overlapping generations?

– How do those generations interact, both synchronically and diachronically, to construct that response?

4.3. Speech/Discourse/Interpretive Community

Here, we are concerned with a group of related theories addressing the importance of *symbolic expression and interpretation* for maintaining a community's distinctive norms, values and beliefs, and for constituting the practices which certify communal standards for legitimate membership. We build here from Hymes' (1972) conception of "speech community" as a social group defined by distinctive practices of communication – including the use of rules guiding who may speak on a particular topic, when, where, with whom, and how. In this perspective, communal membership is demonstrated in members' shared knowledge and coordinated practice, as these are oriented to cultural categories for relevant speech situations, their component events and acts, and their accompanying styles of speaking.

Our second concept of "discourse community," subsequently, directs attention to the ways that shared norms, values, and beliefs structure the form and content of spoken and written communication, exchanged between the members of *voluntary, goal-oriented* social groups (Borg, 2003; Olsen, 1993). It focuses on the quality of communicative performances which lead audiences to deem them both appropriate and effective. It depicts community members as engaged in ongoing processes of expression, impression formation, and evaluation, which serve to maintain, negotiate, and transform related standards of communication competence.

"Interpretive community," finally, signals the role of *textual interpretation* in shaping communal identity (Fish, 1980; Lindlof, forthcoming). Here, readers and other kinds of audiences are networked through their shared modes of active sensemaking of media artifacts, and their preferences of for *performing* that sensemaking in their ongoing conduct of everyday life. In this perspective, texts do not possess innate authority; instead, they serve as raw, indeterminate, semiotic resources which may be creatively appropriated by social groups to serve their unique projects. Interpretive communities are sustained not only in their members' consistent performance of these strategies, but also through their response to divergent and deviant performances, and their ongoing debate over whether and how to change those strategies to accommodate evolving situations.

For our purposes, this collection of perspectives usefully focuses on academic-disciplines *as* communities that are *centrally* – perhaps even obsessively – organized around the phenomena of discursive / textual production and interpretation (Duff, 2010). It depicts ongoing opportunities and dilemmas created for professional socialization by members' learning about preferred strategies for interpreting canonical texts, and their assimilation of complex rules for designing and performing associated communication (e.g., stance-taking in relation to intellectual controversy). While related studies often focus on the trials of novice members (i.e., students), the perspective may also be cultivated to engage the ongoing socialization of *ma-*

ture professionals responding to textual waves of disciplinary and methodological globalization. It may also depict the dialogic, mutual influence exchanged between novices, veterans, and their intermediaries in academic communities, as those members orient to change, and potentially produce new forms of literacy and performance.

Research questions derived from this collection of theories thus include the following:

– What are the textual economies (e.g., works and networks) through which an academic-disciplinary community engages the globalization of qualitative research methods?

– How do traditional discursive and interpretive practices in an academic-disciplinary community (e.g., citation protocols and classroom pedagogy) change to accommodate the globalization of qualitative research methods?

4.4. Community of Practice

Eschewing the arid structuralism of network studies and the geographical determinism of the speech community concept, this theoretical tradition conceptualizes its eponymous groups as "people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavor" (Wenger, n.p.). It emphasizes the *passionate, unifying commitment* displayed among related group members to a distinctive interest or purpose (e.g., achieving aesthetic excellence and commercial success in fiction-writing); the contexts in which they regularly meet to cultivate affiliative and collaborative relationships (e.g., writing workshops); and finally, their ritualized performance of activities (e.g., reading and discussing each other's' work-in-progress) which enact these contexts.

Innovatively, the theory identifies how such communities *self-organize* – arising spontaneously in response to the recognition of unmet needs among individuals and groups with common interests, and who subsequently maintain their enterprise *informally*, independent of conventional organizational structures. It thus celebrates the unruly potential for group learning to exceed officially-designated moments and spaces, and enroll a growing range of actors and events. The theory is also concerned with how such groups move through stages of development characterized by distinctive forms of interaction (e.g., coalescing, dispersing, and commemorating), and also with the consequences of those activities for related institutions (e.g., stewardship of valuable competencies, cultivation of alternate identities, etc.). The potential for beneficial outcomes here inspires the theory's normative concern with how members and their sponsoring organizations may successfully nurture these kinds of groups (e.g., through internal leadership and official legitimation).

For our purposes, this tradition usefully theorizes the *process* through which academic professionals sharing an interest in methodological innovation may form a community, both within and outside traditional disciplinary structures, to cultivate understanding and mastery of related knowledge and practice (Becher & Parry, 2005). It suggests how such communities may serve as testing grounds for disciplinary adoption of 'new' research methods. It emphasizes the contingency of official sanction by larger institutions which is required for their widespread adoption. It thus implicates two scenes of interaction: that occurring *internally* among the members of *academic communities of practice*, as they develop their standards of membership, and also *externally*, as they represent the outcomes of their learning to disciplinary gatekeepers.

Nonetheless, by emphasizing the potential for diverse manifestations of academic communities of practice, this tradition alternately *affirms* and *subverts* the presumed stability and

influence of disciplines as learning contexts. Klein and Hirschhiem (2008), for example, argue that correspondence with academic community of practice is most likely to occur among developing disciplines. Additionally, our proposed use of this theory diverges from its traditional focus on *student*, *professional staff,* and *novice-faculty* learner groups (e.g., Jawitz, 2007; McDonald & Star, 2008; Otten, 2009). This is necessary to emphasize the full range of inter-generational configurations that may emerge to negotiate specific *disciplinary* transitions (Andrew, et al., 2009). Here, we draw support from the argument that professional disciplines endure as an overarching source of fundamental ideas which contextualize the situated development by academic communities of practical knowledge *as* a relevant, legitimate, and fruitful enterprise (Becher & Parry, 2005).

Finally, researchers have already used the theory to partly address the features of our chosen object. Churchman and Stehlik (2007), for example, have conceptualized alternative structures enabling the members of higher-educational institutions to mitigate the disruption of their traditional academic community by neo-liberal reforms. Additionally, in their attempt to map the communities constituting a "pedagogical culture" surrounding social science research methods, Wagner, et al. (2011) identify a genre of journal-based discussion devoted to "the way in which specific disciplines use an approach to teach research methods" (p. 78) – with many of these specifically debating the merits of *qualitative* methods.

Based on this discussion, related research questions include:

– How do local academic communities of practice form to engage with the globalization of qualitative research methods?

– How do their operations influence disciplinary development within local and regional institutions of higher-education?

4.5. Bourdieu's Theory of Academic Fields and Habitus

Pierre Bourdieu's *oeuvre* of theory and research is large and exceedingly complex, and his ideas evolved significantly over the course of his career. This is not the occasion for a detailed, comprehensive review. Generally, Bourdieu (1977) was concerned with the dynamics of power in society, and the subtle ways it is exchanged within and across contexts. Bourdieu argued that individuals simultaneously occupy multiple positions in social space – most significantly, in *fields* which configure institutional forces to produce distinctive, relatively autonomous forms of play, competition, and conflict. We are subsequently defined not only by our memberships in objective structures (e.g., of class), but by the distinctive forms of *capital* (e.g., valuable forms of property, membership, status, qualification, knowledge, and skill) we are able to develop and use in our conduct of relationships within fields.

Specifically, Bourdieu (1979/1984) focused on how class positions become "fractionated" between dominant and dominated groups, based upon the types and amounts of capital their members inherit or otherwise acquire, and the ways they are able to *convert* those types into resources supporting their aspirations. Members of cultural groups utilize these resources in their practices of everyday life, in order to gain strategic advantage, and to reconcile themselves to the pressing conditions of their existence. Crucially, Bourdieu argued that these processes manifest through our public performance of judgements of *taste* and *preference*. He argued that these judgments are not merely aesthetic: they are instead tied to social positions developed within fields, and their deployment constitutes an act of *positioning* – a bid for the attribution by others of status which distances us from undesirable socio-economic identities.

Bourdieu (1990) subsequently emphasized how social actors constitute symbolic orders through their intuitive, unconscious embodiment of social structure (i.e., as an acquired 'disposition' for enacting particular forms of thought, feeling, belief, and action). He used the term *habitus* to designate related systems of embodied knowledge and cultural standards for assessing the competence of practices, arguing that such schemes of classification are inextricably tied to mechanisms which reproduce forms of inequality. One of those mechanisms involves our cultivation of *symbolic capital* (Bourdieu, 1979/1984) – the ability to naturalize other forms of capital and their effects as-if universal, legitimate and inevitable. The imposition of these modes of perception by elites on dominated groups, Bourdieu argued (1990), constitutes *symbolic violence*. Fields can only exist, he concluded, as long as social actors possess the dispositions that are necessary to constitute them as orderly sites of meaningful relations. As a result, no field is completely stable. Change may come about as its members recognize incongruent and underdetermined relations between their motives, their available resources, and the outcomes of their practices.

We are of course interested here in Bourdieu's (1988) application of this theory to critique the *habitus* of the higher-educational *field*. Specifically, Bourdieu was concerned with the role of academic institutions in maintaining social inequality, the exacerbation of that inequality by neo-liberal globalization, and the potential for social science to subvert its hegemony (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1999). Bourdieu questioned how the ruling and intellectual classes manage to preserve their social privilege across generations, despite increasing evidence contradicting their claim that higher-educational systems produce equal opportunity and socio-economic mobility. Instead, his studies revealed that, in performing routine processes like admitting students, conferring degrees, and hiring, promoting, and fêting faculty members, the members of higher-educational institutions typically normalize systems of classification and standards of evaluation that correspond with logics of the dominant order.

In this process, Bourdieu closely examined the structure and culture of higher-educational institutions. He viewed the academic field as a site of fierce, ongoing struggle (albeit sublimated through bureaucratic procedure and intellectual abstraction), conducted among the members of various disciplinary and professional groups. This struggle manifested as their members sought to alternately defend and transform existing systems for controlling their internal operations, and the ethical and political consequences of those operations for larger society. Bourdieu subsequently differentiated categories of academic players, based upon their types and degrees of available power. He noted, for example, that elite universities typically favored academic disciplines possessing high degrees of "temporal power," based upon their fulfillment of state requirements for the production of essential professionals (e.g., lawyers, doctors and priests). Disciplines possessing low degrees of that power enjoyed an upside, however – relative institutional freedom to pursue their distinctive intellectual passions. Additionally, Bourdieu distinguished between disciplines displaying "scientific" power (i.e., intellectual prestige achieved through traditional scholarly activities of teaching and research) and more instrumental forms of "academic" power associated with the localized reproduction of institutional structure (e.g., the over-representation of particular faculty groups on university committees that award competitive research funding). Other relevant factors here include how the members of academic-disciplines differ in their socio-economic backgrounds, personal incomes, predominant attitudes toward social and political issues, and the cultural preferences and practices they display in their private lives (Huber, 1990).

Bourdieu's work thus guides researchers to investigate how the members of academic disciplines work to cultivate, translate, and promote their distinctive knowledge in order to secure their positions in local institutional hierarchies, and also to achieve external validation in the larger social order. Significantly, Bourdieu emphasized that this struggle is conducted over immediate and mundane issues (e.g., budgetary shortfalls, ethical lapses, etc.), but also more reflexively – as academic groups contest the logics (i.e., criteria) by which their relative forms of capital are alternately *differentiated, evaluated*, and *stratified*.

For our purposes, it is significant that Bourdieu viewed the social sciences as occupying a unique – if conflicted – position in academic fields: they simultaneously enjoy relative freedom to pursue their chosen lines of inquiry, while producing knowledge that critiques "the monopoly of legitimate thought and discourse" produced by higher-status disciplines such as law and business. Additionally, we note that Bourdieu recognized research methodology as a type of "scientific capital" within academic fields. He sarcastically condemned, for example, the fetishization of methodology displayed by some of his positivist colleagues in the international field of political sociology: "One realizes that these scholastic codifications of the rules of scientific practice are inseparable from the project of building a kind of intellectual papacy, replete with its international corps of vicars, regularly visited or gathered together *in concilium* and charged with the exercise of rigorous and constant control over common practice…" (Bourdieu, 1985/2007, p. 1252). As a result, the revision by a discipline of its existing methodology might be compared to innovation occurring in the cultural field of *sports*: "The appearance of a new sport or a new way of practicing an already established sport … causes a restructuring of the space of sporting practices and a more or less complete redefinition of the meaning attached to the various practices" (Bourdieu, 1978/1993, p. 350). Finally, Bourdieu was a passionate critic of textual economies which supported the globalization of academic disciplines – particularly their ability to reinforce the power of Anglo-American professionals to 'consecrate' the value derived by international researchers from adopting related knowledge and practice (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1999, p. 46).

Applying Bourdieu's theory to our proposed project comes with some caveats. For example, Bourdieu's analysis has been critiqued for the limited generalizability of its findings concerning a specific (i.e., French) cultural setting – including its increasingly outdated depiction of intellectual groups enjoying relative insulation from economic colonization (Marginson, 2008). Additionally, Bourdieu's did not typically conceptualize single disciplines as "fields" – preferring instead to model a large complex of forces which challenge the presumed independence and stability of those contexts. Indeed, significant intellectual work is required to cultivate the implications of Bourdieu's arguments for reflexive critique by social scientists of the overarching contingency of their entire disciplines, and not merely of their specific practices for collecting, analyzing, or representing data (Robbins, 2007). Ideally, such projects would follow Bourdieu's claim that "only a genuine history of the genesis of ideas about the social world, combined with an analysis of the social mechanisms of the international circulation of those ideas, could lead intellectuals … to a better mastery of those instruments with which they argue" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1999, pp. 51-52). Fortunately for our purposes, Naidoo (2004) argues that this goal is best served by methodological strategies emphasizing the specific *processes* by which academic capital is reproduced within and between local institutions, and also "the [distinctive] content and internal structuring of knowledge" (p. 468) within academic fields.

As a result, we may derive the following research questions from this tradition:

– How do the existing possession and use of capital among the members of an academic-disciplinary community shape their initial orientation to the potential value of qualitative research methods? How do *specialists* within that community utilize their capital to promote *particular forms and practices* of qualitative research methods?

– How is a uniquely *cultural* mode of demand for 'qualitative research methods' produced within academic disciplines? How do their members acquire a "taste" for its knowledge and practice? How are its perceived benefits articulated with existing schemes for classifying legitimately "academic" enterprise (Naidoo, 2004, p. 466)?

– How are particular academic fields *transformed* through the disciplinary development of qualitative research methods? How does this development create *new* forms of academic and scientific capital – "gains in distinction" (Bourdieu, 1978/1993, p. 346), which serve "position-taking" by academic groups in ongoing struggle conducted within and between disciplines? Put another way: How does the disciplinary adoption of qualitative methods achieve "distributional significance" among its constituents? (Bourdieu, 1978/1993, p. 352)?

5. Conclusion

This essay has explored changing contexts of professional-academic knowledge and practice in the contemporary era of neo-liberal globalization. It argues that, around the world, local communities of social scientists are currently engaged in negotiating the internationalization of both their disciplinary identities, and the potential resource of qualitative research methods. In this process, these communities operate with increased awareness of their unique, geopolitical situations as producers and consumers of methodological knowledge and practice. Our review has identified a current opportunity for empirical research of this phenomenon – one involving the reflexive use of qualitative research methods to study glocalized communities of qualitative researchers. The distinctive object of this nquiry involves the manifestation of those communities within overlapping contexts of national/regional culture, academic-disciplinary identity, and higher-educational institutionalization. The potential benefit of such inquiry includes enhanced knowledge of how local contingencies may influence the disciplinary appropriation of research methods to produce authentic communal artifacts.

To ensure its viability, this project requires diligent consideration of available theoretical resources. To that end, this essay has reviewed five available traditions, focusing on their key claims, their characteristic strengths and limitations, and the useful research questions they yield. While those traditions differ considerably, they also contribute to a composite picture of how such a project might work. Specifically, that agenda may be characterized by the following, distinctively qualitative commitments in gathering and interpreting evidence:

– Focus on specific communal meanings and practices – particularly those of symbolic expression and interpretation;

– Focus on the communal supervision of change – the concrete activities through which it is conceptualized and enacted by local-disciplinary members;

– Focus on the role of local, regional, national, and international textual economies in circulating both apparent exigencies, and resources for communal response;

– Focus on the role of existing communal norms, values, and beliefs in members' construction of qualitative research methods as a concern of local disciplinary identity;

– Focus on the diversity and interdependency of social groups configured in local disciplinary appropriation of global qualitative methods. Focus on their negotiation of competing conceptions of those methods;

– Focus on the role of actors' motives and interests in engaging global qualitative methods as a strategic resource for their ongoing conduct of institutional competition and conflict;

– Focus on the related ethics and politics of that interaction – for example, the ways in which communal adoption of qualitative research methods alternately opens and forecloses potential paths of disciplinary development; and finally,

– Focus on actors' display of independent agency and creative participation in related processes, rather than assuming the inevitable determination of related outcomes by abstract, external forces.

Hopefully, these commitments will enable researchers to successfully cultivate the value of this line of inquiry. Regarding limitations, most obviously, this current proposal does not address methodological questions concerning the design and conduct of related data collection and analysis, or the representation of subsequent findings. Additionally, we should not presume that the theories discussed here exhaust relevant possibilities for this project, or that discussion here of any particular theory has completely resolved its utility. For now, however, we must leave these questions and gaps to be addressed in separate statements, in reports of concrete studies, and through communal assessment of evolving results. In this process, the global community of qualitative research may continue to fashion and circulate images of itself, for itself, striving to increase their accuracy, completeness, and value.

References

1. Adam, F., & Podmenik, D. (2005, September). Qualitative research in a changing epistemic context. The case of a small social science community. In *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research* (Vol. 6, No. 3). http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/viewArticle/14

2. Alasuutari, P. (2004). The globalization of qualitative research. In C. Seale, G. Gobo, J. Gubrium, & D. Silverman (Eds.), *Qualitative research practice* (pp. 595-608). London: Sage.

3. Angermüller, J. (2005, September). "Qualitative" Methods of Social Research in France: Reconstructing the Actor, Deconstructing the Subject. In *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research* (Vol. 6, No. 3). http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/viewArticle/8

4. Becher, T., & Parry, S. (2005). The endurance of the disciplines. In I. Bliekle & M. Henkel (Eds.), *Governing knowledge* (pp. 133-144). Netherlands: Springer.

5. Becher, T., & Trowler, P. (2001). *Academic tribes and territories: Intellectual enquiry and the culture of disciplines*. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).

6. Borg, E. (2003). Discourse community. *ELT Journal, 57* (4), 398-400.

7. Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Vol. 16). Cambridge University Press.

8. Bourdieu, P. (1978/1993). How can one be a sports fan? In S. During (Ed.), *The cultural studies reader* (427-440). London: Routledge.

9. Bourdieu, P. (1979/1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. Harvard University Press.

10. Bourdieu, P. (1985/2007). The market of symbolic goods. In D. H. Richter, *The critical tradition: Classic texts and contemporary trends* (pp. 1231-1253). Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.

11. Bourdieu, P. (1988). *Homo academicus*. Stanford University Press.

12. Bourdieu, P. (1990). *The logic of practice*. Stanford University Press.

13. Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. (1999). On the cunning of imperialist reason.*Theory, Culture & Society*, *16*(1), 41-58.

14. Charmaz, K. (2014). Grounded theory in global perspective: Reviews by international researchers. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *20*(9), 1074-1084.

15. Churchman, D., & Stehlik, T. (2007). Transforming academic work: Communities of practice in Australian universities. *Journal of Organisational Transformation & Social Change*, *4*(3), 263-278.

16. Dearing, J. W. (2006). Communication as diffusion. In G. Shepherd, J. St. John, & T. Striphas (Eds.), *Communication as…: Perspectives on theory* (174-179). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

17. Duff, P. A. (2010). Language socialization into academic discourse communities. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, *30*, 169-192.

18. Eberle, T. S., & Elliker, F. (2005, September). A cartography of qualitative research in Switzerland. In *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research* (Vol. 6, No. 3). http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/viewArticle/13

19. Fish, S. E. (1980). *Is there a text in this class?: The authority of interpretive communities*. Harvard University Press.

20. Fiske, J. (1992). Cultural studies and the culture of everyday life. In L. Grossberg, C. Nelson, & P Treichler (Eds.), *Cultural Studies* (pp. 154-173). New York: Routledge.

21. Flick, U. (2014). Challenges for qualitative inquiry as a global endeavor: Introduction to the special issue. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *20*(9), 1059-1063.

22. Flick, U., & Röhnsch, G. (2014). Migrating diseases, triangulating approaches: Applying qualitative inquiry as a global endeavor. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *20*(9), 1096-1109.

23. Flick, U. (2015). *Qualitative Inquiry* – 2.0 at 20? Developments, trends, and challenges for the politics of research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *21* (7): 599-608.

24. Goodall, H. L. (1999). Casing the academy for community. *Communication Theory*, *9*(4), 465-494.

25. Henwood, K., & Lang, I. (2005, September). Qualitative Social Science in the UK: A Reflexive Commentary on the" State of the Art". In *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research* (Vol. 6, No. 3). http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/16/35

26. Hsiung, P. C. (2012). The globalization of qualitative research: Challenging Anglo-American domination and local hegemonic discourse. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 13* (1), Art. 21, http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs1201216.

27. Huber, L. (1990). Disciplinary cultures and social reproduction. *European Journal of Education*, *25*, 241-261.

28. Hymes, D. (1972). On communicative competence. *Sociolinguistics*, 3, 269-293.

29. Jawitz, J. (2007). New academics negotiating communities of practice: Learning to swim with the big fish. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *12*(2), 185-197.

30. Klein, H. K., & Hirschheim, R. (2008). The structure of the IS discipline reconsidered: Implications and reflections from a community of practice perspective. *Information and Organization*, *18*(4), 280-302.

31. Kleypas, K. L., & McDougall, J. I. (Eds.). (2011). *The American-style university at large: Transplants, outposts, and the globalization of higher education*. Lexington Books.

32. Knoblauch, H., Flick, U., & Maeder, C. (2005, October). The state of the art of qualitative research in Europe. In *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research* (Vol. 6, No. 3). www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/download/3/8

33. Konecki, K. T., Kacperczyk, A. M., & Marciniak, L. T. (2005, September). Polish Qualitative Sociology. The General Features and Development. In*Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research* (Vol. 6, No. 3). http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/12/25

34. Lamont, M., & Molnár, V. (2002). The study of boundaries in the social sciences. *Annual review of sociology*, *28*, 167-195.

35. Lindlof, T. R. (forthcoming). From interpretive community to produser community: A media audience paradigm shift. In R. A. Lind (Ed.), *Produsing Theory in a Digital World: The Intersection of Audiences and Production in Contemporary Theory, Vol. 2*. New York: Peter Lang.

36. Mannheim, K. (1952/2009). The sociological problem of generations. Available from *http://1989af-ter1989.exeter.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/01_The_Sociological_Problem.pdf*.

37. Marginson, S. (2008). Global field and global imagining: Bourdieu and worldwide higher education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *29*(3), 303-315.

38. Marshall, H., & Robinson, P. (2014). Generational differences in the early careers of teaching sociologists. *Journal of Sociology*, 1440783313514642.

39. McDonald, J., & Star, C. (2008). The challenges of building an academic community of practice: An Australian case study. In *Proceedings of the 31st HERDSA Annual Conference: Engaging Communities*. Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia.

40. Naidoo, R. (2004). Fields and institutional strategy: Bourdieu on the relationship between higher education, inequality and society. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *25*(4), 457-471.

41. Olsen, L. (1993). Research on discourse communities: An overview. In R. Spilka (Ed.), *Writing in the workplace: New research perspectives*, 181-195. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

42. Otten, M., Allwood, J., Aneas, M. A., Busch, D., Hoffman, D., & Schweisfurth, M. (2009). Qualitative research on intercultural communication. In *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research* (Vol. 10, No. 1). http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1248

43. Pilcher, J. (1994). Mannheim's sociology of generations: an undervalued legacy. *British Journal of Sociology*, *45* (3): 481-495.

44. Puebla, C., Figaredo, D., Faux, R., Kölbl, C., & Packer, M. (2006). Editorial: About qualitative research epistemologies and peripheries. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 7*(4), Art. 4, http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs060444

45. Robbins, D. (2007). Sociology as Reflexive Science: On Bourdieu's Project.*Theory, Culture & Society*, *24*(5), 77-98.

46. Rogers, E. M. 2003. *Diffusion of innovations* (5th Ed.). New York: Free Press.

47. Schubotz, D. (2005, September). Beyond the Orange and the Green. The diversification of the qualitative social research landscape in Northern Ireland. In *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research* (Vol. 6, No. 3). http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/viewArticle/11.

48. Somekh, B., Burman, E., Delamont, S., Meyer, J., Payne, M., & Thorpe, R. (2005). Research communities in the social sciences. In B. Somkekh & C. Lewin, *Research methods in the social sciences*, (1-13). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

49. Taylor, B., & Lindlof, T. (2013). Travelling methods: Tracing the globalization of qualitative communication research. *Romanian Journal of Communication and Public Relations*, *15*(3), 11-30.

50. Torrance, H. (2014). Qualitative research in the United Kingdom: Short-term problems, long-term issues. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *20*(9), 1110-1118.

51. Umpleby, S. A., Mekhonoshin, K., & Vladimirov, Z. (2009). A global university for a global village. *Cultural Studies- Critical Methodologies*, *9*(3), 446-461.

52. Valles, M. S., & Baer, A. (2005, September). Qualitative social research in Spain: Past, present, and future. A portrait. In *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research* (Vol. 6, No. 3). http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/viewArticle/15.

53. Wagner, C., Garner, M., & Kawulich, B. (2011). The state of the art of teaching research methods in the social sciences: Towards a pedagogical culture. *Studies in Higher Education*, *36*(1), 75-88.

54. Weil, S. (2005, September). Qualitative methods in Israel. In *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research* (Vol. 6, No. 3). http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/viewArticle/9.

55. Wenger, E. (no date). Communities of Practice: A Brief Introduction. Available at: http://wenger-trayner.com/introduction-to-communities-of-practice/.

Liz Yeomans*
Martina Topic**

Engagement and Empathy Discourses in Corporate Communication: The Case of "The Science of Engagement"

Abstract

This paper analyzes engagement and empathy discourse in a corporate document *The Science of Engagement* published online by a leading UK PR agency. The method used was a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of the document, and the findings reveal that the engagement discourse in this document positions the consumer as a passive, compulsive purchaser, while the empathy discourse largely frames the consumer as young and more empathic than previous generations, and thus an easily accessible target for brands to appeal to, using emotional communication on social media. The conclusion of the paper is that in contrast to conceptual understandings of engagement as two-way and empathy as other-oriented, the Agency relies on early understanding of engagement as a cognitive process based on instincts and persuasive communication, and not as a concept of social communication that will be dependent on cultural and social differences, individual approach, and trust. This practice goes against the already acknowledged view of engagement and empathy as more than just cognitive responses by consumers, and presents an outdated understanding of these increasingly debated concepts.

Keywords: engagement, empathy, public relations, discourse

1. Introduction

The concept of engagement seems to be inherent to all communication professions at the moment; however, it is not always clear whether scholars or practitioners understand the term properly (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009; Kang, 2014; Taylor & Kent, 2014; 2002). Yet, it has become almost a buzzword in communications, marketing and advertising. Engagement is usually seen as a two-way communication but the confusion arises as to whether communication on social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook can be considered as engagement or simply some sort of conversation and/or feedback (Adams & McCorkindale, 2013; Kang, 2014; Lovejoy et al, 2012), and whether engagement encompasses much more than just a conversation, i.e. research, understanding, spending time together, dialogue, etc. (Taylor & Kent, 2014) as well as an emotional connection (Johnston, 2014).

