

Communicare

Journal for Communication Sciences in Southern Africa

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CALL FOR PAPERS

Communicare awaits articles to be published in Communicare 32(1), July 2012. Articles should be submitted to the Editor-in-Chief.

Guidelines for the submission of articles

1. Contributions must be submitted in English.
2. All articles (average length of 6 000 words) are to be submitted via email to communicare@uj.ac.za:
 - The material should be prepared in Microsoft Office Word.
 - Text should be in Times New Roman, 12pt and justified.
 - 1.5 cm line spacing should be used throughout the article.
 - Margins should have the following measurements: left (2,5 cm); top (2 cm); right (2 cm) and bottom (2 cm).
 - Tables and figures should be included in the text. Please attach the original file in which these graphics were generated (e.g. PowerPoint). Furthermore, ensure that the number of a figure or table corresponds with the number of the section under which it appears and the source appears after the figure/table.
3. All articles must be accompanied by an abstract of between 100 and 150 words in English.
4. The first page should contain the name(s) of the author(s), the title of the article and the name of the author and address(es) to whom correspondence should be addressed. The abstract should also appear on the first page. The article itself should start on a new page.
5. All references must be done according to the APA style and carefully checked for completeness, accuracy and consistency.
6. All articles submitted to Communicare should be original contributions and should not be under consideration for any other publication at the same time.

EDITORIAL

This issue of *Communicare* primarily explores the concept of stakeholders and their relationship with the organisation. This relationship is investigated both within and between organisations. The stakeholder concept originally described in the influential work by Freeman (1984) has, over the years, been adapted to include multiple stakeholders who may not have a direct stake in the organisation, but who can, and do, influence the actions of the organisation. The extent of this influence has become such that the strategic focus and intent of a business should include the development of strategic relationships with important stakeholders.

In the first article, Slabbert and Barker contextualise the current need for, and emphasis on, Organisation Stakeholder Relationships (OSR) to ensure organisational survival, and explore the need for OSR-building frameworks that explain the process of OSR. Through a critical analysis of various theoretical perspectives and existing conceptual frameworks, strategic stakeholder identification, OSR development, and OSR maintenance are integrated to propose a conceptual framework for building strategic organisation-stakeholder partnerships.

In their article, Steyn and de Beer conceptualise strategic communication management (SCM) within the context of governance. They argue that SCM can assist in solving or avoiding conflict between organisational actions and the public perception of how societally responsible organisations should operate. This could extend the core of corporate communication practice as it is conceptualised in the reflective paradigm – from social responsibility to societal responsibility. Steyn and de Beer also suggest that the triple bottom line, stakeholder, and stakeholder-inclusiveness approaches should also be added to the framework for SCM, which would then constitute a stakeholder orientated/responsible approach.

In their article, Verwey and Davis generate explanations that go beyond conventional theories and thought by adopting Morgan's view that an understanding of schism as a (normal) characteristic of social systems is required for a complete understanding of the inherent tensions and contradictions between the opposing elements whereby Network Direct Selling Organisations (NDSOs) recursively create and recreate themselves through networks of communication. In their article, such a framework is formulated and applied to generate powerful insights into the disintegrative tendencies of NDSOs, and their ability to sustain themselves despite these forces.

In response to the recently published Special Edition of *Communicare* on peace journalism, Lynch and McGoldrick recount and discuss a sample of results from an experiment designed to address the following questions: What difference, if any, does peace journalism make to audience responses? and In what respects, if any, do audience responses potentially add to societal sources of effective, non-violent responses to conflict? From the interim findings reported in this article, peace journalism proves to be ideational in the sense that peace journalism viewers are more likely to perceive structural and/or systemic explanations for problems, and are more likely to see opportunities for therapeutic and/or cooperative remedies to be applied through exertions of political agency from different levels.

Prof Sonja Verwey

Editor-in-Chief: *Communicare*

*Y Slabbert
R Barker*

A sequential, integrated, sustainable organisation-stakeholder relationship (SISOSR) process for building organisation-stakeholder partnerships: a conceptual framework

ABSTRACT

Although the concept 'organisation-stakeholder relationship (OSR)' is not new and has been researched extensively in the literature, few attempts have been made to critically analyse existing viewpoints and propose a unified conceptual framework. The main research problem of this paper is to address this lack of a commonly accepted conceptual framework for organisational stakeholder relationships. This is done through a critical analysis of the different perspectives and existing conceptual frameworks, using a qualitative method whereby strategic stakeholder identification, OSR development, and OSR maintenance are integrated to propose a conceptual framework, subsequently termed SISOSR, for building organisation-stakeholder partnerships (OSPs) with strategic stakeholders. This article is structured as follows: Firstly, the key concepts are defined; secondly, the building blocks of the framework are presented based on sound theoretical constructs; and, thirdly, the SISOSR framework is graphically presented and discussed to elaborate on the proposed process of OSR building, followed by concluding arguments.

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INTRODUCTION¹

Organisational success is largely dependent on stakeholder perceptions, which can be ascribed to various aspects, including the following: the turbulent external organisational environment; pressure on organisations to report on the social and environmental impacts of their organisational activities; the prevalence of public activism, globalisation, increasing emergence of organisational issues and crises; and the need for organisations to be regarded as good corporate citizens through ethical and socially responsible behaviour (Burchell & Cook, 2006: 210; Cornelissen, Van Bekkum & Van Ruler, 2006: 114; Goodman, 2006: 199; Jonker & Foster, 2002: 188; Malmelin, 2006: 298; Steyn & Niemann, 2010: 106; Valackiene, 2010: 101).

A dominant focus on organisational stakeholders is eminent in an environment characterised by active publics and demands for transparency to facilitate *dialogue* (Bishop, 2006: 217); and to build understanding and mutually beneficial relationships (Grunig & Grunig, 1992: 289), or *two-way symmetrical communication*. The focus on mutually beneficial organisational stakeholder relationships (OSR) is emphasised by Johansen and Nielsen (2011: 206), who argue that "... traditional unidirectional means of stakeholder communication must be replaced or replenished by two-way communication." Although this is emphasised by various authors (Alpaslan, Green & Mitroff, 2009; Fearn-Banks, 2007; Grunig & Repper, 1992; Heath, 1997; Marra, 1992; Rensburg & Cant, 2009; Ulmer, 2001;), a lack of research exists on how to *build* these relationships (Bridges & Nelson, 2000: 106; Broom, Casey & Ritchey, 2000: 6; Kim, 2007: 167; Ulmer 2001: 607). One reason presented is that the core focus is on the measurement of the corporate communication discipline and the influence on public opinion, rather than stakeholder relationship building (Broom, Casey & Ritchey, 2000: 5).

Against this background, the main aim of this article is to *explore the lack of OSR building frameworks that emphasise the elements and development of an OSR, and the need for a generic, strategic, integrated approach for sustainable OSRs to contribute towards organisational effectiveness*. This will be based on three aspects of studies on organisational stakeholders, namely stakeholder identification (Kaler, 2002; Mitchell, Agle & Wood, 1997) stakeholder relationship development (Hung, 2007; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000; Ulmer, 2001), and stakeholder relationship maintenance strategies (Grunig & Huang, 2000; Hung, 2007). Hence, an integrated approach to OSR building is proposed, in which these aspects will be seen as a holistic, sequential process to address the lack of current research on how to *build* OSRs and to *develop* a framework with which to manage stakeholder relationships more effectively. The secondary aim is to address the importance of practising corporate communication strategically by emphasising its role in OSR, or as Luoma-aho and Paloviita (2010: 49) state: "*Stakeholder relations are the heartbeat of corporate communication.*"

¹ This article is based on a summary of Mrs Slabbert's literature review conducted towards her doctorate degree, with Prof Barker as supervisor.

1. KEY CONCEPTS

Key concepts that will be utilised throughout this article are defined in the following section.

1.1 Corporate communication

The proposed framework is built from a corporate communication perspective, whereby it is argued that corporate communicators should be responsible for building OSRs. Various interchangeable terms for communication within the organisation exist, of which the most prominent are: business communication, management communication, organisational communication, public relations, corporate communication, marketing communication, integrated marketing communication, and integrated communication (Cornelissen 2005: 34; Reinsch 1991: 306; Shelby 1993: 242). For the purpose of this article, 'corporate communication' will be the preferred term when referring to all strategic organisational communication with internal and external stakeholders, and can be defined as a management function focused on building favourable, mutually beneficial relationships between the organisation and its strategic stakeholders (Cornelissen 2005: 21).

1.2 Strategic stakeholders

The terms 'stakeholder', 'public', and 'constituent' are often used interchangeably. Since 'organisational constituents' is too broad (Grunig & Huang, 2000: 32), and organisational publics can only be managed reactively (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2002: 324), which excludes relationship building, *stakeholders* will be used to refer to groups that are essential for organisational survival and with which the organisation must proactively build mutually beneficial relationships. Furthermore, the focus will be on *strategic* stakeholders, specifically, defined as *those groups that hold a continuous high degree of stakeholder salience and with which the organisation shares a reciprocal interest that should be nurtured through proactive, mutually beneficial relationship building to ensure organisational survival.*

Stakeholder salience is a concept derived from Mitchell et al.'s (1997) theory of stakeholder identification and salience, and refers to stakeholders with high power, legitimacy, and urgency. It should be noted that the proposed framework is built on the argument that strategic stakeholders should take priority, and that secondary stakeholder concerns should be managed based on an issue prioritisation approach, which constitutes a different stakeholder management approach altogether. It is thus argued that, in the case of secondary stakeholders, the focus will rather be to establish working relationships as opposed to building organisation-stakeholder partnerships (OSPs).

1.3 Organisational stakeholder relationships (OSRs)

In a search for a specific definition for OSR, the researchers propose that, for the purpose of this article, a basic OSR is considered a *foundational* OSR, and defined as *the result of*

the management of common interests between the organisation and strategic stakeholder(s) over time, to reach mutually beneficial goal achievement through a high degree of reciprocity and continuous two-way symmetrical communication.

1.4 Organisation-stakeholder partnerships (OSPs)

OSPs allow organisations “to build bridges with their stakeholders in the pursuit of common goals, whereas the traditional stakeholder management techniques only allow for the fulfillment of stakeholders’ needs and expectations” (Girard & Sobczak, 2011: 2). Three main concepts underlie OSPs: firstly, Girard and Sobczak’s (2011: 3) perspective that stakeholder engagement is a *mutual process* whereby both the organisation and stakeholders are key initiators of engaging in one another’s business activities on OSP level, representing two-way engagement; secondly, *collaborative problem solving* as a key element of a relationship between the organisation and stakeholders – through knowledge and learning, joint problem solving becomes evident where the organisation and strategic stakeholders move beyond mere discussion to “...deep listening with empathy, expressing hidden assumptions, focusing on common interests and searching for conceptual breakthroughs” (Halal, 2010: 30); and, thirdly, *stewardship*, which according to Kelly (1998), is the ‘missing step’ in the communication process, and, as argued by Ledingham (2003: 192) and Waters (2009: 114) implies a *mutual* experience of responsibility, reporting, and relationship nurturing. Based on these concepts, OSP is considered the ultimate relational state, and is defined as a *foundational OSR, practised over a long period of time to reach the level of two-way engagement, characterised by a mutual experience of stewardship, where both the organisation and strategic stakeholders join in collaborative problem solving to achieve a mutually desired end goal.*

2. THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF AN OSR-BUILDING FRAMEWORK

Three building blocks are proposed to constitute an OSR building framework, namely a *strategic communication foundation*, a *conceptualisation of OSR building*, and a *theoretical foundation*.

2.1 Building block 1: Strategic communication foundation

This building block of the framework is based on the integration of the following key corporate communication functions, essential for successful OSR building:

2.1.1 Two-way symmetrical communication

The two-way symmetrical approach originated from asymmetrical and symmetrical communication worldviews. A worldview can be defined as “the attitudes, views, beliefs or mindset of any individual or group of people” (Steyn 2003: 57) regarding a phenomenon, in this case, corporate communication. Grunig et al. (2002: 548) argue that corporate communication makes an organisation more effective through the utilisation of two-way symmetrical communication to develop and maintain sustainable relationships with strategic stakeholders. In accordance, Waters and Lemanski (2011: 154) argue

that strategic communicators should practise two-way communication if they aspire to build sustainable relationships between the organisation and stakeholders. Based on the definition of two-way symmetrical communication as a model that is focused on establishing balanced dialogue between the organisation and its audiences to encourage transparent, sincere, and mutually beneficial relationships (Grunig & Grunig 1992: 289) and other two-way symmetrical characteristics, two-way symmetrical communication, for the purpose of this study, is defined as *a model that stimulates conversation, interaction and feedback between the organisation and strategic stakeholders, identified through research, to establish a high degree of mutuality*, and is regarded as the foundation and key to building stakeholder partnerships.

2.1.2 Knowledge transfer enabled by a culture of knowledge

Since this study is focused on establishing mutually beneficial relationships, *knowledge transfer* as an element of knowledge management literature is considered. For the purpose of this study, the *communication* component of knowledge management will be addressed in terms of the transfer of knowledge between the organisation and strategic stakeholders to contribute towards *sustainable* OSR building. For the purpose of this study, 'knowledge transfer' will be used to refer to knowledge sharing at individual *and* group level. It should, however, be noted that knowledge transfer can only occur if a culture of knowledge is integrated into the organisation, which is a culture that "...enables and motivates people to create, share and utilise knowledge" (Rivière & Sitar, 2010: 36). It is argued that knowledge transfer will occur once mutually beneficial OSR have been built – it therefore plays a role in building *sustainable* relationships and eventual stakeholder *partnerships*. The reason why knowledge transfer occurs only upon the establishment of a mutually beneficial relationship to establish sustainability within a relationship, is that individuals will only share knowledge when reciprocity, a good reputation, altruism, and, most importantly, *trust* have already been established (Rivière & Sitar, 2010: 38).

2.1.3 Reputation management

Thiessen and Ingenhoff (2010: 9) regard reputation management as "relational capital" that strengthens relationships and builds trust – the organisation's "reservoir of goodwill." To highlight the prominence of stakeholders in reputation management, Romenti (2010: 306) argues that corporate communication plays an important role in developing the reputation of an organisation through listening to stakeholder expectations, addressing these concerns with planned strategies, and establishing sustainable relationships with strategic stakeholders. The relevance of reputation management, for the purpose of this study, is that "the cultivation of relationships is considered the basis for building a strong and consistent reputation" (Romenti, 2010: 310). However, reputation management will also be regarded as an *initial* and *continuous* process within the proposed stakeholder relationship-building framework, since stakeholders will not build relationships with an organisation with a poor or tarnished reputation; hence, a positive organisational reputation is required as a starting point for building OSRs.

2.1.4 *Research: environmental scanning and evaluation research*

In order to build mutually beneficial relationships with strategic stakeholders, the communication needs of stakeholders have to be fulfilled, which is made possible through *research* (Bruning, 2002: 45). Research can be divided into two key categories (Dozier & Repper, 1992:186; Macnamara, 2003: 330): Firstly, research that is focused on detecting problems and assessing the status quo, namely *environmental scanning*, and, secondly, research aimed to assess the planning, implementation, and effect of corporate communication strategies, namely *evaluation research*.

Environmental scanning is open and explorative in nature, in which the strategic function of scanning lies in the *early detection of emerging problems* and determining the sum of known issues in the environment (Dozier & Repper, 1992: 187). Environmental scanning could be employed to serve as an important element of the stakeholder identification phase of the framework, to identify strategic stakeholders with which the organisation aspires to build mutually beneficial relationships, detect issues of concern and the subsequent emergence of publics that could damage OSRs at any time of the relationship-building process, and/or obtain more detailed information about a certain stakeholder group, public, or issue of concern. In order to ensure that stakeholders' relational needs are being met, Bruning (2002: 45) argues that organisations must ensure that both the *communication needs* and *relational communication needs* are being met, utilising *evaluation research*, which could serve to identify strategic stakeholders' needs and relational expectations during the stakeholder identification phase of the framework, and as a measure of relational quality as part of OSR maintenance.

2.1.5 *Issues management*

Issues management is defined as a process that manages emerging issues and their potential to interfere with the operations of the organisation, while keeping in mind the need of the organisation to orchestrate its interests with those of its stakeholders (Heath, 1997: 5). The relevance of issues management from a stakeholder perspective is that it serves as a *proactive, continuous process to manage and resolve issues of concern, detected through environmental scanning, prior to these developing into full-blown organisational crises, and, most importantly, to avoid the formation of or manage reactive publics and situations that might harm OSR building and/or maintenance*. The study therefore supports Hung's (2003: 25) argument that "...for an organisation.... conducting environmental scanning and issues management in their strategic planning process will help them identify more specifically the publics involved, and the issues that have great impact now or in the future."

2.2 Building block 2: Conceptualisation of OSR building

This building block is the essence of the proposed framework, as it highlights the key phases of the framework, aligned with an OSR development continuum. The following three prominent phases of the framework are relevant:

2.2.1 Phase 1: Strategic stakeholder identification

The applicability of the criteria for strategic stakeholder identification constitutes the strategic stakeholder identification methodology for both the organisation and stakeholder, as indicated in Table 1. This methodology is based on the integration of Mitchell et al's (1997) theory of stakeholder identification and salience (TSIS), the cost-benefit analysis (Grunig & Huang, 2000: 32), and the situational theory of publics (Grunig, 1983).

Table 1: A methodology for strategic stakeholder identification

	Criteria	Organisation	Strategic stakeholder
Stakeholder salience	Mutual power-dependence	Both the organisation and stakeholder are dependent on one another to achieve relational objectives. The organisation relies on stakeholders to ensure its future existence, and stakeholders require the input of the organisation to achieve their end goal. From this perspective, both the organisation and the stakeholder hold power.	
	Legitimacy	Strategic stakeholders' actions should be socially acceptable and in line with the organisation's values.	This links with the argument that a positive organisational reputation is required as a pre-requisite for OSR. A stakeholder will be more likely to engage with an organisation that is legitimate and socially acceptable.
	Urgency	Corporate communication managers should identify stakeholders with urgent claims, which are often characteristic of a strategic stakeholder.	Stakeholders are more likely to engage with an organisation that recognises the urgency of their claims and attends to these in a timeous manner.
	Benefit must exceed cost	The benefit of the OSR must exceed the time, effort, and other costs to both the organisation and stakeholder.	
	High level of involvement	Both the organisation and the stakeholder must have a mutual interest in one another, which links to the argument posed earlier that a high degree of reciprocity should be evident.	

Evident from the above table is that strategic stakeholders have a high degree of stakeholder salience, the benefits of relationships with strategic stakeholders should outweigh the costs, and a high level of involvement should be evident. Although the corporate communication manager will utilise these criteria to identify strategic stakeholders, it is proposed that these stakeholders should similarly experience these criteria in order to ensure the sustainability of the OSR.

2.2.2 OSR antecedents

Various theorists explored the *antecedents* or *precursors* of OSRs (Broom et al., 2000: 16; Ledingham, 2003: 195; Kim, 2007: 170). It is argued that, for the purpose of this article, that certain conditions are necessary prior to the OSR development phase, and hence, OSR antecedents will be accepted as a pre-phase in OSR development.

Antecedents are those conditions on which OSR depend (Dimmick, Bell, Burgiss & Ragsdale, 2000: 131), which include opinions, motivations, needs, and behaviours, which are packaged as contingencies or causes in the development of OSR (Broom et al, 2000: 16). The antecedents of OSR provide the motivation for stakeholders choosing to be associated with an organisation, and determine what benefits stakeholders aspire to derive from the relationship, which also affect the quality of the OSR (Sevick Bortree, 2011: 44).

Antecedents are the first phase of a relationship, since these elements cause the development of OSR (Kim, 2007: 170). Seltzer and Zhang (2011) consider time, interpersonal trust, and party identification or association as key antecedents in developing relationships in a political context. *Time* refers to the fact that relationships evolve over time and grow in intensity (Seltzer & Zhang, 2011: 28). *Interpersonal trust*, which is also recognised by Hendricks (2004: 39), is the expectation that both relational parties are motivated to take one another's interest into account, which links with reciprocity and mutuality, defined earlier. Lastly, *party association* refers to a sense of attachment to, and identification with, a political party (Selzer & Zang, 2011: 28). These antecedents have been adapted for the purpose of this article. The concept of time is not applicable as an antecedent in this study, but is rather considered a key element across the entire OSR-building framework, as it is argued that an OSR grows in intensity over time, and because trust is developed over time (Rayman-Bacchus, 2004: 32) only a *sense* of trust could be experienced at this stage of the OSR building framework.

Furthermore, since this study is focused on OSRs and not on relationships on an individual level, interpersonal trust was replaced with *trustworthiness*. Greenwood and Van Buren (2010: 429) argue that organisational trustworthiness "...refers to a virtue or set of virtues held by the organisation, reflecting its worthiness to be trusted." Similarly, the organisation should also regard the strategic stakeholder as trustworthy so as to stimulate reciprocity and mutuality. Lastly, party association could be replaced with *organisation-stakeholder association*, which implies that both the organisation and the stakeholder should be able to resonate with one another. In conjunction with these antecedents, *mutual consequence* (Hon & Grunig, 1999: 12) and *expectations* (Broom et al, 2000: 17; Kim & Radar, 2010: 62) could also be added. *Expectations*, which are influenced by perceptions, attitudes, feelings, and knowledge about one another, highlight that each relational party has certain expectations prior to an OSR, which could either be met or not be met (Kim & Radar, 2010: 62).

2.2.3 Phase 2: OSR development

An *OSR development continuum* that highlights that foundational or basic OSRs evolve in intensity *over time* to become mutually beneficial OSRs, sustainable OSRs and, eventually, OSPs, is proposed. It should be noted that this proposed sequential development of OSRs is *normative*, and OSRs will not always develop in such linearity. However, the purpose of this article is to highlight the conditions necessary for a

sustainable OSR development process to establish OSPs. Although 'continuum' for the purpose of this study does not necessarily imply the conventional meaning of the word, which is the representation of extreme opposites at each end point (Yan & Curtin 2010: 537), the end points of the proposed continuum will represent differences in terms of the intensity and strength of the OSR. Hence, it is proposed that a foundational OSR represents a basic OSR on one side of the continuum, and an OSP is regarded as the ultimate relational state.

Two-way symmetrical communication is at the centre of OSR building in the proposed OSR development continuum – it *stimulates conversation, interaction, and feedback between the organisation and strategic stakeholders in order to establish a high degree of mutuality*. Time is an important consideration in the continuum used to illustrate how a foundational OSR builds in intensity to reach OSPs. Ledingham, Bruning, and Wilson (1999) indicate that more time in an OSR provides more opportunities for interaction and, hence, leads to a better understanding of each others' perspectives, which strengthens the OSR (Sheltzer & Mitrook, 2009: 7). Furthermore, the duration of an OSR has an influence on the loyalty of strategic stakeholders to the relationship (Coombs, 2000: 88). In this article, Hendricks's (2004: 122) viewpoint that "a successful relationship is built over time" is thus supported.

The OSR development continuum proposes the following sequential development of an OSR over time, expressed as the following OSR types necessary to reach OSP:

- *Foundational OSR*: This was defined earlier, and refers to the initial OSR built through two-way symmetrical communication;
- *Mutually beneficial OSR*: This relationship represents an acknowledgement that the organisation and strategic stakeholder are "inextricably tied together," which represents a collaborative orientation and a sense of mutual association (Kent & Taylor, 2002: 25), where the mutual benefit for both relational parties is clear, and a high degree of reciprocity is evident.
- *Sustainable OSR*: This relationship emphasises that the organisation and the strategic stakeholder have moved beyond achieving mutual objectives, and are focusing on building an OSP, thereby shaping and guiding organisation-stakeholder interaction to build towards long-term competitively advantaged OSR to contribute towards innovation and progressive decision making (Rensburg & Cant, 2009: 52).
- *OSP*: As defined earlier, an OSP represents the ultimate relational state, where a foundational OSR grew in intensity over time to establish an advanced OSR that embodies stewardship, collaborative problem solving, and two-way engagement.

Since this study is concerned with OSR building, the following are regarded as key elements of a foundational OSR:

- *Trust*: Various theorists regard trust as a critical element of an OSR (Goodman, 2003: 200; Greenwood & Van Buren, 2010: 427; Hung, 2003: 10-11; Rayman-Bacchus, 2004: 21,31). Trust is defined by Grunig and Grunig (1998:4) as the extent to which both the organisation and stakeholders display vulnerability towards the other's behaviour, and the confidence that one relational party will take the other's interests into account when making important decisions. According to Hon and Grunig (1999: 3), trust refers to one relational party's "level of confidence in and willingness to open oneself to the other party," which requires a mutual sense of integrity (Goodman & Hirsch, 2010: 37).
- *Control mutuality*: According to Stafford and Canary (1991: 224) control mutuality refers to the agreement between relational partners as to who will be responsible for deciding on relational objectives and behaviour. The issue lies within whether both partners agree that "one or both may rightfully influence the other."
- *Relationship satisfaction*: When experiencing relationship satisfaction, it implies that the benefits of engaging in this relationship outweigh the costs (Hon & Grunig, 1999: 3), which also encapsulates the principle of the cost-benefit analysis considered in the stakeholder identification methodology, where it was argued that an OSR can only be beneficial if the benefits of the OSR exceed the compromises made to engage in the OSR.
- *Relational commitment*: This refers to the expectation that a relationship will continue, or the degree to which a relational partner wants to stay in a relationship (Hung, 2003: 12). Meyer and Allen (1984: 375) identify two types of commitment, namely *affective* commitment, which is a sentimental affiliation towards an organisation, and *continuance* commitment, which is experienced when stakeholders "feel committed to their organisations by virtue of the costs that they feel are associated with leaving."
- *Mutual understanding*: This can include mutual legitimacy, mutual satisfaction, mutual consequence, and mutual dependence, and implies that both relational parties have the same level of power in achieving relational objectives, and a reduced potential for exploitation is evident (Rusbult & Arriaga, 1997: 229). It also highlights that the message must be formulated "in such a way that the recipient understands it as closely as possible to the intended meaning" (Du Plessis, 2006: 197) to reach a *level of shared meaning* towards the achievement of relational objectives.

2.2.4 Stakeholder engagement

In OSR literature, various theorists explored *relational outcomes* (Grunig & Huang, 2000:42; Hon & Grunig, 1999:3; Jonker & Foster, 2002:191; Rensburg, de Beer & Coetzee, 2008:388; Seltzer & Mitrook, 2009:3) that should be achieved after an OSR has been built. *Stakeholder engagement* is considered as a desirable OSR outcome that should be maintained in order to establish an OSP. Girard and Sobczak (2011: 4) suggest two dimensions of stakeholder engagement: Firstly, it is characterised by communication and environmental scanning focused on managing possible risks associated with conflict of interests, and, secondly, it initiates collaboration and partnership building. This two-

dimensional approach to stakeholder engagement will form a basis for the purpose of this article: once a foundational OSR has been built, stakeholder engagement could be experienced, where the organisation is the key driver in building a mutually beneficial OSR. It is therefore proposed that stakeholder engagement can only be experienced *after* the development of an OSR, to fulfil the role of an OSR outcome, since stakeholder engagement moves beyond the management of common interests to a higher level of intensity of stakeholder participation in decision making, problem solving, and organisational activities. This perspective is affirmed by Greenwood's (2007: 315) definition of stakeholder engagement as the endeavours that the organisation undertakes to involve strategic stakeholders in decision making, and to encourage participation in organisational activities; hence, the organisation is regarded as the key initiator where two-way engagement will only be experienced on OSP level.

2.2.5 Phase 3: OSR maintenance

OSR maintenance is defined as the "growth and nurturing of mutually beneficial OSR" (Jo, Hon & Brunner, 2004: 14). Various synonyms are also presented for the maintenance of OSRs, of which the most predominant is *stakeholder management* or, more accurately, *stakeholder relationship* management. Boesso and Kamar (2008: 65) define stakeholder management as the management of a diverse range of tasks, which include "identifying, assessing, prioritising, managing the relationship, communicating, negotiating and contracting" with various stakeholders that have an influence on the organisation's economic interests. Chinyio and Olomolaiye (2010: 7-8) are of opinion that stakeholder management is related to stakeholder relationship management, and includes the principles of acknowledgement of stakeholder concerns, listening to and communicating with stakeholders, adoption of stakeholder processes, recognition of the interdependence among stakeholders, collaborative work, and the acknowledgement of possible conflicts. The preferred term that will be utilised for the purpose of this article is *OSR maintenance*, which refers to the nurturing of sustainable OSRs to allow the evolution of these relationships into OSPs. Strategies to maintain relationships and symmetrical OSRs are derived from Stafford and Canary (1991: 233) and Hon and Grunig (1999: 14): access, openness, positivity, assurances of legitimacy, networks, and sharing tasks. *Access* refers to the communicators of organisations and members of strategic stakeholder groups, and highlights a direct reporting relationship between the organisation and strategic stakeholders, with the avoidance of third-party interference. *Openness* or *disclosure* across the whole process is a key indicator that relational parties are satisfied and committed to the OSR, and will, according to Christensen and Langer (2008: 7), result in transparency, clarity, and comprehension, which will, within a foundational OSR, evolve in intensity over time. *Positivity* refers to all the measures the organisation employs to make strategic stakeholders more satisfied in the relationship. *Assurances of legitimacy* are attempts made by relational parties to assure one another that actions taken and claims made are valid, and that true commitment to maintain the OSR is present. *Networking* refers to "the structure of ties between actors in a social system," and implies that organisations must make an effort to build networks or

coalitions with the same groups as their strategic stakeholders. *Sharing tasks* between the organisation and strategic stakeholders could, for example, be achieved through the provision of employment. It strengthens the sense of mutuality within the OSR, and inspires relational parties to work towards the achievement of shared objectives. In addition to these symmetrical OSR maintenance strategies, *evaluation* and *conflict resolution strategies* are also considered part of the OSR maintenance phase. *Evaluation* through environmental scanning and evaluation research can determine whether identified stakeholder needs and expectations are being met, and *conflict resolution strategies* can be used to resolve possible issues that were detected through environmental scanning, that could harm the OSR development process. Hon and Grunig's (1999: 16-17) symmetrical *integrative* conflict resolution strategies are accepted for this article, which include cooperation, being unconditionally constructive, saying "win-win or no deal", and cooperating.

2.3 Building block 3: Theoretical foundation

The theoretical foundation constitutes the third building block of the proposed OSR building framework, and comprises the following: the stakeholder concept (Freeman, 1984) and Ferguson's (1984) proposition of a relational paradigm to public relations, the excellence theory (Grunig, 1983); and the relationship management theory (Ledingham, 2003).

2.3.1 The stakeholder concept

The stakeholder concept is predominantly referred to as the 'stakeholder theory' (Agle, Donaldson, Freeman, Jensen, Mitchell & Wood, 2008; Antonacopoulou & Méric, 2005; Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Friedman & Miles, 2002; Luoma-aho & Paloviita, 2010; Johansen & Nielsen, 2011; Rensburg et al., 2008). However, Freeman (1994: 413) specifically states that "there is no such thing as the stakeholder theory", that it is "...a framework, a set of ideas from which a number of theories can be derived" (Freeman, Harrison, Wicks, Parmar & De Colle, 2010: 63). Fassin (2009: 116) also emphasises that the stakeholder concept has potential for theory development, and that it requires a proper theoretical body of work. In support of these arguments, the stakeholder concept will be utilised as the preferred term, and will be considered a collection of ideas that place focus on the maximisation of value for stakeholders (Freeman et al., 2010:28), which is aligned with the organisation's strategy to ensure mutual goal fulfilment. The stakeholder concept proposes a *stakeholder mindset* within the organisation to ensure organisational survival, which implies that "...business is fully situated in the realm of humanity" (Freeman et al., 2010:24, 29). For the purpose of this study, Donaldson and Preston's (1995) normative paradigm and studies that focused on the relational perspective of the stakeholder concept are applicable:

- **Normative paradigm:** Based on a study conducted by Donaldson and Preston (1995: 65-66) in which various issues and implications associated with the stakeholder concept were explored in terms of descriptive precision,

instrumental power, and normative validity of the stakeholder concept, evident in management literature, three paradigms are proposed, namely the normative, the instrumental, and the descriptive. The normative paradigm is the most applicable to this study, and implies that organisations with high moral standards will simultaneously place value on true stakeholder engagement, characterised by qualities such as trust, fairness, and dialogue (Amaeshi, 2010: 16). According to Mainardes, Alves, and Raposo (2011: 233), the normative paradigm forms the foundation of the stakeholder concept, and is orientated towards establishing a relationship between the organisation and stakeholders within an ethical and morally acceptable framework, thereby moving away from economic interests. The normative paradigm places high regard on human qualities in economic activity, and integrates the notion that a collective working relationship developed within a framework of fairness, honesty, and trust, will create more value for the organisation over time than pursuing profit-driven objectives.

- **The relational perspective:** The relational perspective of strategic management "...brings to the forefront of our attention the relational nature of organizational life" (Antonacopoulou & Méric, 2005: 30), and is regarded as the original intention of the stakeholder concept: "envisioning the organisation and its stakeholders in two-way relationships" (Freeman et al., 2010: 109). It also emphasises that a mutually beneficial OSR to achieve mutually desired end goals is more beneficial than pursuing goals driven by self-interest.

The stakeholder concept, from a normative, relational perspective, contributes the following to the theoretical framework of this study:

- It places emphasis on having a stakeholder mindset – which is not limited to include numerous stakeholder groups and having the ability to balance diverse stakeholder needs, but also includes a proactive approach towards OSR building rather than the reactive approaches associated with publics;
- The success of the organisation is based on collaboration between the organisation and strategic stakeholders;
- It underlines that relationships should be based on ethical principles, and that mutual benefits for both the organisation and stakeholders should be considered, thereby making two-way symmetrical communication principles relevant; and
- It places emphasis on management decision making that will contribute to raising the corporate communication function to the desired strategic level, since stakeholder relationship building is a key function of corporate communicators.