On the other hand, the turn to emotion in the academy, including cultural studies (e.g. Ahmed, 2007), organization studies (e.g. Bloch, 2012; Fineman, 2010; Putnam & Mumby, 1993) and the social sciences (e.g. Greco & Stenner, 2008; Turner & Stets, 2005) is widely acknowledged. An interest in emotion, and empathy in particular, is also reflected in popu-

* Leeds Beckett University, Leeds, United Kingdom; l.yeomans@leedsbeckett.ac.uk.
** Leeds Beckett University, Leeds, United Kingdom; M.Topic@leedsbeckett.ac.uk.

lar discourse: numerous book titles espouse empathy as a core skill to provide competitive advantage in a global economy (Pedwell, 2012) while *New Scientist* magazine reports on technological innovation in the form of "empathy apps" to help workers strengthen their online and offline relationships (Rutkin, 2015).

In the light of a turn to engagement and emotion in the academy, as well as in popular discourse, this paper examines engagement and empathy discourse in a corporate engagement document. Using critical discourse analysis (CDA), we analyze engagement and empathy discourse of *The Science of Engagement* document published online by one of UK's leading PR agencies, Weber Shandwick.

2. Public Relations and Engagement

Engagement is a concept largely used in public relations (PR), marketing and communications in general. Engagement is often seen as something that can bring "positive organizational or marketing outcomes such as increased employee voluntary behaviours, consumer advocacy, financial support, and loyalty" (Kang, 2014, p. 399). However, the fact the concept is often used does not mean it is used in the right context, nor that all who use the term understand it properly (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009; Kang, 2014; Taylor & Kent, 2014; 2002).

Nevertheless, some authors have argued that engagement is an ideograph that many use without explaining what they mean when they say engagement, with which this term becomes a rhetorical argument that closes any discussion rather than fostering it (Taylor & Kent, 2014). At first, the concept appeared in discussions on "importance of cognitive involvement for campaign related behavioural outcomes", and then again later on in "the context of community capacity building" (Johnston, 2014, p. 381). Recently, however, engagement became intertwined with Public Relations practice, as it is believed engagement presents the mantra for successful PR (Edelman 2008, cited from Johnston, 2014). Heath (2014) has argued that engagement is more than a two-way communication, but also an "appreciation for, and commitment to dialogue with and among stakeholders and organizations as community-building discourse and power resource co-management" (cited from Johnston, 2014, p. 382). Thus, engagement as a two-way communication has stepped in as a theory that has the power to replace the widely exploited Excellence theory that was a dominant paradigm in PR research for decades (Taylor & Kent, 2014).

So far, however, engagement has been used in five communication contexts, i.e. "social media engagement, employee engagement, CSR and engagement, civic engagement and social capital, and dialogic engagement" (Taylor & Kent, 2014, p. 385). In other words, many authors have explored the influence of social media such as Facebook, Twitter and others for fostering engagement and a two-way communication (Adams & McCorkindale, 2013; Kang, 2014; Lovejoy et al., 2012), engagement in the workplace through exploring staff satisfaction (Men, 2012), CSR policies as an engagement with publics (Devin & Lane, 2014; Golob & Bartlett, 2007; O'Byrne, 2014; Men & Tsai 2014; Tench et al., 2014), engagement and its role in building social capital (Taylor & Kent, 2014), and engagement as a dialogue (Kent & Taylor, 2002).

Engagement is closely related to caring for those stakeholders that PR practitioners communicate with, and in this way engagement has always been closely related to dialogue and a two-way communication rather than a one-way form of communication. However, in order

to have a dialogue it is important that two sides of the communication process trust each other. Taylor and Kent (2014) argue that interaction between companies and customers on social media networks is not an example of dialogue but an exchange of information and feedback because a true dialogue must encompass more than just any conversation, i.e. "dialogue is only possible when people spend time together interacting, understanding the rules of interaction, trusting the other person/people involved in an interaction, etc." (p. 390).

This furthermore means that organizations who want to truly enforce engagement as part of their policy should understand engagement as an "interaction with stakeholder/publics to begin only after secondary research has been conducted to understand an issue(s), key publics, cultural variables, etc."; "demonstration of positive regard for stakeholder/publics' input, experiences and needs"; "interaction with stakeholder/publics for relational purposes, outside of an immediate problem/issue"; "interaction with stakeholder/publics for their advice and counsel on issues of organizational/public/community concern", and "interaction that contributes to a fully functioning society whereby organizations and publics recognize their interdependence and act together for the good of the community" (Taylor & Kent, 2014, p. 391). On the other hand, according to Kang (2014, p. 403) the elements of engagement are trust, satisfaction, word of mouth and loyalty.

In sum, engagement is about building relationships with stakeholders. However this relationship needs to be a two-way communication grounded in research, trust and understanding and not just as a way of initiating conversations and feedback sessions. This also means that PR practitioners who seek establishing engagement with publics need to understand their publics and their needs and find a way to engage them, rather than just communicate with them via communication channels. This is because even though communication channels such as social media present some sort of conversation and communication, they still do not present a dialogue or engagement because engagement is more than just a conversation and communicating with publics via social media or other communication channels presents a type of one-way communication, or at least a one-way initiation of conversation but not engagement that primarily needs to be built on trust and understanding.

3. Empathy in Public Relations

Within the public relations literature, empathy is considered as important to achieving an organization's communications objectives. Here, empathy is discussed as a key principle, an interpersonal process, and a personal trait, attribute or competence. Empathy is a key principle in engaging publics, providing an "atmosphere of support and trust that must exist if dialogue is to succeed" (Kent & Taylor, 2002, p. 27) and building organization-public relationships (Bruning, Dials, & Shirka, 2008). Empathy is regarded an important part of an organization's response in crisis communication (Martinelli & Briggs, 1998; Seeger, 2006) and there are attempts to measure empathy as part of "personalizing" organization-publics relationships (e.g. Bruning, Dials, & Shirka, 2008, p. 29).

Windahl and Signitzer (1992, p. 21) explore empathy more conceptually. These authors define empathy as: "the capacity to understand how other people perceive and interpret reality […] without giving up one's own view of this reality". Empathy, along with the related concept of social perspective-taking, which is "the ability to understand the options available to others", are considered important interpersonal processes for the communication planner

who often has "no direct contact with the people with whom they communicate" (Windahl & Signitzer, 1992, pp. 21-22). These authors go on to hint at the problems of disparities, or dissimilarities, between sender and receiver in communication, citing social perspective-taking (Reardon, 1987) as particularly helpful in attempting to address these disparities.

Another concept closely related to empathy, is that of role-taking (Mead, 1934) which Culbertson (2009, p. 3) defines as the process of "psyching out", understanding, or predicting another's attitudes, behaviors, and points of view". Culbertson's definition of role-taking clearly points to a self-orientated (Coplan, 2011), even manipulative, version of empathy, which he argues is important for PR practitioners to focus on (i.e. identify, measure and control). Described in this way, role-taking, like social perspective-taking, is a form of empathy, but there is no suggestion that the actor lets go of the self and engages with the "other" through feeling (Calloway-Thomas, 2010) – rather, the practitioner retains full, cognitive control – standing back to observe the minutiae of their role-taking interactions with the other person and its effects.

Jin (2010), meanwhile, explicitly examined emotion in public relations leadership and employee communication. In contrast to the foregoing views of empathy as a key principle and an interpersonal process, Jin's study, identified empathy as a core emotional trait, attribute and communication competence of a PR leader. Empathy, according to Jin (2010, p.179), enables leaders to both assess employees' emotions and respond to them "with sensitivity and understanding". Empathy also enhances PR leaders' communication effectiveness with top management. Finally, a recent qualitative study identified empathy as among the top three personal attributes in four specific professional communication roles, further highlighting the perceived importance of empathy among public relations practitioners (Tench & Moreno, 2015).

While the importance of empathy as a personal attribute or competence for public relations practitioners has emerged from recent studies (i.e. Jin, 2010; Tench & Moreno, 2015), there is little scholarly attempt to conceptualize empathy in PR, nor is there interest in the broader, neoliberal discourse(s) of empathy and its implications for PR's relationships with the market/consumers, as discussed by political scholars such as Pedwell (2014; 2012) and Olsen (2013). Therefore it is necessary to provide broader frameworks from the social sciences for discussing empathy including "self" and "other" orientation (Calloway-Thomas, 2010; Coplan, 2011); "true" and "instrumental" empathy (Pedwell, 2012).

4. Method

For this research, we analyzed one major corporate document published online by one of the leading PR agencies in the UK, entitled *The Science of Engagement: An exploration into the true nature of engagement–what it means and what causes it. Grounded in science, not fiction* (Canvas 8/Weber Shandwick, 2014). In this document, which we classify as a "corporate positioning document" due to its persuasive content, the Agency offered views on what constitutes engagement and empathy, and how their work is built on engagement. In order to understand what the Agency is trying to achieve we conducted a critical discourse analysis of the document to determine what is the ideological/relational positioning of this organization and in which way they would like to shape society?

In our analysis we looked for the so-called "discursive topoi" as defined by Ruth Wodak (1999). Wodak defined "discursive topoi" as a "core argument that appears in the talk of the

actors" (Wodak 1999, cited from Topic & Vasiljevic, 2011, p. 4). In keeping with Wodak's emphasis on the dialectical relationship between discourses and specific fields of social action, we locate the discourses identified within the social and institutional contexts within which they are embedded (i.e. business/the market), therefore, the findings are analyzed against the theoretical debates on engagement and empathy in PR as well as in the broader literature on empathy.

In the analysis, we focused on the Principles of Engagement section, and on empathy as one of 19 elements of engagement. The reason for focusing on empathy only is that, apart from defining 10 principles of engagement, the Document also defines 19 elements of engagement by introducing terms such as "access", "aesthetics", "associations", "belonging", "desire", "empathy", "enhancement", "escape", "escape", "experience", "herd behaviour", "integrity", "intrigue", "involvement", "meaning", "newness", "pleasure", "respect", "shared values", and "social totems" (*The Science of Engagement*, Canvas 8/Weber Shandwick, 2014, pp. 10-12). Each of these elements could be a subject of special analysis since they were analyzed separately by scholars working in those fields, and this prevents detailed analysis of each element in this paper due to the limited space. However, the Document makes reference to the emotions and since empathy is a concept intertwined with emotions (Calloway-Thomas, 2010; Clark, 1997), we decided to conduct a discourse analysis of the 10 Principles of Engagement, and then an in-depth analysis of the Document understands of empathy.

5. Findings

"The study of the reproduction of power and dominance through discourse is a primary objective" as it is considered critical discourse analysis (van Dijk, 2008 p. 84). In this document the overarching discourse of science pervades, framing engagement through claims to specific expertise represented by a panel of three scholars (defined as "Methodology") contributing expert knowledge in anthropology, psychology, behavioral economics and neuroscience (*The Science of Engagement*, Canvas 8/Weber Shandwick, 2014, p. l5). The discourse of science encompasses the visual design of the document, from a genetic structural diagram on the front cover to the 19 elements of engagement (p. 9), which are represented through an emulation of the periodic tables in chemistry. The rhetorical power of what may be termed as popular scientific discourse could be said to legitimize the claims concerning the central topic of engagement.

6. The Engagement Discourses

We identified two main discourses of so-called engagement, i.e. the discourse of a passive consumer and the discourse of consumers as impulsive buyers. These two discourses form the core understanding of engagement as understood by *The Science of Engagement* Document, and these two discourses appear as core arguments why companies should "engage" in the way the Agency proposes.

6.1. The discourse of a passive consumer

The discourse of a passive consumer is strongly present in the Document through a variety of explanations the Agency offers about consumers. It appears that engagement is understood through profit orientation and business growth, or stimulated purchase, which corresponds with views of engagement in the early days when the concept was firstly introduced (Kang, 2014). In addition, engagement is understood through emotional connections, and this connection is particularly seen as present on social media:

> Engagement requires an emotional connection between a brand or organisation and an individual. This emotional connection leads to action, whether purchases, shares, Likes or Tweets, which are measured as participation. Because engagement is relative, its intensity can be measured by the strength of an individual's connection or participation. (*The Science of Engagement*, Canvas 8/Weber Shandwick, 2014, p. 6).

Treating consumers as passive recipients of messages makes this definition diametrically opposite to the definition of engagement by PR scholars working in the field who state that engagement is not an online conversation or online feedback sessions, but a continuous effort that comes from both sides and must be built on trust (Taylor & Kent, 2014). In addition, engagement defined like this assumes digital media as the most crucial mean for engagement (in any understanding), which goes directly opposite against the current media research showing that even though digital media has risen, this rise does not undermine the importance of the traditional media that remain strong in setting the agenda since the early days of communication research (Barnes et al., 2008; Breed, 1955; Dearing & Rogers, 1996; Hamilton, 2004; Kim et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2005; Ofcom, 2014; McCombs, 2004; 2014; Messner & Watson-Distaso, 2008; Manheim & Albritton, 1984; Roberts et al., 2002, Tan & Weaver, 2013; Weiss, 1974; Winter & Eyal, 1981).

In addition, research shows that even though millions of people use digital media, it is still only one part of the population that does so, usually the younger and better educated part, while other members of societies still remain loyal to traditional media (Figenschou et al, 2015; Ofcom, 2014; Salwen et al, 2005). Also, new digital media are quoting traditional media much more than the other way around, which means that it is still the traditional media that set the public agenda (Barnes et al., 2008; Breed, 1955; Dearing & Rogers, 1996; Hamilton, 2004; Kim et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2005; Ofcom, 2014; McCombs, 2004; 2014; Messner & Watson Distaso, 2008; Manheim & Albritton, 1984; Roberts et al., 2002, Tan & Weaver, 2013; Weiss, 1974; Winter & Eyal, 1981). Turning only to consumers who "engage" online actually means turning to a very specific part of the market, while ignoring others.

It appears that the Agency is trying to re-position itself in the PR market in line with the new trend of abandoning the Excellence theory of PR and turning towards engagement without actually understanding what it means to engage (Taylor & Kent, 2014; 2002; Kang, 2014; Bortree & Seltzer, 2009), and probably without even being aware of any PR theory or Media theory. The lack of understanding is particularly visible in additional elements of engagement where consumers are treated as objects that need to be persuaded to engage, i.e. again as passive recipients of communication messages. This is similar to the long abandoned hypodermic needle theory of communication effects of the mass media that treated audiences as patients and media messages as drugs (Haralambos & Holborn, 2000; McCombs, 2004; 2014) as well as psychological theories of persuasive communication where people were seen as easy targets for persuasion via media messages (Petty et al., 2009). For example, the doc-

ument states that, "engagement is a finite resource, not an infinite commodity" (*The Science of Engagement*, 2014, p. 6). In elaboration of this view, the document correctly states that people's attention is limited, which has been recognized in both PR and CSR work (Pederson, 2006). However, the document then continues by stating.

Brands must be realistic about what they demand from people and clear in communicating what people can expect in return. Different environments pose different challenges for engagement – whether at home or on-the-go, alone or with friends, at night or in the morning. Knowledge of these factors will help brands identify the most *relevant and opportune* moments for engagement (*The Science of Engagement*, Canvas 8/Weber Shandwick, 2014, p. 6, our emphasis).

Nevertheless, the companies only need to capture attention and they will build engagement:

Like the special offer, communications can capture our attention. Shout loud enough and everyone will look. Keep shouting and you may go unheard. Combining novel ways to capture attention with audience resonance builds engagements. Next time, you won't have to shout so loud (*The Science of Engagement*, Canvas 8/Weber Shandwick, 2014, p. 7).

6.2. Consumers as impulsive buyers

Another discourse is the view of consumers as people who can easily be stimulated for purchase based on their subconscious desires and needs for immediate rewards, which clearly leads to impulsive behavior. For example:

Our brains process all decisions as potential rewards driven by two systems: what we want and what we like. Our wanting system (System One) is driven by subconscious desires. These decisions we call our 'gut feelings'. They are mental short cuts–instinctive, impulsive and often related to immediate and primal rewards, such as a piece of chocolate or sex […] (*The Science of Engagement*, Canvas 8/Weber Shandwick, 2014, pp. 6-7).

Our brains have evolved to make snap decisions based on the anticipation of immediate reward. These decisions are not always conscious–consider System One thinking. Communications' call-to-action requires a direct connection to the reward. Rewards that are perceived as immediate deliver higher engagement (*The Science of Engagement*, Canvas 8/Weber Shandwick, 2014, p. 7).

The view of consumers as impulsive buyers is again in line with early research on engagement based on cognitive aspects of consumer behavior (Johnston, 2014) and not the new research taking in consideration engagement as a two-way process of communication built on trust (Taylor & Kent, 2014) or even CSR Communication (Tench et al., 2014).

The Science of Engagement Document also explains decisions to eat take away food and watch the TV as a need coming from System One entirely ignoring, for example, the current situation in the market where people work long hours on frustrating zero hour contracts, and once when they return home they are unable to do anything else including cooking (see Bowman, 2015 and the discussion in the comments section). However the Document states this:

People are often unaware of the reasons behind their decisions. When they pledge to get healthy, save money or learn more, they are demonstrating System Two engagement. Later, when they are tired and grab fast food before collapsing in front of the television, the primitive urge of System One takes over. People say to themselves 'I deserved it', and that 'tomorrow I'll restart the diet' (*The Science of Engagement*, Canvas 8/Weber Shandwick, 2014, pp. 6-7).

Nevertheless, passive consumers apparently can be stimulated to engage with brands by offering them rewards such as coupons and similar sales promotions:

Those seeking high engagement must offer a high reward. This can be a tangible reward, such as a voucher, but can also be a softer, more long-term reward, such a sense of belonging, self-actualisation or status. Softer rewards are adaptable, allowing audiences to serve their personal needs. This requires an understanding of the common ground between the individual's goals and the brand or organisation's goals (*The Science of Engagement*, Canvas 8/Weber Shandwick, 2014, p. 6).

This again goes against views of scholars working in the field of engagement who said that engagement must be a two-way communication built on trust and common goals, i.e. to work together for the betterment of the community, and engagement is built on elements such as primarily secondary research of culture and identifying the key publics, treating customers as equal in building joint policies and community programmes and accepting their advice, acting together, etc. (Taylor & Kent, 2014). But contrary to these views, *The Science of Engagement* document enforces a view according to which companies only have to decide to engage with customers, and this will be accomplished:

Engagement is not a light to be switched on or off within people. It shines all the time, varying in intensity from person to person, time to time, and context to context. Whether brands choose to acknowledge it or not matters less. How and when they choose to capitalise on the right types of engagement across various channels and topics is the real issue (*The Science of Engagement*, Canvas 8/Weber Shandwick, 2014, p. 6).

If we put aside the PR theories, the views expressed in this document are also going against all sociological theories emphasizing socialization and cultural values as crucial in our development as social beings, and this has an influence over our purchase behavior. Even though socialization is a process that lasts all life (Haralambos & Holborn, 2000) it still needs a major effort to build trust and engagement, and the approach cannot be uniform. It seems, however, that the Agency still relies on understanding of engagement as it was present in the early days when this term was introduced in debates on managing publics, i.e. engagement is apparently understood as a means but not as an end to use Kant's term, and as a way to achieve consumer advocacy and loyalty (cf. Kang, 2014). The way the agency proposes to do this is based on early understanding of engagement as a cognitive involvement that affects consumer behaviour (Johnston, 2014).

7. Empathy Discourse: Paradigm Shifts and Releasing Genies

Empathy is listed as one of the 19 elements of engagement in the Document. It is defined as:

The ability to relate to another person's situation, feelings or experience is a fundamental human trait. Empathy is a subconscious process that builds engagement. *In science*: understanding or observing something engages the same neural structures as actually doing it. *In action*: caring about a film or story's protagonist (*The Science of Engagement*, Canvas 8/Weber Shandwick, 2014, p. 10)

Empathy is further expanded upon on page 16 when one of the experts, an anthropologist, Dr Grant McCracken, offers an "anthropological perspective". The text follows:

Empathy is hard-wired into the human species. It is creating what anthropologists refer to as 'the death of difference'. Not very long ago, people saw groups that were different from their own as being slightly alarming or strange and threatening. You could persuade them without much difficulty to demonise those groups. Culture used to get in the way of people's natural mirroring process or empathy. Younger people are now thinking "Well, they're not that different. No-one's so different from me that I can't imagine what their lives are like; I can't participate in their lives from a distance. (*The Science of Engagement*, Canvas 8/Weber Shandwick, 2014, p. 16).

Empathy discourse in this text frames empathy in a number of ways. The first discourse is that it is a biological human trait, which also accords with the earlier definition in the "19 elements of engagement". The phrases "hard-wired", "natural mirroring process", "fundamental human trait" and "neural structures" reinforce the idea that empathy is something that people have or are naturally born with, thus fulfilling an individual, if rather limited, "container" view of emotion which arises from psycho-biological theories (Yeomans, 2013).

Very quickly, however, the discourse shifts: "it is creating […] the death of difference" suggests that empathy is being put to use in some new way–to break down cultural barriers between people. "Not very long ago" suggests that people were unable to use their natural empathy, but now, they are able to. But, if empathy "is creating […] the death of difference" *now*, why was it not doing this *before*, if indeed it is "hard-wired into the human species"? Further on in the text, the meaning becomes clearer as the word "people" is qualified by "younger". This raises the question of why "younger people" are more empathic than other generations who, we are told, allowed culture to "get in the way" and who could be persuaded to "demonise" others? The text continues:

Now the 'empathy genie' has been let out of the bottle, and now it's spreading everywhere. People are using it for new purposes, as a kind of experiential vehicle. They use it to imagine what it would be like to be a coffee grower in Guatemala. You can engage with people's empathy. Empathy means that people will follow you anywhere (*The Science of Engagement*, Canvas 8/Weber Shandwick, 2014, p. 16)

The reference to "genie" having been "let out of the bottle" is curious, suggesting that something bad has been allowed to happen that is irreversible: "it's spreading everywhere". And yet the suggested intention of the "genie" idiom is that something good has occurred as a result of the genie's release. The emphasis in this text is on the utility of empathy which is being deployed "for new purposes", by which we infer good purposes when we learn about how people use empathy to imagine the life of a "coffee grower in Guatemala" (e.g. evoking the image of Fairtrade). "You can engage with people's empathy" and "empathy means that people will follow you anywhere" suggests an instrumental orientation towards empathy, not forgetting that emotion here is ultimately used within engagement discourse as a resource to connect people to brands. From this text it is unclear why there has been a sudden release of empathy among human beings, and how this has happened, and is there truly evidence of it in the current world?

The next paragraph, which refers to identification, identity and media consumption, once again evokes the then ("we used to") and now discourse, implying that something new is occurring as a result of empathy, although again, we are not informed precisely why this is happening:

A wonderful English film critic recently said that in the old days we used to identify with the hero. Now, we identify with everybody on the screen – the hero, the villain, the bit players – we are voracious in this process of identification. So it's an incredibly powerful piece of engagement, to give people an opportunity

for identity exploration, for identity definition and identity manufacture (*The Science of Engagement*, Canvas 8/Weber Shandwick, 2014, p.16).

The above text switches the discourse of empathy as "hard-wired" to empathy framed as an interactional process. Indeed the reference to "this process of identification" in relating the individual engaging with a cultural product–a film–brings in a socio-cultural understanding of empathy as feeling that is produced through interactions between the self and other (Calloway-Thomas, 2010). However, this identification process is ultimately put to individual use as an identity project: "identity exploration", "identity definition" and "identity manufacture". Furthermore, the rhetorical uses of "we": "we identify with everybody on the screen" and "we are voracious in this process of identification" makes claim to a societal shift, not just a (younger) generational shift in media consumption.

I think people are increasingly engaged by the idea that they are accomplishing some social good; they're still individuals, acting in a way that suits them and benefits them, but from that stems social good. Younger consumers in particular want to break out of the prison of individualism. (*The Science of Engagement*, Canvas 8/Weber Shandwick, 2014, p. 16)

The final paragraph is a discourse of defence: empathy here is not merely deployed to help the individual to explore, define and produce, or re-make, their own identity–a self-identity project, but to serve a higher social purpose. Once again, "younger" people; this time "younger consumers" are marked out as the people of particular interest. Breaking out of "the prison of individualism" is a powerful metaphor used to demonstrate that young consumers are not self-centred and self-serving but reaching out to achieve wider social goals.

8. Conclusion

From our analysis, it is obvious that the Agency relies on early understanding of engagement as a cognitive behaviour based on instincts and persuasive communication, and not as a concept of social communication that will be dependent on cultural and social differences, individual approach, and trust. People are seen as impulsive and easily manipulated, and clients only need to find the right way to stimulate them and they will give a "like" on Facebook or re-tweet something, and that automatically means customers are engaged and purchasing. In practice, it is very likely that liking or re-tweeting means nothing of the above, or at least not with all customers and for all companies.

The Document as *The Science of Engagement* claims to be scientific but it ignores findings from social sciences and relies almost entirely on findings from cognitive science, albeit even these findings are not referenced properly but rely merely on the three people who claim to be the experts. There is no relying on communication, media, PR, CSR, or sociology and findings and views from these disciplines, which is why this document does not offer a social understanding of engagement.

In other words, the document seems *passé* because many companies are nowadays turning towards socially responsible and relevant campaigns that engage people in joint causes and foster values of equality, diversity, address social problems such as obesity, etc. Examples of these campaigns are Always' campaign #*Like a Girl* where the company tried to explain what it means to enforce stereotypes on young girls and how that affects growing up,

or Morrison's *Let's Grow Together* where the company addressed concerns about obesity and unhealthy living, to see that companies are trying to engage and build trust with customers. Whether they are successful or not is another question, however, the attempt is apparent. On the other hand, those companies that do not launch large campaigns to create dialogues have turned to fostering social values and addressing changed social circumstances to appeal to their target customers but again by refraining from persuasive advertising (e.g. Chanel's campaign *The One That I Want*, which approached single mothers who are trying to balance work and private lives).

In common with the contradictions and problems that we have already identified, in which the consumer is positioned as passive, the discourse of empathy is also problematic. Rather than discussed as a key principle in building (long-term) dialogue and trust (Kent & Taylor, 2002) and to engage publics (Bruning, Dials, & Shirker, 2008), the empathy discourse in the Document could be described as instrumental (Pedwell, 2012) and self-orientated (Coplan, 2011).

In *The Science of Engagement*, the utilization of an empathy science discourse frames empathy (through unsupported generalizations and claims) as a freely available human trait or attribute, and thus a resource that can be captured and deployed to connect people, particularly young consumers, to brands through appealing to both their individualistic and social concerns as part of identity formation. From this discourse, we have no indication as to why there is more empathy leading to the "death of difference" (Canvas 8/Weber Shandwick, 2014, p. 16); indeed current world events would suggest the opposite is occurring: an "empathy deficit" as coined by President Barack Obama (cf. Pedwell, 2012, p. 280). However, our earlier analysis of engagement discourse and social media may provide some explanation as to why younger people are perceived to be able to overcome cultural differences, through empathy, better than older generations. This is compelling to brands because young consumers as voracious social media users are positioned as a ready-made target for brands to appeal to, using emotionally-charged communication strategies.