2.3.2 Ferguson's relational paradigm for public relations

The principle of Ferguson's (1984) paradigm is that the *relationship* between the organisation and publics should be the unit of analysis, as opposed to focusing on the organisation and its publics as distinct entities (Toth, 2002:205). Within an OSR context, this is underlined by Hung's (2007:445-448) evolutionary review of studies

on OSRs, which include, among others, relational dimensions of OSRs (Ballinger, 1991), antecedents and consequences of OSRs (Broom et al, 1997), indicators for evaluating relationships (Huang, 1997), the dimensions of OSRs (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999), OSR measurement strategies (Hon & Grunig, 1999), methods for evaluating relationships in the antecedent, cultivation, and outcome stages of a relationship (Grunig & Huang, 2000), the conceptualisation of OSRs in terms of interpersonal communication (Toth, 2002), a cross-cultural, multi-item scale for measuring OSRs (Huang, 2001), the influence of relationship on organisational reputation (Grunig & Hung, 2002), and the role of structural and personal commitment in OSRs (Bruning & Galloway, 2003). Although Ferguson's paradigm is only a collection of ideas and propositions for further theory development, it is considered the starting point and a foundational element, together with the stakeholder concept, for the development of an OSR building framework.

2.3.3 *The excellence theory*

The excellence theory (Grunig, 1983) explains the value of corporate communication to an organisation by identifying specific characteristics of corporate communication that contribute towards organisational effectiveness, which is accomplished when *mutually beneficial objectives*, identified for both the organisation and stakeholders, are achieved (Grunig & Grunig, 2008: 327-328). The excellence theory provides both a *strategic* and *pragmatic platform to implement the proposed framework*:

- **Strategic contribution:** Grunig and Grunig (2008: 329-331) explain that corporate communication could be practised from two different approaches, namely, the *interpretative or symbolic approach*, which emphasises how corporate communication influences stakeholders' perception of the organisation through media relations, and the *strategic management approach*, which focuses on the participation of corporate communication executives in strategic decision making that is specifically designed to *build OSR* (Van den Bosch & Van Riel, 1998: 25). The strategic management paradigm provides a "normative framework for an ethical, effective, and both organizationally and socially valued approach" that can be applied to the communication practice (Grunig & Grunig, 2008: 331). Grunig and Repper (1992: 120) offer two important components of strategic management of corporate communication: firstly, communication practitioners have to be part of the strategic management of the overall organisation through environmental scanning and providing inputs to define the organisational mission and objectives, which provides direction from the organisational level. Secondly, communication practitioners should also manage communication programmes strategically; corporate communication itself should be practised strategically, which is achieved through strategic stakeholder identification and the proactive resolution of issues by means of symmetrical communication programmes. Based on this discussion, it is evident that *building OSRs is both central to practising corporate communication strategically and to corporate communication to contribute to the strategic level of the organisation, since*

sustainable OSRs are required to achieve the organisational mission, which, in turn, requires continuous research to identify stakeholder needs and detect issues of concern.

- **Pragmatic contribution:** The pragmatic contribution as indicated, implies that it could aid the implementation of the proposed SISOSR framework, and is based on the key characteristics of the excellence theory, which, *inter alia*, include the importance of involving senior communication executives in the strategic management process, the integration of communication functions, and two-way symmetrical communication. Furthermore, communication excellence can be illustrated on three levels, namely programme, departmental, and organisational. Since OSR building is central to the excellence theory, the proposition is thus that *the excellence communication function should be integrated in the communication department to ensure the successful implementation and facilitation of the proposed OSR building framework.*

The excellence theory therefore provides the required context for the implementation of the proposed OSR building framework, and has the ability to raise corporate communication to the desired strategic level.

2.3.4 *The relationship management theory*

Based on Littlejohn's (1983: 13-14) criteria of a theory, Ledingham (2003:190) theory of relationship management proposes that the effective management of OSR "around common interests and shared goals, over time, results in mutual understanding and benefit" for interacting organisations and stakeholders. The applicability of this theory to the present study is encapsulated by Ledingham's (2003: 192) statement that "relationship management specifies how to build toward *symmetry (managing OSRs around common interests and shared goals)*, and when to apply the approach (*over time*). Moreover, the relationship management theory not only *predicts outcomes and the conditions* under which those occur..." [own emphasis], but also accommodates theories that explain only part of the relationship-building process. The relationship management theory offers an *affirmative contribution* to the present study, as it confirms and reiterates the rationale and argument behind the OSR building framework.

3. A SEQUENTIAL, INTEGRATED, SUSTAINABLE ORGANISATION-STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIP (SISOSR) FRAMEWORK

The proposed SISOSR framework is based on three key characteristics, which also constitute the acronym for the framework. Firstly, it is **sequential**. Saz-Carranza and Vernis (2006: 417) argue that a sequential process is characterised by linearity that is usually composed of emergence, evolution, and possible dissolution steps, which process is promoted by this framework through a three-phased process approach whereby one phase is dependent on the successful completion of the previous phase. Secondly, it is **integrated**, which implies the integration of

stakeholder identification, OSR development and OSR maintenance, which are normally studied independently, into one OSR building framework. This is based on the rationale that: OSRs cannot be built if strategic stakeholders have not been identified; OSR that have been built, need to be maintained to ensure optimal organisational effectiveness; and stakeholder identification, OSR development, and OSR maintenance are interrelated, and should be studied as a collective whole to more sufficiently explain the process and elements of OSR building. Thirdly, it is **sustainable**, which is often associated with progress and OSPs, which Smith and Sharicz (2011: 74) define as “the result of the activities of the organization...that demonstrate the ability of the organization to maintain viable its business operations...” and can be achieved through the practice of two-way symmetrical communication to establish mutually beneficial relationships where concern for others’ interests is evident.

Furthermore, the proposed framework is also **generic**, which implies that the same principles could be applied to different situations, as they are not specific or customised (Arif, 2007: 21). Although the SISOSR framework promotes OSR building with *strategic* stakeholders, specifically, it is generic in the sense that it does not focus on a specific strategic stakeholder group, and because the framework could be applied to both internal and external strategic stakeholder groups. The rationale behind this approach is that some strategic stakeholder groups will be applicable to all organisations, for example employees, but it will also differ depending on the industry of the organisation. A need for a generic approach to address a variety of strategic stakeholders is therefore addressed. Furthermore, it is also generic in that it could assist the organisation in any communication situation, and is not limited to a specific communication activity.

A graphic illustration of the proposed SISOSR framework will be provided, followed by a brief explanation of the key concepts and process of the framework.

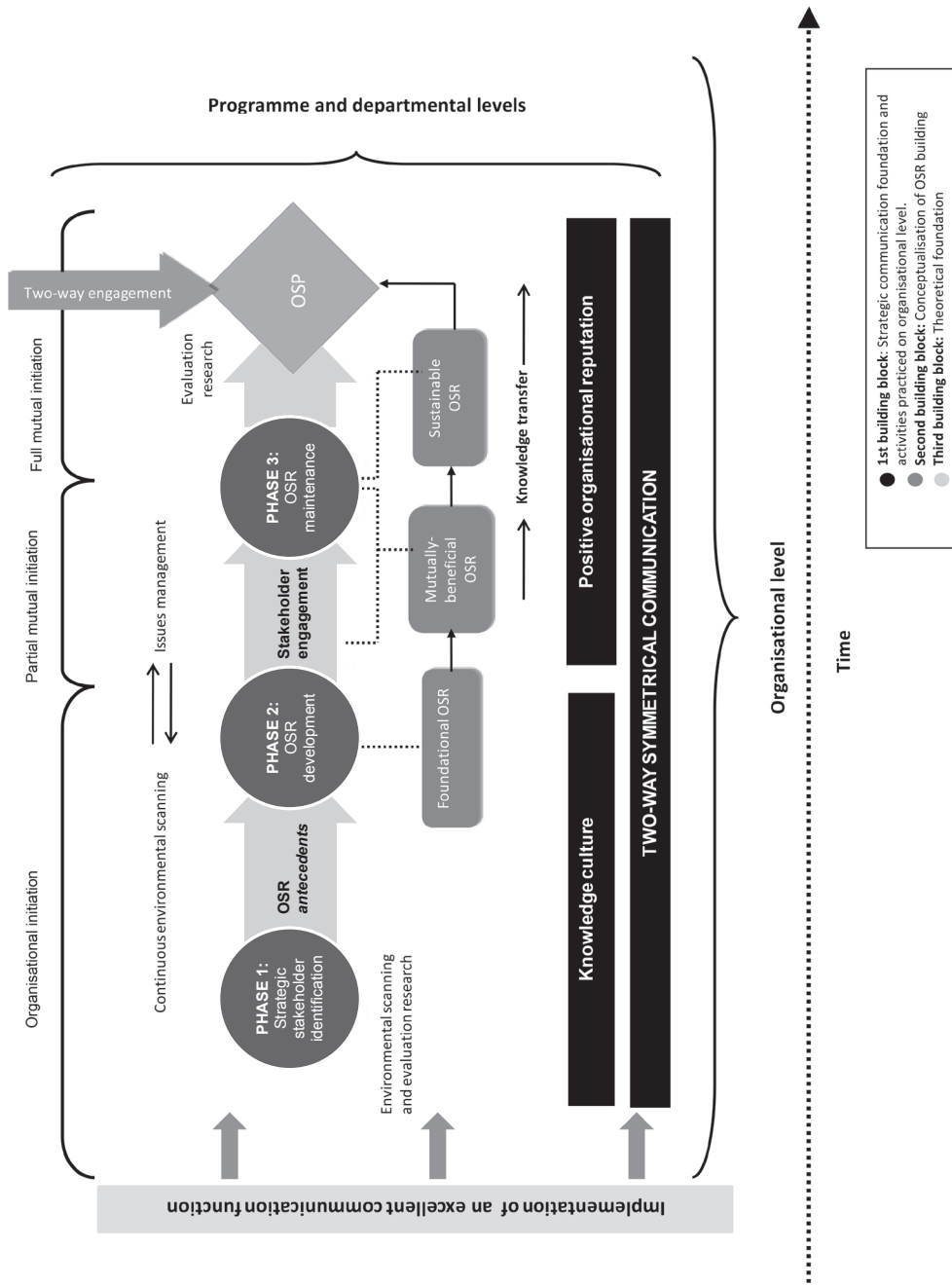


Figure 1: A conceptual Sequential Integrated Sustainable Organisation-Stakeholder Relationship (SISOSR) framework

Prior to explaining the process behind the SISOSR framework, it is important to understand how the framework should be interpreted. Firstly, the black elements of the framework represent the first building block of the framework, namely the strategic communication foundation. It also represents all the corporate communication actions that should be executed on *organisational level*. The strategic communication foundation therefore not only serves as an important basis of the SISOSR framework, but also emphasises how corporate communication contributes towards the overall strategic management of the organisation to contribute towards organisational effectiveness. Secondly, the dark grey elements of the framework present the second building block of the framework, namely the conceptualisation of OSR building. As illustrated, the actual relationship building process occurs on *departmental* and *programme* levels of the organisation. Lastly, the third building block of the framework, namely, the theoretical foundation, is represented by the light grey area (on the left hand side of the figure) and embodies the integration of the excellence function within the communication department which will allow the implementation of the proposed actions, and in essence, is a prerequisite for the successful implementation of the SISOSR framework. Furthermore, the establishment of an excellent communication department and OSR building in itself occurs *over time*, which represents a continuous process.

The framework will be discussed as a *process* within which the various elements of the framework will be discussed *in order of development*. It should be noted, that although an order of development is proposed, these building blocks, and, hence, the three organisational levels, are interlinked, in that the elements proposed by one building block and organisational level become applicable and necessary for the achievement of elements proposed by another building block and organisational level.

3.1 Establishment of an excellent communication function within the communication department

The implementation of the excellence function within the communication department supports the principles of the theories presented in building block 3: It allows the development of strategic communication programmes for various strategic stakeholders (stakeholder concept), it focuses on the relationship between the organisation and stakeholders (relationship management paradigm), it proposes a symmetrical two-way communication process to allow the establishment of mutually beneficial OSR (relationship management theory and stakeholder concept) and it emphasises the importance of practising corporate communication strategically and how corporate communication could contribute towards the overall strategic management of the organisation (stakeholder concept). Hence, the implementation of a communication excellence function may not be considered as merely a prerequisite for the SISOSR framework; it could also make the principles of these theories a reality.

On programme level, it is proposed that senior communication executives could be involved in the strategic management process of the organisation, since communication programmes for strategic stakeholders (identified through the utilisation of the strategic stakeholder methodology proposed by the second building block of the framework) could become part

of this overall strategic management process. The strategic communication foundation also becomes applicable at this stage, since strategic stakeholders are identified, in addition to the actions of the strategic stakeholder methodology, by means of research. It is proposed that the communication programmes for these strategic stakeholders should be managed strategically through continuous research and the implementation of measurable objectives and evaluation strategies to determine the effectiveness of these programmes in meeting mutually desired end goals. This also resembles environmental scanning, evaluation research, and issues management, in order to resolve issues of concern proposed by the strategic communication framework.

It is suggested that the communication department should be headed by a senior corporate communication manager with formal communication training and experience, who has the required corporate communication knowledge to practise two-way symmetrical communication, and to ensure that corporate communication is regarded as a strategic function within the organisation. The department should also, ideally, be staffed with corporate communication professionals who have solid academic and practical knowledge of the field. The corporate communication functions should also be integrated into one single communication department to ensure message consistency, and not be placed under the management of another department with a purpose other than communication. It is argued that the two-way symmetrical communication framework should prevail in the department, to allow sustainable OSR building. Two-way symmetrical communication could also stimulate participation, mutuality, and trust between management and employees. It is advisable that the corporate communication executive be part of the decision makers, i.e. the *dominant coalition* in the organisation. It is vital that the dominant coalition share the same two-way communication worldview of the communication executive to ensure sustainable OSR building. It is also important to instil symmetrical internal communication, since a collective working relationship is required to successfully create mutually beneficial external relationships.

The integration of the excellence communication function within the communication department provides the foundation and ideal conditions necessary to ensure the successful implementation of the SISOSR framework. This department can only be established if top management and the organisation as a whole support the two-way symmetrical communication perspective, thereby moving away from serving organisational self-interests towards the achievement of mutually beneficial objectives shared by the organisation and strategic stakeholders.

3.2 The strategic communication foundation

The OSR-building activities proposed are practised on *organisational level*, and display corporate communication's contribution towards the overall strategic management of the organisation. The successful implementation elements are dependent on the implementation of the *two-way symmetrical framework of communication*, which will be enabled by the integration of the excellence function into the communication department.

To ensure the development of OSRs, a positive organisational reputation is required, to stimulate the initial attraction of the stakeholder to the organisation. The practise of symmetrical communication could promote openness, honesty, trust, negotiation, and collaboration to build and maintain a positive organisational reputation. The establishment of a knowledge culture in the organisation to ensure knowledge transfer is also facilitated by the excellent communication department.

Symmetrical internal communication allows employee participation and a collective working relationship to promote knowledge sharing. The integrated spheres of communication excellence encapsulate the requirements for a knowledge culture: the head of the corporate communication department must, firstly, have the *required knowledge* to practise the two-way symmetrical communication framework, and, secondly, the dominant coalition must support the practice of two-way symmetrical communication in order to enable a *participative organisational culture*. Once a culture of knowledge has been established, *knowledge sharing* can only occur once mutually beneficial OSRs have been built, since knowledge sharing will only occur once a high level of trust has been established between the organisation and strategic stakeholders.

Corporate communication executives should conduct continuous environmental scanning, in conjunction with other stakeholder identification methodologies, to identify strategic stakeholders, obtain more information on these stakeholder groups, and detect issues of concern in order to proactively employ issues management to resolve problems, prior to these developing into crises. Environmental scanning, evaluation, and research should be conducted during the stakeholder identification phase of the framework, to further determine what the identified strategic stakeholders' needs and wants are, and during the OSR maintenance phase, to ensure that stakeholder needs are being met. Although evaluation research is predominantly relevant to the organisational level, it could also become relevant on programme level as it could contribute towards developing measureable objectives for the communication programmes for each stakeholder.

3.3 The conceptualisation of OSR building

The process of OSR building will be explained according to the three proposed phases of OSR building, namely strategic stakeholder identification, OSR development, and OSR maintenance, as well as the two sub-phases of OSR antecedents and stakeholder engagement. This discussion will also highlight the development of foundational OSRs to mutually beneficial OSRs to sustainable OSRs and to eventual OSPs against the three phases of the SISOSR framework. Phases 1 and 2 of the framework are also predominantly driven by *organisational initiation*, which implies that the organisation is the initiator of the OSR. Phase 3 is characterised by *partial mutual initiation*, whereby both the organisation and the strategic stakeholder, although to a lesser extent, initiate engagement towards *full mutual engagement* through two-way engagement on OSP level. Furthermore, the second building block of the framework occurs on *programme and departmental levels*, and encapsulates the *strategic* practice of corporate communication.

3.3.1 Phase 1: Strategic stakeholder identification

Since the organisation is the initiator at this stage of OSR building, corporate communication executives should identify all strategic stakeholder groups, and select those groups that display a high degree of stakeholder salience. Furthermore, these groups should display a high level of involvement, and the costs of engaging these stakeholders should not exceed the benefits. As stipulated in Figure 1, continuous environmental scanning and evaluation research need to be conducted to obtain more information on the needs of these stakeholder groups.

3.3.2 Phase 2: OSR development

The actual OSR development phase is preceded by certain OSR antecedents, and has the proposed outcome of stakeholder engagement. Within this phase, the *foundational OSR*, as presented by the OSR development continuum, is developed, and will, over time, evolve into a mutually beneficial OSR, a sustainable OSR, and an eventual OSP. As mentioned earlier, this phase is characterised by, predominantly, organisational initiation, and partial mutual initiation only becomes evident in the stakeholder engagement phase.

In conjunction with the establishment of an excellent communication department and a strategic communication framework, four OSR antecedents, which constitute the sub-phase prior to Phase 2 of the framework, should be evident, which will stimulate the OSR development process. Once strategic stakeholders have been identified, the organisation should reflect its *worthiness to be trusted*. This is closely linked to the establishment of a positive organisational reputation, and will become evident through open and honest communication through the practice of two-way symmetrical communication that is supported by the dominant coalition in the organisation. To stimulate OSR building, the organisation and stakeholders should experience a sense of *association* with one another. Furthermore, it is argued that the need for a communication programme becomes evident once both the organisation's and the stakeholders' actions have *consequences* on one another because the need to collectively work towards reaching mutually desired end-goals is higher. Lastly, both the organisation and strategic stakeholders will have certain *expectations* prior to the relationship, and if these are not met throughout the OSR, the relationship will not endure. Continuous two-way symmetrical communication *practised over time* will ensure the development of trust, control mutuality, relationship satisfaction, relational commitment, and mutual understanding between the identified strategic stakeholders and the organisation, which are the desired elements of a foundational OSR.

3.3.3 Phase 3: OSR maintenance

A foundational OSR will evolve into a mutually beneficial OSR when stakeholder engagement has been achieved, and the OSR has been maintained for a period of time. Further maintenance of the mutually beneficial OSR will lead to sustainable OSR. For the purpose of this study, stakeholder engagement has been proposed as a two-

dimensional approach. The first dimension of stakeholder engagement occurs upon the implementation of a foundational OSR, thereby serving as an outcome of OSR.

To move towards a mutually beneficial OSR, the organisation has to engage stakeholders to partake in organisational decision making and problem solving. Continuous environmental scanning will also assist the organisation to detect possible risks associated with conflicts of interests, which is essential when engaging stakeholders in organisational activities and decision making. This dimension of stakeholder engagement is therefore characterised by *organisational initiation*. Although stakeholder engagement paves the way towards a mutually beneficial OSR, a degree of OSR maintenance is also required to establish a fully-fledged mutually beneficial OSR through the use of maintenance strategies. The mutual dependence and reciprocity experienced at foundational OSR level is maximised within a mutually beneficial OSR, where the organisation and strategic stakeholders are fully aware of their mutual dependence to achieve relational objectives.

A sustainable OSR is specifically characterised by shared meaning and decision making, as well as a cooperative working relationship brought about through these maintenance strategies. At this level, both the organisation and strategic stakeholders act in the best interests of one another, and full mutual initiation becomes evident.

Since environmental scanning and issues management were promoted as corporate communications strategies that should be conducted throughout the OSR-building process to detect issues of concern, it is assumed that OSR building is not a smooth process, and that various elements could hinder the OSR-building process. Evaluation research becomes evident at programme and departmental levels within the OSR maintenance phase. Since OSRs are multi-dimensional, which implies that strategic stakeholders require organisations to fulfil personal, professional, and community relationship needs, the organisation should determine whether these needs have been met, so as to further strengthen the OSR. As part of evaluation research, the organisation must evaluate whether both the communication and the relational needs of the stakeholders have been met, using feedback, advisory or consultant groups, interviews, focus groups or surveys, social media, and online chat rooms and/or blogs. Symmetrical conflict resolution strategies should be employed to seek solutions to problems through open and mutual decision making.

3.4 OSP

Through continuous two-way symmetrical communication, practised over time, the sustainable OSR will evolve into an OSP, which is characterised by a cooperative working relationship to achieve mutually desired end goals and shared responsibility between the organisation and stakeholders. At this level, stakeholder engagement has evolved into *two-way engagement*, where engagement is initiated by both the organisation and strategic stakeholders, which is characterised by a *mutual process*, *collaborative problem solving*, and *stewardship*. The organisation and stakeholders now work collectively to achieve mutually desired end goals. Through knowledge transfer, evident at this stage of the framework, collaborative problem

solving becomes evident. The capabilities of the organisation and the strategic stakeholders are now combined to reach mutually beneficial solutions to problems in order to achieve a shared goal. Stewardship is experienced at this level, whereby both the stakeholder and organisation act as stewards of one another; both act in the best interest of the partnership, and hence, one another.

4. CONCLUSION

This article contextualised the current emphasis on and need for OSR to ensure organisational survival, and explored the need for OSR building frameworks that explain the process of OSR, in which the need for accepting corporate communication as a strategic function was also highlighted, since OSRs are at the heart of corporate communication.

The limitation of the SISOSR framework is that it is presented as a normative ideal, and future studies should focus on testing this framework in practice, with the aim of developing a model. Furthermore, since this framework focuses on strategic stakeholders, future studies could focus on specific strategic stakeholder groups, and customised phases pertaining to a specific stakeholder group could be added to this generic framework.

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Conceptualising strategic communication management (SCM) in the context of governance and stakeholder inclusiveness

ABSTRACT

The research objective for the study was to conceptualise strategic communication management (SCM) in the context of governance. Based on the insights obtained through the conceptual analysis, the core of corporate communication practice in the reflective paradigm is broadened from *social* responsibility to *societal* responsibility. Corporate communication, in its strategic role (SCM), therefore assists in solving or avoiding conflict between organisational behaviour and the public perception of how *societally* responsible organisations should operate.

Furthermore, theoretical and conceptual linkages that emerged through the conceptual analysis suggest that the three meta-theoretical approaches initially selected for the governance domain (the *triple bottom line*, *stakeholder*, and *stakeholder inclusiveness* approaches) should also be added to the framework for SCM. It was also found that corporate communication (especially in its strategic role, known as SCM) can be regarded as a *stakeholder orientated/responsible* approach.

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INTRODUCTION

Since the turn of the century, major shifts have taken place worldwide in the relationship of business with individuals and society. A survey of CEOs conducted by the Arthur W. Page Society (2007) found that chief executives believe that we are at one of those inflection points in business history; the game is changing in fundamental ways, and accepted beliefs, long-standing institutions, and highly successful enterprises are subject to rapid redefinition. It can thus be safely stated that, at this point in time, there is no more 'business as usual.'

Stakeholder and societal interests, concerns, values, and norms are more effectively articulated in this new business era than at any time since the dawn of the free enterprise system. Contemporary concepts such as the triple bottom line, governance, sustainability, corporate citizenship, societally responsible behaviour (social, environmental, and economic), reputation, trust, legitimacy, and ethics are monopolising strategic conversations from the US to Europe to South Africa (Steyn, 2009: 517). These conversations have (or should have) a bearing on the future practice of corporate communication.

Changing business paradigms have indeed influenced corporate communication, bringing about a changing focus in the field over the last 30 years. It has developed substantially from technical role-playing at lower organisational levels for most of the 20th century (known as 'public relations') to managerial role-playing since the 1980s (increasingly called 'corporate communication').

The first ten years of this century "ignited a new beginning of the public relations profession in its day-to-day practice, conceptualization and public perception" (Muzi Falconi, 2010: 5). Paradigms such as relationship management (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000); reputation management (Fombrun & Van Riel, 1997); the European societal/reflective approach (Van Ruler & Verçiç, 2002; Holmström, 1996, 1997); the strategic approach (Steyn, in Toth, 2007, 2009; in Karakaya Şatir, 2011); Grunig's (2009) strategic management, behavioural paradigm; and the *Pretoria School of Thought* (De Beer, Steyn & Rensburg, forthcoming 2013) entered university curricula, and have been embraced by forward-looking organisations — necessitating strategic role playing by senior corporate communication practitioners (Steyn, in Karakaya Şatir, 2011).

The field of corporate communication, including its latest theoretical developments and best practice in a strategic organisational context, can be described as 'strategic communication management' (De Beer, Steyn & Rensburg, forthcoming 2013).

1. STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT (SCM)

Strategic communication management (SCM), according to the *Pretoria School of Thought* (De Beer, 2010; De Beer, Steyn & Rensburg, forthcoming 2013), is a scientific worldview or paradigm that conceptualises communication management in the strategic context of the organisation. In this view, 'communication management' is not equated with 'strategic communication management'. Communication management is defined as the management of communication

between an organisation (institution) and its internal and external stakeholders, and other societal interest groups, and is performed at the **functional** level of an organisation. SCM assumes corporate communication to be a strategic management function with a mandate to function at the **strategic** (macro, societal, or environmental) level (Steyn, in Toth, 2007; in Karakaya Şatir, 2011). Grunig, Grunig, and Dozier (2002: 143, 383) call this the 'full-participation' approach to strategic corporate communication, where the function is 'empowered,' i.e. involved before strategic decisions are made.

The central concepts of SCM are *environmental scanning* with a view to identifying and managing *stakeholders* and *issues*. Since an issue cannot be considered as such without a stakeholder or interest/advocacy group being involved, stakeholders and the publics/advocacy groups that develop around issues, need to receive the organisation's attention (Steyn, in Toth, 2007).

When solely guided by a process of gathering, understanding, and interpreting the often-conflicting expectations of specific stakeholders, an organisation will improve the quality of its decision-making processes and accelerate its implementation. However, it will risk not being sufficiently aware of wider societal expectations, values, and norms – also known as the public interest (Muzi Falconi, 2010: 5). The analysis of societal issues and trends is important because the values and beliefs of key stakeholders are derived from broader societal influences. Awareness of, and compliance with, societal attitudes can help organisations avoid restrictive legislation and being regarded as a 'bad corporate citizen' (Harrison & St John, 1998). The integration of the stakeholder relationship governance process with those of boundary spanning and issues management is therefore essential (Muzi Falconi, 2010: 5).

According to Steyn (in Toth, 2007), corporate communication¹ in its strategic role:

- provides an organisation/institution with a societal (outside-in) perspective by feeding intelligence with regards to strategic stakeholders² (their expectations, concerns, values, and norms), societal issues, and the publics³ (interest/advocacy groups) that emerge around the issues into the organisation's strategy development processes — thereby assisting an organisation to adapt its strategies/goals/policies/behaviour to its societal and stakeholder environment;
- influences organisational leaders to address reputation risks and other strategic issues identified in the reflective process by aligning organisational goals and strategies to

¹ '**Corporate communication**' is used in this paper because of the negative connotations of the term 'public relations,' and also because the latter is often equated with the tactical level.

² People or groups are **stakeholders** when they are affected by the decisions/behaviour of an organisation, or when their behaviour/decisions affect the organisation (Grunig & Repper, in Grunig, 1992: 125).

³ **Publics** form when stakeholders (or other interest/advocacy groups) recognise one of more of the consequences of organisational behaviour as a problem, and organise to do something about it (Grunig & Repper, in Grunig, 1992: 124).

societal and stakeholder expectations/concerns/values/norms — serving both the organisation's and the public interest;

- influences organisational leaders to state the organisation's position on, and practice two-way communication with external and internal stakeholders about, issues of strategic importance;
- builds mutually beneficial relationships with the organisation's stakeholders and other interest groups in society on whom it depends to meet its goals; and
- assists the organisation to act socially responsible, and thus obtain legitimacy, garner trust, and build a good reputation.

The above process constitutes corporate communication's contribution to strategic decision making, which manifests in inputs in the development of an organisation's enterprise strategy, i.e. a contribution to the organisation's triple bottom line through a focus on the 'people' and 'planet' (rather than 'profit') components (Steyn, in Toth, 2007). Considering SCM in the triple context environment – people, planet, and profit (as addressed in this article) — is a seminal perspective that is shaping the theoretical and pragmatic thinking in the field of communication management (De Beer & Rensburg, 2011a, 2011b; Muzi Falconi, 2010; Rensburg & De Beer, 2003; Steyn, 2009; Steyn, in Şatir, 2011; Steyn & De Beer, 2012; Steyn & Niemann, 2008, 2010; Stockholm Accords, 2010).

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The concept of governance (prominent in the corporate world, as well as in government and the non-profit sector) is receiving attention in all sectors of the economy and academia. The King Code of Governance for South Africa, 2009 (IoD, 2009a; PWC, 2009: 2), states that a fundamental shift is needed in the way companies and directors act and organise themselves. This has (partly) come about because corporate scandals (such as Enron, WorldCom, and Tyco), which occurred in the early years of the 21st century, reinforced the idea that companies and corporate executives care little for ethics in their pursuit of profit. At the end of the first decade, the global financial crisis dealt another blow to public trust in business as an institution. These crises revealed a need for managers and academics to re-think the traditional ways of conceptualising the responsibilities of companies (Parmar, Freeman, Harrison, Wicks, De Colle & Purnell, 2010).

A way to restore trust in business is through ideas and processes that demonstrate that business cares about more than just profit. The triple bottom line, stakeholder inclusiveness, corporate governance, and sustainability approaches to strategic management currently followed by best practice companies (JSE, 2010; Dow Jones, 2011) demonstrate that profit does not have to be incompatible with caring about employees, communities, or the planet. Business organisations should be rebuilt around a new set of principles and behaviours (Nohria, in HBS, 2010: 3), such as stakeholder inclusivity, where the legitimate interests/expectations of stakeholders are considered to be in the best interests of the company (IoD, 2009a). Another important principle is that governance, strategy, and sustainability are inseparable (IoD, 2009a; Gao & Zhang, 2006).

According to Steyn and De Beer (2012), the field of corporate communication presently has much to offer in bringing about the organisational changes referred to above; for instance, through the performance of its strategic role in the new organisational process of 'integrated reporting.'

It is, however, the view of the authors that current developments in the business-society relationship (specifically the stakeholder inclusiveness approach to governance) necessitate a broadening of the concept of SCM to also include governance principles in its value-added contributions to the organisation. Corporate communication practitioners have to remain relevant to the priorities, issues, and risks of the 21st century organisation. Not only will the expectations/concerns of stakeholder and societal interest groups have an impact on the SCM function in the organisation, but top management expectations will also place new demands on it.

The research objective of this exploratory study was to broaden SCM conceptually by exploring it in the context of governance, with reference to stakeholder inclusiveness.

3. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The research approach was qualitative (Patton, 1990: 424; Struwig & Stead, 2001: 11-13), and the design exploratory (Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995: 41) and non-empirical (Mouton, 2001: 175). The research method was a literature study, the data sources were literature on meta-theories, theories, and concepts in the domains of SCM and corporate governance (including stakeholder inclusiveness).

The data analysis method was a conceptual analysis which, according to Mouton (2001: 175), refers to the "analysis of the meaning of words or concepts through clarification and elaboration of the different dimensions of meaning." Well-structured conceptual analysis makes conceptual categories clear, explicates theoretical linkages, and reveals conceptual implications of different viewpoints (Mouton, 2001: 175).

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study explored the concept of SCM in the context of governance and stakeholder inclusiveness. **Table 1** indicates meta-theories and theories that the authors deemed relevant at the start of the exploration process (the numbers in Table 1 refer to the corresponding section in the text).

Table 1: Meta-theories, theories, and concepts of the study

DOMAIN	Corporate communication (Public relations)	Governance
PARADIGM	(4.1) Reflective paradigm (Holmström, 1996)	(4.2) Triple bottom line (Elkington, 1999) Broad view
META-THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	(4.1) Societal approach (Van Ruler & Verčič, 2002)	(4.3) Stakeholder approach (Freeman, 1984) Descriptive and prescriptive (4.4) Stakeholder orientated/responsible approaches (Zambon & Del Bello, 2005)
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	<p>Mutual reflection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflective task (SCM) • Expressive task <p>Corporate communication functions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mirror function (SCM) • Window function <p>Strategic PR roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Reflective) Strategist (SCM) • Manager • Technician <p>Levels of strategy formulation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribution to enterprise strategy (SCM) • Functional strategy • Implementation strategy 	<p>Narrow view:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shareholders • Set of transactions <p>Broad view:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholders • Relationships <p><i>Enlightened shareholder view</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder interests have instrumental value <p>Stakeholder inclusiveness view</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder interests are in the best interests of the company
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	(4.4.1) Strategic Communication Management (SCM)	(4.5) Governance

Source: Authors' conceptualisation

4.1 The reflective paradigm for corporate communication

The Danish scholar Holmström (1996, 1997) anchored corporate communication in social systems theory, an approach that sought to understand it as a macro-level (or sociological) phenomenon — a structure relating to society in general, rather than individual segments thereof. In Holmström's (1996, 1997) **reflective paradigm**, the role of corporate communication is to advise on methods of problem representation, thereby influencing the way management makes sense of important issues.