It would seem, then, from *The Science of Engagement*, that empathy is another resource that can be tapped into and released, just like the empathy app (Rutkin, 2015), to suit market demands. We therefore concur with critics that the deployment of engagement and empathy discourses within a business context must be problematized and critiqued to reveal their true intentions.

References

1. Adams, A., & McCorkindale, T. (2013). Dialogue and transparency: A content analysis of how the 2012 presidential candidates used twitter. *Public Relations Review* 39, 357-359.
2. Ahmed, S. (2007). *The cultural politics of emotion*. London: Routledge.
3. Barnes, M.D., Hanson, C.L., Novilla, L.M.B., Meacham, A.T., & McIntyre, E. (2008). Analysis of media agenda setting during and after Hurricane Katrina: Implications for emergency preparedness, disaster response, and disaster policy. *American Journal of Public Health,* 98(4), 604-610.
4. Bloch, C. (2012). *Passion and paranoia. Emotions and the culture of emotion in academia.* Farnham, Surrey, UK: Ashgate.
5. Bortree, D.S., & Seltzer, T. (2009). Dialogic strategies and outcomes: An analysis of environmental advocacy groups' Facebook profiles. *Public Relations Review* 35(3), 317-319.

6. Bowman, A. (2015). Stories from staff on zero hour contracts. Retrieved from: http://www.totaljobs .com/insidejob/stories-from-staff-on-zero-hour-contracts/.

7. Breed, W. (1955). Newspaper opinion leaders and the process of standardization. *Journalism Quarterly, 32*, 277-284.

8. Bruning, S.D., Dials, M., & Shirker, A. (2008). Using dialogue to build organization public relationships, engage publics, and positively affect organizational outcomes. *Public Relations Review, (34),* 25-31.

9. Calloway-Thomas, C. (2010). *Empathy in the global world: An intercultural perspective.* Thousand Oaks: Sage.

10. Canvas8/Weber Shandwick (2014). The Science of Engagement. An exploration into the true nature of engagement–what it means and what causes it. Grounded in science, not fiction. Retrieved from: http://webershandwick.co.uk/what-we-do/.

11. Clark, C. (1997). *Misery and company: Sympathy in everyday life*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

12. Coplan, A. (2011). Will the real empathy please stand up? A case for a narrow conceptualization. *The Southern Journal of Philosophy, 49*, 40–65.

13. Dearing, J.W., & Rogers, E.M. (1996). *Agenda-setting, Vol. 6.* Thousand Oaks: SAGE.

14. Devin, B.L., & Lane, A.B. (2014). Communicating engagement in corporate social responsibility: A meta-level construal of engagement. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 26*, 436-454.

15. Van Dijk, T.A. (2008). *Discourse and power*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

16. Figenschou, T.U., Beyer, A., & Thorbjornsrud, K. (2015). The moral police: Agenda setting and framing effects of a new(s) concept of immigration. *Nordicom Review, 36*(1), 65-78.

17. Fineman, S. (2010). Emotion in organizations – a critical turn. In B. Sieben & A. Wettergren (Eds.), *Emotionalizing organizations and organizing emotions* (pp. 23-41). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

18. Golob, U., & Bartlett, J. L. (2007). Communicating about corporate social responsibility: A comparative study of CSR reporting in Australia and Slovenia. *Public Relations Review, 33*, 1-9.

19. Greco, M., & Stenner, P. (2008). Introduction: emotion and social science. In M. Greco & P. Stenner, (Eds.), *Emotions: A social science reader* (pp. 1-21). Oxford: Routledge.

20. Hamilton, J.T. (2004). *All the news that's fit to sell: How the market transforms information into news.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

21. Haralambos, M. & Holborn, M. (2000). *Sociology: Themes and perspectives*. London: Collins Educational.

22. Johnston, K.A. (2014). Public relations and engagement: Theoretical imperatives of a multidimensional concept. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 26*(5), 381-383.

23. Kang, M. (2014). Understanding public engagement: Conceptualizing and measuring its influence on supportive behavioural intentions. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 26*(5), 399-416.

24. Kent, M.L., & Taylor, M. (2002). Toward a dialogic theory of public relations. *Public Relations Review, 28*, 21-37.

25. Kim, J.Y., Kiousis, S., & Xiang, Z. (2015). Agenda building and agenda setting in business: Corporate reputation attributes. *Corporate Reputation Review, 18*(1), 25-36.

26. Lee, B., Lancendorfer, K.M., & Lee, K.J. (2005). Agenda-setting and the internet: The intermedia influence of internet bulletin boards on newspaper coverage of the 2000 general election in South Korea. *Asian Journal of Communication, 15*(1), 57-71.

27. Lovejoy, K., Walters, R.D., & Saxton, G.D. (2012). Engaging stakeholders through Twitter: How nonprofit organizations are getting more out of 140 characters or less. *Public Relations Review, 38*(2), 313-318.

28. Manheim, J.B. & Albritton, R.B. (1984). Changing national images: International public relations and media agenda setting. *The American Political Science Review, 78*(3), 641-657.

29. McCombs, M. (2014). *Setting the agenda: The mass media and public opinion* (2nd edition). Cambridge: Polity.

30. McCombs, M. (2004). *Setting the agenda: The mass media and public opinion.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

31. Men, K.R., & Tsai, W-H.S. (2014). Perceptual, attitudinal, and behavioral outcomes of organization-public engagement on corporate social networking sites. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 26*(5), 417-435.
32. Men, L.R. (2012). CEO credibility, perceived organizational reputation, and employee engagement. *Public Relations Review, 38*, 171-173.
33. Messner, M., & Watson-Distaso, M. (2008). The source cycle: How traditional media and weblogs use each other as sources. *Journalism Studies, 9*(3), 447-463.
34. Obama, B. (2006). *The audacity of hope: Thoughts on reclaiming the American dream.* Crown/Three Rivers Press.
35. O'Byrne, S., & Daymon, C. (2014). Irresponsible engagement and the citizen investor. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 26*(5), 455-473.
36. Ofcom (2014). *Adults's media use and attitudes report 2014.* Retrieved from: http://stakeholders .ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/media-literacy/adults-2014/2014_Adults_report.pdf.
37. Olson, G. (2013). The neoliberal state and the state of empathy. In *Empathy imperilled: Capitalism, culture and the brain* (pp. 43-51).Springer Briefs in Political Science 10.
38. Pedersen, E.R. (2006). Making corporate social responsibility (CSR) operable: How companies translate stakeholder dialogue into practice. *Business and Society Review, 111*(2), 137-163.
39. Pedwell. C. (2014). *Affective relations. The transnational politics of empathy*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
40. Pedwell, C. (2012). Economies of empathy: Obama, neoliberalism, and social justice. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space, 30*, 280-297.
41. Petty, R.E.,Wheeler, S.C., & Tormala, Z.L. (2009). Persuasion and attitude change. In T. Millon & M. J. Lerner, (Eds.), *Comprehensive handbook of psychology* (2nd edition). New York: John Wiley & Sons.
42. Putnam, L., & Mumby. D.K. (1993). Organizations, emotions and the myth of rationality. In S. Fineman (Ed.), *Emotion in organizations*. Sage: London.
43. Roberts, M., Wants, W., & Tzong-Horng, D. (2002). Agenda setting and issue salience online. *Communication Research, 29*(4), 452-465.
44. Rutkin, A. (2015). 'No empathy? Fake it'. *New Scientist*, 9 May, 20-21.
45. Salwen, M.E., Garrison, B.G., & Driscoll, P.D. (Eds.) (2005). *Online news and the Public.* Mahwah, NJ.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
46. Tan, Y., & Weaver, D.H. (2013). Agenda diversity and agenda setting from 1956 to 2004. *Journalism Studies, 14*(6), 773-789.
47. Taylor, M., & Kent, M.L. (2014). Dialogic engagement: Clarifying foundational concepts. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 26*(5), 384-398.
48. Tench, R., Sun, W., & Jones, B. (2014). Introduction: CSR Communication as an emerging field of study. In R. Tench, W. Sun, & B. Jones (Eds.). *Communicating corporate social responsibility: Perspectives and practice* (pp. 3-25). Howard House: Emerald.
49. Tench, R., & Moreno, A. (2015). Mapping communication management competencies for European practitioners. *Journal of Communication Management*, *19*(1), 39 – 61.
50. Topic, M., & Vasiljevic, S. (2011). *Work Package 7 – Identity construction programs of the state and the EU: case study phase III: Citizens and modernities: Between national and European paths in Croatia.* Project report submitted to the European Commission inside FP7 Identities and Modernities project (SSH-CT-2009-215949) in February, 2011.
51. Turner, J.H., & Stets, J.E. (2005). *The sociology of emotions*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
52. Weiss, C. (1974). What America's leaders read. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 38, 1-22.
53. Winter, J., & Eyal, C. (1981). Agenda setting for the civil rights issue. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 45*, 376-383.
54. Wodak, R. (1999). *The discursive construction of national identity*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
55. Yeomans, E. (2013). *Exploring professional relationships in public relations: An emotional labour perspective*. (Unpublished doctoral thesis). Leeds: Metropolitan University, Leeds, UK.

Ana Adi*

#publicrelations on Twitter: Pushers, Talkers, Influencers on Spamming PR and Job Hunting

Abstract

A space generally associated with marketers and breaking news (Hobsbawn, 2009 cited in Evans, Twomey & Talan, 2011), Twitter has also become a space debate, community building and legitimization for companies and social movements alike. The academic literature has seen a rise in interest in the micro-blogging platform. For instance, Adi and Moloney (2012) assess the strategic uses of Twitter by protest groups, Adi, Erickson and Lilleker (2014) reflect on the networks and use pattern of the same platform by politicians, namely UK Labor party representatives in the House of Lords while Adi and Grigore (2015) analyze the strategic uses of social media by corporations. Bajpai and Jaiswal (2011) on the other hand propose a framework for analyzing collective action events on Twitter and so do the creators behind visual analysis platforms like NodeXL, Gephi, Linkurious and Socioviz. Public Relations research too has provided several reflections and analyses of Twitter. Verhoeven et al (2012) and Sweetsner and Kelleher discuss how practitioners use social media; Lovejoy, Waters and Saxton evaluate how NGO are engaging stakeholders though the new medium, while Saffer, Sommerfeldt and Taylor (2013) suggest that Twitter interactivity influences the quality of organization–public relationships. With questions about the professionalization of Public Relations as well as about the portrayals and perceptions of the profession continuing to intrigue researchers, it is surprising that only Xifra and Grau (2010) looked into the type of information shared in tweets about public relations. Using the Twitter data collection and analysis option from Socioviz this paper provides an exploratory account of the #publicrelations on Twitter. Using the visualizations provided by the platform and automated data analysis to gain insight into over 10,000 tweets published during June 15-24 and July 15-24, this paper qualitatively assesses the emerging themes about public relations focusing on association of hashtags and type of messages shared and identifies the most active and most influential users within the issue topic. The paper reveals that the #publicrelations is often associated with #jobs or is hijacked and associated with tags such as #gossip or #entertainment. The paper also shows that conversation in the #publicrelations issue network is limited and that the hashtag only partially includes content relevant to the practice. In doing so the paper raises important questions about the nature of dialogue and symmetry on social media and their assessment and suggests that further research should explore twitter chats as well as continue to apply similar data collection methods as used for the study.

Keywords: Social media, Twitter, network analysis, exploratory study, content analysis

1. Twitter fascination

A space generally associated with marketers and breaking news, Twitter has also become a space for community building and legitimization for companies and social movements alike. Currently the 12th most popular social media platform worldwide (Statista.com, 2014), Twitter appeals to a younger, professional and college-educated demographic, the service record-

* Quadriga University of Applied Sciences, Berlin, Germany; ana.adi@quadriga.eu.

ing according to Duggan et al (2014) "significant increases among a number of demographic groups: men, whites, those ages 65 and older, those who live in households with an annual household income of $50,000 or more, college graduates, and urbanite". The academic literature too has seen a rise in interest in the micro-blogging platform with political communication, activist communication, public relations, marketing, and journalism researchers exploring its uses, influences and effects.

For instance, Adi (2015) and Adi and Moloney (2012) assess the strategic uses of Twitter by Occupy groups concluding that social movements need, beyond clear and focused messages and robust strategic communication planning and execution, both scale and a supportive communities. A similar interest in Occupy's use of social media is also shared by Juris (2012) whose article focuses on the logics of aggregation. Speaking of social movements, Giroux (2014) examines ISIS and its online "spectacle of terrorism". In discussing the wider use of social media as a place where a new conception of politics is formed, Giroux also touches upon Twitter's role in enhacing the visibility and gaining support for ISIS and the organization of "personal and public structures of attention". A framework for analyzing collective action events on Twitter is proposed by Bajpai and Jaiswal (2011) and so do the creators behind visual analysis platforms like NodeXL, Gephi, Linkurious and Socioviz.

Still on the subject of political communication, Lilleker et al. (2015) indicate that political parties take the online environment seriously as a campaign tool, adopting social and digital media platforms to gain more followers and increase visibility and support for their campaigns (Jackson & Lilleker, 2009). In the context of the permanent campaign however, and the politicians' need and ability to connect with their constituents outside and in between campaign times, the analysis of the network structures and social media use of UK Labor party representatives in the House of Lords carried out by Adi, Erickson and Lilleker (2014) shows the big disconnect between the well maintained and trained campaign machine and the mixed professional and personal communication of politicians.

Public relations, CSR and marketing communications and their social media applications and implications are also of interest for researchers. In their discussion about how practitioners use social media, Verhoeven et al. (2012) and Sweetsner and Kelleher (2011) argue that digital communication and social media are perceived to have grown in importance in the media mix, especially in the view of European organizations. This is also echoed by Evans, Twomey and Talan (2011) and Distaso, McCorkindale and Wright (2011). More specifically, Evans et al.'s interviews with executive-level public relations professionals reveal that executives believe that Twitter offers a unique form of communication and a valuable asset to a campaign social media strategy.

Distaso, McCorkindale and Wright's interviewees on the other hand also acknowledge the value of the insights accessed through direct or indirect social media participation. Although perceived as important, Distaso, McCorkindale and Wright (2011) interviewees also point out to numerous challenges that social media poses to communicators including lack of control of information, criticism, false information, potentially embarrassing employee behavior. Taking into account that only about a third of the organizations studied by Verhoeven et al. (2012) have social media policies in place, this potentially alludes to a wider discrepancy between the perceived importance of social media channels and the skills and training opportunities practitioners have, which in practice is seen through the either uncoordinated and adhoc approaches to social media by some organizations, or through the continuation of one-way communications (Adi & Grigore, 2015). In the case of Pfizer, although the Twitter channel

is brand consistent and the messages shares are integrated within the company's general values and propositions, the channel is a true mouth-piece of the organization, an un-engaging and self-centered presence.

Many NGOs are not doing better than corporations either. Perceived to be more flexible and with enhanced access to agile teams, the studies undertaken by Waters and Jamal (2011) and Lovejoy, Waters and Saxton (2012) evaluating how NGOs are engaging stakeholders though the new medium provide insights that contradict these assumptions and expectations. While using different models and methodologies, their conclusions are very similar: instead of using Twitter to maximize stakeholder engagement, the nonprofits "continue to use social media as a one-way communication channel, as less than 20% of their total tweets demonstrate conversations and roughly 16% demonstrate indirect connections to specific users" (Lovejoy, Waters & Saxton, 2012, p.1). An exception is perhaps the American Red Cross; the study carried out by Briones et al. (2011) based on interviews with forty individuals working for the NGO suggest that the organization is practicing public relations through social media achieving two-way dialogue with younger constituents, the media and the wider community using channels like Twitter and Facebook.

Twitter is an appealing channel for communicators (whether political, from NGOs or elsewhere) yet differences between its perceived importance, its adoption and its effective use being noted. Twitter however is also a space for debate and discussion, with both opposing and supporting voices converging on the platform. Jürgens' (2012) work focused on social media communities and their integration of digital methods shows that users leave digital traces which enable other users and researchers alike to detect community dynamics. This suggests that the content users post can record the rise and fall of topics of interest, the tags used enabling the access to these records.

Perhaps the most insightful in this respect is Twitter's hashtagging. Defined by Chang (2010) as a "bottom-up user proposed tagging convention" that "embodies user participation in the process of hashtag innovation, especially as it pertains to information organization tasks" (p.1), Twitter hashtags enable users to link as well as tap into broader yet theme or topic-focused conversations. By joining either live conversations such as Twitter chats or contributing to issue focused hashtags, the practice enables the emergence and formation of issue publics (Highfield, 2012). Cook et al. (2013) argue that Twitter chats, "periodic, synchronized group conversations focused on specific topics" (p. 1) are an unintended use of the platform. Their analysis of 1.4K group chats involving 2.3 million users indicates „the grassroots nature of these organized groups demarcates a subset of Twitter containing passionate users producing seemingly higher quality tweets" (p. 10). Budak and Agrawal (2013) start from the „five major factors that affect the participation of a person in a group: individual initiative, group characteristics, perceived receptivity, linguistic affinity, and geographic proximity" (p. 165). In looking at thirty Twitter educational chats recorded over a two year period, the authors reveal that Twitter chats share similarities with traditional groups, social inclusion and linguisting similarity being among the factors that influence most their dynamics. While also confirming the community building value of these chats, the authors do show however that for educational chats it is their informational support that is more important.

Current research has explored issue publics formed around specific events and their discourses and the emotions they convey. Equally, the little research carried around Twitter hashtag/issue chats, as shown above, focused either on the mechanics of the information transmission process or on the factors influencing diffusion of information or group cohesion.

There is a need therefore to focus more into hashtag discourses, and in particular on professional hashtag discourses as a means of understanding the issues of concern of professionals as well as to identify their influencers and contributors.

2. Perceptions of public relations

Public relations have a contested history and, arguably, a continuously contested image, its function within organizations as well as role in society being often discussed by professionals and academics alike. Authors like Rampton and Stauber (1995) and Miller and Dinan (2008) focus on the negative aspects of the practice, both current and historical, criticizing PR's association and representation of big corporations accusing it of spin, lack of ethics, propaganda and manipulation. Public relations professionals are therefore propagandists, spin doctors, liars and manipulators. Coombs and Holladay (2007) on the other hand, invite a more distant analysis of the profession that considers aspects of power and societal impact. In their view, PR practitioners are at the confluence of business and stakeholder needs with a difficult task of enabling dialogue and collaboration between the two. A similar approach is also taken by Solis and Breakenridge (2009) who, in speaking about the role social media play in changing current PR practices, launch a call for a more strategic, structured, critical and realistic approach to what PR practitioners can achieve. These, from a theoretical perspective are further revisited, in Grunig and Grunigs's (2008) excellence theory, Kent and Taylor's (2002) dialogical critique of public relations or Zerfass' (2008) integrated communication and communication controlling perspectives.

Public relations is also represented in popular culture and media, a wide range of representations including those referred to by Miller & Dinan (2008) as well as by Coombs and Holladay (2007) being found. Some of these images are for instance echoed on the big screen; movies like "Thank You for Smoking", "Wag the dog" and "Phone booth" portraying in particular the generally negative stereotypes associated with the profession. This is also confirmed by Saltzmar (2011) and Kinsky (2011) who focus in their studies on portrayals of PR practitioners in television and movies. Their findings indicate that the portrayals of public relations – both practitioners and the practice – are by far more negative in movies than on the small screen. Similar negative stereotypes are also echoed by journalists, Spicer's (2009) analysis of media reports containing the term public relations "revealing seven different connotative themes or definitions: distraction, disaster, challenge, hype, merely, war, and schmooze. In over 80% of the cases, the journalist used the terms in a negatively embedded context".

As a response to these critiques, Grunig (2000) suggests that for PR to gain recognition as a profession it needs professional norms and an intellectual tradition that would accompany an established body of knowledge, this besides a set of professional values. Some of these norms are currently inscribed in codes of ethics or codes of conduct (CIPR; IPRA, 2011; PRSA) and their impact is often discussed by academics and professionals alike (Farrell, Cobbin and Farrell, 2002; Fitzpatrick, 2002; Long & Driscoll, 2008; Wood, 2000). The question however is whether these norms, principles and values are an integral part of the practitioners' current and general discussions about the profession and not only codified in normative documents. Research like the one undertaken by Xifra and Grau (2010) would suggest that this is the case, however only to a smaller extent. Their content analysis of 653 tweets comprising keywords like "public relations" and "pr" reveals that most almost a third of the tweet collected include

announcements, reviews, agenda and retweets followed by an attempted dialogue with the community. Tweets were also labor introspective, offering general information on the public relations sector, academic introspective, practice, research and press releases, which one could argue provide a reflection of professional values, processes and functions. They conclude that Twitter is a "medium of more professional use than a platform which favors the theoretical development of the field" (…) the platform being " a good tool for disseminating information about experiences, case studies, ideas and theoretical approaches" (p. 173).

There is therefore a need to further explore Twitter conversations and messages about the profession. This study, continuing on the theme explored by Xifra and Grau (2010), will assess the discourses, influencers and conversation drivers around the #publicrelations hashtag.

3. Methodology

3.1. Methodological approach and data collection

This paper uses an exploratory approach combining automated online data collection with qualitative observation. Qualifying into the wider digital humanities tradition, this paper uses two free, online platforms (Socioviz and Foller.me) to collect data and gain some insight into its meaning through the visualizations or automated analyses provided. Socioviz[1] enables data collection of up to 5,000 tweets per search and automatic reporting on the top ten most frequent hashtags, the top ten most active accounts and the top ten most influential accounts (understood as account re-tweeted the most often) while Foller.me provides an activity summary of any public Twitter account based on its most recent 100 tweets. The Foller.me analysis includes the accounts mentioned most often, the most used hashtags, the links and domains shared the most together with information on the joining data, time zone, number of followers and following, followers ratio for the account. Foller.me also provides a summary of the accounts activity reporting the number of tweets with mentions, replies, hashtags, links and media within the dataset of 100 tweets collected.

While Foller.me has been used in research before and most recently by Adi and Moloney (2012), and Adi (2015) in their analyses of Occupy and by Adi and Grigore (2015) in their analysis of Pfizer's use of social media in Europe, Socioviz currently unknown to social sciences and communication research, the only one paper so far using platform and discussing its benefits being published in computing journal (Anoop, Asharaf, & Alessandro, 2015).

Unlike Xifra and Grau (2010) who aggregated their Twitter data by collecting four waves of 100 tweets that included "public relations" or "PR" as keywords at four different times and clustered them around emerging themes, this paper relies on a much bigger corpus of data: 10,000 tweets that included the #publicrelations hashtag (the platform scrapes a maximum of 5,000 tweets on each search) in two equivalent weeks of two consecutive months (June 15-24 and July 15-24, 2015).

3.2. Data analysis

Besides the automatic data reporting (of top hashtags, most active users and most influential users), Socioviz also includes two visualization options of the data scraped, one enabling for the accounts network and the other for the hashtags network. This enables the observation of network dynamics and the connections either at user or at concept level. These visu-

alizations together with the tables automatically generated by the platform were used as entry points back into the data. This means that the database of tweets was then searched for the top hashtags in order to extract the tweets containing them and observe their format, topic shared and, where relevant and necessary, the tone. The tables featuring the most active and most influential accounts too were used as entry points, each account in the list being then submitted to an additional Foller.me check on August 5, 2015, enabling thus the observation of its communication, interaction and sharing patterns.

As the corpus of data analyzed is small compared to the entire corpus of data collected, this paper is exploratory in nature, focused as much on testing the methodology of data collection and analysis as on the identification of emerging patterns (of conversation, of discourse, of themes).

4. Spamming PR & Job hunting

The hashtags used the most in conjunction with #public relations are #pr, #socialmedia. Similar interest, concerns and discussions about social media are also reflected by many practitioner surveys including the European Communication Monitor (Zerfass et al, 2015), The Latin American Communication Monitor (Moreno et al, 2015) or CIPR's State of the Profession (2015) as well as Solis and Breakenridge (2012). This also confirms Jürgen's (2012) findings according to which hashtags record and trace the rise and fall of current topic/issue interests within a network.

When #pr and #publicrelations are used in tandem, the tweets generally include tips, links and best practice questions and examples. This is in line with Xifra and Grau's (2010) findings about public relations conversations on Twitter being labor introspective, offering general information on the public relations sector and practice. Additionally, the balanced mixture between RTs and tweets comprising the two hashtags would suggest that the messages shared are consumed and considered valuable to share, however very few, if any at all, lead to conversations.

RT @theallyest: Malaysia Airlines: Hardest #PR Job Jackie Crossman Has Ever Done http://t.co/e8IrW w3nXz #PublicRelations (@tanvin194, June 24, 2015)

Media Pitching Do and Dont's http://t.co/HvrLN3xBGc #PR #publicrelations (@emilyahills, June 24, 2015)

How to measure the value and importance of #PR for your business #PublicRelations @EverythingPR http://t.co/Pr1V6ElfUh (@EverythingPR, June 23, 2015)

RT @AneelaRosePR: How to write 'tweetable' press release headlines – http://t.co/je17bvLZLC #PR #PublicRelations http://t.co/kPSI7Z7PeF (@getrefined, July 24, 2015)

Some tweets containing the #pr and #publicrelations tags also include #jobs. In fact, job related hashtags (#jobs, #job, #getalljobs) represent circa 15% of the tweets collected, their position however being different during the two data collection periods: #jobs for instance occupies the fourth position in the top 10 of most used hashtags in the tweets collected in June but is only on the sixth position in July. Most of the jobs advertised are based in North America ranging from advisory to management roles and from promotions to corporate communications. From this perspective, Twitter is used as a recruitment tool by organizations of any kind, something that Xifra and Grau's (2010) study did not feature. Although no conversa-

tions or Twitter-based interviews were found in the dataset, it could be said that communicators find the platform to be supportive for recruitment as well as a good monitoring tool for the interested candidates. Perhaps what is the most interesting here is the number and diversity of the positions posted as well as their geographical spread. While this confirms that the #publicrelations is a mostly English and North-American topic hashtag, the abundance of tweets featuring job openings suggesting the existence of a thirving, competitive, dynamic and perhaps volatile market. This also indicates a stark difference between Grunig's (2008) normative model of symmetrical communication, and the industry focus and continued preference for positions better fitting the publicity and public information models; positions like events manager and promotions are among the most frequent. A higher frequency of such positions being advertised could also potentially lead to the perpetuation of the professional misrepresentations of the PR profession and PR practitioners discussed earlier (Miller & Dinan, 2008; Rampton & Stauber, 1995; Spicer, 2009).

Other hashtags associated with public relations include #marketing, #webdesign, #model, #promotion, #gossip (place nine in both June and July) and #publicity (place four in July). As with the job opening tweets these too include potentially misleading associations. The association with #promotion and #publicity reduces the PR practice to sensationalism, hype and schmoozing, something also encountered in Spicer's (2009) journalistic portrayals to PR.

The association of marketing and public relations, on the other hand, while recognizing the shared tools and tactics, would also posit PR in the 4P, including it into the wider marketing and bottom-line focused practices and thus diminishing its contribution to promotion.

For instance, marketing and public relations are used in the same tweets of marketing agencies promoting their services or in messages generally about content marketing or digital marketing. These messages are unidirectional and promotional. By including multiple hashtags often from different yet related disciplines these messages present an attempt to reach out to audiences that are as wide as possible. However, by doing so, these messages are borderline-spam and impersonal. Similar characteristics are also displayed by tweets including #promotion or #publicity.