According to Holmström (1997: 25,76), **social responsibility** is the core of corporate communication practice – solving or avoiding conflict between organisational behaviour and

the public perception of how socially responsible organisations should operate. Business organisations have an impact, beyond their financial bottom line, on the so-called societal level — they also affect other organisations, individuals, and stakeholders in society. A precondition for maintaining public trust is social responsibility (Holmström, 1996: 81).

The assumptions of the reflective paradigm for corporate communication are shared by the European **societal approach**, explicated in the Bled Manifesto by Van Ruler and Verčič (2002: 16) as a strategic process of viewing an organisation from an ‘outside’ perspective — showing a special concern for broader societal issues. Legitimacy and public trust in the organisation are central concepts, and an organisation’s inclusiveness — preserving its ‘license to operate’ — is of primary concern (Verčič, Van Ruler, Bütschi & Flodin, 2001: 382).

4.1.1 *Reflective and expressive task for corporate communication*

Mutual reflection, the core concept of the reflective paradigm, consists of a reflective and an expressive task for corporate communication (Holmström, 1996: 97-98):

- The **reflective task** (inward communication) is to act as a sensor — selecting information on what is considered *socially responsible* behaviour in the public sphere (society), transmitting it to the organisation, and encouraging organisational members to balance their behaviour in relation to societal expectations, concerns, values, and norms, thereby assisting to make the organisation deserving of trust. This task is similar to the reflective dimension/role of corporate communication identified by Verčič *et al.* (2001) in the European Body of Knowledge (EBOK) project.
- The **expressive task** (outward communication) is to create and provide regular, widely distributed information (based on reflection) on behalf of the organisation, to ensure that societal members regard it as socially responsible, in order to gain/strengthen the public trust that is necessary in interacting with other systems.

With regards to the research objective of this study, it is part of the reflective task to convey/transmit/reflect information to the organisation’s management that **‘good governance’** and **‘stakeholder inclusiveness’** are considered *socially responsible behaviour* by stakeholders and societal members, and to encourage adjustment of organisational behaviour/strategies accordingly, so that the organisation earns and maintains public trust.

4.1.2 *Strategic communication management research programme in South Africa*

During the same period that the EBOK project was being conducted by Verčič *et al.* (2001) in Europe, Steyn (2000a), unaware of the EBOK project, laid the foundations of a ‘strategic communication management’ paradigm at the University of Pretoria, now referred to as the *Pretoria School of Thought* (De Beer, 2010; De Beer, Steyn & Rensburg, forthcoming 2013). The theoretical pillars of this paradigm are **‘role’** (specifically the reflective communication strategist), and the **‘levels of strategy formulation’** (specifically the contribution of corporate communication to the development of enterprise strategy at the top management/societal level of the organisation) (Steyn, in Toth, 2007).

Steyn (2000a) conceptualised three corporate communication roles, which were subsequently empirically verified: strategist, manager, and technician (Steyn, 2000b). Considered the most important is the communication **strategist** role, based on the **mirror** function of corporate communication (Steyn, 2000b: 29-31; Steyn, 2004: 24; Steyn & Puth, 2000: 19-21). The strategist's activities are performed at the top management or societal level of the organisation — representing corporate communication's strategic **contribution to the enterprise strategy development** process. The strategist is responsible for (but also supports corporate, business-unit, and functional strategies in) the identification of reputation risks and other strategic issues/opportunities that need to be communicated. According to Steyn (in Toth, 2007), this role is based on the outside-in approach to strategic management and the information acquisition/processing role of the boundary spanner.

In performing the information acquisition/processing role of the boundary spanner, it is the responsibility of the communication strategist to identify and bring to top management's attention that **'governance'** and **'stakeholder inclusiveness'** are reputation risks if the organisation does not acknowledge and adhere to these societal expectations/values/norms.

In a comparative analysis, Steyn and Bütschi (2003) found the European reflective role to be conceptually similar to the South African communication strategist role. Consequently, based on the assumptions shared with the reflective paradigm, Steyn (2009) selected the latter as the meta-theoretical approach for her theory of three roles for corporate communication and relabelled the communication strategist to the **'reflective strategist'**.

The reflective strategist acts as an advocate for key stakeholders by explaining their expectations/values/norms/views (*inter alia*, on **'good governance'** and **'stakeholder inclusiveness'**) to management; makes the latter aware of the impact of their behaviour/organisational policies and strategies on key stakeholders and societal interest groups; and acts as an early warning system before issues in the environment (e.g. non-conformance to expectations regarding **'good governance'** and **'stakeholder inclusiveness'**) escalate to crises.

Furthermore, the reflective strategist influences management to adapt organisational strategies to societal/stakeholder expectations, concerns, values, and norms, thereby balancing the quest for the realisation of organisational goals (profit) with respect for the natural environment (planet), and its inhabitants (people). Management is made to understand that public trust is not earned by simply changing outward communication to *signify* responsibility; an organisation has to behave responsibly (i.e. practise **'good governance'** and **'stakeholder inclusiveness'**).

This concludes the explication of the first theoretical pillar of the SCM paradigm, that of (the reflective strategist's) role. In the next section, the levels of strategy formulation as the second pillar will be addressed.

4.1.3 Levels of strategy development

Strategy development generally takes place at five organisational levels, namely enterprise, corporate, business unit, functional, and implementation strategy (Digman, 1990). According to Steyn (in Toth, 2007), the corporate communication function contributes to strategy development at three organisational levels:

- The development of **enterprise strategy** at the top management level, for which the reflective strategist has co-responsibility with top management (Steyn, 2003; Steyn, in Toth, 2007; Steyn & Niemann, 2008, 2010). This forms part of corporate communication's mirror function which, according to Steyn and Bütschi (2003), is similar to Holmström's reflective task. *This is the core of SCM.*
- The development of **corporate communication** strategy at the functional level (Steyn, 2000c, 2003), both deliberate and emergent (Steyn, in Toth, 2007), for which the communication manager has responsibility, and **implementation** strategy at the operational level, for which the communication technician has responsibility. This forms part of corporate communication's window function, which, according to Steyn and Bütschi (2003), is similar to Holmström's expressive task.

Relevant to the objectives of this research, is corporate communication's strategic contribution to developing the enterprise strategy at the societal or environmental level — an overarching strategy level that addresses the organisation's relationship with society and its stakeholders (Freeman, 1984), as well as its political and social legitimacy (Ansoff, 1977). Enterprise strategy is also known as the strategy level that achieves non-financial goals (Steyn & Puth, 2000; Steyn & Niemann, 2008, 2010.).

The enterprise strategy stems from research on the social responsibility of business, and answers the question of what the organisation *should* be doing (Freeman, 1984), i.e. to ensure that its strategies, actions and outputs are "consistent with the value-pattern of society" (Sutton, 1993: 3). As a bridging strategy (Meznar & Nigh, 1995), enterprise strategy attempts to rapidly identify changing societal/social expectations, so as to promote organisational conformance to those expectations. This is done in order to minimise risk to the organisation's reputation (Fennell & Alexander, 1987; Grunig, 2006); be regarded as societally responsible (socially, environmentally and economically); a good (corporate) citizen; and thereby securing legitimacy and ensuring that the organisation is seen as trustworthy and credible (Steyn, 2003, 2009, in Toth, 2007).

In addressing stakeholder expectations, values, and concerns, as well as social and environmental issues (non-financial/sustainability dimensions of strategy), the enterprise strategy differs from the corporate strategy, which addresses the business dimensions of strategy (Freeman, 1984).

Stead and Stead (2000: 310) extended the scope of enterprise strategy to the ecological level of analysis, calling it 'eco-enterprise' strategy. This provides a sound theoretical

framework for ethically and strategically accounting for the ultimate stakeholder, which is 'Planet Earth'.

Playing the strategic role of corporate communication by contributing towards the development of an organisation's enterprise strategy is the foundation of SCM.

It is at the level of enterprise strategy that an organisation's approach to '**governance**' and '**stakeholder inclusiveness**' is decided, and strategic (non-financial) goals are set in order to address these stakeholder and societal expectations/values/norms.

4.2 Triple bottom line approach to decision making

The **triple bottom line (TBL)** was selected as the overarching paradigm for the governance domain. Traditionally, organisations were only expected or required by law to report on financial or economic matters. In line with the drive towards corporate governance worldwide, there is a move from this single bottom line to a TBL approach (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2004: 45). The TBL entails business organisations focusing not just on the economic value that they add, but also on the environmental and social value that they add — or destroy (Elkington, 1999).

In a **narrow view**, the TBL is a framework for measuring and reporting corporate performance against economic, social, and environmental parameters over a period of time (Elkington, 1999):

- The traditional measure of corporate 'profit'— the bottom line of the **profit and loss** account.
- The bottom line of a company's 'people' account — some measure of how **socially responsible** an organisation has been throughout its operations.
- The bottom line of the company's 'planet' account — a measure of how **environmentally responsible** the organisation has been.

This paper is based on the **broad view** of the TBL as an approach to decision making that captures the whole set of **values, ethics, societal expectations, issues, and processes** that organisations must address in order to minimise any harm resulting from their activities, thereby creating economic, social, and environmental value. This requires clarity about the organisation's purpose, and taking into consideration the needs of all its stakeholders and society. The TBL is a way of thinking about corporate social responsibility (CSR), and not a method of accounting. Too many companies have not appreciated the *philosophy* behind the TBL, and are responding only to the reporting requirements (Accountability, 2003).

The TBL should be built into an organisation's corporate governance structures, management tools, individual performance assessments, and reward schemes. In a TBL approach, any decision should always seek to balance three considerations, namely whether it is

economically viable, socially responsible, and environmentally sound. Using the TBL as a business principle in decision making balances financial growth with corporate responsibility, short-term gains with long-term profitability, and shareholder return with other stakeholder interests (NovoNordisk, n.d.).

The flexibility of the TBL approach allows organisations to apply the concept in a manner suitable to their specific needs. Currently, some organisations consider governance (the statutory, regulatory, business, administrative, and political processes that determine or influence decision making and actions) along with economic, social, and environmental circumstances – thus adopting a ‘quadruple-bottom-line’ approach to strategic decision making (Dept. of Environment, n.d.).

4.3 Stakeholder approach

The **stakeholder approach** (perspective/theory) is another framework applied in the domain of governance. Although there are many definitions of a stakeholder, the same principle is generally reflected, namely that the organisation should take into consideration the **needs, interests, and influences of peoples and groups** who either impact on, or may be impacted by its strategies, policies, and operations (Mainardes, Alves & Raposo, 2011). According to Freeman and McVea (2001), a stakeholder approach emphasises *active* management of the business environment and relationships, as well as the promotion of shared interests. The interests of key stakeholders must be integrated into the very purpose of the organisation.

According to Freeman and McVea (2001), a major contribution of the CSR literature was the broadening of the scope of stakeholder analysis and impressing on management the importance of building relationships with previously estranged groups. The social activist movement has demonstrated the dangers of developing strategies that ignore the influence of antagonistic groups. However, CSR is often regarded as either an ‘add-on’ luxury that only the most successful businesses can afford, or as damage limitation insurance, rather than as a core input to enterprise strategy.

According to Harrison and St John (1998), stakeholder management is built on a partnering mentality that involves communicating, negotiating, contracting, managing relationships, and motivating. These different aspects are held together by the **enterprise strategy**, which defines what the organisation stands for. The organisation’s values and its enterprise strategy may dictate priorities for particular partnerships and discourage others.

Values and values-based management play a critical role in business strategy. According to Collins and Porras (1994), it is a pre-condition to long-term financial success. Diverse collections of stakeholders can only cooperate over the long run if, despite their differences, they **share a set of core values** (Freeman & McVea, 2001). Not only does this provide strong support for the importance of an enterprise strategy, but many of the core values confirm the importance of basing strategy on collaborative stakeholder relationships.

Stakeholder theory allows managers to incorporate personal values into the formulation and implementation of strategic plans. An example is the concept of an enterprise strategy (Schendel & Hofer, 1979) that describes the relationship between the organisation and society by answering the question: What do we stand for? Enterprise strategy is important, because the organisation's survival depends, in part, on there being some 'fit' between the values of the organisation and its managers, the expectations of the stakeholders, and the societal issues that will determine the ability of the organisation to sell its products (Freeman, 1984: 107).

The importance of building relationships with previously estranged groups was pointed out in the CSR literature. The social activist movement has demonstrated the dangers of developing strategies that ignore the influence of antagonistic groups. However, CSR is often regarded as either an 'add-on' luxury that can be only afforded by the most successful businesses, or as damage limitation insurance, rather than as a core input to enterprise strategy (Freeman & McVea, 2001).

4.4 Governance as a stakeholder orientated/responsible approach

The social and environmental aspects of an organisation's external environment, as well as stakeholder-linked issues, have become important corporate value drivers. There is a clear relationship between the **stakeholder perspective** and concepts/practices related to **non-financial** aspects of company behaviour, e.g., corporate governance, sustainability, and CSR (Zambon & Del Bello, 2005: 130):

- Corporate sustainability and CSR involve assessment of the company's economic, social, and environmental impact, taking steps to improve it in line with stakeholder expectations, concerns, values and norms, and reporting on relevant measurements.
- Corporate governance reflects the way companies address legal responsibilities, and therefore provides the foundations upon which corporate sustainability and CSR practices can be built to enhance responsible business operations (Katsoulacos & Katsoulacos, 2007: 356).

According to Zambon and Del Bello (2005: 130-131), the concepts and practices of corporate sustainability, CSR, and corporate governance rely on the notion of 'stakeholder,' and have their **conceptual roots** in stakeholder theory. They can thus be seen as **specific implementations** of the stakeholder theory. (It is not possible, for instance, to be 'socially responsible' or 'sustainable' without identifying the stakeholder target). Collectively, they can be referred to as stakeholder orientated/responsible approaches.

Corporate communication also relies on the notion of 'stakeholder'. Grunig, Grunig, and Ehling (in Grunig, 1992) state that stakeholders (strategic constituencies) are the *raison d'être* (**justification**) for the existence of the corporate communication function. According to Grunig's situational theory of publics (in Grunig, 1992: 14), SCM begins when communication practitioners identify potential problems in the relationship between the organisation and its stakeholders/advocacy groups, and define the 'publics' (categories affected by the problem).

'Publics' arise within or outside of the stakeholder categories. The second stage in SCM is the segmentation of publics into 'latent,' 'aware,' or 'active' publics (as each category responds differently to the potential problems).

It is only after publics and issues have been identified in the process of SCM (i.e. what needs to be communicated *about* and to *whom*) that the process of **communication** management starts (identifying *what* needs to be communicated and *how*).

This concludes the discussion of the meta-theoretical framework selected for the domain of governance. In the following section, the theoretical framework is explicated.

4.5 Governance

A core debate in the corporate governance literature is that of the shareholder perspective (traditional/narrow view of governance) versus the stakeholder perspective (broad view). Corporate governance in the **traditional (narrow)** view refers to the formal system of accountability of the board of directors to shareholders (which is financially orientated). According to Mintz (2005: 585), the shareholder model of corporate governance relies on the assumption that shareholders are entitled (morally, not merely legally) to direct the business organisation, because their capital investments provide ownership rights. While the shareholder model has historically been followed in the US, countries such as Germany adhere to a stakeholder model. The latter considers corporate governance to be more than simply the relationship between a business organisation and its capital providers. It indicates how the various constituencies that define the entity serve, and are served by, the business organisation.

While the traditional school of corporate governance focused on the maximisation of shareholder wealth, stakeholder theory emerged as a response to the shareholder theory. Freeman's (1984) seminal book on stakeholder theory posits that successful managers systematically attend to the interests of various stakeholder groups. This '**enlightened self-interest**' position has been expanded upon, *inter alia*, by Donaldson and Preston (1995), who believe that the interests of stakeholders have intrinsic worth, irrespective of whether it advances the interests of shareholders (Mintz, 2005: 586). In this perspective, business organisations act responsibly when CSR issues have been integrated into their decision-making and governance structures.

The King II Report, published in South Africa (IoD, 2002), defines corporate governance as the building of a balance between economic and social goals, and between individual and communal goals — the aim being to align, as closely as possible, the interest of individuals, organisations, and society. This reflects the **broad view**, where governance is concerned with the informal and formal relationships between the organisation and its stakeholders (rather than a set of transactions), the way an organisation aligns its own goals with those of its stakeholders, and the impact of the organisation on society in general (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2004). These relationships impact on the strategic direction/intent of the organisation and, subsequently, on the performance of the organisation (Gelauff & Den Broeder, 1997: 7-14).

Chapters 1 and 8 of the King III Report (IoD, 2009b) have particular relevance to this research. In Chapter 1: *Ethical Leadership and Corporate Citizenship*, important principles highlighted are, *inter alia*, that the board should: ensure that the company acts responsibly, and is seen to be a responsible corporate citizen; cultivate and promote an ethical corporate culture; and appreciate that strategy, risk, performance, and sustainability are inseparable. King III further states that good governance is essentially about effective, responsible leaders, characterised by the ethical values of responsibility, accountability, fairness, and transparency (IoD 2009b: 20). According to Jones (in Gottschalk, 2011: 87), the principles of modern governance are legitimacy, accountability, performance, and fairness.

In King III's *Introduction and Background* (IoD, 2009b), the approach to stakeholder engagement is outlined in Chapter 8: *Governing Stakeholder Relationships*. In the 'enlightened shareholder' model, as well as in the 'stakeholder inclusive' model of corporate governance, the board of directors should consider the legitimate interests and expectations of stakeholders other than shareholders. However, the way in which stakeholder interests and expectations are treated in the two approaches is very different (De Beer, 2009):

- In the '**enlightened shareholder**' approach, legitimate stakeholder interests and expectations have only instrumental value, i.e. stakeholders are only considered in as far as it is in the interests of shareholders to do so.
- In the '**stakeholder inclusive**' approach, the board of directors considers legitimate stakeholder interests and expectations on the basis that this is in the best interests of the company, and not merely as an instrument to serve the interests of the shareholders.

What this means in practice is that, in the 'stakeholder inclusive' model, the legitimate interests and expectations of stakeholders are considered when deciding in the **best interests of the company**. The integration of, and trade-offs between, various stakeholders are then done on a case-by-case basis, to serve the best interests of the company. The shareholder, on the premise of this approach, does not have a predetermined place of precedence over other stakeholders. However, the interests of the shareholder or any other stakeholder may be afforded precedence, based on what is believed to serve the best interests of the company at that point. The latter should be interpreted within the parameters of the company as a sustainable enterprise and a responsible corporate citizen. This approach gives effect to the notion of redefining success in terms of lasting positive effects for all stakeholders (De Beer, 2009).

In King III, the first paragraph of Chapter 8: *Governing Stakeholder Relationships* states that a stakeholder-inclusive approach to corporate governance recognises that a company has many stakeholders who can affect the company in the achievement of its strategy and long-term sustained growth, and **whose needs have to be considered** when developing the strategic intent of the organisation. The organisation's purpose has to be defined, the values by which the organisation will carry out its activities have to be identified, and both must be

communicated to all stakeholders. In essence, these three factors should be combined in developing strategies to achieve the organisation's financial and non-financial goals in aiming to be sustainable in the long run.

The central insight from the King III Report (IoD, 2009b) regarding SCM is that corporate communication practitioners are to play a strategic role in governing stakeholder relationships, which includes corporate governance, sustainability initiatives, strategy, reputation management, stakeholder engagement, and communication management as its core principles (De Beer & Rensburg, 2011a). This process was outlined in Chapter 8 of King III (*Governing Stakeholder Relationships*). The relevance for SCM is that it illustrates, for the first time, the expectations that the board now has of the reputation of the organisation, stakeholder relationships, and communication functions in the organisation (De Beer, 2009). Toni Muzi Falconi (2009), world-renowned corporate communication practitioner and academic, regards the King III Report (specifically the chapter on *Stakeholder Relationship Governance*) as constituting a "dramatic acceleration of the growth of our profession."

Corporate governance explores the organisation in terms of ownership and as a social entity, i.e. the structure of the organisation, its legal basis, and economic functions (Campbell & Mollica, 2009: xiv). It also deals with managing and being accountable for the full range of corporate responsibilities. As such, it provides guidance for the corporate communication function when developing its strategies, policies, and activities. King III (IoD, 2009b) places significant emphasis on a company being a responsible corporate citizen. Boards are urged to take into account legitimate stakeholder interests and expectations when making decisions in the best interests of the company. Katsoulakos and Katsoulacos (2006: 356, 359) furthermore argue for the integration of corporate responsibility principles and stakeholder approaches into mainstream strategy.

A stakeholder-inclusive approach to governance considers, weighs, and promotes the interests of all the organisation's stakeholders, thus ensuring their cooperation and support. In this way, the organisation creates trust between itself and its internal and external stakeholders, without whom it cannot operate sustainably (IoD, 2009b). If the organisation is run ethically, it earns the necessary approval – its **license to operate** – from those affected by and affecting its operations (IoD, 2009b). Ultimately, good corporate governance guidelines are aimed at helping businesses rebuild their **legitimacy**, providing a way to foster social cohesion between business and society (Oketch, 2004: 9).

The central insight from the perspective of the corporate governance movement is that effective and efficient leadership, management, and control of the business organisation will be impossible without integrating moral attitudes and requirements with behaviour. Values, the embodiment of what an organisation stands for, should be the basis for the behaviour of its members. Such a comprehensive understanding of corporate governance means that the objective of **values management** should be considered a **strategic management task**, anchored at top management level (Wieland, 2005). Fitzpatrick (1996) states that corporate

communication practitioners can offer insights into the values that should guide the business organisation, and should be sensitive to values issues. In the opinion of this article's authors, it is the role of the reflective strategist to offer decision makers insight into the values of stakeholders and societal interest/advocacy groups, which should guide the organisation.

Business organisations that aspire to positions of leadership need to behave as responsible agents. If an organisation is to conduct itself responsibly, it needs the structures and processes that make this possible. A set of governance and management systems that are aligned with this objective is needed. It is not sufficient to have special programmes on the side – a code of conduct is meaningless unless adherence to it is part of the organisation's performance evaluation and compensation system (Bernhut, 2003). Values have to be integrated with what the organisation actually does, i.e. woven into its formal systems and processes, rather than being layered over them (Wieland, 2005).

In the framework of enterprise strategy, a value system based on good governance can provide a sound ethical basis for developing ecologically and socially sensitive strategic management strategies. In doing so, organisations are able to satisfy the demands of a myriad of stakeholders for whom the protection of the environment and social equality are critical (Freeman, 1984).

The terminology of corporate governance is mostly used with respect to corporate *responsibilities* i.e. corporate **environmental** responsibility, corporate **social** responsibility, and corporate **business** responsibility and **sustainability** (Campbell & Mollica, 2009: xv-xvi). Responsible business behaviour constitutes the consciousness that an organisation can do well in the long run by paying attention to the environment and the society in which it operates.

Muzi Falconi (2010: 5) is of the opinion that a *responsible* organisation is effective when it achieves the best possible balance — between any specific, as well as general, objectives — regarding the three different levels of interests involved in any organisational activity, namely the organisation's interests, the different (and often conflicting) interests of its stakeholder groups, and the public interest.

According to Van Tulder and Van der Zwart (2006: 142), CSR is shifting from a largely instrumental and managerial approach to one aimed at managing strategic networks where longer-term relationships with stakeholders are prominent in strategic decision making. The AA1000 standard states that stakeholder engagement is about organisations using leadership to build relationships with stakeholders, thereby improving their overall performance, accountability, and sustainability (Gao & Zhang, 2006: 725-726). Interactive communication with key stakeholders is fundamental to obtaining legitimacy, as engagement leads to knowledge of the stakeholders' legitimate interests and expectations (IRC, 2011). The information acquired through this engagement process enables the executive team to implement, and the governing structure to monitor, the organisation's long-term strategy on a more informed basis.

Views have changed concerning the responsibilities of business, not only towards its owners and shareholders, but also to a vast array of other stakeholders (Freeman, 1984). Accordingly, the demand has risen, not only for ethical corporate conduct, but also for information about this conduct.

In light of the importance attached to governance, it is necessary for the field of SCM to view itself through the lens of governance in order to broaden its assumptions and concepts, so that its purpose remains relevant to 21st century organisations.

5. BROADENING SCM AT THE META-THEORETICAL LEVEL

This exploratory study spans two domains. For the corporate communication domain (including the sub-domain of SCM, i.e. the strategic role of corporate communication), the meta-theoretical approach selected was the reflective paradigm/societal approach. For the governance domain, various meta-theoretical approaches were selected as a framework. In describing the assumptions of the selected approaches to governance, a number of insights emerged regarding, firstly, the broadening of one of the major assumptions of the reflective paradigm and, secondly, the relevance of the governance approaches to SCM.

In the conceptual analysis that follows, the text in *italics* refers to the previous discussion of the corporate communication domain (Sections 1 and 4.1), while boxed text refers to the discussion of the governance domain (meta-theoretical approaches) (Sections 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4) and theory (Section 4.5). The aim is to reveal the theoretical linkages between the two domains. The text in **boldface** indicates conceptual linkages.

5.1 Adding the TBL approach to the SCM meta-theoretical framework

In Section 4.1 of this article, corporate communication (including its strategic role, known as SCM) was positioned within the reflective paradigm, with its most important assumption being that:

***social responsibility** {is} regarded as the core of corporate communication practice – solving or avoiding conflict between organisational behaviour and the public perception of how **socially** responsible organisations should operate.*

From a governance perspective on SCM, the authors concluded that the TBL approach to decision making (Section 4.2) needs to be added to SCM's meta-theoretical framework. In assisting the organisation to be(come) a good corporate citizen, the core of corporate communication practice should, in addition to **social** responsibility, include **economic** and **environmental responsibility**, i.e. **societal responsibility**. Therefore, corporate communication should assist in solving or avoiding conflict between organisational behaviour and the public perception of how **societally** responsible organisations should operate.

5.2 Adding the stakeholder approach to the SCM meta-theoretical framework

In Section 1, it is stated that:

*The central concepts of SCM are **environmental scanning** with a view to identifying and managing **stakeholders and issues**;*

and

*Corporate communication in its strategic role provides an organisation/institution with a societal (outside-in) perspective by feeding intelligence with regards to **strategic stakeholders** (their **expectations, concerns, values, and norms**), **societal issues**, and the **publics** (interest-/advocacy groups) that emerge around the issues, into the organisation's strategy development processes, thereby assisting an organisation to adapt its strategies/goals/policies/behaviour to its societal and stakeholder environment;*

and

*When solely guided by a process of gathering, understanding, and interpreting the often-conflicting expectations of specific **stakeholders**, an organisation will improve the quality of its decision-making processes and accelerate the time of its implementation. However, the organisation will risk not being sufficiently aware of **wider societal expectations** (the public interest). This is why the **integration** of the stakeholder relationship governance process with boundary spanning and issues management processes is essential.*

The stakeholder approach (Section 4.3) posits that the organisation “should take into consideration the **needs, interests, and influences of people and groups** who either impact on, or may be impacted by, its strategies, policies, and operations.” These people are described as the organisation's stakeholders.

The authors concluded that the stakeholder approach needs to be added to corporate communication's meta-theoretical framework (in addition to the reflective/societal approach), to incorporate the **expectations, concerns, values, and norms of stakeholders** that need to be brought to management's attention (in the process of SCM) for purposes of strategy development. The stakeholder approach (referring to organisational **stakeholders**) is needed *in addition to* the reflective/societal approach that was initially selected for corporate communication — the latter referring to the **societal issues** and the **publics** (interest-/advocacy groups) that emerge around the issues.

The stakeholder approach (Section 4.3) also posits that there is “a critical role for **values and values-based management** within business strategy. **Diverse collections of stakeholders** can only cooperate over the long run if, despite their differences, they **share** a set of **core values**. Thus, for a stakeholder approach to be successful, it must incorporate values as a key element of the strategic management process.”

The authors concluded that the assumptions regarding values-based management provide additional substantiation for the **stakeholder approach** to be added to corporate communication's meta-theoretical framework, since it explicates how different organisational stakeholders can cooperate despite their different needs and expectations.

5.3 SCM as a stakeholder orientated/responsible approach

In Section 4.4, it is stated that:

Stakeholders (strategic constituencies) are the raison d'être (justification) for the existence of the corporate communication function.

Also in Section 4.4, it is stated that the concepts and practices of corporate sustainability, **CSR, and corporate governance** rely on the notion of 'stakeholder' and have their conceptual roots in stakeholder theory. They can thus be seen as specific **implementations** of the stakeholder theory. The authors are of the opinion that corporate communication also relies on the notion of 'stakeholder', and can thus also be seen as a specific **implementation** of stakeholder theory.

It is therefore concluded that a **stakeholder orientated/responsible approach** is also a suitable approach to corporate communication (especially in its **strategic role, known as SCM**), and should be added to its meta-theoretical framework.

Both domains in the study (corporate communication as well as governance) can thus be regarded as stakeholder orientated/responsible approaches.

5.4 Adding the stakeholder inclusiveness approach (to governance) to the SCM meta-theoretical framework

In Section 1, it is stated that corporate communication, in its strategic role:

*provides an organisation/institution with a societal (outside-in) perspective by feeding intelligence with regards to **strategic stakeholders** (their **expectations, concerns, values, and norms**), **societal issues**, and the **publics** (interest/advocacy groups) that emerge around the issues, into the organisation's strategy development processes, thereby assisting an organisation to **adapt its strategies/goals/policies/behaviour to its societal and stakeholder environment**;*

and

In Section 4.1, it is stated that, in the societal approach to corporate communication, **legitimacy and public trust** in the organisation are central concepts, and that an organisation's inclusiveness — preserving its '**license to operate**' — is of primary concern.

A stakeholder inclusive approach to governance (Section 4.5) recognises that a business organisation has many stakeholders who can affect the achievement of its strategy and long-term sustained growth, and **whose needs have to be considered** when developing its strategic intent.

In an inclusive approach, the board of directors considers **legitimate stakeholder interests and expectations** on the basis that this is in the **best interests of the company**, and not merely an instrument to serve the interests of the shareholders. The best interests of the company should be interpreted within the parameters of the company as a sustainable enterprise and a responsible corporate citizen.

If the organisation is run ethically, it earns the necessary approval – its **license to operate** – from those affected by and affecting its operations. Ultimately, good corporate governance is aimed at helping business rebuild their **legitimacy**.

It is suggested that the **stakeholder inclusiveness approach** to governance be added to the meta-theoretical framework for SCM.

In Section 5.1:

***Societal responsibility** {is} regarded as the core of corporate communication practice – solving or avoiding conflict between organisational behaviour and the public perception of how **societally responsible** organisations should operate.*

In Section 4.5, the term ‘governance’ is mostly used with respect to *corporate responsibilities*, such as corporate **environmental responsibility**, corporate **social responsibility**, corporate **business responsibility**, and corporate sustainability. **Responsible** business behaviour constitutes the consciousness that an organisation can do well in the long run by **paying attention to the environment and the society in which it operates**.

This is further substantiation for adding the **stakeholder inclusiveness approach** (to governance) to the meta-theoretical framework for SCM.

To summarise: the TBL approach, the stakeholder approach, and the stakeholder inclusiveness approach (to governance) were added to SCM’s meta-theoretical framework. Also, it was found that corporate communication (especially in its strategic role, known as SCM) can be regarded as a stakeholder orientated/responsible approach.

6. CONCEPTUALISING SCM FROM A GOVERNANCE PERSPECTIVE

The conceptual analysis conducted revealed the conceptual implications of, and the theoretical linkages between, the reflective paradigm/societal approach initially selected for the corporate

communication domain (including the sub-domain of SCM) and the various approaches selected as the meta-theoretical framework for the governance domain.

Based on the insights obtained through the conceptual analysis, the core of corporate communication practice in the reflective paradigm was broadened from *social* responsibility to **societal** responsibility. That is, corporate communication assists in solving or avoiding conflict between organisational behaviour and the public perception of how **societally** responsible organisations should operate. The reflective task of corporate communication (**inward communication**) was thus also broadened: in its strategic/reflective role, corporate communication acts as a sensor; selects information on what is considered **societally responsible behaviour** in the public sphere (society); transmits it to the organisation; and encourages organisational members to balance their behaviour and strategies in relation to the expectations, concerns, values, and norms of stakeholders and societal members/interest groups.

As suggested by the findings of the conceptual analysis, four approaches were added in order to broaden the meta-theoretical framework of SCM.

6.1 TBL approach to SCM

From a governance perspective on SCM, the major assumption of the TBL approach to decision making was added to SCM's meta-theoretical framework. In assisting the organisation to be(come) a good corporate citizen, the core of corporate communication practice becomes **societal responsibility** – including economic and environmental responsibility in addition to social responsibility.

6.2 Stakeholder approach to SCM

The stakeholder approach was added to SCM's meta-theoretical framework to incorporate the **expectations, concerns, values, and norms of stakeholders** that need to be brought to management's attention (in the process of SCM) for purposes of strategy development. The strategic role of corporate communication is thus to provide intelligence on stakeholder values as input into the organisation's strategy development processes, so that decision makers can adjust organisational values, norms, and standards regarding **societal responsibility**, thereby gaining **legitimacy and trust**. Through its contribution to enterprise strategy formulation, corporate communication assists decision makers to realise the need for developing and communicating **a value system** that can provide a sound ethical basis for developing ecologically and socially sensitive strategic management strategies.

Values and values-based management play a critical role in business strategy; diverse collections of stakeholders can only cooperate over the long run if, despite their differences, they share a set of core values.

6.3 Stakeholder inclusiveness approach

The stakeholder inclusiveness approach (to governance) was added to the meta-theoretical framework for SCM, recognising that a business organisation has many stakeholders who can affect the achievement of its strategy and long-term sustained growth, and **whose needs and values have to be considered** when developing its strategic intent. In this approach, values management becomes a **strategic management** task, anchored at the top management level, and part of the input into the enterprise strategy. In its strategic role, corporate communication assists the organisation to define its purpose, identifies the (ethical) values by which the organisation will carry out its activities, and communicates this to all stakeholders.