3 Important Benefits of Digital Public Relations (Infographic) http://t.co/ehT24WJdKf #PublicRelations #PR #DigitalMarketing #SEO (@Buzz_Nitro, June 23, 2015).

Figure 1. Top # associated with #publicrelations during June 15-24, 2015. Collected via Socioviz.

Figure 2. Top # associated with #publicrelations during July 15-24, 2015. Collected via Socioviz.

Follow my new account for #digitalmarketing #technology #publicrelations and #internationaltidbits https://t.co/l7n0uhQyY1 (@blonde_rays, July 23, 2015)

Want upward success? Call us 631.761.9223 #BluChipMarketing #socialmedia #success #publicrelations #media #advertising http://t.co/gXBr2N7spw (@BluChipMrktng, July 23, 2015)

#Promotion #Growthhacking #Marketing #Seo #PublicRelations #Worlwide #Exposure #Music #Super #Viral (@RealRizzReed, July 22, 2015)

Contact Us @MeekMill We Can Strategize This Publicity Stunt Properly !! :) #PR #PUBLICRELA-TIONS #DAMAGECONTROL #MEEKMILL (@MidoriStarMedia, July 22, 2015)

With regards to #gossip, the messages are highly consistent and with high frequency: 4-6 posts with the tag being recorded almost every hour. They always include the same three hashtags (#socialmedia #publicrelations #gossip) and share the same anatomy: the beginning of a sentence followed by a link which connects, in fact, to an automated post. They are all focused on celebrities and entertainment, with the Kardashian family competing in frequency of mentions with Start Wars in the June dataset. In July, other favorites emerge, many related to sports, mirroring the trends and interests and calendars of celebrity and entertainment media.

Kim Kardashian – Meet … http://t.co/UnjHJ2R6NF #socialmedia #publicrelations #gossip | https://t.co/4LgokrTL4i http://t.co/rRCjpAAAWN (@CSchwarz17, June 24, 2015)

Magic Johnson's Mega-Ya… http://t.co/Z284VcJDs5 #socialmedia #publicrelations #gossip | https://t.co/4LgokrTL4i http://t.co/wr29kMQ0Lh (@CSchwarz17, July 23, 2015)

KKK Rally Gets Trolled … http://t.co/Ex5xshrngE #socialmedia #publicrelations #gossip | https://t.co/4LgokrTL4i http://t.co/i0b3FebF8p (@CSchwarz17, July 21, 2015)

All messages are generated by a single account, @CSchwarz17, an account with no bio and no further details except for a black and white photograph of its owner hiding behind sunglasses. Behind the anonymity of an RSS feed automated account, lies the second most prolific contributor to the #publicrelations twitter chatter.

Out of the content shared around the #publicrelations hashtag, less than a third[2] is related to information exchange about the profession; if the issue tag is not hijacked or infiltrated by other user groups that are not related to the profession, the other messages most frequently shared are about job openings. Structure-wise, the messages display all the types of communications that Twitter enables – from simple, one-way messages, to RTs, mentions and replies. In the entire data ecosystem however, the conversations are the least frequent. We reach a paradox: an environment that is praised for its connectivity and ability to enhance dialogue and symmetry displays as its most common practice communication that is one-way (one-to-many), self-focused, shouting-in-the-dark type.

5. Pushers, spammers, talkers, influentials

While identification of topics and themes related to #publicrelations reveals potential challenges to the portrayal of the profession, all these messages have sources that can be identified. Socioviz in this case makes a difference between influentials (accounts receive the highest numbers of mentions and/or RTs) and active accounts, the latter having a higher frequency of postings. This difference is also seen in network analysis, a concept on which Socioviz is based, where hubs are vertices (or nodes) that bring higher connectivity to the network. Clearly, the in the case of issue topics and hashtag chats, the people who are referred to the most play a more important role in biding the network than those sharing content. The influential account in this case would be acknowledged for their contribution while active users will be driving the sharing of particular hashtag associations. Figures 3 and 4 show the top influential and most active users for the June and July datasets.

Figure 3. #publicrelations most active and most influential users in June 2015 (data collected via Socioviz.net during 15-24 of June, 2015)

Figure 4. #publicrelations most active and most influential users in July 2015 (data collected via Socioviz.net during 15-24 of July, 2015)

@Getpubrelatjobs is the most prolific sharer of content, followed by @CSchwarz17 and @bulldogreporter, the three accounts maintaining their positions in both datasets. Although they all publish content often, @getpubreljobs and @CSchwartz17 are the promoters of the #jobs, respectively #gossip hashtags. Their content is generally automated and is hardly ever shared. Like with the hashtags they promote, the most active users gain visibility through their sharing yet they have little impact and drive no conversations. This however, might be their desired outcome.

Compared to them, @bulldogreporter has a wider topic network which is also shared further, a quarter of its messages being RTed.

RT @BulldogReporter: BMW Leads All Companies in #CorporateReputation, Unseating Disney, Google @Reputation_Inst http://t.co/prCCf49Tlu #PR …(@KarlJamesPR, June 20, 2015)

This is also the case of all the other influential accounts, a more careful look into the data revealing that these accounts gain their influential status solely because their tweets are retweeted. Perhaps the most successful at this practice is @managerialmag, a UK-based "bi-monthly magazine for senior managers" whose sponsored ad for a free business consultation was RTed more than 500 times:

SPONSORED AD: Get FREE PR Business Consultation #PR #PublicRelations #SocialMedia #Publicity http://t.co/CHuSka6TpP http://t.co/JFsny2WeN3 (@managerialmag, July 21, 2015)

As a sponsored post, the message is perhaps even more interesting as it includes a combination of paid media shared over an owned media channel.

The performance is replicated by @ShujaRabbani, a Dubai-based and self-described "Writer, speaker & commentator of all things Afghanistan. Electronic Dance Music Producer". His statement-post received more than 260 RTs.

RT @ShujaRabbani: I'm no publicist, much less a public relations person, but over the last 48-hours I've learned a lot. #publicrelations (@rGavityCycles, July 22, 2015)

Similar thoughts of wisdom and strong displays of a personal brand are seen in the tweets of @JotoPR, or Karla Jo Helms, „CEO of JoTo PR – PR services for Healthcare, Finance & IT":

A good PR campaign is essential to the growth of your business. Karla Jo Helms #PR #publicrelations (@JoToPR, June 17, 2015)

Public relations is all about knowing how to reach out to the public to establish your credibility. ~ Karla Jo Helms #PR #publicrelations ((@JoToPR, June 17, 2015)

@jeffbullas, „#1 Content Marketing Influencer,Social Media Marketing Strategist & Speaker,Forbes Top 10 Social Media Influencer,Huffington Top 100 Business Twitter Accts" and @jose_garde, „#MarketingDigital #SocialMedia, #PersonalBranding #SEO, #Management, #Marketing, #Sales, #Strategy. Conviction, Determination are keys to achieving success" on the other hand focus more on tips and tricks of the trade:

RT jeffbullas: Should #PublicRelations Claim Control of #ContentMarketing? http://t.co/MKFDfJ961W #PR #thoughtleadership #socialmediamark…(@whissocialmedia, June 18, 2015)

RT @jeffbullas: 50 Surprising Tips for Getting Attention in Mass Media http://t.co/Tw705ddyvC #Publicrelations #PR #Marketing #marketingtips (@samyOneKenobi, July 21, 2915)

jeffbullas: How to Shield Your #Brands Social Reputation http://t.co/3OGNRFNA3d #SocialMedia #PR #PublicRelations (@abhigyan2014, July 19, 2015)

RT @jose_garde: 3 Ways To Make News For Your Business – http://t.co/dlX2cGHXnj #PublicRelations #Marketing (@jjlakosta, June 23, 2015)

What these influential accounts also have in common are wider follower networks, a high posting frequency, and a high use of tweets with #hashtags and media. In comparison with the most active accounts whose tweets only include hashtags and links (see @Cschwartz17 and @GetPubRelatJobs), most of the influential accounts have high numbers of tweets with

mentions and relatively low numbers of tweets with replies. In Twitter-speak, a mention is the first to happen; it is a proactive call for attention. It can be interpreted as a initiation of a conversation, a call for support, as an acknowledgement of a source or a direct way of targetting information. A reply on the other hand is reactive, is a response to a mention or to a simple tweet. All influentials with exception of @giusy_cantone just mention people but hardly ever reply. Moreover, only a half of them would retweet yet, as this data shows, their influential status comes from being retweeted. So influentials are good at pointing out sources, recognizing contributions or calling for attention but avoid repeating what others are saying. This is, in itself, rather paradoxical, as all the sharing and mentioning activities are partly supported by repetition of information that is to be found elsewhere. This could reveal that influentials get their news and content from outside of Twitter and their influence results of their content scouting capacities.

On the other hand, taking into consideration the unclear interpretation of the value and meaning of a retweet – whether supportive, endorsement, agreement or simple sharing of information while aknowlading the source – the lack of retweets from the influentials messages could be perhaps explained. Moreover, automation and planning of messages (sometime with the aid of content aggeration platforms) also makes retweets less likely to be featured in a user's mix.

Table 1 provides a summary of the activity of the top most influential accounts using #publ icrelations.

Table 1. Top Influentials and most active on #publicrelations. Data captured with Foller.me on August 5, 2015.

Account ID	Year created	Tweets	Followers	Replies	Tweets with @mentions	Tweets with #	Retweets by the account	Tweets with links	Tweets with media
@bulldogreporter	2008	27,192	11,283	1/100	97/100	93/100	36/100	99/100	32/100
@CSchwartz17	2014	11,386	171	0/100	0/100	100/100	0/100	100/100	86/100
@GetPubRelatJobs	2008	42,565	11,950	0/100	0/100	100/100	0/100	100/100	0/100
@giusy_cantone	2011	14,229	927	79/100	81/100	88/100	0/100	6/100	90/100
@jeffbullas	2008	223,238	374,171	6/100	10/100	89/100	0/100	100/100	16/100
@jose_garde	2014	66,722	16,441	4/100	12/100	91/100	6/100	96/100	0/100
@KirklandReader	2011	55,008	2,668	2/92	73/92	74/92	59/92	44/92	30/92
@managerialmag	2015	2,366	114,784	1/100	80/100	77/100	47/100	16/100	11/100
@PRdaily	2009	23,483	80,891	0/100	31/100	42/100	29/100	64/100	21/100
@ShujaRabbani	2011	29,291	2,003	8/100	60/100	31/100	28/100	66/100	17/100

6. Conversation is dead. Repetition and parallel talk rule Twitter

Twitter is indeed a platform for information dissemination, as Xifra and Grau (2010) point out in the conclusions of their study; all the tweets in this study include information that is disseminated – sometimes for the first time, oftentimes however reiterated, repeated and repackaged. However, unlike the expectations or the promises for dialogue and two-way symmetrical

communication on social media in general and Twitter in particular, the content shared around the #publicrelations hashtag is often unilateral, promotional, and self-interested.

The absence of direct evidence that the messages shared are the result of analysis, feedback and followers' interests and needs, the messages thus shared about #publicrelations are fitting mostly the earlier stages of Grunig's models of public relations such as public information or two-way asymmetrical communication. Twitter is therefore not a conversational, two-way symmetrical platform, at least not when it comes to information exchanged and shared about #publicrelations.

This is further supported by the fact that the most active accounts, as this paper has shown, gain their visibility due to the sheer amount of information that they share. The most influential accounts too are heavily relying on repetition of information; however, the major difference here is that their content is sourced outside of Twitter. Their tweets are not conversational either, in the sense that they do not spark discussion and debate even if at times some might adopt a conversational tone. When it comes to general discussions about #publicrelations, repetition and parallel talk are the most common practices.

Instead of contributing strongly to the advancement of the profession, its standards or its associated research, the wider majority of the #publicrelations tweets are either focused on job hunting or include other hashtags that associate the practice with publicity, gossip, entertainment or marketing. This, on the one hand, could confirm yet again Jürgen's (2012) findings; that users leave digital traces that enable other users and researchers alike to detect community dynamics. This is certainly true both for #gossip, which captures the volatility of the entertainment industry focus and its trends, as well as for #jobs capturing the current market demands, including skills (SEO, SEM, content management, and storytelling). On the other hand, however, this could also deepen the misconceptions about the profession and further question its legitimacy and role, something that Spicer's (2009) alluded to and do did Miller and Dinan (2008) and Rampton and Stauber (1995).

This paper has aimed to identify the themes, practices and influencers sharing messages about public relations on Twitter using the #publicrelations hashtag. In doing so, it has used two collection dates in June and July 2015 and analyzed 10,000 tweets in a novel and innovative exploratory manner combining social media data scarping and analysis free tools with qualitative assessment of discourse and observation of behavioral patterns displayed by active and influential social media users. It has shown that conversation is limited and that the hashtag only partially included content relevant to the practice.

This is echoing Adams and McCorkindale´s (2013) US 2012 presidential candidates' uses of Twitter study results, "revealing that political candidates are not using Twitter to create meaningful dialogue with their constituents" (p. 359). A lack of ability to create or maintain dialogue is also observed by Waters and Williams (2011) in their study of government agencies communication on Twitter as well as by Adi and Moloney (2012) and Adi (2015) in their studies of Occupy. Much wider questions about whether dialogue is possible on Twitter result thus from here and, more importantly, a need to revisit the definition of dialogue and symmetry in the case of social media. Kent and Taylor´s (2002) proposed framework for assessing the potential for dialogue for public relations based on propinquity, mutuality, empathy, commitment, and risk provides a very detailed conceptualization of the elements needed for dialogue to happen. Equally insightful is Theunissen and Noordin`s (2012) review of the concept of dialogue in public relations together with its features and assumptions however, it too remains normative in its nature, focusing mostly on what the communicators should do

and on the potential for dialogue that social media presents. Kent´s (2013) later essay on the value of dialogue and the role of public relations in reviving democracy shares those same characteristics. Perhaps closer to an assessment of dialogical features on social media, and therefore a new definition of the concept of dialogue that is fit for these new, social and technical environments, is Rybalko and Seltzer's (2010) adaptation to Twitter of Kent and Taylor's (1998) dialogical principles for the world wide web: "ease of interface (how easy is the website to navigate?), conservation of visitors (does the site contain features that encourage a visitor to stay on the site?), generation of return visits (does the site contain features that encourage visitors to make repeat visits to the site?), providing useful information(does the site contain content tailored to the specific needs of the sponsoring organization's stakeholders?), and dialogic loop (does the site feature mechanisms for visitors to ask questions and receive feedback from the sponsoring organization?)".

Needless to say, there is a need for further research to continue to explore public discourses on Twitter and extend the analysis from user uses and discourses, to issue topics like this paper has explored and to Twitter chats like #prprochat, #pr20chat, #journchat, #measurepr and #prstudchat, arguably the most conversational of all the features currently available on the platform. Moreover, there is a need to continue to use innovative methods of data collection and analysis, enabling thus researchers to analyze social media phenomena and reflect upon their findings. More importantly however, there is a need for future research to revive the discussion about dialogue and symmetry on social media and the conceptual and theoretical assumptions they include as well as to move beyond advice of what communicators should do and into developing an applicable assessment framework for dialogue on social media.

Notes

[1] Socioviz.net is a Java-based platform importing public data from Twitter and visualizing it with a Gephi embed.

[2] Considering that the #pr hashtag represents around 32% of the total tweets recorded in the June dataset, respectively 36% in the July dataset and that not all #pr tweets also include #publicrelations, it is safe to assume that the percentage of tweets about public relations dedicated to information exchange or discussions about the profession is lower than the numbers recorded.

References

1. Adams, A., & McCorkindale, T. (2013). Dialogue and transparency: A content analysis of how the 2012 presidential candidates used twitter. Public Relations Review, 39(4), 357-359.
2. Adi, A. (2015). Occupy PR: An analysis of online media communications of Occupy Wall Street and Occupy London. *Public Relations Review*.
3. Adi, A. & Moloney, K. (2012) The importance of scale in Occupy movement protests: a case study of a local Occupy protest as a tool of communication through Public Relations and Social Media. *Revista Internacional de Relaciones Publicas* 4(II), 97-12.
4. Adi, A., Erickson, K. & Lilleker, D. (2014) Elite Tweets: Analysing the Twitter Communication Patterns of Labour Party Peers in the House of Lords. *Policy and Internet.* 6(1): 1-27.

5. Adi, A. & Grigore, G. (2015). Communicating CSR on social media – the case of Pfizer's social media communications in Europe. IN: A., Adi, G., Grigore, and D. Crowther, eds. *Corporate Social Responsibility in the Digital Age*. Emerald.

6. Anoop, V. S., Asharaf, S., & Alessandro, Z. (2015, August). Generating and visualizing topic hierarchies from microblogs: An iterative latent dirichlet allocation approach. In *Advances in Computing, Communications and Informatics (ICACCI), 2015 International Conference on* (pp. 824-828). IEEE.

7. Bajpai, K., & Jaiswal, A. (2011, May). A framework for analyzing collective action events on Twitter. In *Proceedings of the 8th International ISCRAM Conference, Lisbon, Portugal*.

8. Briones, R.L., Kuch, B., Fisher Liu, B., & Jin, Y. (2011) Keeping up with the digital age: How the American Red Cross uses social media to build relationships. *Public Relations Review. 37 (1): 37-43.*

9. Budak, C., & Agrawal, R. (2013) On participation in group chats on Twitter. Paper presented at the International World Wide Web Conference (IW3C2). WWW 2013, May 13–17, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

10. Chartered Institute of Public Relations (2015) State of the Profession 2015. Retrieved July 29, 2015, from http://www.cipr.co.uk/stateofpr.

11. Chartered Institute of Public Relations (n.d.) Professionalism and ethics. Retrieved November 23, 2015 from http://www.cipr.co.uk/content/about-us/our-organisation/professionalism-and-ethics.

12. Chang, H-C. (2010) A New Perspective on Twitter Hashtag Use: Diffusion of Innovation Theory. ASIST 2010, October 22–27, Pittsburgh, PA, USA.

13. Cook, J., Kenthapadi, K., & Mishra, N. (2013) Group Chats on Twitter. Paper presented at the International World Wide Web Conference (IW3C2). WWW 2013, May 13–17, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

14. Coombs, W. T., & Holladay, S. J. (2007) *It's not Just PR: Public Relations in Society.* Wiley-Blackwell.

15. DiStaso, M. W., McCorkindale, T., & Wright, D. K. (2011). How public relations executives perceive and measure the impact of social media in their organizations. *Public Relations Review*, *37*(3), 325-328.

16. Duggan, M., Ellison, N. B., Lampe, C., Lenhart, A. & Madden, M. (2014) Demographics of Key Social Networking Platforms. Pew Internet. Available from http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/01/09/demographics-of-key-social-networking-platforms-2/. Accessed on July 3, 2015.

17. Evans, A., Twomey, J., & Talan, S. (2011) Twitter as a Public Relations Tool. *Public Relations Journal.* 5(1): 1-20.

18. Farrell, B. J., Cobbin, D. M., & Farrell, H. M. (2002). Codes of ethics: Their evolution, development and other controversies. *Journal of Management Development*, *21*(2), 152-163.

19. Fitzpatrick, K. R. (2002). Evolving standards in public relations: A historical examination of PRSA's codes of ethics. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, *17*(2), 89-110.

20. Giroux, H. A. (2014) ISIS and the spectacle of terrorism: Resisting mainstream workstations of fear. Philosophersforchange.org. Retrieved July 3, 2015, from http://philosophersforchange.org/2014/10/07/isis-and-the-spectacle-of-terrorism-resisting-mainstream-workstations-of-fear/.

21. Grunig, J. E. (2000) Collectivism, Collaboration, and Societal Corporatism as Core Professional Values in Public Relations, *Journal of Public Relations Research.* 12(1): 23-48.

22. Grunig, J. E. & Grunig, L. A. (2008) Excellence Theory in Public Relations: Past, Present, and Future. IN Zerfass, A., van Ruler, B. and Sriramesh, K. (Eds) *Public Relations Research: European and International Perspectives and Innovations.* VS Verlag Fur Sozialwissenschaften: 327-348.

23. Highfield, T. (2012). Talking of many things: using topical networks to study discussions in social media. Journal of Technology in Human Services, 30(3-4), 204-218.

24. International Public Relations Association (2011) The IPRA Code of Conduct. Retrieved November 23, 2015, from http://www.ipra.org/about/ipra-codes.

25. Jackson, N. A., & Lilleker, D. G. (2009). Building an architecture of participation? Political parties and Web 2.0 in Britain. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, 6(3-4), 232-250.

26. Jürgens, P. (2012). Communities of communication: making sense of the "social" in social media. *Journal of Technology in Human Services*, 30(3-4), 186-203.

27. Juris, J. S. (2012). Reflections on #Occupy Everywhere: Social media, public space, and emerging logics of aggregation. *American Ethnologist*, 39(2), 259–279.
28. Kent, M. L., & Taylor, M. (1998). Building dialogic relationships through the World Wide Web. *Public relations review*, *24*(3), 321-334.
29. Kent, M. L., & Taylor, M. (2002) Toward a dialogic theory of public relations. *Public Relations Review.* 28: 21-37.
30. Kent, M. L. (2013). Using social media dialogically: Public relations role in reviving democracy. Public Relations Review, 39(4), 337-345.
31. Kinsky, E. S. (2011) The Portrayal of Public Relations on Television. *The Image of the Journalist in Popular Culture.*
32. Lilleker, D. G., Tenscher, J., & Stetka, V. (2015). Towards hypermedia campaigning? Perceptions of new media's importance for campaigning by party strategists in comparative perspective. *Information, Communication & Society*,18(7), 747-765.
33. Long, B. S., & Driscoll, C. (2008). Codes of ethics and the pursuit of organizational legitimacy: Theoretical and empirical contributions. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *77*(2), 173-189.
34. Lovejoy, K., Waters, R. D., & Saxton, G. D. (2012). Engaging stakeholders through Twitter: How nonprofit organizations are getting more out of 140 characters or less. *Public Relations Review*, *38*(2), 313-318.
35. Miller, D., & Dinan, William (2008) *A Century of Spin: How Public Relations Became the Cutting Edge of Corporate Power*. Pluto Press: London.
36. Moreno, A., Molleda, J.C., Athaydes, A. & Suárez, A.M. (2015). Latin American Communication Monitor 2015. Excelencia en comunicación estratégica, trabajo en la era digital, social media y profesionalización. Resultados de una encuesta en 18 países. Bruselas: EUPRERA
37. Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) Member Code of Ethics. (n.d.). Retrieved November 23, 2015, from https://www.prsa.org/aboutprsa/ethics/codeenglish/#.VlMAFHYvddg
38. Rampton, S., & Stauber, J. (1995) *Toxic Sludge is Good for You*. Robinson.
39. Rybalko, S., & Seltzer, T. (2010). Dialogic communication in 140 characters or less: How Fortune 500 companies engage stakeholders using Twitter. Public Relations Review, 36(4), 336-341.
40. Saltzmar, J. (2011) The Image of the Public Relations Practitioner in Movies and Television 1901-2011. *The Image of the Journalist in Popular Culture.* 1-50.
41. Solis, B., & Breakenridge, D. (2009). *Putting the public back in Public Relations: How social media is reinventing the aging business of PR.* Pearson Education.
42. Spicer, C.H. (2009) Images of Public Relations in Print Media. *Public Relations Research.* 5(1). Retrieved July 3, 2015, from http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1207/s1532754xjprr0501_03#.VSQPqBOUd6g.
43. Statista.com (2014) Leading social networks worldwide as of March 2015, ranked by number of active users (in millions). Retrieved July 3, 2015, from http://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/.
44. Sweetser, K. D., & Kelleher, T. (2011). A survey of social media use, motivation and leadership among public relations practitioners. *Public Relations Review*, *37*(4), 425-428.
45. Theunissen, P., & Noordin, W. N. W. (2012). Revisiting the concept "dialogue" in public relations. Public Relations Review, 38(1), 5-13.
46. Verhoeven, P., Tench, R., Zerfass, A., Moreno, A., & Verèiè, D. (2012). How European PR practitioners handle digital and social media. *Public Relations Review*, *38*(1), 162-164.
47. Waters, R. D., & Jamal, J. Y. (2011) Tweet, tweet, tweet: A content analysis of nonprofit organizations' Twitter updates. *Public Relations Review*. 37: 321-324.
48. Wood, G. (2000). A cross cultural comparison of the contents of codes of ethics: USA, Canada and Australia. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *25*(4), 287-298.

49. Xifra, J., & Grau, F. (2010). Nanoblogging PR: The discourse on public relations in Twitter. *Public Relations Review*, *36*(2), 171-174.
50. Zerfass, A. (2008). Corporate Communication Revisited: Integrating Business Strategy and Strategic Communication. In A. Zerfass, B. van Ruler, & K. Sriramesh (eds). *Public Relations Research: European and International Perspectives and Innovations*. Wiesbaden: VS. pp. 65-96.
51. Zerfass, A., Vercic, D., Verhoeven, P., Moreno, A. & Tench, R. (2015) European Communication Monitor 2015. Creating Communication Value through Listening, Messaging and Measurment. Results of a Survey in 41 Countries. Brussels: EACD/EUPRERA, Helios Media.

Tulia Maria Căşvean*

Understanding the videogame genre: a qualitative analysis of the "playing contract"

Abstract

Available in the widest variety of forms, with or without the "story" or the scoring, played alone (single player), with a few partners (multiplayer) or with many others (massive multiplayer online games), the videogames categories are built on multiple perspectives that depend on the observer and his or her agenda. Embedded in the popular culture, videogames exploit models and formal containers, pre-worked materials, well-known heroes, stereotypes and myths. Paraphrasing Umberto Eco, (1989) different videogame categories become a "playing contract" between producers and players, who should instantly recognize on its basis the videogame's genre -characterized by multiple meanings, functions, production models and audience expectations, and evolving through time. The overall understanding of videogames depends on defining their genre framework as opposed to labels or marketing tools used by the game producers – a blueprint that requires an arrangement of specific elements. While not proposing an exhaustive genre categorization, this paper aims to assess the plot as a suitable criterion for videogame genre framework by correlating the specialists' opinions on plot usage with the manner in which the plot is reflected into the game features. The findings and the conclusion of this paper are supported by in-depth interviews with industry professionals and by a videogames plot evaluation grid built in line with the methodology proposed by Aarseth, Smedetad and Sunnanå (2003) and Tobias' plot evaluation (1993).

Keywords: videogame, genre, popular culture, genre theory, playing contract

1. Introduction

In comparison with other popular culture manifestations, videogames are more difficult to analyze because every time a "(part of a) game is played, the output that appears on the desktop computer or a console screen is different from any previous time, even if it is played by the same player under similar circumstances" (Malliet, 2007). This creates a difficulty to define what belongs to what and what the game designer intended versus what comes from the configuration done by the player. This is a strong argument to use qualitative research for understanding the videogames in the analyzed context, allowing the studied object "to provide with better and richer answers to questions" (Hossian, 2011, p. 145), given by the research.