Corporate communication brings stakeholder needs, values, concerns, and expectations to the attention of decision makers, so that they can consider **legitimate** stakeholder interests and expectations, and **align** as closely as possible, the interest of **individuals, the organisation, and society**. The organisation considers this to be in its own best interests (and not as serving the interests of shareholders). The best interests of the company are interpreted within the parameters of the company as a responsible corporate citizen.

Corporate communication assists the organisation to be a **responsible corporate citizen** and to **integrate** corporate responsibility principles and stakeholder approaches into its **mainstream strategy** (via corporate communication's contribution to enterprise strategy formulation), integrating moral attitudes and requirements with behaviour.

Corporate governance also deals with managing, and being **accountable** for, the full range of corporate **responsibilities**. As such, it provides **guidance** for the corporate communication function when developing its **own strategies, policies, and activities**.

Corporate communication plays a **strategic role** in **governing stakeholder relationships**, which includes corporate governance, sustainability initiatives, enterprise strategy development, reputation management, stakeholder engagement, and communication management as its core principles.

In its strategic role, corporate communication assists the organisation to earn the necessary approval – its **license to operate** – from those affected by and affecting its operations (obtaining **legitimacy** and earning **trust** from stakeholders and society).

6.4 A stakeholder orientated/responsible approach

An additional insight that emerged through the conceptual analysis was that SCM (like sustainability, governance, and CSR) could also be regarded as a stakeholder orientated/responsible approach. Corporate governance and SCM share a **common aim**: the attempt to broaden the responsibilities of business organisations to include more than just financial considerations.

In view of the many theoretical/conceptual linkages and shared assumptions between the meta-theoretical approaches to corporate communication (specifically its strategic role) and governance, the authors concluded that it was theoretically beneficial and insightful to first broaden SCM in the context of governance at the *meta-theoretical* level, before *conceptualising* it.

7. CONCLUSION

Governance is regarded by the authors as a new, overarching *business* paradigm in the triple context environment. Changing business paradigms necessitates a change of focus in the corporate communication domain, specifically in its strategic role, known as SCM (Steyn, in Karakaya Şatir, 2011).

The research objective of this exploratory study was achieved by conceptually broadening SCM in the context of *governance*, with reference to *stakeholder inclusiveness*. This was achieved through a conceptual analysis, which broadened the reflective paradigm (the meta-theoretical approach initially selected for corporate communication and its sub-domain, SCM), and added four new meta-theoretical approaches to SCM, *inter alia*, the stakeholder inclusive approach to governance.

From this perspective, the expectations, concerns, values, and norms of stakeholders can be brought to the attention of management for the purpose of strategy and policy development. Strategic intelligence on the above could inform the enterprise strategy, and could also be reflected in the organisation's integrated report. The current business revolution in the context of the TBL necessitates a new positioning of the SCM function as one that is sensitive to the organisation's societal responsibilities. Incorporating stakeholder expectations, values, and concerns into the strategic intent of the organisation could ultimately reduce enterprise risk, and could also contribute to an organisation being more sustainable.

Governance, as explicated in this study, is thus regarded as a new meta-theoretical approach to SCM at the macro level in a triple-context environment. These findings substantiate the vision of Toni Muzi Falconi, (2010: 4), renowned practitioner, academic, and founding Chair of the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management, who stated:

"The effective governance of stakeholder relationships is the new global frontier of the public relations and communication profession."

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Network Direct Selling Organisations: a schismatic perspective

ABSTRACT

Many studies have explored Network Direct Selling Organisations (NDSOs) because they create many communicative contexts and demonstrate such a diverse range of communicative processes that form and sustain this large industry. These organisations exist in more than 70 countries, and have almost 88 million members who generate over US\$132 billion annually (WFDSA, 2011). This paper argues that although NDSOs can be differentiated from other types of organising, their characteristics can be linked to some key premises in postmodern thinking about organising. It utilises the schismatic metaphor identified by Morgan (1981) to generate further insights into the study of individuals as composite unities of operationally closed self-creating systems that co-create organisations such as NDSOs. The schismatic metaphor is utilised to provide a powerful framework for social analysis of organisations by identifying and discussing some theoretical links between postmodernism, social autopoiesis, and second-order cybernetics.

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INTRODUCTION

Systems of all kinds, such as ecosystems, mechanical systems, living systems, social systems, and so forth, all co-exist and co-create, and can therefore not be successfully studied in isolation. To some extent, every system affects every other system (Davis, 2011). Social systems, such as organisations, are created through communication that is driven by different and often diverse expectations, created within different functional systems, such as the economy, politics, mass media, and so forth (Luhmann, 1995). The systems approach adopted in this study aims to demonstrate that, while traditional system thinking presents system elements as collaborative, system elements often operate in opposition, and even in competition. This paper draws from data obtained from international bodies such as the World Federation of Direct Selling Organisations (WFDSA) and the Direct Selling Organisation of South Africa (DSA SA). The empirical data in the study serve the purpose of creating the theoretical context. The study employed cognitive methodology to extend the social autopoietic theorising of Niklas Luhmann, heralded as one of the most prominent social theorists of the 20th century (Stichweh, 2000: 7).

This paper utilises the schismatic metaphor identified by Morgan (1981) to generate further insights into the study of individuals as composite unities of operationally closed, self-creating systems that co-create organisations such as NDSOs. Metaphors are, as Lakof and Johnson (1980: 3) suggest, pervasive in everyday life, not just in language, but also as a conceptual system in terms of which we both think and act. The concept of 'metaphor' is, in itself, as a figure of speech, central to the study of language, and is, of necessity, subject to some degree of perceptionism, since it contains image schemata. Lemmens (2004: 1) suggests that conceptual metaphors are not arbitrary, but have their basis in our physical and cultural experience. As such, they are understood and experienced in terms of their context. In this regard, Cornelissen (2006: 683) observes:

Despite the increased salience of metaphor in organization theory, there is still very little conceptual machinery for capturing and explaining how metaphor creates and/or reorders knowledge within organization theory. Moreover, prior work on metaphor has insufficiently accounted for the context of interpreting a metaphor.

In his publication: *The Schismatic Metaphor and Its Implications for Organizational Analysis* (1981), Morgan notes that social scientists have become increasingly aware of "the problems involved in using models and methods drawn from the natural sciences for the study of social affairs." He states:

The schismatic metaphor seeks to focus attention upon the disintegrative tendencies of social systems, with a view to highlighting properties and explanations either ignored by conventional systems models, or else regarded as pathological, abnormal, temporarily deviant states to be remedied in some way. It seeks to examine schism as a natural system property, and thus provide a counterweight to the emphasis normally placed upon the system-maintaining properties of social systems.

Morgan's (1981) description of a schismatic system characterises it as an open system that displays patterns of activity that lead to the increasing differentiation and functional autonomy of the constituent elements or subsystems. However, studies in the field of socio cybernetics, for example, have contributed to the understanding that systems are open to receive inputs (information or resources), yet operationally closed, in that information or resources are "processed" within closed systems (Davis, 2011). An individual can, for example, not understand another person's consciousness, since it is operationally closed. Considering this understanding of system closure, this means that the elements or subsystems that are open are created within operationally closed systems, such as the individual on a micro-level, or the organisation on a macro-level of analysis. The schismatic metaphor portrays how the interests of the elements or subsystems take precedence over the interest of the larger system (as defined by its boundaries within a particular inquiry), and how these, in their quest for autonomy, serve as internal forces that may manifest as change within the larger system. Morgan (1981: 24) suggests that, unlike mechanistic or organismic metaphors, where elements and subsystems are considered to be functionally unified, schismatic systems display a propensity towards fractionalisation and fission that constitute endogenous forces for change, and which may lead to the ultimate separation and opposition of system parts.

Literature that also addresses the concept 'schism' can be found within the field of psychology, where it is discussed with reference to Bateson's study of schizophrenia and communication in small groups (see Stagoll, 2006). Bateson (in Morgan, 1981: 30) defines schismogenesis as "a process of differentiation in the norms of individual behaviour resulting from cumulative interaction between individuals." Cooper and Burrell (1988) also present a comprehensive conceptual paper in which they provide poignant links between modern, postmodern, and also second-order cybernetic paradigms, and in which they specifically refer to the concept 'schism'. This notion of schism corresponds with current thinking on the communicative constitution of organisations (CCO). While some of the literature cited in this paper may appear outdated, an extensive literature search revealed that Morgan (1981) identified and discussed the schismatic metaphor only once, and did not pursue its development in later work. In later work, he refers instead to "paradox", and remarks that, "Although there may be many ways of resolving paradoxes, the fact that the tensions [in organisations] are *experienced as contradictory* may in itself be sufficient to negate transformational change" (Morgan, 1998: 151-152). Verwey and Davis (2011) reintroduced the schismatic metaphor to illustrate the presence of schism in both modern and postmodern discourses, and to show how a new autopoietic metaphor is emerging through the application of second-order cybernetic theorising and the application of the tenets of the social systems theory proposed by Niklas Luhmann. As Morgan himself (1981: 26) argues:

When the concepts of 'schismogenesis' and 'functional unity' are linked and developed within the bounds of a single conceptual framework concerned with showing that social systems are characterized by powerful disintegrative tendencies as well as those which may sustain unity, we are provided with a powerful framework for social analysis.

The postmodern description of NDSOs that is provided in this paper aims to identify some of these powerful disintegrative tendencies, as well as those that somehow sustain these unlikely

unities. This description is undertaken in an attempt to create a framework for the social analysis of the type of organising that is evident in NDSOs, and which sustains itself, regardless of the improbability of its existence. The global statistical data presented in this paper indicate that the economic system created and sustained through NDSOs transcends causal explanations based on human agency alone. The key consideration that is presented here is that NDSOs create themselves through networks of communication. If it is further considered that communication in itself is viewed as improbable by Luhmann (1981), it becomes even more apparent how both morphogenesis and schismogenesis create and perpetuate the coordinated management of meanings that sustain this industry.

While Luhmann's theory of social systems is often misinterpreted and criticised because of its anti-anthropocentric approach (Schoeneborn, 2011: 2), his views are supported by CCO scholars who reject the notion that organisations are constituted by their members. As Schoeneborn (2011: 3) states: "Instead, they put forward a fluid and processual notion of organizations as being constituted by ephemeral acts of communication." The study of NDSOs in particular shows that organisations are not physical structures, i.e. collections of people, joined by material channels of communication, but rather constructions constituted through communication (Schoeneborn, 2011: 3).

The schismatic metaphor is utilised as a framework for analysis in this paper for two specific purposes: 1) to illustrate that elements of a social system, such as an NDSO, may have a propensity to strive for functional autonomy and independence from or within the system as a whole, and 2) to provide a powerful framework for social analysis of NDSOs by identifying and discussing some theoretical links between postmodernism, social autopoiesis, and second-order cybernetics. Through the application of the schismatic metaphor, this paper aims to develop a theoretical explanation for the existence of NDSOs and their continued sustainability despite poor financial returns for the vast majority of individual members.

For the purpose of this analysis, terminology and concepts from a broad range of disciplines, such as second-order cybernetics, social autopoiesis, organisational communication, postmodernism, communication theory, and sociology, are integrated in this paper and it is therefore noted that these terms are developed inter-referentially, meaning that they obtain particular meanings within the parameters of this discussion. This paper adopts a clear constructivist epistemological stance and a second-order cybernetic and social autopoietic theoretical orientation.

1. NETWORK DIRECT SELLING ORGANISATIONS

NDSOs are well known to most consumers in the global market who are familiar with brands such as Tupperware, Avroy Shlain, Global NeoLife Diamite (GNLD), Amway, Avon, Honey Jewellery, to name a few. Network direct selling has been defined as an economic and social activity that aims to establish relationships between and among individuals through communication activities, for the purpose of establishing markets for the selling of products (Davis, 2011: 63). NDSOs consist of a group of individual agents who share informal norms or values beyond those necessary for

ordinary market transactions (Lin, 2002). In NDSOs, employees provide organisations with their skills/expertise and time, and organisations reward them for these. In exchange, individuals gain flexibility and higher earnings, as well as other benefits, such as liberation from bureaucratic control, more choice about when to work or how long to work for, as well as increased opportunities to devote time to friends and family (Cully, Woodland, O'Reilly & Dix, 1999; Storey, Quintas, Taylor & Fowle, 2002).

In order to cope with increasing complexity and velocity in the New Economy, fixed organisational structures of the bureaucratic era have had to make way for the flexible, evolving, and transient forms of the postmodern era. As a consequence, the postmodern organisation has had to redefine, restructure, and integrate work culture to achieve better-quality human relationships. The culture of control that permeated the last decade has changed into what Huzzard (2004: 352) refers to as "legitimate peripheral participation", where power relationships are articulated through social practices that produce the "truths" that make up our self-concepts and the institutions in which our selves are embedded.

Geyer (1995: 24) suggests that the mechanistic and deterministic view of organisations has been replaced by an emerging paradigm that is more in line with the accelerated social change, and in which disorder, instability, diversity, disequilibrium, and non-linear relationships between open systems, morphogenesis and temporality, and increased complexity are emphasised. This paper aims to illustrate how, within such an emergent paradigm, NDSOs recursively create and recreate through:

- 1) co-constructed reality;
- 2) communicatively enacted organising;
- 3) experience that is mediated through language and symbolic representation;
- 4) creation of multiple subjective realities; and
- 5) power, which is located in social practices and the relationships on which such practices are built.

It can be argued that NDSOs have always exhibited network-type characteristics, and that their functioning has always been more aligned with post-bureaucratic assumptions, due to their flexible membership base and the temporality of their organisational structuring. In this sense they contain within them powerful disintegrative forces, as well as the integrative forces that may establish unities and which may account for the phenomenal growth in the direct sales force size.

As Cooper and Burrell (1988: 94) indicate, "postmodern discourse begins with the idea that systems have lives of their own which make them fundamentally independent of human control." They also provide a fundamental link between Luhmann's theorising and the postmodern paradigm when they state: "Postmodernism [therefore] decenters the human agent from its self-elevated position of narcissistic 'rationality' and shows it to be essentially an observer-community which constructs interpretations of the world, these interpretations having no absolute or universal status" (Cooper & Burrell, 1988: 94). The relevance of this viewpoint becomes evident when the statistical and

logistical data pertaining to NDSOs are reviewed. The data for analysis, presented in Figure 1 and Figure 2, were obtained from the WFDSA and the DSA SA.

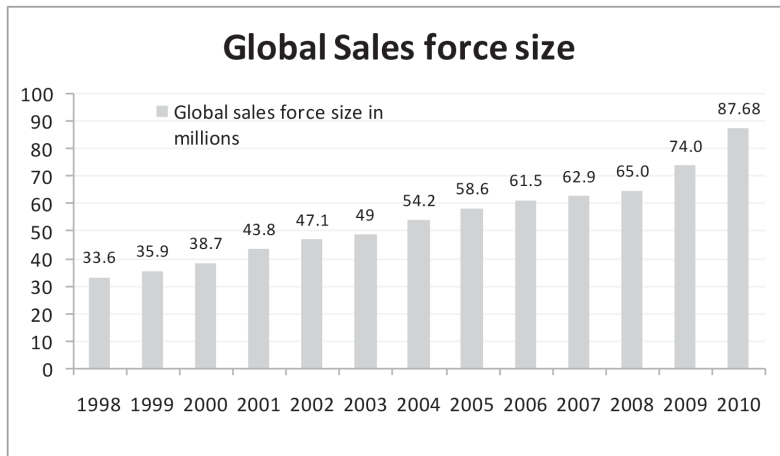


Figure 1: Growth in global direct sales force size (WFDSA, 2012)

Over the past ten years, the global sales force has increased by approximately 127 percent, from 38.7 million to 87.7 million. It is interesting to note that the global sales force increased by 9 million between 2008 and 2009, and a staggering 13.68 million between 2009 and 2010. This may be attributed to the fall-out of the global credit crisis in 2008. The growth in global direct retail sales is presented in Figure 2 below.



Figure 2: Growth in global direct sales (WFDSA, 2012)

Despite the approximately 127 percent global increase in the number of independent sales distributors over the past ten years, global sales increased by approximately 61 percent over the same period, from approximately \$82.3 billion to \$132.2 billion (WFDSA, 2011). A simple division would suggest that the global retail sales per person would be approximately \$126 per person in 2010, which provides further evidence that the average member of an NDSO could not possibly earn significant income through membership. These statistics present one of many paradoxes: the majority of individuals who join NDSOs to earn income, fail to do so – and, more significantly, even operate at a loss. The sections that follow apply postmodern premises and the schismatic metaphor to demonstrate how communication itself creates contingency, paradox, and schismogenesis.

1.1 Reality is co-constructed

It becomes more apparent why organisations such as NDSOs are described by Luhmann (1996: 342) as “non-trivial machines that have to operate under the condition of self-generated uncertainty, and therefore have to construct the realities that guide their operations.” One such mechanism for constructing the realities that guide the operation of NDSOs is the recruitment of their membership base, as it is illustrated in Figure 3.