Videogames use formal models or containers such as genre, characters, stories, environment, setting, and attract wider audiences to various types of content. The importance of the videogames genres revolves around players who are attracted or not by the producers towards new launches, affecting the industry. The videogames genre is connected with the selection of the content and the control of the access by interpreting the needs and interests of the au-

* University of Bucharest, Romania; tulia.casvean@gmail.com.

diences (McQuail, 1999, p. 181), serving as a communication bridge between producers, players and academics. As part of popular culture, every videogame belongs to one or several genres, which are "heuristic remnant" of the period when technology allowed producing quite simple, non-complex games (Aarseth, 2004, p. 363). Fast technological development and increased inters towards videogames of a wide audience led to an expansion and a hybridization of videogames genres. The successful fantasy massive multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPGs) *World of Warcraft* (Blizzard Entertainment, 2004), for example, can be classified under several videogame genres (RPG, strategy, quest) and, assessing the game as a whole, it is an hybrid fantasy combat game. Arguments that support the hybridization of videogames are given by Aarseth (2004, p. 363) when analyzing the videogame *Halo* (Bungie, 2001): it is an action game ("science fiction combat game") mainly played in the first person (FPS), but occasionally a third person ("third-person driver") that has components of puzzle and strategy (Aarseth, 2004, p. 363). Rich and complex cultural manifestations, the videogames should be understood and analysed using a genres framework that creates a narrative consensus for a mediated experience with a very strong cultural influence.

As the text unity is not in its origin but in the destination's (Barthes, 2002, p. 224), the videogames transform the players in authors and co-authors of content often using the subaltern transmediality (Spiridon 2013, p. 141) and well-known genres. Gamers are usually very familiar with the genre of videogames, with few favourites in their repertoire, just as it happens in the case of cinema movies or TV series. They use their own genre labels – *de facto* genre – as Kress (2010, p. 115) observes, having a solid standing in the ordinary usage and being mostly motivated by the videogame's title: sport, role-play or leisure game.

There are also *genres in actions*, available on the sites where players and game producers interact with one another (Clearwater, 2011 p. 37). The way that the industry understands and uses videogames genres is player-centric, focused on mechanics and game design patterns that deliver particular play-experiences. More details about the industry point of view are included in the Results section.

The lack of unique or at least clear criteria of some of the *de facto* and *in action* genres triggers difficulties for scholars who research videogame genres, because, as Aarseth (2004, p. 363) observers: "what works well as a sales term might not work at all as a theoretical perspective". In this context, the typology proposed by Miller (2004, pp. 212-213) should be revisited and enriched with new criteria that respond to the present reality.

The aim of the present paper consists in a preliminary exploration of the possibilities of including the plot as a suitable criterion for creating a videogame genre framework. My intention is to investigate the validity of this criterion as being a "necessary and sufficient condition" (Chandler, 1997), and not just as a label or marketing tool acting as triggers for audiences. To achieve this objective, firstly I review the current situation of genres pre-existing studies. In addition, I use qualitative analysis to better understand the way the industry uses and builds the videogame genre, focusing mainly on secondary sources and face-to-face interviews with game developers, narrative managers and realization managers. The propose of the paper is to unify the specialists' opinions from both academia and the industry with how the plot is reflected into the game features, provoking discussions and inspiring critical approaches that could bridge theory and practice.

2. Reflections on the genre and on the videogame genre

Genre are "fuzzy" categories that "cannot be defined as necessary and sufficient conditions" (Chandler, 1997) with no rigid rules, but actually "systems of expectations and hypothesis" (Neale, 2000, p. 158) that circulate among audiences, industries and academics. This "great genre illusion" points to the fact that genre is an umbrella word bundling disparate concepts under a single name and giving the false impression of unity (Arsenault, 2009, p. 157), a "codification of discursive properties" (Todorov, 1976, p. 162), stable structures, repetitive rules and conventions which function as a "transmission belt between producers and their receptors" (Spiridon, 2013, pp. 92-100).

Genres are firstly and foremost a boundary phenomenon (Glendhill, 2000, p. 221) that fixes "the meaning in a modal, generic and discursive form" (Kress, 2010, p. 122). Being an abstract concept rather than something that exists physically in the world (Feuer, 1992, p.144, quoted by Chandler, 1997), genres are units that can be described through abstract analysis based on pre-set criteria or through empirical observation of specific characteristics. Analyzing videogames, Laurel ([1991] 2014, p. 163) considers that genres are "a collection of information that includes the ethics and 'the rules of conduct' for different story types".

Linked with the cultural work of production and reception, the genres are difficult to define, being historically and discursive relative (Todorov, 1976, p. 164). Apperley (2006, p. 9) emphasizes a similar observation explaining that "the expectation is that the stability of genre will be tempered by innovation; this innovation may be technical, not necessarily stylistic". Chandler (1997) stresses the fact that both genre forms and genre functions are dynamic, while Kress (2010, p. 116) demonstrates that genres provide not just videogame kinds, but "means for contextualizing / locating / situating".

As per Todorov's (1976) genre definition, the videogames in a same genre have some common systemic features being recognized because their conventionality of structural, thematic and or functional criteria and industrialization. Järvinen (2007, p. 333) agrees and concludes that videogame genres "are found in the junction of game themes, system behaviour, and emotions and moods".

Inspired by the film studies, contemporary studies are focusing on several criteria for analyzing the videogames genres based on narratives, types of experience, structure, engagement or support (Herz, 1997; Wolf, 2001; Newman, 2004; Nieborg & Hermes, 2008). Another approach is taken by Wolf (2001, pp. 116-117) who sorts the videogames under 42 categories focusing on ludological elements such as the dominant characteristics of the interactive experience, the games' goals and objectives, the nature of the game's player-character and the player control. A careful assessment of Wolf (2001, pp. 116-117) categories shows that some are rather specific recognizable games with particular elements than unique and mutual exclusive criteria. Another classification focusing mostly on the mechanics is proposed by Poole (2000, pp. 35-58). The nine types of games are not mutually exclusive (for example sport type games could be considered simulation games). Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Smith, and Tosca (2008, pp. 41-44) develop a much simpler taxonomy, reducing videogame genres to four types: action, adventure, strategy, and process oriented games. Yet, the current hybridization and mutations of the videogames require further combination of those four main types.

A player-centric point of view is developed by Murray (2006, pp.9-10) who recommends not to enforce legacy genres boundaries, but to enhance practice within this new medium. In order to fuel new genres that would grow from a community of practice Murray suggests to

elaborate new expressive conventions and to think of "the characteristics of stories and games and how these separable characteristics are being recombined and reinvented within the astonishingly plastic world of cyberspace" (Murray, 2006, p. 10).

Lebowitz & Klug (2011, pg. 61-65) show that videogames recycle mythological repertoires (Greco-Roman, chivalrous, oriental, Egyptian, Nordic), stereotypes of gender, ethnic, cultural, national, historical and other well-known themes or even clichés. The most used themes and clichés mentioned by Lebowitz & Klug (2011, pg. 61-65) include: the hero amnesia, the conspiracy and betrayal, the last of his race, the brother or father recovered, the beautiful mysterious girl (often the last of her race) who holds the key to salvation or world destruction, the rebellious princess who falls in love with a warrior hero, the wise old man who gives valuable advice or the ancient civilizations that have left encrypted artefacts . Beyond these prefabricated models, characters, heroes, stereotypes and myths, videogames as popular culture artefacts reuse genres as well. Some of the genres are transmedial (S.F., horror, historical, adventures, and romance), while others are more specific (talk-show, shooter). However, the genres differ by the degree of standardization (Spiridon, 2013, p. 96), the familiarity with a genre enabling its audience to generate feasible predictions about events in the story.

Following Duff's genres triad, based on structural, thematic and functional criteria (2014, p. xiii), videogames genres should be assessed as Arsenault suggests: a "phenomenological, pragmatic deployment of actions through the gameplay experience" which is "partly functional and partly aesthetic" (Arsenault, 2009, p. 171). Aarseth (2004, p. 364) proposes a radical systematization, using discriminative criteria: digitized versions of traditional games (card, board, dice, mechanical arcade games such as Pinball) and games in virtual environments, based on a simulation of a physical world, not necessarily similar to real world, and usually much less complex.

Particular milestones for genres' frameworks have been identified by Aaretsh, Smedstad and Sunnană (2003) and grouped under five headings: Space, Time, Player-structure, Control and Rules. The authors suggest that the model is flexible, any changes in terms of dimensions not destroying "the underlying principle" (Aarseth et al., 2003, p.53). The declared objective of the model is to outline genres that are more specific, not necessary used by the industry and popular game publications, in "a rigorous, analytical way" (Aarseth et al., 2003, p. 48).

3. Research Method

Practically, the videogames genres have been built on multiple perspectives (gameplay, story theme, context or player's performance), not always mutually exclusive. Most classifications use "too many, arbitrary, incompatible or overlapping criteria generating a multi-dimensional typology" (Aarseth et al., 2003, p. 48). Considering that there is not much research literature for the domain and having no empirical evidences, building a genres "blueprint" using mutually exclusive frameworks would only take us half of the way. Instead, my objective is to collect in-depth insights about videogames genres and about how these are built and embedded in the videogames. In this context, I consider that a qualitative exploratory study, which embraces secondary sources (other scholars' theoretical or empirical studies) and specialists' opinions on the topic of interest (face-to-face interviews with professionals) helps formulating the research question: is the plot a suitable criterion for a videogame genre

framework? My intention is to answer it using qualitative methods that are less limiting in terms of time and resources needed.

In my approach, I searched for patterns mostly common in literature and movies, yet without forgetting that not all the videogames have a story. In this train of thoughts, I consider as a valuable beginning position the "20 master plots" proposed by Tobias (1993): Quest, Adventure, Pursuit, Rescue, Escape, Revenge, The Riddle, Rivalry, Underdog, Temptation, Metamorphosis, Transformation, Maturation, Love, Forbidden Love, Sacrifice, Discovery, Wretched Excess, Ascension, Descension. This typology allows a close up of videogames to other narrative media. Some of these tags are already *de facto* genre (quest, adventure) recognized as such by players, producers, and scholars. Others, like the "discovery" and "the riddle", could be applied to the videogames with no narrative pattern proving that the plot criterion is not limited to the videogames with a narrative pattern.

During the data collection process, I gathered information using Hossian's (2011, p. 144) qualitative research checklist: knowledge, attitudes and beliefs of industry representatives. I investigated the way videogames genre are used and built by the industry, focusing mainly on the plot usage (secondary sources and in-depth semi-structured interviews with game developers, narrative and realization managers). Subsequently, applied the methodology proposed by Aarseth et al. (2003, p.49): "the dimensional categories and their values are gathered by taking two similar games […] and then try to describe the difference between them in a principal way". The plot dimension is assessed in line with the methodology is concentrated on the plot statement (Tobias, 1993), for both narrative and non-narrative games. The variables that support plot are evaluated by the common value with other media as the case of the beginning statement included in the game intro, characters, props, sound effects, or by very specific ones such rules or mechanics.

I ran four semi-structured interviews between August 2014 and April 2015, using Creswell's directions for phenomenological qualitative methodology (Creswell, 2007). I selected the interviewees based on their expertise (employees of Romanian branches of international game producers), ensuring variety: a former level designer, a realization manager, a narrative manger and an external communication manager. The respondents have expressly agreed to answer the questions for the research purpose I previously stated, as recorded on tape and on the signed forms. For the illustration of specific examples some verbatims have been quoted in the paper with the interviewee's consent. The consent protocols have been signed with all the participants before starting the interviews and only those who accepted the confidentiality terms (possibility of quoting them and of using initials of name and job title) were used in the paper. All interviews are full-length, at least one hour each, recorded, transcribed and analyzed.

4. Results and discussion

Understanding the industry view is a milestone for this paper because the producers lower the risk by delivering against popular genres that insure gratification and pleasure for the receptor. Explaining why players specialize in genres, the industry veteran Daniel Cook (2007, p. 1) acknowledges that when players discover that a game fits their entertainment needs nicely, they return to the store seeking another similar game.

The industry's professional's reflections on the genre show that from its early development ages, the game industry settled into several genres that everybody recognizes: sports,

strategy, racing, fighting, action, role-playing. Chris Crawford, a well-known game designer, (1984, pp. 19-40) focuses on mechanics: skill and action (combat, maze, sports, paddle, race, miscellaneous), strategy games (adventures, dungeons and dragons), war-games, games of chance, interpersonal games, educational and children games. Crawford observed that the basis of classification is not constant but varies during the history, influenced by the available technology (Crawford, 1984, pp. 39-40). Another game designer, Ernest Adams, emphasizes that the entire value chain of videogames industry was influenced by genre: "the retailers began organizing their shelves along these lines. Publishers created product plans based on them. Gamers learned, as Adams (2009, p. 1) observes, to prefer one genre over another and to identify themselves as fans of shooters or platformers or real-time strategy".

Daniel Cook (2007, p. 1) reinforces the fact that similar game mechanics define the characteristic of gaming value, despite all the industry's effort spent on innovation, branding, packaging and licenses. Using a lifecycle approach, following the economic pattern of any industrial good (introduction, growth, maturity, decline, niche), Cook (2007, p.2) shows that genres evolve over time as "players discover, fall in love, grow bored and then move on to other forms of entertainment".

D.R., narrative manager, insists on the need of harmony among all videogame's features and the genre: "The general genres have to match everything. Ideally, the graphics, the sounds, the story, the in-game actions, everything must match the genre. Ideally, the second time you look at the game, you know what it is about and you know the general feeling of it"[face-to-face interview, Bucharest, April 2015]. C.T., external communication manager, completes the same point of view considering that when creating a game a producer must deeply understand the audience in order to meet their skills and expectations. C.T. concludes that sticking to the popular genres lowers the risks for the industry, yet it inhibits any other innovation than technological [face-to-face interview, Bucharest, September 2014]. Narrative manager D.R. explains that "the genre is given by the game designer to the narrative team who has to build on it. This means that the narrative team must know the specifics of genres, even though in the case of videogames it can be broken down a little bit. For example, the war genre is the given action for everything, but with the story I can break it down a little bit and add romance or comedy to it, so add some different facets to the general genre" [face-to-face interview, Bucharest, April 2015]. Taking an opposite stand, the game designer Sid Meier considers that a genre should be a support for a chosen topic and not the start for designing a game: "first figure out what your topic is and then find interesting ways and an appropriate genre to bring it to life as opposed to coming the other way around" (Ruse, 2001, pp. 21-22). The fast development of mobile games and the limitations in terms of technology and story length forced the industry to have a different approach: "nowadays, with the mobile gaming industry, suddenly women are playing videogames and this completely opened up the market, so most of the games are casual videogames and the mobile companies are looking to draw women in embedding new genres in the games" [D.R., narrative manager, face-to-face interview, Bucharest, April 2015].

Summarizing the industry point of view, the player is the pivotal element and the purpose of delivering a playing experience is fulfilled through mechanics and game design patterns that support different genres.

Based on a clear methodology, respecting how genres conventions are always acting in combination or modules (Spiridon, 2013, p. 95), the criteria proposed by Aarseth et al. (2003) were assessed through several dimensions and values applied on a significant number of

games. Since videogames are equally rooted in the meanings, in the mechanics and in the performance, the industry standardizes videogames based on well-known genres tags. Adding a plot layer allows the integration of the transmedial genres, easily recognized by the audience in other narrative media like books, TV or cinema, and in genres such as horror, adventure, war or romance. The videogames gain from this transfer of meanings from other established media genres, as long this framework is a *de facto* one and is actively used by producers, sellers and audience. Plot, as a new dimensional category, should have supportive values as other media genres conventions, adapted to the videogames specifics: props, sound effects, genre pillar characters (i.e.: soldier, detective or zombie). Yet, there are many situations when a hybrid genre or an emergent one is forced by the sellers to merge with a well-established one, hopping that the tag is working as a "branding tool" and attracts the audience.

The current data analysis grid was populated against two axes, using the methodology validated by Aarseth et al. (2003) and the extended Tobias' plot list (1993). The two axes are included in Table 1: the plot expression mode and the plot statement.

Table 1. The Plot Classification using Character, Props, Sound Effects, and Rules/Mechanics

	The Plot statement	20 master plots (Tobias,1993)	
		Narrative Games	Non-narrative Games
The Plot expression mode	Game Intro	Call of Duty (2003-2014), Ai draci (Romanian MMO), (Destiny (2014)	Hearthstone: Heroes of Warcraft (2014)
	Character	Return of the Phantom (1993), The Longest Journey (1999), Condemned (2005), The Heavy Rain (2010),	–
	Props	Portal (2007), Call Of Duty (2003-2014), Assassins' Creed (2007-2013), DayZ (2013), L.A. Noire (2011)	Majhong (1992-2000), Minecraft (2009), FarmVille (2009-2012), Candy Crush Saga (2012)
	Sound Effects	Final Fantasy (1987-2010), Resident Evil (1996-2012), Amnesia (2010)	Guitar Hero (2005-2010)
	Rules/ Mechanics	Grand Theft Auto V (2014)	Chess Master (1986-2007), 2048 (2014), Tetris (1984)

The examination of the analysis grid showed that multiple plots could be used in one single genre (i.e. forbidden love and sacrifice can both be found in romance). When these plots are recognisable from other media, it becomes easier for the audience to connect the genre of a videogame with the one used by other media – as former level designer A.I. shows, the genre shooter, embedding multiple plots like Adventure or Escape, is easily recognisable and creates similar expectations across various media.

5. Conclusions and area of future developments

The difficulty of understanding the videogames genres framework is driven by the difficulty of straightforward definitions of game genres (cf. Wolf, 2001; Apperley, 2006; Clearwater, 2011). When compared with other media, videogame genres are built on both narratives and ludological elements.

The changes in videogame genre in the past years, triggered by technology progress and by the focus on player, led to an expansion and a hybridization of videogames genres. The hybridization of genre, specific for today's reality, rise research challenges. The lack of unique or at least clear criteria of some of the *de facto* and *in-action* genres generates difficulties for videogame genres research. The literature review offers insights about several videogames genres taxonomies (Poole, 2000; Wolf, 2001; Aaretsh et al., 2003; Murray, 2006; Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Smith & Tosca, 2008) that allow examining, deconstructing, and comparing games.

It would be difficult to point out each of the necessary and jointly sufficient criteria for placing a videogame into a specific genre, standing out in a certain historical moment. Yet, for the moment, the criteria proposed by Aarseth, et al. (2003), are mutually exclusive, applicable to a large set of videogames.

In addition to the literature, for industry, genres are player-centric built, focusing on mechanics and game design patterns that deliver particular play-experiences (Crawford C. , 1984; Cook, 2005; Cook, 2007; Adams, 2009; C.T., 2014; C.V., 2014; A.I., 2014; D.R., 2015).

The research question of this study – is the plot a suitable criterion for a videogame genre framework? – was answered by overlapping specialists' opinions on the plot usage with how the plot is reflected into the game features, using the dimensional category grid inspired by the methodology proposed by Aarseth et al. (2003). The analysis showed that the plot could serve as a convention for embedding the transmedial genres into videogames typology. The conclusions of the current research cannot be generalized due to the limited number of games included in the evaluation. Another limitation of the present study is that it can be argued that the grid could be linked with a specific historical moment, adapted for this specific point of industry development. Considering the genre as a "playing contract", an extended empirical fallow up study focused on players could contribute to the future advance of the topic. In addition, as future development, it is equally important to find proper labels for the genres based on the plot, recognized by scholars, industry and audience.

References

1. Aarseth, E. (2004). Quest games as post-narrative discourse. In M.-L. Ryan, *Narrative across media* (pp. 361-376). Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press.
2. Aarseth, E., Smedetad, S., & Sunnanå, L. (2003). *A Multi-Dimensional Typology of Games*. Proceeding of the 2003 DiGRA International Conference: Level Up. 2 (pp. 47-53). Retrieved on February 11, 2015, from http://www.digra.org/wp-content/uploads/digital-library/05163.52481.pdf
3. Adams, E. (2009, July 09). *The Designer's Notebook: Sorting Out the Genre Muddle*. Retrieved June 15, 2014, from http://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/132463/the_ designers_notebook_sorting_.php.
4. Anderson, C. A. (2010). *Violent Video Games and Other Media Violence* (Part I). In R. Sagall, Ed., *Pediatrics for Parents*. January/February 2010, 26(1&2), 28-30. Retrieved July 22, 2015 from http://public .psych.iastate.edu/caa/abstracts/2010-2014/10ApartI.pdf.

5. Apperley, T. H. (2006, March). *Genre and game studies: Toward a critical approach to video game genres*. Simulation & Gaming, 37(1), 6-23. doi:10.1177/1046878105282278

6. Arsenault, D. (2009). Video Game Genre, Evolution and Innovation. *Eludamos. Journal for Computer Game Culture*, 3(2), 149-176. Retrieved on March 21, 2015, from http://www.eludamos.org/index.php/eludamos/article/view/vol3no2-3/126.

7. Barthes, R. (2002). The Death of the Author. In A. McCleery & D. Finkelstein (eds.), *The Book History Reader* (pp. 221-224). New York: Routledge.

8. Bolter, J.D. & Grusin, R. (1999). *Remediation: Understanding New Media*. London: MIT Press.

9. Bryce, J., & Rutter, J. (2002). *Killing like a girl: gendered gaming and girl gamers visibility*. CGDC (pp. 243–255). Tampere, Finland: University of Tampere. Retrieved March 12, 2015, from http://www.digiplay.org.uk/media/cgdc.pdf.

10. Chandler, D. (1997). *An Introduction to Genre Theory*. Retrieved March 22, 2015, from <http://visualmemory.co.uk/daniel/Documents/intgenre/chandler_genre_theory.pdf>

11. Clearwater, D. (2011, May 5). What Defines Videogame Genre? Thinking about Genre Study after the Great Divide. *Loading…. The Journal of the Canadian Game Studies Association*, 5(8), 29-49. Retrieved on April 12, 2015, from http://loading.gamestudies.ca.

12. Cook, D. (2005). *My Name is Daniel and I am a Genre Addict. The impact of psychological addiction on the game industry*. Retrieved March 23, 2015, from Lost Garden: http://lunar.lostgarden.com/essay_genreaddict.htm.

13. Cook, D. (2007, May 15). *The Circle of Life: An Analysis of the Game Product Lifecycle*. Retrieved April, 1, 2015, from: http://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/129880/the _circle_of_life_an_analysis_of _.php?page=2.

14. Crawford, C. (1984). A Taxonomy of Computer Games. In C. Crowford, *The Art of Computer Game Design. Reflections of an Master Game Designer* (pp. 19-40). Berkeley, California: Osborne/McGraw-Hill.

15. Creswell, J. W. (2007). Five qualitative approches to inquiry. In J. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Traditions* (pp. 53-84). London: Sage Publication. Retrieved May 8, 2015, from <http://www.stiba-malang.ac.id/uploadban>.

16. Duff, D. (2014). *Modern Genre Theory* (ed. first published in 2000 by Pearson Education Limited). New York: Routledge.

17. Eco, U. (1989). *The Open Work* (A. Cancogni, Trad.). Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

18. Egenfeldt-Nielsen, S., Smith, J.H. & Tosca, S.P. (2008). *Understanding Video Games. The Essential Introduction* (ed. 2nd edition). New York: Routlege.

19. Feuer, J. (1992). Genre study and television. In C. Allen (Ed.), *Channels of Discourse, Reassembled: Television and Contemporary Criticism*. 138-59, London: Routledge.

20. Glendhill, C. (2000). Rethinking Genre. In C. Gledhill & L. Williams, *Reinventing Film Studies*. 221-243, London: Edward Arnold.

21. Herz, J. (1997). *Joystick Nation. How videogames ate our quarters, won our hearts, and rewired our minds*. Princeton, NJ: Little Brown & Company.

22. Hossian, D. (2011, September). Qualitative Research Process. *Postmodern Openings*. 2(7), 143-156.

23. Järvinen, A. (2007). *Games without Frontiers. Theories and Methods for Game Studies and Design*. Doctoral dissertation study for Media Culture, Univeristy of Tampere, Finland, 417. Tampere, Finlanda. Retrieved October 16, 2014, from http://acta.uta.fi.

24. Jull, J. (2007). *Without a goal. On open and expressive games*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. Retrieved August 9, 2014, from http://www.jesperjuul.net /text/withoutagoal/.

25. Jull, J. (2010). *A Casual Revolution. Reinventing Video Games and Their Players*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.

26. Kress, G. (2010). *Multimodality. A social semiotic approach to contemporary communication*. London and New York: Routledge.

27. Laurel, B. ([1991] 2014). *Computers as Theatre* (2nd edition). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Addison-Wesley.

28. Lebowitz, J. & Klug, C. (2011). The Hero's Journey And The Structure Of Game Stories. In J. Lebowitz & C. Klug (Eds.), *Interactive Storytelling for Video Games. A Player-Centered Approach to Creating Memorable Characters and Stories* (pp. 39-70). Elsevier Inc.

29. Malliet, S. (2007, August). Adapting the Principles of Ludology to the Method of Video Game Content Analysis. *Game Studies. The International Journal of Computer Game Research*, 7(1). Retrieved November 22, 2013, from <http://gamestudies.org/0701/ articles/malliet>.

30. McQuail, D. (1999). *Communicarea*. (D. Rusu, Trad.) Iasi: Editura Institutul European.

31. Miller, C. H. (2004). *Digital Storytelling. A Creator's Guide to Interactive Entertainment*. Oxford, UK: Elsevier.

32. Murray, J. (2006). From Game-Story to Cyberdrama. In N. Wardrip-Fruin & P. Harrigan, *First Person: New Media as Story, Performance, and Game* (pp. 7-11). Cambridge: MIT Press.

33. Neale, S. (2000). Questions of Genre. *Screen; The Journal of the Society for Education in Film and Television*. 31(1), spring 1990. 45-66, Retrieved April 22, 2015 from https://genrefilm.wikispaces.com/file/view /Neale+on+Genre.pdf.

34. Newman, J. (2004). *Videogames*. New York: Routledge.

35. Nieborg, D., & Hermes, J. (2008). What is game studies anyway? *European Journal of Cultural Studies*. 11(2), 131-146. Retrieved on February 2, 2015, from http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-227441.

36. Poole, S. (2000). *Trigger Happy: Videogames and the Entertainment Revolution*. New York: Arcade Publishing.

37. Ruse, R. (2001). *Game Design: Theory and Practice* (ed. 2nd). Plano, Texas, TX: Wordware Publisihing Inc.

38. Salen, K. & Zimmerman, E. (2004). R*ules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals*. Cambridge: MA:MIT-Press.

39. Spiridon, M. (2013). *Popular culture. Modele, repere și practici contemporane*. Craiova: Editura Scrisul Românesc.

40. Tisseron, S., & Gravillon, I. (2010). *Psihologia Jocurilor Video* (Qui a peur des jeux video?) (D. Jipa, Trad.). București: Editura Trei.

41. Tobias, R. B. (1993). *20 Master Plots. And how to build them*. Cincinnati: Writer's Digest Books.

42. Todorov, T. (1976). The Origin of Genres. *New Literary History. Readers and Spectators: Some Views and Reviews*. 8(1), 159-170. Retrieved February 11, 2015, from http://www.jstor.org/stable/468619

43. Wolf, M.J.P. (2001). Genre and the Video Game. In M. Wolf (Ed.), *The medium of the video game* (pg. 113-134). Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Varia

Ion Chiciudean*
Nicoleta Corbu**

Saved by the Union:
Romanians' Attitudes toward the European Union

Abstract

In this study we show that, in the aftermath of the economic crisis, Romanians remain among the most enthusiastic citizens of the European Union, in what concerns trust in the European institutions, projections for the future, the image of the EU and general attitudes toward the union. Relying on data provided by eurobarometers since the Romanian integration, we argue that the reasons for this peculiar position of Romanians within the EU is largely due to how people evaluate the economic and political performance of their own country: from evaluations of the economy to trust in national institutions, Romanians are very pessimistic about how their country handles the present situation and about perspectives for the future. In this context, they turn to the European Union as to a Savior, who represents their hope and promise for a better future, for economic prosperity and security. This is the reason why, more than five years after the beginning of the financial crisis, Romanians are still among the most optimistic citizens of Europe.

Key words: European attitudes, European identity, trust, European institutions

1. Introduction

After the European integration, Romanians' attitudes toward Europe, the European future, and the European institutions changed, in the direction of a more moderate and rational approach to the European project in general, especially in the context of the economic crisis; nonetheless, Romanians still remain among the most optimistic and enthusiastic European citizens, significantly more in favor of the European project than the majority of Europeans.

This article aims at finding plausible explanations about the general level of support of the European Union in Romania, in the context of the aftermath of the economic crisis, and by comparison with the general support at the Union level. The general context of the crisis also generates a crisis of credibility in the EU, often associated with of the perception of a lack of internal regulation (Dobrescu, 2013, p. 130).

In a historical context dominated by the raise of euroscepticism, not necessarily as a fact reflected in the general level of support of the EU by the European citizens, but especially in terms of perceptions regarding the future of the European Union, the newly integrated countries, such as Romania, manifest some of the symptoms of euroscepticism in general, but have a more positive approach and attitude toward the EU. Some of the academic literature

* National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, Bucharest, Romania; ion.chiciudean@comunicare.ro.

** National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, Bucharest, Romania; nicoleta.corbu@comunicare.ro.

trying to explain this phenomenon offer rather historical explanations, related to the very high level of euroenthusiasm from before the European integration, which diminished slowly in time, after the inclusion of the country in the EU. Nonetheless, we consider that authors sometimes ignore the economic factor (perceptions about the state of the economy at the national and union levels), the internal (national) political situation, which translate into the general level of trust/distrust in the most important national and European institutions.

Another important factor addressed in this study is the feeling of belonging to the European Union, or the feeling of being European. We argue that the European identity is a rather fuzzy concept, unstable in time as general perception, at least for the newly integrated citizens, such as Romanians. We will discuss issues of cultural versus instrumental European identity, and their role in the configuration of general attitudes toward the European Union.

In this context, by using secondary data analysis of Eurobarometers data since 2007, we try to offer a more comprehensive explanation of the attitudes of Romanian citizens toward the European Union.

In the context of the economic crisis, Romanian academic literature (Bârgăoanu, 2011; Negrea, 2011; Radu, 2012; Dobrescu & Durach, 2014) suggests that the crisis favored the crystallization and consolidation of eurosceptic feelings, and even an identity crisis for the citizens. We argue that Romanians' attitudes toward EU became rather moderate, as a result of the diminishing enthusiasm, normal after the integration, and regained momentum, to some extent, in the last years, as a result of increasing distrust in the national main institutions (Government and Parliament).

2. Attitudes towards the European Union

Citizens' attitudes toward the European Union have been a constant concern of European officials, as well as of scholars, since they are directly related to the legitimacy of the European project. In the context of the financial crisis, the legitimacy deficit of the EU has been given an even greater amount of attention, because of the threat of the raising eurosceptic feelings among the citizens.

When analyzing attitudes toward the EU, both public and academic discourses changed from *citizen support* (Duch & Taylor, 1997) to *euroscepticism* (Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2001; Lubbers & Scheepers, 2005) over the last decades. Both concepts are rather vague and need further clarifications.

Defined as a phenomenon that express an opposition toward the process of European integration (Kopecky & Mudde, 2002) or, more narrowly, "as opposition toward a specific policy or integration effort", euroscepticism "may be just one facet of public opinion toward the EU" (Boomgaarden et al, 2011, p. 2). Nonetheless, euroscepticism has become the buzzword largely used when discussing attitudes toward the EU.

Starting from the original definition of Taggart (1998, p. 366), as expressing "the idea of contingent or qualified opposition, as well as incorporating outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European integration", euroscepticism has been later classified as *hard* or *soft* (Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2001), which made the distinction between a clear rejection of the entire European project, and a "qualified opposition" to the EU on specific policies or decisions.

Both support and eurosceptic attitudes are facets of the same coin and were considered as *diffuse* or *specific* (Gabel, 1998; Hewstone, 1986), or having an *utilitarian* or *affective* nature

(Lindberg & Scheingold, 1970). The utilitarian dimension refers to the evaluation by the citizens of the costs and benefits of the integration (we will further see a similar distinction with regard to the European identity), whereas the affective one refers to the emotional responses to the EU. Regardless of the form they take, feelings and attitudes toward the EU have been shown to fluctuate (Lubbers & Scheepers, 2010), specially in the context of dramatic economic changes.

We argue that support or eurosceptic attitudes toward the EU are related to various factors, among which some of the most pervasive influence power could be attributed to the evaluation of national economy (from an utilitarian perspective), as well as the general feeling of European identity (from an affective perspective). In practice, it is almost impossible to differentiate between the costs-benefits and the emotional dimensions of people's feelings and thoughts about the EU; this is the reason why a research should take into consideration both perspectives, when discussing the multifaceted nature of EU attitudes.

There have been various attempts to operationalize support or eurosceptic attitudes toward the EU, the most commonly cited being related to five dimensions: feelings of fear and threat by the EU, a sense of European identity, performance and democratic functioning of the EU, supports and benefits evaluations, and support for further integration (Boomgaarden et. al., 2011; Spanje & deVreese, 2011). We argue that, related to those, trust in national institutions (as a result of evaluating national government performance), correlated with other dimensions, could play an important role in how people relate to the European Union. At the same time, we take into account Habermas' idea that citizens have somehow developed two *personae*, one that represents himself/herself as a European citizen contributing to the very process of creation of the European Union, and the other – being a citizen of his/her country, as a well established nation state. (Habermas, 2012, pp. 95-96) This means that people's representations of both European and national images, institutions, economic evaluations, etc. play an important role in developing attitudes toward the European Union in general.

3. Toward a European Identity

The concept of European identity has seen a lot of transformations since its birth, mainly due to its vague and volatile nature. In order to circumscribe the term, one should rely on the notion of "multiple identities" or "different self-construals [that] may coexist within the same individual, available to be activated at different times or in different situations" (Brewer & Gardner, 1996, p. 83). Thus, the European identity is but one of the various layers of identity Europeans hold simultaneously (Bruter, 2005; Risse, 2010). In other words, when taking European identity into account for explaining different phenomena, one should acknowledge that people may have loyalties toward their nations, as well and simultaneously as/for Europe and the European community.

Most of the theories regarding the European identity rely on the commonly accepted distinction between its civic vs. cultural components (Bruter, 2005; Wintle, 2005; Inthorn, 2006), to which an instrumental layer has been added by some authors (Cinerella, 1997; Ruiz Himenez et al, 2004; Schoen, 2008). The civic European identity refers to citizens' sense of belonging to the EU from an institutional point of view (mostly economic and political dimensions) (Bruter, 2005, 2009), or people's commitment to the shared values of the Union (Weiler, 1999). Cultural identity relies on the general feeling perception of citizens that they feel rather

European than non-European (Bruter, 2005), "based on ethno-cultural factors generated through a long-term historical process" (Udrea, 2014, p. 56). The instrumental approach largely relates to citizens' evaluation of the benefits (potential gains and losses) provided by the very fact of belonging to the European Union.

It has been argued that the more people perceive weaknesses of their country in the international arena (the lack of a strong national voice in international context), the more they identify with the European Union (Gabel & Palmer, 1995; Gabel, 1998). We argue that the same stands for general economic and political "performance" of national institutions: the more people distrust the most important institutions of their country (such as the Government and Parliament), the more they tend to trust the European institutions, basically looking for some sort of "salvation" outside the country. At the same time, it has been stated that nowadays euroscepticism focused on alleged bureaucratic intrusions and the waste of resources of the European institutions, as well as on a sense of identity loss that would result from the European unification (Verhofstadt, 2012/2009, p. 223).

The feeling of being European is closely related to the national loyalties. There are different approaches to the nature of the relationship between national and European identities: some scholars have argued that collective identities are conflicting and exclusive, competing against each other, while others believe that people are perfectly happy with multiple identities (Arts & Halman, 2006; Dufek, 2009). Most of the time, researchers agree that the European identity is rather developed as a secondary layer of identity, added to the national (or even local, regional) identity. This is mainly due to the fact that "national identity can never be induced to a population by artificial means" (Udrea, 2014, p. 58), whereas "European identity has been in construction and reconstruction process throughout history" (Udrea, 2014, p. 59). This is the reason why, when defining themselves as Europeans, citizens rather see themselves as being "national and European" than simply European or even "European and national".

We argue that Romanians and, to some extent, Europeans as well have changing (or mixed) feelings with regard to their national vs. supranational identities, which makes the equation explaining the attitudes crystallization toward the EU even more complicate.

This study tries to find empirical basis for a general explanation of the changing attitudes toward the European Union in Romania, compared with the average of other member states, taking into account people's feelings, attitudes, trust about the EU, as well as their projections related to the image or future of the European Union.

4. Methodology

In order to understand the evolution of the attitudes toward the European Union and its institutions, both at the level of the union and in Romania, we used secondary data analysis of eurobarometers since 2007. We used a comparative approach between data regarding Romania and the average of the European member states, aiming at providing a comprehensive analysis of the general evolution of European citizens' opinion about the EU in general, its future, its institutions, etc. We used 16 standard European Barometers (the last one being EB82, autumn 2014, preliminary data), and three special eurobarometers (EB 346, "New Europeans", spring 2010, EB 379, "Future of Europe", autumn 2011, and EB 394, "Future of Europe", autumn 2012).

The research questions guiding the analysis focused on attitudes toward the European Union, trust in the future of the European project and trust in the national and European institutions. All the research questions aim at providing insights into the mechanisms of the attitudes evolution in Romania, compared to the average attitudes of the European citizens in general.

RQ1. How did Romanians and Europeans' attitudes toward the European Union evolved since the adhesion of Romania to the European Union?

The aim of this research question is to provide explanations for the evolution of Romanians' attitudes toward the EU, in the context of the economic crisis, correlated to the mean of European citizens' attitudes. The role of this research question is to offer a first level of understanding of attitudes fluctuations and (possible) eurosceptic movements after 2007, with of focus on the aftermath of the economic crisis.

RQ2. How did Romanians and Europeans perceive the future of the European Union?

The image of the European Union in the eyes of its citizens is an indicator of how people generally perceive the European project. Correlated with people's opinions about the future of the EU, one could have a more complex understanding of the direction of future evolution of the union.

RQ3. How did Romanians and Europeans level of trust in the national and European main institutions (Government and Parliament) evolve since the integration of Romania in the European Union?

We believe that the level of trust in European institutions is negatively correlated with the level of trust in the national institutions; in other words, we will investigate to what extent a positive evolution of trust in national institutions might lead to a decrease in trust in the European institutions and vice versa. For Romania, we expect to find a correlation that could provide an explanation to the findings related to the first research question, which, combined with how people forecast the future of the EU, and feelings of being European (the second research question) would offer a general image of how people form and change their opinions regarding the European Union in general.

When analyzing the existing data in Eurobarometers, we used the standardized questions related to the three research questions; when the wording changed over the years, we used most semantically closely related questions following the logic of the original ones. There are some rare cases in which some questions were eliminated from the eurobarometers and later reintroduced with a different wording. We considered data as missing for the respective eurobaromenters. We used the same logic for the last eurobarometer (autumn 2014), for which only preliminary data was available.
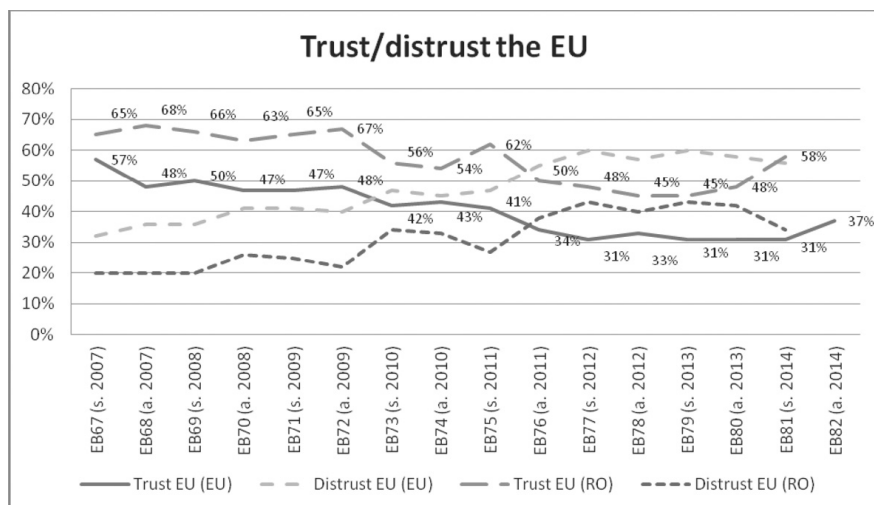

5. Findings

Data from eurobarometers provide evidence about various facets of attitudes toward the European Union. In order to get a general image and understanding of Romanian and European citizens' attitudes, we will analyze people's trust in the union in general, the way they perceive the image of the European Union and its future, as well as trust in national and European main institutions, namely Government and Parliament. We will further try to correlate these data with additional figures related to the feeling of being European and with the

way people evaluate both national and European state of the economy in general, in order to understand the mechanisms through which people's attitude toward the EU have evolved over time, since the adhesion of Romania to the European Union.

The general level of trust in the European Union, the main macro-indicator of people's general attitudes evolved to some extent predictably over time: the general mean at the level of the union have been constant above the level of distrust until the moment the effects of the crisis began to be dramatically perceived at the citizens' level. Thus, starting 2009, the distrust overcame trust in the EU. However, Romanians' level of trust, even though dropped dramatically in the same period of time, has never outrun the level of distrust (Figure 1).
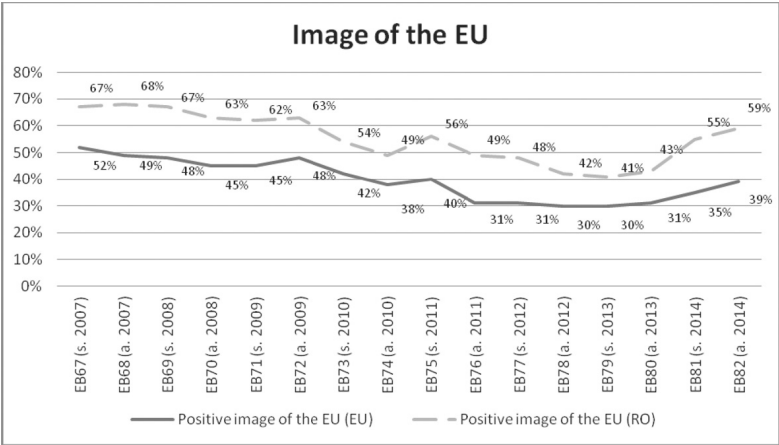
Figure 1. The level of trust/distrust in the European Union in Eurobarometers (EU versus Romania).

In 2014, trust in the European Union raised dramatically again in Romania (with 10%, compared with 0% in the EU). Even though there is no data available yet for each nation state, the last eurobarometer shows that the general level of trust at the European level increased with 6%, compared with the beginning of 2014. These very visible changes, after a period of two years of stagnation might be due, in part, to the general feeling of populations that the end of the crisis already happened or is very near. In Romania, we believe that the high increase in the level of trust in the EU is also due to the presidential elections and general political turmoil in the last year, which made people believe that 'salvation' may come from the EU.

At the same time, there is a similar gab between the moderate increase (8%) of the positive image that European holds of the union in 2014 compared to 2013, while Romanians rate with 16% more positively the image of the EU in the same period of time. (Figure 2).
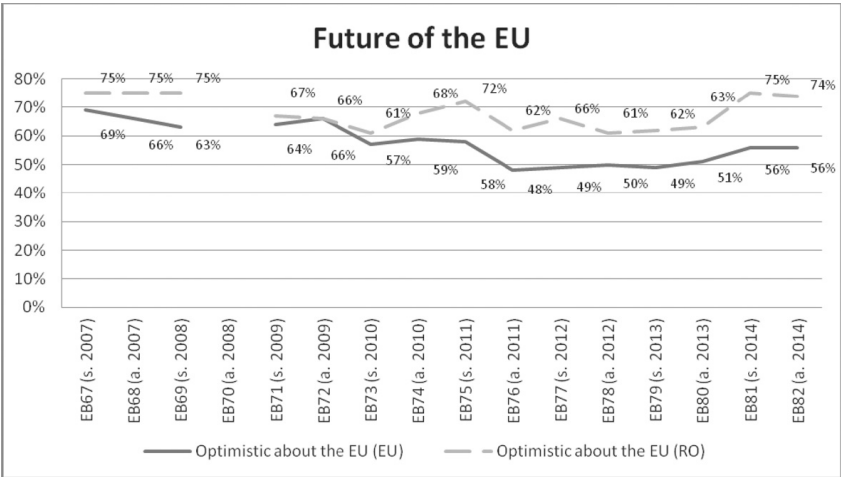
Figure 2. Positive image of the European Union in Eurobarometers (EU versus Romania).

The general way in which Europeans and Romanians perceive the image of the European Union regain to some extent the level of before the crisis (before 2009). After a dramatic drop of 10% and 14% respectively in just one year, the EU has somehow managed to readjust its image in the last one year and a half. In Romania there are only 4% of difference between the period of before the crisis and the end of 2014, and at the level of the union there is a difference of about 9%. Correlated with the level of trust, we can affirm that Romanians regain faith in the EU more than the majority of the other Europeans.

As far as the future of the union is concerned, Romanians have always been more optimistic than the rest of Europeans (with the exception of the beginning of 2010), and at present they are with almost 20% more optimistic than the average European. (Figure 3).

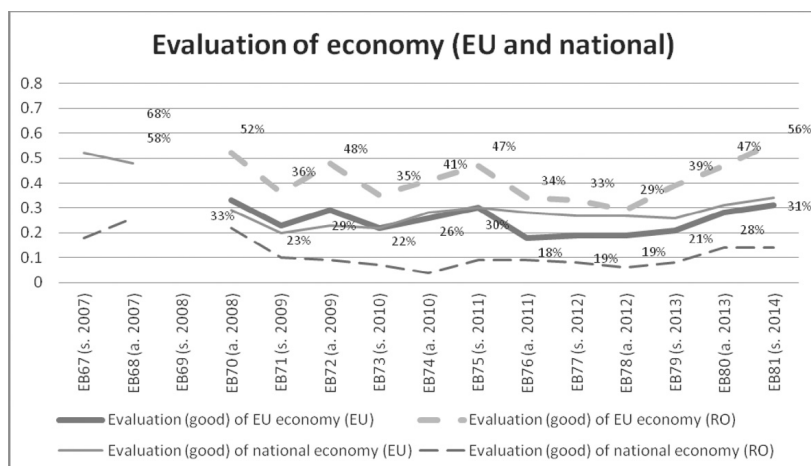Figure 3. Perceptions about the future of the EU in Eurobarometers (EU versus Romania).

The level of optimism of Europeans regarding the future of the European Union increased steadily but moderately in the last two years, with about 7%, while in Romania optimism raised with 12%.

Trying to understand the different paces of change in the various facets of the attitudes of citizens toward the EU, we will take a close look at possible explanations of the somehow particular evolution of attitudes toward EU in Romania. Thus, we will further investigate people's evaluation of national and European economies, and the level of trust in national and European institutions respectively. We believe that a rather negative evaluation of the general "performance" of their country (translated into evaluations of the state of the economy and trust in national institutions), might make people turn for hope to the EU, viewed as a "savior" and a trustworthy guaranty of future prosperity.

The evaluation of national economies has not been too positive for the European countries in general, with a mean of 30% of a good evaluation at the European level; however, the level of positive evaluations of the national economy for Romanian has a mean of only 12%, with a constant level under 10% after 2009, and a slight increase in 2014 (14%). (Figure 4)

Figure 4. Evaluation of the national and European economy in Eurobarometers (EU versus Romania).
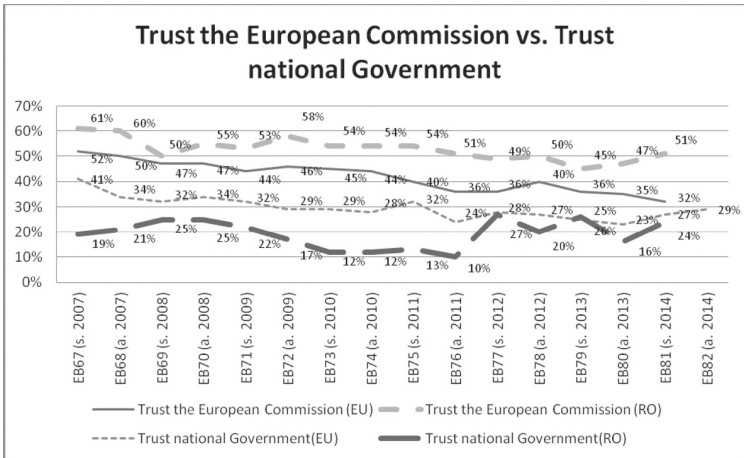

At the same time, Europeans' evaluations of the EU economy match their evaluations of national economies (just slightly lower than the national – 27% compared to 30%), while Romanians' evaluations of the EU economy are far from mirroring their representations of the national economy (an average of 43% compared to 12%). (Figure 4)

This prominent discrepancy between Romania and the rest of the European Union is one of the causes of the much higher level of trust in the European Union and its future; being discouraged to a very high degree by the performance of the national economy, and thus having probably a rather gloom overview of their country's future, Romanians turn to EU for help, hope, and the promise of a better future.

This becomes clear as well from how people appreciate their level of trust in the national and European main institutions, the Government and the Parliament. Europeans trust more the European Commission than they trust the governments of their countries (with a difference of 12%), while Romanians trust more the European Commission than the Romanian Government with 44% of difference. This shows the huge gap that Romania has to overcome, if compared with the average of the European Union. Even though the general trust in the Commission is higher for European as well, a difference of more than 40% basically show that

Romanians have lost almost entirely their faith in the Romanian Government and seek "salvation" to the European institutions. (Figure 5)
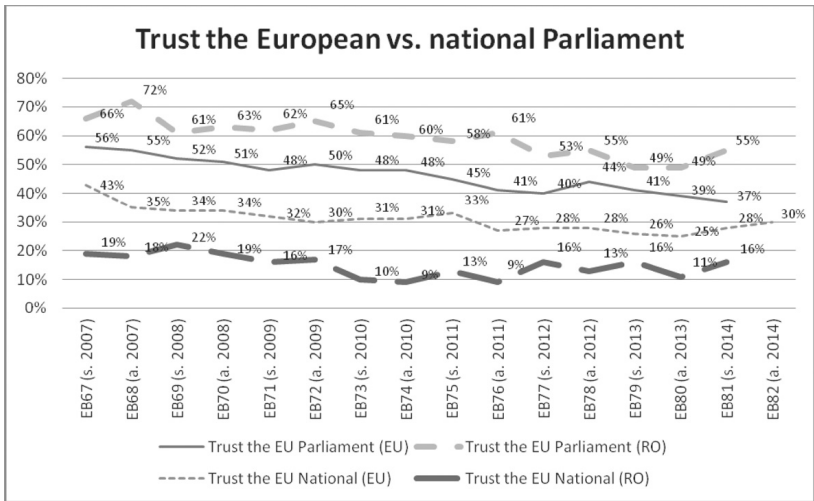
Figure 5. The level of trust in the national vs. European government in Eurobarometers (EU versus Romania).

At the same time, eurobarometers show that Romanians regain to some extent their trust in the government after 2012 (which coincide with national elections), while their trust in the European Commission remained more or less unchanged. Trust in the European and national governments at the level of the EU registered a slightly decreasing trend since 2007.

Similar trends could be observed with regard to national and European Parliaments. Europeans trust more the European Parliament (M=46%) than their own parliaments (M=31%), but the difference of the two levels of trust is rather moderate, if we compare data with the level of Romanians' trust in the parliament of their own country and the European Parliament (15% compared to 59%). (Figure 6)

Figure 6. The level of trust in the national vs. European Parliament in Eurobarometers (EU versus Romania).

The general trend at the European level is a descending one, for both national and European parliaments, with a slight increase in the last year in favor of the national parliaments, while for Romanians both trends are sinuous, with a slight decrease in 2009, and a soft recovery in the last one year and a half.

The very large difference in the levels of trust of European and Romanian institutions provide insights into the way people of Romania perceive the European Union in general, as a counterweight to the weak performance of their own country.

Finally, we will look into the feelings of being European. They have started to be evaluated in eurobarometers since 2010. Generally speaking, Romanians feel less European than the rest of Europe, with a general mean (aggregate data for "Romanian and European", "European and Romanian" and "just European") of 50%, as compared to 57% for the other Europeans. At the same time, the feelings of being "just Romanian" or any kind of European layer of identity are not very stable over time, with sometimes differences of up to 10%. Judging from the aggregate means of available data, Romanians feel slightly less European than the rest of Europe (see Table 1). The explanation is related to the very concept of "European identity": when discussing about identity, strong feelings of belonging cannot be developed in a short period of time, such as the time elapsed since the Romanian integration, which makes people reluctant to feeling European. They probably experience some degree of Europeaness related to the costs-benefits paradigm (the instrumental approach to identity).

Table 1. Feelings of being European (EU versus Romania)

	Just National	Just Romanian	National and European	Romanian and European	European and National	European and Romanian	Just European (EU)	Just European (RO)
EB346 SE (s. 2010)	46%	50%	41%	18%	7%	13%	3%	6%
EB 379 (a. 2011)	39%	44%	46%	41%	8%	13%	4%	9%
EB77 (s. 2012)	38%	41%	49%	33%	6%	10%	3%	7%
EB394 (a. 2012)	38%	40%	49%	46%	7%	6%	3%	2%
EB79 (s. 2013)	38%	41%	49%	32%	7%	7%	3%	7%
EB80 (a.2013)	42%	45%	47%	31%	5%	7%	2%	8%
EB81 (s. 2014)	39%	47%	51%	46%	6%	4%	2%	3%

Summing up, data from eurobarometers over the years suggests that Romanians' attitudes toward the European Union are somewhat more positive than the average of the Europeans, in terms of trust, optimism about the future, picture of the image of the EU, etc. The main explanation for that is the general very low trust of Romanians in their own national institutions, and the general negative evaluation of the Romanian economy. Thus, the citizens of Romania believe that the European Union is the answer to their hopes of personal prosperity and growth, consolidating a myth of the savior, which projects an aura of trust and stability onto the European Union.

6. Discussion and Conclusions

In this paper we argue that feelings and attitudes that Romanians and Europeans hold toward the European Union changed in ways that could be explained and understood under the light of the economic crisis on the one hand and of national economic and political performance on the other hand. When trying to provide explanations about the somehow unpredictable ways people's attitudes changed over the last years, we took into consideration to what extent people's feelings are driven by their evaluations of their own countries. We argue that, by judging the economic and political performance of their country as (rather) negative, people turn to the EU for 'salvation' and promise of future prosperity. This is the reason why, in the context of increasing eurosceptic feelings, Romanians still remain among the most euroenthusiastic European citizens.

Attitudes toward the European Union changed in the last 7 years, especially in the context of the financial distress brought about by the economic crisis. Starting 2009, the general level of distrust at the union level outran the level of trust. However, as far as Romanians are concerned, their trust in the EU never leveled up with the distrust. Even though their enthusiasm diminished, they still perceive the union as a reliable source of stability and hope for the future.

The same holds true for the general image people have of the European Union, dramatically affected since 2009: Europeans in general slightly reconsidered the image of the union in the last two years; however, the somewhat more positive image is still far from what it used to be before 2009. Romanians recovered more visibly, but still never reached the highly positive image they used to hold of the union before 2009. In this context, Europeans are moderately optimistic about the future of the EU, while Romanians are highly optimistic and hopeful.

As far as the trust in institutions is concerned, Romanians' position is highly different of the majority of Europeans. They distrust profoundly the national institutions (Government and Parliament), while, as a form of compensation, they tend to trust more deeply than the rest of the Europeans the European Commission and the European Parliament. For most Europeans, the general level of trust in the Commission and the European Parliament steadily decreased, whereas for Romanians, the level of trust regained (after the turning point of 2009) a positive trend in the last two years. At the same time, it is important to take into consideration the way people evaluate national economies. Even though the average European evaluates poorly his/her own country's economy, Romanians are among the citizens that evaluate their own country economic performance worst; this is probably the reason why they tend to evaluate much better the European economy than the other European citizens in general.

The most unstable indicators of attitudes toward the EU remain the feelings of belonging to the EU, of being Europeans in general. Romanians generally feel less European than the majority of Europeans, which is generally the case for newly integrated countries. In the context of the crisis, these feelings evolved somehow chaotically, with notable differences from one barometer to the next, not only for Romanians, but for Europeans in general as well. The supranational identity is, thus, a very fluid entity, probably dominated by instrumental reasons (benefits of the integration).

Summing up, Romanians' attitudes toward the European Union evolved toward the direction of euroscepticism after 2009, following a general trend at the union's level; nonetheless, they remained and still remain among the most enthusiastic about the future of the European project. Their level of trust in the European institutions and EU in general is negatively correlated with their trust of national economic and political performance. We argue that Romanians still hold a very positive image of the EU, continuously building and consolidating a myth of the Savior: the European Union will "come and save" them, thus offering a hope of economic prosperity and individual well-being.

References

1. Arts, W., & Halman, L. (2006). Identity: The case of the European Union. *Journal of Civil Society*. 2(3), 179-198.
2. Bârgăoanu, A. (2011). *Examenul Schengen. În căutarea sferei publice europene.* Bucharest: Comunicare.ro.
3. Boomgaarden, H. G., Schuck, A. R. T., Elenbaas, M., & de Vreese, C. H. (2011). Mapping EU attitudes: Conceptual and empirical dimensions of Euroscepticism and EU support. *European Union Politics*. 12(2), 241-266.
4. Brewer, M. B. & Gardner (1996). W., Who is this 'we'? Levels of collective identity and self representation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 71, 83-93.
5. Bruter, M. (2005). *Citizens of Europe? The Emergence of a Mass European Identity*. Palgrave: Macmillan.
6. Cinnirella, M. (1997). Towards a European Identity? Interactions between the National and European social identities manifested by university students in Britain and Italy. British *Journal of Social Psychology*. 36, 19-31.
7. Dobrescu, P. (2013). *Lumea cu două viteze. Puterile emergente și țările dezvoltate*. Bucharest: Comunicare.ro.
8. Dobrescu, P., & Durach, F. (2014). Euroscepticism – a sign of a Europe in distress. *Romanian Journal of Communication and Public Relations*. 16(1), 25-40.
9. Duch R. & Taylor M. (1997). Economics and the vulnerability of the pan-European institutions. *Political Behavior*. 19(1), 65–80.
10. Dufek, P. (2009). Fortress Europe or Pace-Setter? Identity and Values in an Intergrating Europe. *Czech Journal of Political Science*. 1, 44-62.
11. Gabel, M. (1998). Public Support for European Integration: An Empirical Test of Five Theories. *The Journal of Politics*. 60(2), 333-354.
12. Gabel, M. & Palmer, H. (1995). Understanding Variation in Public Support for European Integration. *European Journal of Political Research*. 27(1), 3-19.
13. Hewstone M. (1986). *Understanding Attitudes towards the European Community*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
14. Habermas, J. (2012). *Despre constituția Europei*. trad. Paul Gabriel Sandu. Bucharest: Comunicare.ro.
15. Inthorn, S. (2006). What Does It Mean to Be an EU Citizen? How News Media Construct Civic and Cultural Concepts of Europe. *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*. 3(3), 71-90.

16. Kopecky, P. & Mudde, C. (2002). The Two Sides of Euroscepticism. Party Positions on European Integration in East Central Europe. *European Union Politics*. 3(3), 297-326.
17. Lindberg L. N., & Scheingold S. A. (1970). *Europe's Would-be Polity: Patterns of Change in the European Community*, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
18. Lubbers M. & Scheepers P. (2005). Political versus instrumental Euro-scepticism. *European Union Politics*. 6(2), 223-242.
19. Negrea, E. (2011). Tendințe ale Euroscepticismului în România. Observații pe marginea rezultatelor unui sondaj național. In A. Bârgăoanu & E. Negrea. (Eds.). *Comunicarea în Uniunea Europeană. Modele teoretice și aspecte practice* (pp. 167-186). Bucharest: Comunicare.ro.
20. Radu, L. (2012). *Criza economică în Uniunea Europeană. O perspectivă comunicațională.* Bucharest: Comunicare.ro.
21. Risse, T. (2010). *A Community of Europeans?*. London: Cornell University Press.
22. Ruiz Jimenez, A. M., Gorniak, J. J., Kosic, A., Kiss, P., & Kandulla, M. (2004). European and National Identities in EU's Old and New Member States: Ethnic, Civic, Instrumental and Symbolic Components. *European Integration online Papers (EIoP).* 8(11), http://eiop.or.at/eiop/pdf/2004-011.pdf.
23. Schoen, H. (2008). Identity, Instrumental Self-Interest and Institutional Evaluations. Explaining Public Opinion on Common European Policies in Foreign Affairs and Defence. *European Union Politics*. 9(1), 5-29.
24. Spanje, J., & De Vreese (2011). So What´s Wrong With the EU? Motivations Underlying the Eurosceptic Vote in the 2009 European Elections. *European Union Politics.* 12(3), 405-429.
25. Taggart, P. (1998). A Touchstone of Dissent: Euroscepticism in Contemporary Western European Party Systems. *European Journal of Political Research*. 33(3), 363-388.
26. Taggart, P., & Szczerbiak, A. (2001). Party Politics, Political Support and Europe: Mapping Euroscepticism in EU Candidate States of Central and Eastern Europe, *SEI Working Paper No. 46, Opposing Europe Research Network Working Paper No. 6*. Brighton: Sussex European Institute.
27. Udrea G. (2014). *European Identity in Intercultural Context*. Bucharest: Tritonic.
28. Weiler, J. H. (1999). *The Constitution of Europe. 'Do the New Clothes Have an Emperor?' and other essays on European Integration*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
29. Wintle, M. J. (2005). European Identity: A Threat to the Nation?. *Europe's Journal of Psychology*. 1(2), http://ejop.psychopen.eu/article/view/363/html.

Francesca ARCOSTANZO*
Alice PULVIRENTI**

When News Goes Online. A Cross-Media Analysis of Editorial Logics and Consumers' Feedbacks in the Printed, Online and Facebook Versions of the Italian Newspaper *la Repubblica*

Abstract

As a consequence of the advent and diffusion of new media, one of the most accredited hypotheses in the realm of mediatization theory has been that the essential prerequisites of mediatization would have slowly started to disappear. On the contrary, we hypothesize that the unprecedented knowledge about users' preferences given to media companies would be reflected in the logics of news production, which would shift from being guided by internal logics and standards of newsworthiness to be driven by an audience-oriented commercial logic. Therefore, we expect storytelling techniques to prevail in online news production, with *soft news* becoming progressively prevalent moving from traditional to new media. We address our hypothesis performing a cross-media analysis of the Italian newspaper *la Repubblica*, investigating both the different editorial logics underlying the selection and framing of contents as well as the relationship between the general news frame and the level of readers' engagement. In our findings, *soft news* prevails regardless of the platform, also following a positive trend as we move towards Facebook. Moreover, *soft news* seems to be able to foster a higher level of users' engagement as expressed in terms of likes and shares, while *hard news* prevails in commenting activities.

Keywords: mediatization, hybridization, Facebook, media logics, news consumption

1. Introduction

Since the early 1990s, the growing interest in *mediatization theory* as a new research field of political communication has contributed to shift the attention from the analysis of media contents and their influence on the audience, to the study of media platforms and their institutional and technological essence. Given the multifaceted nature of *mediatization* as a cross-field phenomenon which "simultaneously facilitates centrifugal, centripetal, homogenizing and differentiating processes" (Hepp, Hjarvard, & Lundby, 2010, p. 226), the concept has been used by scholars both to refer to those changes affecting media and their modes of communication as well as to interpret the wide range of transformations resulting from the growing media influence on other cultural and societal spheres.

With regard to the different emphasis accorded either to media as institutions in their own right or to the role they play as societal agents of cultural production, in *mediatization theory* we might identify two main approaches (Couldry & Hepp, 2013): the *institutionalist* (see Altheide & Snow, 1979 among others) and the *social-constructivist* (see Krotz, 2009; Hepp, 2012 among others).

* University of Milan, Italy, f.arcostanzo@gmail.com.
** University of Milan, Italy, alice.pulvirenti01@libero.it.

From an institutionalist perspective *mediatization* refers to "the forms, practices and experiences associated with the dominant media and institutions of the broadcast era, and particularly television" (Hoskins, 2009, p. 148). Within the institutionalist tradition, media should thus be considered as an independent institution with its own set of rules and practices, whose growing influence on different fields of society determines an adaptation of external social actors and institutions to *media logic*, intended as the process through which media present and transmit information (Altheide & Snow, 1979; 1988; 1991). The concept of mediatization as coined by institutionalists is particularly useful for analyzing the transformation of many disparate social and cultural processes into forms or formats suitable for media representation. Nevertheless, the linearity of the process described has been widely questioned during the last years, becoming the subject of different criticisms that could be brought back to four main reasons. First of all, the monolithic definition proposed seems not to be working for capturing the multi-polar nature of society (Bourdieu, 1993). Secondly, the institutionalist conceptualization of mediatization appears to be limited in time, applicable only since the moment in which media have become independent institutions (since 1980s according to Hjarvard, 2008). Thirdly, the institutionalist approach lacks in considering how the rise of a new digital network space of communication has contributed to the redistribution of assets and to the relative distribution of rules and resources characterizing the logics of traditional media (Jensen, 2013). Finally, the reference to a *single media logic* as if operating in one direction and at the same speed seems to be reductive, as underlined even more by the growth of the Internet (Couldry, 2008).

Furthermore, *social-constructivists* refuse to acknowledge media as a single institution, attributing to them a symbolic power through which they would not only influence what social actors and audiences do, but first and foremost their ability to describe social life (Block, 2013). Mediatization is here conceived as a "process of communicative construction of socio-cultural realities enacted by different and various media" (Couldry & Hepp, 2013, p. 196). Although conceptualizing mediatization as a process resulting from different intervening and intertwined factors the social-constructivist approach has the merit to grasp the multi-polar character of contemporary society, such a definition seems to be too blurring if one wants to capture macro-level dynamics (Hjarvard 2008).

In recent years, several scholars (Altheide, 2013; Hjarvard, 2008; Jensen, 2013) have shed light on the necessity to operate a *brainstorming* on the concept of mediatization in order to find a common thread between the linearity of the institutionalist approach and the too much blurring conceptualization given by social-constructivists (Couldry & Hepp, 2013).

2. Commercial logics, new media and hybridization: towards a "third way" in mediatization studies?

With the rise of web 2.0 and the increasing globalization of media systems since the late 1990s, scholars have started to call for a new conceptualization of mediatization which takes into account both the structuring role of the media as institutions of cultural production as well as the reflexivity of media logics reproduced in – and reshaped through – social interactions (Altheide, 2013; Hjarvard, 2008; Jensen, 2013). This conception of media can be particularly powerful to investigate how the increasing hybridization in the production of newspaper contents, from a traditionally printed form to their by now normalized spread out in the world of social media, is eventually affecting the process of selection and framing of political news.

With regards to the advent and diffusion of new media, since the beginning of 2000s one of the most discussed hypotheses was that the essential prerequisites of mediatization would have slowly started to disappear, with new media exerting a sort of *dis-mediatizing effect* (Schulz, 2004). This hypothesis is widely discussed by Schulz (2004), who in his article *Reconstructing mediatization as an analytical concept,* identifies three possible future scenarios: an optimistic, a sceptical and a moderate one. According to the *optimistic answer*, new media increasingly de-massify and individualize communication (Castells, 2004), thus contributing to enhance users self-selection and self-determination, in contrast to the standardization of information carried out by television. From a mediatization perspective, the increasing de-standardization and selectivity produced by the internet in the long-run would bring to a loss of dependency on media gate-keeping power, with no more mediation and adaptation to the media logic by social actors. On the other hand, according to the *sceptical answer* the rise of new media simply determines new modes of mediatization. Filtering effects would thus remain, making a full autonomy impossible for users, while new forms of standardization would be reproduced through the creation of new languages. Finally, the *moderate answer* imagines a future scenario characterized by a convergence between old and new media. Moreover according to this view the demand for entertainment and infotainment (the so-called *soft news*) is expected to expand much more than the demand for *hard news*, thus reproducing in the consumption of online news the same standardization and mediation effects characterizing old media.

The moderate answer proposed by Schulz (2004, p. 12) has the merit to outline a conception of new media as "nothing but hybrid versions, or reconfigurations, of the conventional media" On the other hand, if the moderate scenario might be still appropriate to describe the present situation in most of Western countries, we expect that the strategic evaluation of media affordances characterizing on-line platforms such as Facebook would affect editorial logics in a way that channels them towards the production of ever more popular or audience-oriented contents. The standardization and mediation effects characterizing the old media would thus not only be reproduced, but also amplified while moving from traditional to new media.

The review of the concept of media logic operated by Landerer (2013) might be useful to clarify our hypothesis. According to, in fact, media companies are mainly driven not by one, but by two competing logics: an audience-oriented *commercial logic* and a normatively oriented *public logic*. In the normative logic (see Bourdieu, 1999), social or public responsibility "takes place over market considerations: what is important is not *how much* a media company sells, but *what* it produces, and what it *should* contribute to a democratic society's public debate" (Landerer, 2013, p. 245). In the commercial logic (Hamilton, 2004; McManus, 1994), "media actors are mainly market-driven and economic considerations are the dominant principles that guide news selection, organization, and production" (Landerer, 2013, p. 243). According to Landerer (2013), the normative aspects of news production sometimes, though not always, clash with the efficiency considerations summarized under commercial logic (p. 245):

Owing to economic constraints, it is likely that commercial logic is stronger in privately organized than in public news companies, which have more scope to implement the normative standards developed under the concept of public logic. But in a globalized world – whereby globalization refers to economic integration and technological progress – profit-oriented media companies act as large transnational firms that compete with public news organizations for airtime […]. In this process, commercial and public logics enter into

direct competition with each other, not only among different companies, but also within one company's limited temporal and financial resources.

Online publishing gives news media unprecedented knowledge about users' preferences and, as a consequence, unprecedented opportunities to instantly 'feed' the audience what they apparently want rather than guessing or knowing what they liked last month (Strömbäck & Karlsson, 2011, p. 648). Thus, while only a minority of users may be actively attempting to influence and participate in news production processes, all users of online news media may be indirectly involved through their choice of online news stories (Landerer, 2013, p. 648). In this regard, our hypothesis is that the increased influence of users' preferences may shift the logic of news production from being driven by internal logics and standards of news-worthiness, to be driven more by an audience-oriented commercial logic. As a consequence, we expect storytelling techniques such as ''simplification, polarization, intensification, personalization, visualization, stereotyping, and particular ways of framing the news'' (Strömbäck & Esser, 2009, p. 213) to become prevailing in online news production, with *soft news* becoming progressively more prevalent moving from traditional to new media. Finally, we expect that the changes in editorial logics would be reflected in the way in which users engage with contents, provide feedbacks or reproduce typical media frames and logics in comments.

3. Research questions and hypotheses

If considered in light of the increasing hybridization of news contents, this renewed theoretical perspective opens up a space for two main RQs:

RQ1: Does the switching of contents from offline to online/social media platforms determine a popularization of media logic(s)?

RQ2: Do the specific affordances characterizing an online platform affect the way users engage with contents?

According to the theoretical framework outlined in the introduction of this article, the hypotheses driving our research are the following:

HI1: As regards logics of news production, we expect to find a higher percentage of soft news: (1) moving from the offline to the online version of the newspaper *la Repubblica* and (2) moving from the online version of the newspaper to its Facebook fan-page.

HI2: As regards logics of news consumption, we expect to find, on average, a higher level of users' *engagement* associated to soft news.

HI3: On the overall Facebook we also expect a higher spread of soft news with respect to the hard ones, measured through the level of users' engagement.

Furthermore, we are interested in investigating if there is any specific pattern associated to the activities of *liking*, *sharing* and *commenting*.

4. Methodology

4.1. Data collection

In order to address our research questions and test our hypotheses, we randomly chose a one-week period of analysis[i] during which:

1. We have collected all the daily printed copies of the newspaper *la Repubblica*[ii], the 2nd most widespread newspaper[iii] in Italy and the 1st one in the ranking of newspaper websites[iv]*;*

2. We have archived all the homepages of the online version of *la Repubblica*[v] through *The Way Back Machine*[vi];

3. We have collected all posts published on *la Repubblica* Facebook fanpage as well as their relative engagement metrics through *Netvizz*, a data collection and extraction application that allows researchers to export data in standard file formats from different sections of the Facebook social networking service (Rieder, 2013).

4.1.1. Offline and online newspaper

In order to investigate which logics and standards of newsworthiness drive the selection of contents from a top-down perspective, we decided to take into consideration only articles appearing in the offline front pages, thus excluding any other news inside the journal. Our intention was to try to apply the same criteria even to the online version of the journal, since our main goal was properly that of a cross-media comparison, but, unfortunately, we could not find in the literature any satisfying reference to a correct definition of what can be considered as the equivalent of an offline front page in the online version of a newspaper. In order to overcome this problem, we thus decided to classify every day the same number of articles we found on the printed version, simply starting from the top of the page.

4.1.2. Repubblica's Facebook fan-page

Through the Netvizz application (Rieder, 2013) we have downloaded a dataset containing all the information and engagement metrics for each post published in the selected days on *la Repubblica* Facebook fan-page. In particular, for each post we have been able to retrieve: 1) the publishing date; 2) the URL of the article published in the post; 3) the number of likes, shares, comments and level of engagement gathered by each post. Although only the metrics indicated at points 1) 2) and 3) have been taken into account for the purposes of this article, it is important to know that Netvizz allows us to obtain as well information about 4) the type of post (video, link, picture) and 5) the text of the post message[vii].

4.2. Method

In order to be able to grasp both top-down news production logics as well as bottom-up patterns of news consumption, we decided to analyze our collected data combining a qualitative approach focused on news frames with a more quantitative use of numerical indicators such as *engagement metrics* and their components (*likes*, *shares*, *comments*). More specifically, we firstly performed a *qualitative content analysis* of all news articles present in our dataset in order to investigate how do editorial logics may or may not change across the different media platforms on which *la Repubblica* is edited.

In the second part of our study we have therefore crossed the results coming from our content analysis with Facebook engagement metrics, an operation that allows us to see more in depth which kind of news frame, whether hard or soft, do stimulate higher (or more active) levels of users' reactions. To complete the analysis, we also experimentally used additional engagement metrics retrieved through the *Like Scraper* (see below) in order to compare news consumption on *la Repubblica* fan-page with their subsequent spread across the overall Facebook.

4.2.1. Qualitative content analysis of hard versus soft news frames

The underlying idea in our research design is to understand whether an increasing hybridization of the information environment could give boost to a likewise increasing mediatization in news production and consumption. In this regard we decided to look at the concept of hard vs. soft news as a proxy of mediatization, thus classifying our sample of 628 articles (see table 1.1) as *hard, medium* or *soft news*[viii]. Our content analysis of news frames has then been performed adopting a qualitative approach through which we induced our classification of contents relying on the operationalization of hard vs. soft news given by Reinemann, Stenier, Scherr and Legnante (2012). In their review of the concept, the authors propose a multi-dimensional operationalization that takes into account the *topic*, *content*, *focus* and *style* of news:

> The more news item is politically relevant, the more it reports in a thematic way, focuses on the societal consequences of events, is impersonal and unemotional in its style, the more it can be regarded as hard news. The more a news items is not politically relevant, the more it reports in an episodic way, focuses on individual consequences of events, is personal and emotional in style, the more it can be regarded as soft news (Reinemann et al. 2012, p. 14).

As far as the topic dimension is concerned, a crucial role has been given by Reinemann and colleagues to the *political relevance* of news, operationalized as the reference to *societal actors, decision-making authorities, policy plan* and *actors' concerns.*

Even though we agree with Reinemann and colleagues in considering the political relevance of an article as particularly crucial for its classification as hard vs. soft, we found that his operationalization was somehow too strict for the purposes of our research. In particular, we realized that focusing mainly on the feature of political relevance would have led us to miss some important information concerning news, whose topic is not related to politics such as those treating chronicles or current events. In fact, as resulted by preliminary analysis on a sub-set of articles, following Reinemann and collaborators (2012), all our articles except political ones would have been classified as soft news, i.e. included articles about important current events and reported with a sacerdotal and serious frame. For these reasons we decided to introduce a third category, that of *medium news*, in order to be able to grasp grey zones and blurring boundaries in our classification of news. Furthermore, as we believed another crucial aspect to be included in our investigation is that related to the popularization of political contents entailed in the concept of mediatization (Mazzoleni & Sfardini, 2009), we decided to add two more indicators of focus and style, namely: 1) the prevailing *reference to ideological positions and actions* versus *scandals or gossip* concerning the actors involved; *2)* the *serious* versus *ironic* style of reporting adopted by the journalist.

According to Mazzoleni and Sfardini (2009), two of the major outcomes within the process of *mediatization* of society are indeed the increasing *spectacularization* and *personalization*

of politics, which seem to have led to phenomena such as *commodification of politics* or *lifestyle politics* (Bennet & Entman, 2001). In light of such considerations, our classification of contents basically relies on the three following categories:

Hard news (2): the more a news is politically relevant, framed in a thematic way, focused on the societal consequences of events and on the ideological positions and substantive actions of actors involved, reported in an impersonal, unemotional and serious style, the more it can be regarded as hard news.

Medium news (1): the more a news is connected to chronicles or current events, framed in a thematic way, focused on the societal consequences of events and on the ideological positions and substantive actions of actors involved, reported in an impersonal, unemotional and serious style, the more it can be regarded as medium news. We consider medium news as well those news that are politically relevant, but framed in an episodic way, focused on the individual consequences of events and on gossip and aspects of the private life of actors involved, reported in a more personal, emotional and ironic style.

Soft news (0): the less a news is politically relevant, but framed in an episodic way, focused on the individual consequences of events and on gossip and aspects of the private life of actors involved, reported in a personal, emotional and ironic style, the more it can be regarded as soft news.

4.2.2. Engagement metrics

In the second part of our work we aim at investigating the diffusion of news contents on Facebook. More specifically, we are interested in analysing the level of *engagement* driven respectively by soft and hard news. In Facebook marketing, engagement is a composite measure constituted by the sum of three indicators: 1) the number of *likes;* 2) the number of *shares;* 3) the number of *comments.*

We are interested in analysing the relationship between hard and soft news and their correspondent ability to drive users' engagement on *la Repubblica* Facebook fan-page.

Yet, we are interested as well in understanding the further diffusion of contents throughout the overall Facebook, therefore including in this second step all likes, shares and comments gathered by a given news not only on *la Repubblica* fan-page but also on other Facebook pages (i.e. personal profiles, groups and other fan-pages). To do so, we have used the *Like Scraper tool*[ix], a script which directly queries the Facebook application and retrieves the number of likes, shares and clicks for any given URL, querying all the URLs of the articles published on *la Repubblica* Facebook fan-page. Even though extremely useful, the only limit of the Like Scraper tool is that it is able to retrieve the number of like, share and comments from any URL except for those of Facebook posts, from which it is still unable to extract the same metrics. Therefore, in order to compare the level of engagement gathered by news shared on *la Repubblica* fan-page with that obtained on the overall Facebook, we have excluded from our dataset all posts without any external link, while performing content analysis of all[x] the other articles.

In Table1.1 and Table1.2, we present, respectively, the number of articles on which content analysis has been performed, by type of support (Table 1.1.) as well as their different engagement metrics per day, both on *la Repubblica* fan-page and throughout the overall Facebook (Table 1.2.). At a first glance, we can also see that the diffusion of news on Facebook goes way beyond the pure consumption of news on *la Repubblica* fan-page.

Table 1.1. Summary of analysed data, by type of support.

	11/05/2015	12/05/2015	13/05/2015	14/05/2015	15/05/2015	16/05/2015	17/05/2015	Total
Offline	11	12	11	13	10	13	12	82
Online	11	12	11	13	10	13	12	82
Facebook	51	59	63	54	63	46	50	386
Total	73	83	85	80	83	72	74	550

Table 1.2. Comparison between the daily total number of likes, shares, comments and level of engagement gathered by articles on *la Repubblica* fan-page and throughout the overall Facebook.

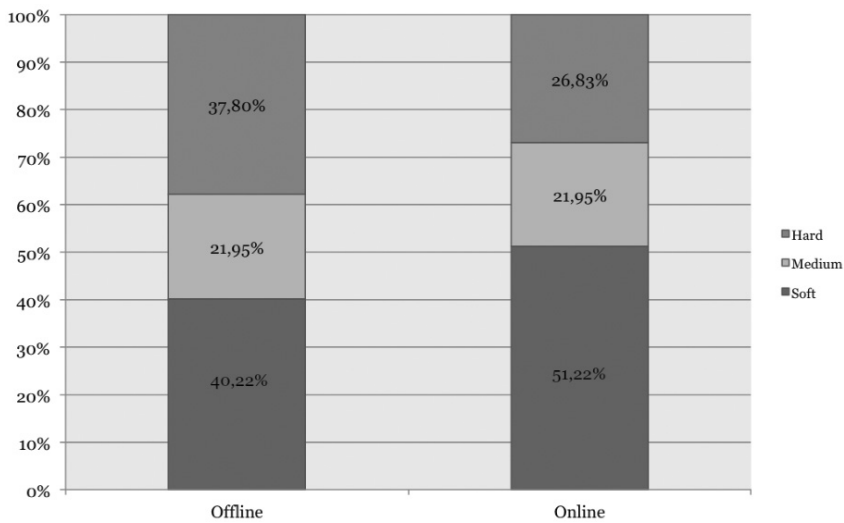|	Like		Share		Comments		Engagement	
	Repubblica	All	Repubblica	All	Repubblica	All	Repubblica	All
11/05/2015	64591	194467	22793	48577	12297	54876	99681	297920
12/05/2015	72798	202526	45148	66376	11070	80395	129016	349297
13/05/2015	54162	106555	24526	39066	8250	29286	86938	174907
14/05/2015	77416	195569	37011	59648	13026	55093	127453	310310
15/05/2015	81635	171482	26480	50370	15363	45477	123478	267329
16/05/2015	81550	133237	23485	36876	14113	28908	119148	199021
17/05/2015	87709	183838	23335	46355	9005	31807	120049	262000
Total	519861	1187674	202778	347268	83124	325842	805763	1860784

4.3. Results

In the following paragraphs our findings are presented. First of all, logics of news production are investigated, through a comparison between the offline and online front page of the newspaper *la Repubblica*. Secondly, we analyse users' activities (liking, sharing, commenting) on *la Repubblica* Facebook fan-page in relation to the different types of news (hard, medium, soft) present there, in order to identify the different patterns of news' consumption. Finally, we suggest a comparison between the consumption of news on *la Repubblica* Facebook fan-page and their diffusion across the overall Facebook, in order to test whether our initial assumptions are confirmed even when moving from the news source to the overall network.

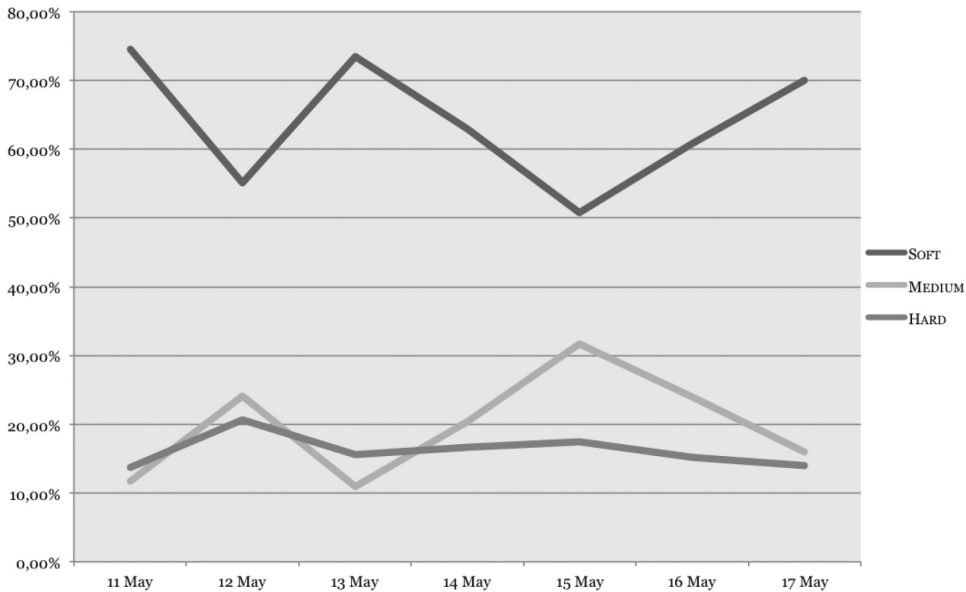#### 4.3.1. News distribution: offline, online and Facebook

Figure 1.1. displays a comparison between the percentage of hard, medium and soft news published on the offline and online version of the newspaper *la Repubblica*. As we can see from the graph, in the offline version of the newspaper the more represented category in our weekly sample is the one of soft news (40.22%), followed by hard (37.80%) and medium news (21.95%). Moving to the online version of the newspaper an even wider space is given to the category soft news, which with a percentage of 51.22% includes the majority of published articles. Even in this case, soft news is followed respectively by the categories of hard (26.83%) and medium (21.95%) news.

Figure 1.1. News production by type of content on the online and offline versions of the newspaper *la Repubblica*, % of the weekly news.

In Figure 1.2., the same analysis is reproduced with regards to the articles shared by *la Repubblica*'s newsroom on the newspapers Facebook fan-page. As we can see from the graph, also in this case a wider space is given by far too soft news (63.73% out of the weekly total). Differently from the offline and online versions of the newspaper, in the analysed week, medium news occupy a wider space on the Facebook fan page (19.95%) if compared to hard news (16.32%). Yet, while the prominence of soft news is undeniable, the difference between medium and hard news should be taken with care and further investigated in future research.

Figure 1.2. News distribution by type of news on the Facebook fan-page of the newspaper *la Repubblica*, % of the weekly news.

4.3.2. News consumption: liking, sharing and commenting on
la Repubblica *Facebook fan-page*

In the analysis of news consumption, our main hypothesis is that production logics would be reflected in users' preferences, expressed through the activities of liking, commenting and sharing. Moreover, we are interested in identifying eventual specific patterns characterizing the three activities. In order to weight our results, instead of the total count of likes, shares and comments, we have used for each metric the weighted average per day (e.g. total number of likes per soft news / total number of soft news published per day).

Figure 1.3. displays our results for what concerns users' *liking* behaviour. As we can see from the graph the general expected trend is confirmed, with soft news gathering the higher number of likes (1563 likes, average per day), followed by medium news (1207) and hard news (671), with 1347 being the average number of likes per day (calculated on the total of news published, regardless of the type of news).   The same trend is confirmed with regards to users' sharing behaviour, with soft news driving the higher number of shares (655 shares, average per day), followed by medium news (347) and hard news (235), with 525 being the average number of shares per day (see Figure 1.4.).

Figure 1.3. Number of likes by type of news on *la Repubblica* Facebook fan-page, weighted average per day (counts).
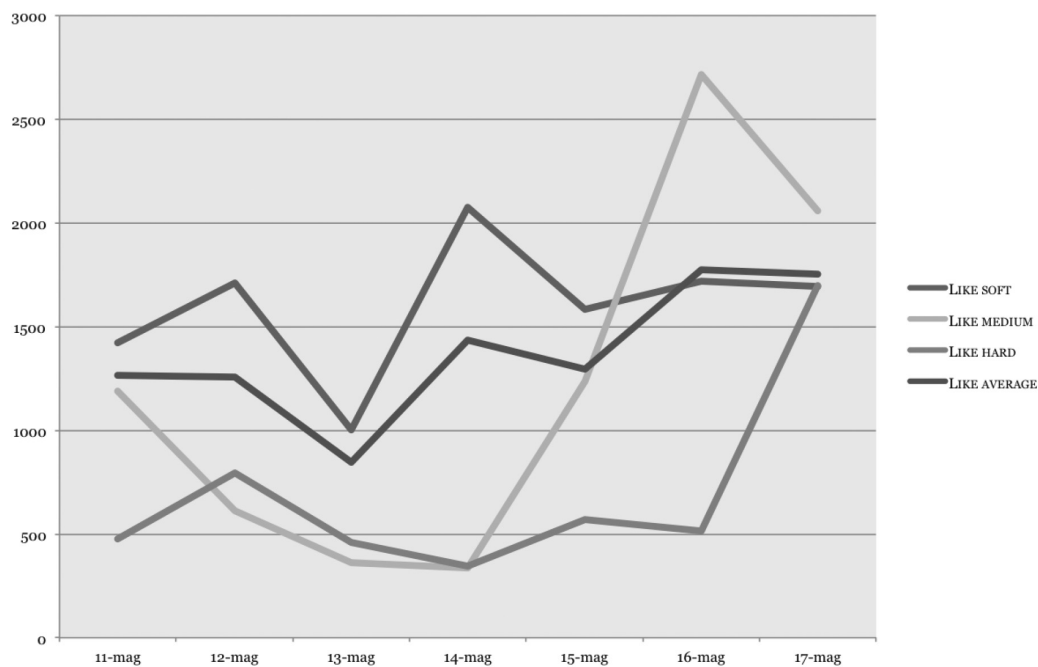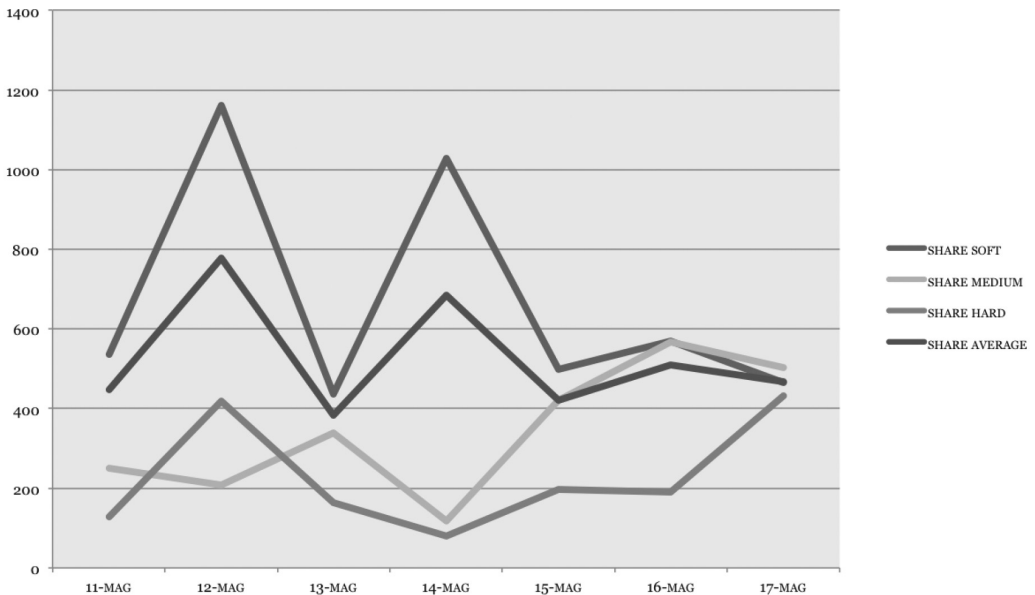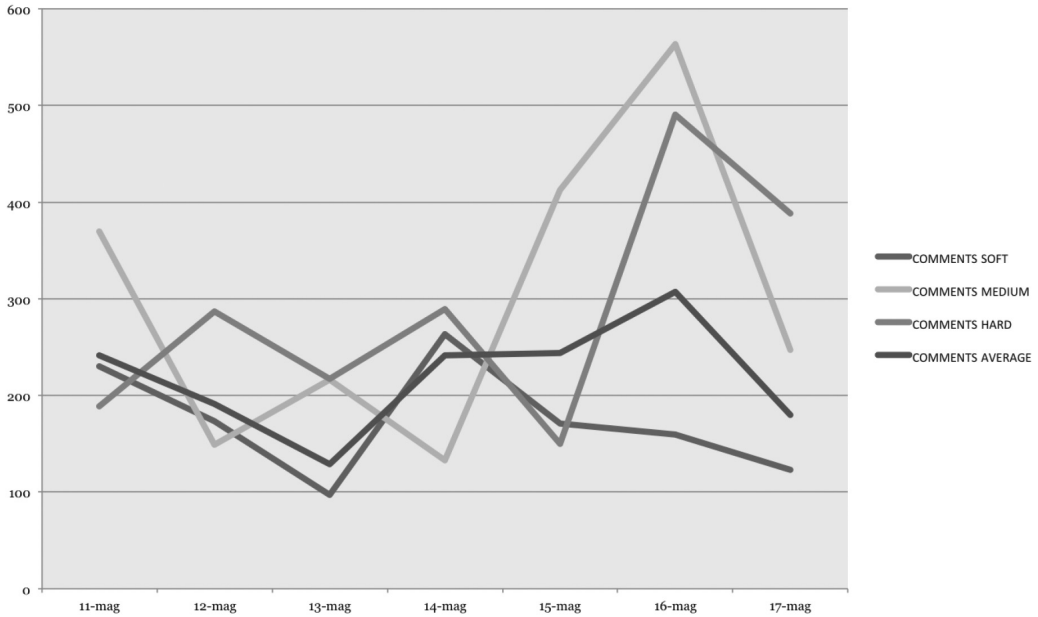
Figure 1.4. Number of shares by type of news on *la Repubblica* Facebook fan-page, weighted average per day (counts).

The analysis of users' commenting behaviours presents different results, which deserve a special consideration (see Figure 1.5.). In fact, while our hypothesis about users' preference for soft news is confirmed by their liking and sharing activities, in their commenting activities readers seem to adopt a different logic. As suggested by the graph, while analysing commenting activities users' preference seems to go to medium (308 comments, average per day) and hard (275 comments, average per day) news, while soft news gather "only" an average of 171 comments per day, with 215 being the average number of comments per day[xi]. Although further research are needed to confirm the existence of a specific pattern characterizing users' commenting activity, our results suggest that it relies on the activation of a different logic which gives preference to hard and medium news instead of to soft news.
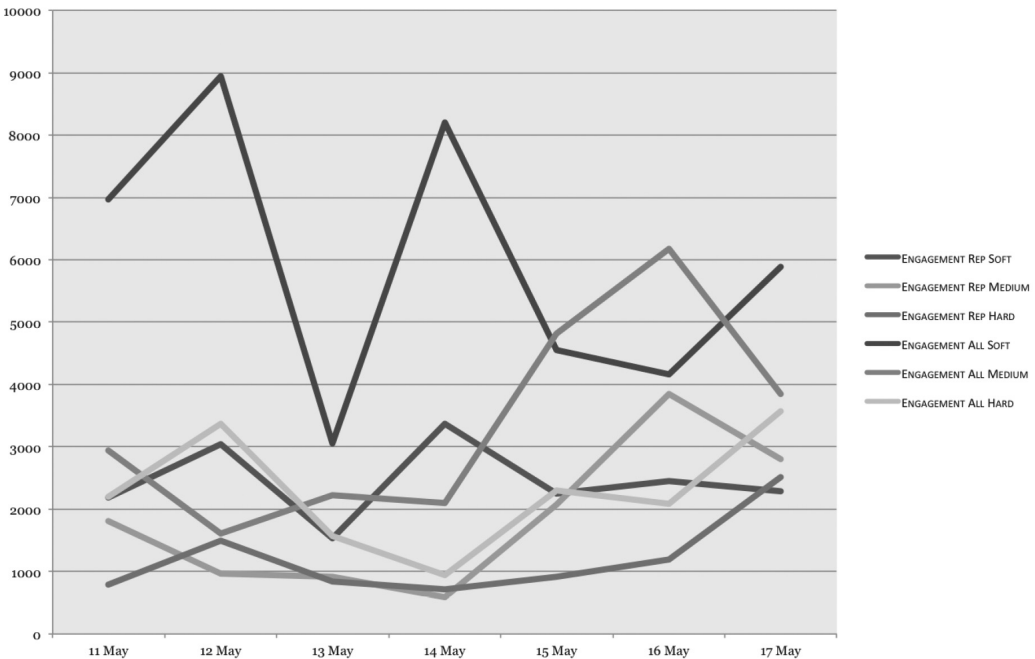
Figure 1.5. Number of comments by type of news on *la Repubblica* Facebook fan page, weighted average per day (counts).

4.3.3. *News consumption: engagement trends in the overall Facebook*

Figure 1.6. displays the results of our comparison between the level of total engagement (sum of likes, shares and comments) gathered by each type of news on *la Repubblica* Facebook fan-page and in their spread on the overall Facebook. As suggested by the picture, even moving from *la Repubblica* Facebook fan-page to the overall social network, soft news remain the type of news which stimulates an higher level of users' engagement (2390 engagement actions, average per day), followed by medium (1863) and hard (1181) news, with 2087 being the average number of engagement actions per day.

Figure 1.6. Engagement actions by type of news: a comparison between *la Repubblica* fan-page and on the overall Facebook, weighted average per day (counts).

Although the relationship between the publication of news on *la Repubblica* Facebook fan-page and their diffusion on the overall Facebook is only sketched in this article, it is interesting to see how the level of engagement gathered by news on the overall Facebook is more than the double of the one they are able to stimulate in the platform on which they are originally published, *la Repubblica* Facebook fan-page (Table 1.3.).

Table 1.3. Engagement actions by type of news: a comparison between *la Repubblica* fan-page and the overall Facebook, weighted average per day (counts).

	soft news	medium news	hard news	average
La Repubblica fanpage	2390	1863	1181	2087
Overall Facebook	5961	3559	2302	4821

As a consequence, even from this first analysis we can see how, in the changed logics of news diffusion and consumption which characterize the era of social media, readers tend to read and get engaged with news not only through the news platforms, but even more through news' appearances on their Facebook timeline, e.g. because shared by users' Facebook friends. What instead doesn't change, even when moving to the overall Facebook, is users' preference for soft news, confirmed by the higher level of engagement associated with this type of content.

5. Conclusion

In contrast to the standardization of information carried out by traditional mass media, the most accredited assumption with regard to the advent and diffusion of new media attributes to them a *dis-mediatizing effect,* which would lead to an increasing de-massification and individualization of communication thus resulting in a progressive wearing away of the essential prerequisites of mediatization. In light of this hypothesis, the unprecedented power of self-selection and self-determination attributed to users by social media platforms' affordances would result in the over-coming of media dependency, with social actors no more adapting to overwhelming media logic.

We hypothesized that the unprecedented knowledge about users' preferences given to media companies by social media affordances would have been reflected in a shift of the logics of news production, which from being guided by internal logics and standards of newsworthiness would now increasingly, be driven by an audience-oriented commercial logic.

Three research hypotheses have therefore been formulated in order to empirically investigate this general assumption. With regard to the logics of news production, findings seem to confirm the existence of a progressive popularization of contents when moving from the offline to the Facebook version of a newspaper (Figure. 1.1. and Figure 1.2.). Our analysis of the Facebook fan-page suggest that the same effect would affect as well the logics of news consumption, with soft news being the more liked and shared by readers (Figure 1.3. and Figure 1.4.). Albeit further researches are needed in order to generalize our results, in this study we have therefore been able to provide empirical evidence for the existence of an audience-oriented commercial logic driving online news production, as theorized by Landerer (2013). Nevertheless, although trends in the overall level of *engagement* display a clear preference manifested by readers towards soft contents, our results suggest that a different logic might stand behind *commenting* activities (Figure 1.5.).

Even though our research hypotheses have been confirmed by the empirical analysis of our collected data, it is worthy to underline the presence of some methodological limits. First of all, although we are aware of the importance of inter-coder reliability in order to assure the validity of qualitative content analysis, we did not have the possibility to train a group of coders working on our analyses. In order to try to overcome this limit, we performed together the content analysis to reach the highest level of consensus at least among us. The second methodological limit concerns the introduction of the category of *medium news*. As specified in our methodological section, this category has been used to include both news that are not politically relevant but framed in a way that is typical of hard news, as well as news that are politically relevant but framed in a way that is typical of soft ones. Although useful for our purpose, the introduction of this category as well as its composition should probably be subject of a more precise analytical reflection. Finally, in the content analysis of the articles published on *la Repubblica* Facebook fan page we did not take into account the *post messages* accompanying the news, which might be useful to better understand editorial logics of news framing on Facebook.

Together with the overcoming of the methodological limits outlined so far, the results presented in this article suggest at least two possible directions for future researches in the field. First of all, the different mechanism which seems to characterize users' commenting behaviour should definitely be further explored, both empirically and theoretically. In this regard, future researches should combine engagement metrics with a deeper analysis of readers' com-

ments and their interactional dynamics, in order to grasp how media logic(s) are reflected in users' online behaviour. Finally, the last section of this article has outlined how more and more people are consuming and getting engaged with online contents not only through newspapers official fan-pages, but first and foremost grasping news from the flow of 'suggested posts' in their Facebook timelines. Although methodologically challenging, further researches should definitely take it into account in order to truly understand how the advent of social media has revolutionized – and is still revolutionizing – the way in which people get informed.

6. Acknowledgements

Notes

[i] from 11/05/2015 to 17/05/2015.

[ii] *La Repubblica* is an Italian daily newspaper, founded in 1976 in Rome by *Gruppo Editoriale L'Espresso*, led by Eugenio Scalfari, Carlo Caracciolo and *Arnoldo Mondadori Editore*. Despite at its origins it had a radical-socialist orientation, in the following years it has progressively shifted towards a moderate centre-left political stance.

[iii] Data available at: http://www.adsnotizie.it/_dati_certificati.asp?azione=filtra, accessed on 15/05/2015.

[iv] Data available at: http://www.similarweb.com/country_category/italy/news_and_media/newspapers accessed on 15/05/2015.

[v] data available at: http://web.archive.org/web/*/repubblica.ithttp://web.archive.org/web/*/repubblica.it, accessed on 24/05/2015.

[vi] As contents in the homepage are constantly updated throughout the day, before starting our data collection we made a pre-test after which we decided to archive the online homepages at 9:00 a.m. every day, since we verified that this was the moment in which contents online were better comparable with those published on the offline newspaper.

[vii] For complete information about Netvizz affordances and functioning see Rieder, 2013.

[viii] For the purpose of this work, we took headlines as unit of analysis.

[ix] https://wiki.digitalmethods.net/Dmi/ToolLikeScraper accessed on 07/06/2015.

[x] In addition, we have excluded from our content analysis other 7 articles which links were not anymore available at the time of the analysis.

[xi] Although it does not change our overall results, we have noticed an anomaly in liking and commenting users' behavior manifested by a peak of users' engagement with soft news on May 16. We have double-checked our data in order to assess the cause of the anomaly and individuated that the irregularity is due to the incredible amount of likes and shares gathered by the article "Luxembourg, gay marriage for the Prime Minister: first time in Europe", which according to our coding scheme we believe to have classified correctly as medium news.

References

1. Altheide, D. L. (2013). Media logic, social control, and fear. *Communication Theory*, *23*(3), 223-238.
2. Altheide, D.L. (1987). Reflections: Ethnographic content analysis. *Qualitative sociology*, *10*(1), 65-77.
3. Altheide, D.L., & Snow, R.P. (1991). *Media worlds in the postjournalism era*, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers.

4. Altheide, D.L., & Snow, R. P. (1988). Toward a theory of mediation. *Communication yearbook*, *11*, 194-223.

5. Altheide, D.L., & Snow, R.P. (1979). *Media logic*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.

6. Bennett, W.L., & Entman, R.M. (2001). *Mediated politics: Communication in the future of democracy*. Cambridge University Press.

7. Block, E. (2013). A culturalist approach to the concept of the mediatization of politics: The age of "media hegemony". *Communication Theory*, *23*(3), 259-278.

8. Bourdieu, P. (1993). *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature.* New York: Columbia University Press.

9. Bourdieu, P. (1999). *On television.* New York: The New Press.

10. Castells, M. (2007). Communication, power and counter-power in the network society. *International journal of communication*, *1*(1), 29, 238-66.

11. Castells, M. (2004). *The network society. A cross-cultural perspective.* Massachusetts: Edward Elgar.

12. Couldry, N. (2008). Mediatization or mediation? Alternative understandings of the emergent space of digital storytelling. *New Media & Society*, *10*(3), 373-391.

13. Couldry, N., & Hepp, A. (2013). Conceptualizing mediatization: Contexts, traditions, arguments. *Communication Theory*, *23*(3), 191-202.

14. Hamilton, J. (2004). *All the news that's fit to sell: How the market transforms information into news*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

15. Hepp, A. (2012). Mediatization and the 'molding force' of the media. *Communications*, *37*(1), 1-28.

16. Hepp, A., Hjarvard, S., & Lundby, K. (2010). Mediatization–empirical perspectives: An introduction to a special issue. *Communications*, *35*(3), 223-228.

17. Hepp, A., & Krotz, F. (2008). Media events, globalization and cultural change: An introduction to the special issue. *Communications*, *33*(3), 265-272.

18. Herman, E.S., & McChesney, R.W. (Eds.) (1997). *The global media: The new missionaries of corporate capitalism*. London: Cassel.

19. Hjarvard, S. (2008). The mediatization of society: A theory of the media as agents of social and cultural change. *Nordicom Review*, *29*(2), 105-134.

20. Hoskins, A. (2009). Digital network memory. In A. Erll & A. Rigney (Eds.), *Mediation, remediation, and the dynamics of cultural memory*, (vol. 10, pp. 91-108). Berlin: de Gruyter.

21. Jensen, K.B. (2013). Definitive and sensitizing conceptualizations of mediatization. *Communication Theory*, *23*(3), 203-222.

22. Knoblauch, H. (2013). Communicative constructivism and mediatization. *Communication Theory*, *23*(3), 297-315.

23. Krotz, F. (2009). Mediatization: A concept with which to grasp media and societal change. In K. Lundby (Ed.), *Mediatization: Concept, changes, consequences*, (pp. 19-38). New York: Peter Lang.

24. Landerer, N. (2013). Rethinking the logics: A conceptual framework for the mediatization of politics. *Communication Theory*, *23*(3), 239-258.

25. Lengauer, G., Esser, F., & Berganza, R. (2011). Negativity in political news: A review of concepts, operationalizations and key findings. *Journalism*, 13(2), 179-202.

26. Mazzoleni, G., & Schulz, W. (1999). " Mediatization" of politics: A challenge for democracy?. *Political communication*, *16*(3), 247-261.

27. Mazzoleni, G., & Sfardini, A. (2009). *Politica pop. Da 'Porta a porta' a 'L'isola dei famosi'*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

28. McManus, J. H. (1994). *Market-driven journalism: Let the citizen beware?* Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

29. Reinemann, C., Stanyer, J., Scherr, S., & Legnante, G. (2011). Hard and soft news: A review of concepts, operationalizations and key findings. *Journalism*, 6(2), 221-239.

30. Schulz, W. (2004). Reconstructing mediatization as an analytical concept. *European journal of communication*, *19*(1), 87-101.

31. Rieder, B. (2013, May). Studying Facebook via data extraction: the Netvizz application. In *Proceedings of the 5th Annual ACM Web Science Conference* (pp. 346-355). ACM.
32. Strömbäck, J., & Karlsson, M. (2011). Who's got the power? Journalists' perceptions of changing influences over the news. *Journalism Practice*, *5*(6), 643-656.
33. Strömbäck, J. (2008). Four phases of mediatization: An analysis of the mediatization of politics. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, *13*(3), 228-246.
34. Strömbäck, J., & Esser, F. (2009). Shaping politics: Mediatization and media environmentalism. In K. Lundby (Ed.), *Mediatization: Concept, Changes, Consequences* (pp. 205-223). New York: Peter Lang.
35. Turow, J. (2005). Audience construction and culture production: Marketing surveillance in the digital age. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *597*(1), 103-121.
36. Ziegele, M., Breiner, T., & Quiring, O. (2014). What creates interactivity in online news discussions? An exploratory analysis of discussion factors in user comments on news items. *Journal of Communication*, *64*(6), 1111-1138.

Call for papers

Romanian Journal of Communication and Public Relations
www.journalofcommunication.ro

The *Romanian Journal of Communication and Public Relations* (RJCPR) is now seeking manuscripts for its upcoming issues. We welcome scholarly contributions from the broad field of communication studies, from public relations research, as well as from related areas. RJCPR also accepts relevant contributions for its permanent book review section.

Prospective authors should submit original papers which meet the customary academic standards in the social sciences. These materials should be methodologically sound, thoroughly argued, and well crafted. They must not have been published elsewhere, or be currently under review for any other publication.

All manuscripts are subject to a blind review process before publication. The author(s) name(s) should not appear on any page except the title page of the submitted paper, and electronic identification data should be removed before submission.

Important Dates:

The Journal is issued three times per year, in April, July, and December. Here are the submission deadlines:

- April issue: March 1;
- July issue: May 1;
- December issue: October 1.

Submission

Submissions must follow the Guidelines for Authors, available on the Journal's website (www.journalofcommunication.ro/guidelines). For further inquiries, please contact the editor, dr. Elena Negrea, elena.negrea@comunicare.ro.

More information on the *Journal of Communication and Public Relations* can be found at www.journalofcommunication.ro.