Recruitment refers the cultivation of membership for these social systems, where, according to Luhmann (1996: 342), *motives* are controlled through membership. The reference to motives is significant because of questions revolving around the sincerity and insincerity of communication that can be linked to the paradox of communication, which can also be related to motives. Individuals who are members of NDSOs may increase communicative activities for the purpose of recruitment. As a result, the sincerity of otherwise typical communicative activities may become suspect. Recruitment activities occur through communication that creates networks (see Figure 3). When the focus is shifted to the relationships that are created through such networks, it becomes evident why Luhmann (1986; 1995; 2002) consistently argues that communication, rather than individuals, should be the unit of analysis. Van Dijk (2001) also seems to support this view from a network theory approach:

Reality should be primarily conceived and investigated from the view of the properties and relationships between and within units instead of the properties of these units themselves. It is a relational approach. In social and communication science these units are social units: individuals, groups/organizations and societies.

As Morgan (1981: 25) explains, “the elements of a social system may have a propensity to strive for autonomy, and independence from or within the system as a whole.” Such interaction between system elements may be schismogenic, because they may generate patterns of activity that are based on positive feedback that individuals members of NDSOs may receive from other members or from their clients.

Individuals who co-construct NDSOs create unities insofar as they create sub-systems within larger sub-systems, but they are simultaneously also competing for autonomy by

creating additional sub-systems that will enable them to become group or area distributors. Morgan (1981: 35) observes: “schismatic systems may not merely become differentiated and decentralized; they may also break up and develop as many different systems on their own account.” Morgan (1981: 30) also distinguishes ‘complementary’ and ‘symmetrical schismogenesis.’ Complementary schismogenesis can be witnessed in NDSOs insofar as the relationships between individuals and groups within these organisations are such that they evoke differentiated, but complementary, responses in how they react to the actions of others. Members of NDSOs may, for instance, admire other members whom they perceive to be successful, and may willingly subject themselves to their leadership. However, Morgan (1981: 30) also suggests that complementary schismogenesis is characterised by progression, where the dominant individual becomes more assertive, while the submissive individuals become more submissive to the point that the relationship breaks down, such as is the case where members withdraw from NDSOs.

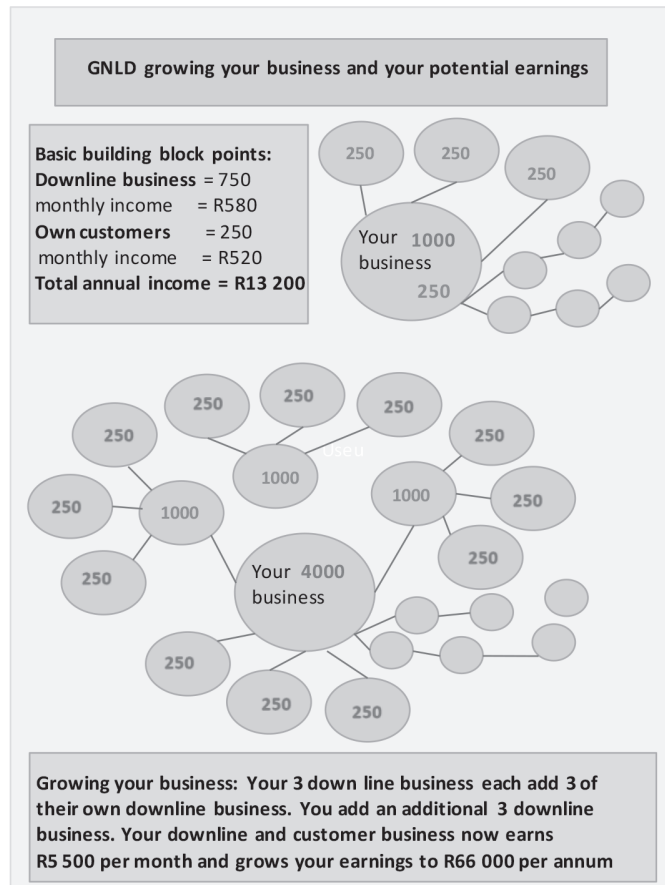


Figure 3: Adapted from GNLD Eagle Team Marketing Plan (Davis, 2011)

With symmetrical schismogenesis, the nature of the relationship between individuals results in the evocation of similar responses in each other. Morgan (1981: 30) explains that such circumstances may lead to competitive situations, as is indeed the case in NDSOs, where parties may respond to each other's actions with similar behaviour, such as competing with each other to recruit more NDSO members. The compensation typically associated with NDSOs constrains the breakdown of the relationships that may typically follow from symmetrical schismogenesis. It should also be considered that compensation within the context of NDSOs often also include emotional and even psychological compensation, such as fulfilling a need for affiliation or fantasy themes.

The continuous creation and re-creation of multiple networks through communication sustains schismogenesis as "a process of differentiation in the norms of individual behaviour which results from cumulative interaction between individuals," as defined by Bateson (in Morgan, 1981: 30). As Van Dijk (2010: 2) shows, networks increase interaction and the chances for variation, and, hence, the options for selection. It can therefore be deduced that the construction of networks of realities through communication contributes to sustaining a kind of functional reciprocity that perpetuates the creation of further networks. Functional reciprocity will be re-addressed in the distinction between symmetrical and asymmetrical reciprocity that follows. With the emphasis on communication that creates the networks in NDSOs, the following section considers how organising is communicatively enacted in these organisations in particular.

1.2 Organising is communicatively enacted (through contingency)

Following Craig's seminal publication on Communication Theory as a not-yet-unified field (1999), it is indisputable that communication creates or constitutes organisations. The terms 'organising' and 'enactment' are most frequently linked to Weick (cf. Aschraft, Kuhn & Cooren, 2009; Craig, 1999; Morgan, 1998; Putnam & Nicotera, 2010; Schoeneborn, 2011). Putnam and Nicotera (2010: 159), for example, state that CCO scholars aim to "address how complex organization processes constitute both organizing and organization and how these processes and outcomes reflexively shape communication." Authors such as Blüdhorn (2000), Seidl and Becker (2006), and Schoeneborn (2011) introduce Luhmann's notion of organisation as communication, and, in doing so, engage in a conceptual and ontological debate about organising and organisation that is of particular relevance to an analysis of NDSOs. The question addressed in this discussion revolves around the definition and characterisation of communication and some of the key dimensions that emerge from second-order cybernetics and social autopoiesis that resonate with some key postmodern assumptions mentioned previously. The focus in this section of the discussion is on Luhmann's definition of communication, the contingency and double contingency within communication, and the paradoxes that emerge from these contingencies, which further explicate schismogenesis as it manifests within NDSOs.

Luhmann (1986; 1995; 1996) argues that communication(s), and nothing but communication(s), creates social systems. Luhmann (1986: 174) identifies communications as the basic elements of the social system, and says that:

Social systems use communication as their particular mode of autopoietic reproduction. Their elements are communications which are recursively produced and reproduced by a network of communications and which cannot exist outside such a network. Communications are not 'living' units, they are not 'conscious' units, they are not 'actions.'

According to Luhmann (1986: 174-175), the unity of communications requires the synthesis of three selections, namely 1) information, 2) utterance, and 3) understanding (including misunderstanding), which is produced by a network of communication, and not by the inherent quality of information or by language, as he states that:

The synthesis of information, utterance and understanding cannot be pre-programmed by language. It has to be recreated from situation to situation by referring to previous communications and to possibilities of future communications which are to be restricted by the actual event. This operation requires self-reference. It can in no way use the environment. Information, utterances and understandings are aspects which for the system cannot exist independently of the system; they are co-created within the process of communication ... The communicative synthesis of information, utterance and understanding is possible only as an elementary unit of an on-going social system.

Luhmann (1986: 175) emphasises that the elementary, decomposable units of the social system are communications of minimal size, and that this minimal size cannot be determined independent of the system. He goes on to argue that "Communication includes understanding as a necessary part of the unity of its operation. It does not include the acceptance of its content" (Luhmann, 1986: 176). Luhmann (1995: 151) further states that:

One individual can never completely know what another individual means and therefore communication loses its meaning: "The basis of this paradox of incommunicability lies in the fact that the 'understander' must presuppose self-reference to separate information from utterance. Therefore every communication expresses the possibility that self-reference and utterance diverge. Without this background communication would be incomprehensible.

With reference to Luhmann's theory of social systems, Schoeneborn (2011: 1) emphasises that organisations are "fundamentally grounded in paradox because they are built on communicative events that are contingent by nature." In accordance with Luhmann's emphasis on the selections of information, utterance, understanding, and also expectation, Schoeneborn (2011: 2) reiterates that *decisions* are the distinctive feature of organisational

communication. In the case of NDSOs, it is exactly the decision to become members that creates this industry, and herein lies the contingency, because they could also have decided not to. It is at this point that the CCO approach departs from the view that organisations are not collections of people joined by materials of communication, but are, instead, continuously constituted by ephemeral acts of communication (Schoeneborn, 2011: 2). According to Luhmann, organisations are driven by the continuous necessity to de-paradoxify their inherent contingency. Contingency is defined as “the state that is reached if necessity and impossibility are negated.” Contingency is thus used in reference to an instance of “it could be otherwise”, and thus represents potentiality as opposed to actuality (Schoeneborn, 2011: 10).

Terpstra (1997) explains double contingency as involving the relationship between the speaker and the addressee, as he states: “Simply put, the difficulty is that action cannot take place when the speaker is waiting for the addressee to respond, and the addressee’s response is dependent upon the speaker’s action. This creates a communication stand-off, each participant waiting for the other.” There is, in other words, a gap between what is understood by the speaker and what is understood by the addressee. For Luhmann, this gap is the contingency that allows for affirmation or negation of the exchange between participants. The contingency is reduced as the communication initiates action, thus determining an affirmation or negation of the essence of the other participant. From this perspective, action is an emergent phenomenon, as it is also explained in Pearce and Cronen’s theory of the coordinated management of meaning (Davis, 2011).

The following section attempts to demonstrate how language constitutes a significant part of the information that creates the unity of the synthesis in Luhmann’s definition of communication. Cooper and Burrell (1988: 98) explain that “The key to understanding the discourse of postmodernism is in the concept of difference: a form of self-reference in which terms contain their own opposites and thus refuse singular grasp of their meanings.” It is argued that this difference is imbedded in the contingency of communication, as it manifests itself in language that creates paradoxes and schismogenesis. All members of NDSOs are different, as individuals typically are, but in the process of mediating their experiences through language and symbolic representation, their differences become unities of communication that are intrinsic to all social forms. As noted by Cooper and Burrell (1988: 98), “At the very centre of discourse, therefore, the human agent is faced with the condition of irreducible indeterminacy and it is this endless and unstoppable demurrage which postmodern thought explicitly recognizes and places in the vanguard of its endeavours.”

1.3 Experience is mediated through language and symbolic representation

The generic language that is used to mediate meaning, which NDSOs typically use with prospective or existing members, creates the expectations that drive the selections of information, utterance, and understanding. These then become the language and symbolic representation that create the networks in NDSOs. Luhmann (1995: 162) explains this as follows:

Language, media of dissemination and symbolically generalized communication media are thus evolutionary achievements that interdependently ground the processing of information and increase what can be produced by social communication. This is how society produces and reproduces itself as a social system. Once communication is set into and kept in motion, the formation of a bounded social system cannot be avoided, nor can the development of further bounded social systems produced by the transformation of expectations about what is improbable into what is sufficiently probable. On the level of social systems, this is an exclusively autopoietic process, which produces what enables it itself.

Morgan (1981: 610) highlights the importance of metaphor in language when he states:

Metaphor has been shown to exert an important influence upon the development of language (Muller, 1897); as meaning is transferred from one situation to another, new words and meanings being created as root meanings are used metaphorically to capture new applications.

Taking into account that discussions on language usually encompass very complex and broad territory, the term 'linguaging' is selected for the purpose of this paper, because of its fit with existing debates in second-order cybernetics, and with Luhmann's theorising. Some clarification of this term is deemed necessary. Krippendorff (2007) contends that second-order cybernetics is a discourse or an "organised way of linguaging", and that "cyberneticians constitute a discourse community, dedicated to advancing its core ideas – circularity, process, information, [and] participation (involvement) in the world." Scott (1996: 397) defines linguaging as language that arises as behaviours. The term is usually used within the context of second-order cybernetics to explain an observer's construction of self and reality. Brier (1996: 234) offers the following explanation:

The process of human knowing is the process in which we, through linguaging, create the difference between the world and ourselves, between self and non-self, and thereby to some extent create the world by creating ourselves. But we do this by relating to a common reality which exists in some way before we make the difference between 'the world' and 'ourselves.'

"The world" referred to here is assumed to include 'others,' therefore the distinction between 'self' and 'others.' Linguaging is therefore understood as referring to the distinction between self and others through processes of differentiation. Von Foerster (2003: 295) provides a visualisation of linguaging when he states: "[Similar to] when we say 'It takes two to Tango,' I am saying, 'It takes two to language.'" In other words, linguaging can be understood as the co-creation of meaning, also referred to as "structural coupling" in autopoietic theory. This relates to the understanding that the observer cannot be separated from the observation, which is at the core of second-order cybernetics and its constructivist epistemological grounding. As Luhmann (1995: 160) states: "The medium that increases the understandability of communication beyond the sphere of perception is *language*. Language is a medium

distinguished by the use of signs. It uses acoustic or optical signs for meaning.” In reference to functional schismogenesis, referred to later in the discussions, a link can also be made to Halliday’s (2005: 134) reference to systemic functional linguistics that presents language as “a semogenic (meaning-making) resource, one governed by tendencies, not rules, and whose categories (as is typical of semiotic systems) are ‘fuzzy’ rather than determinate.” He describes linguistics as “a metaphor for language itself, having many of the same properties that language has. Thus it provides ways of thinking about language, of formulating and engaging with problems that are in the broadest sense problems of meaning”.

Since NDSOs are represented globally, it has to be assumed that, while the various natural languages are a given, NDSOs create communicative contexts where different network direct selling languages are manifested through certain symbolic representations that obtain certain shared meanings among their members. Luhmann (1995: 65) defines meaning as “the unity of actualization and virtualization, of re-actualization and re-virtualization, as a self-propelling process (which can be conditioned by systems).” He adds that “... meaning must be fashioned as basally unstable, restless, and with a built-in compulsion to self-alteration.” It is therefore evident that “meaning” in archetype communicative contexts found in NDSOs are created through symbolic convergence.

Bormann (1996: 81) describes symbolic convergence as a general theory of communication that accounts for the appearance of group consciousness, with its implied shared emotions, motives, and meanings. Gibbs (2006) makes a case for “embodied metaphor” and says that “one reason why people interpret many verbal metaphors through embodied simulations is because this metaphoric language is rooted in bodily processes,” which may further embellish the experience of symbolic convergence as it occurs in NDSOs. Communication in these settings therefore has the propensity to exceed or transcend observation or causal explanations. Ashcraft, Kuhn, and Cooren (2009: 17) confirm that the advent of an interpretive or cultural tradition in communication network studies has led to a departure from a preoccupation with positions and flows in interaction, to a focus to the content and meaning of communication. An action model of organisation formation begins with the assumption that communication networks are best considered perceived links with others (Ashcraft, Kuhn & Cooren, 2009: 17). Members of NDSOs may, for instance, consider any and every acquaintance as a potential semantic network, thus initiating activity that results in message exchanges, which, in turn, re-produce such perceived links (Ashcraft, Kuhn & Cooren, 2009: 17). This corresponds with network theory axioms presented by Van Dijk (2010), referred to earlier, which suggest that networks increase interaction, chances for variation, and options for selections, which relates to Luhmann’s definition of communication, as he states that “networks are structures that create expectations” (Luhmann, 1995: 267). The expectations that are created in NDSO networks become imbedded in the language and metaphors that form part of the selection of information, utterance, and, ultimately, the understandings that emerge in NDSOs. As Lakoff and Johnson (in Lemmens, 2004: 1) observe: “... metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and actions. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature.”

NDSOs evidently provide fruitful terrain for the study of communication networks, and can aid management studies in understanding the production and operation of both organisations and inter-organisational action. Ashcraft, Kuhn, and Cooren (2009: 18) recommend that the thematisation of the meaning and content of communication should be studied further. Further exploration of the schismatic metaphor may also offer additional insight into how meanings are created through networks of communication. The next section of this paper explores how multiple subjective realities are created by, among other things, the meanings suggested by the WFDSA and other direct selling bodies, such as the DSA SA.

1.4 Multiple subjective realities are created

It is generally assumed that individuals join NDSOs for the purpose of earning an income (Davis, 2011) and, therefore, the primary motive for memberships is deemed to be material. The meanings co-created between and among members of NDSOs, through a theoretical explanation such as symbolic convergence, create subjective realities for individuals, who, through the use of language and other symbolic representations, then create networks of meaning that result in membership and participation. Such membership makes it possible to accomplish the potentialities that are presented in the information publicised by the WFDSA and many other bodies. As Luhmann (1996: 341) notes, "Subjects decide to enter the system, to use their freedom to accept constraints, that is, to establish a 'zone of indifference.'" In other types of organisations, individuals accept the "constraints" of abiding by the decisions of the organisation, or the executive who acts on behalf of the organisation. On the other hand, in NDSOs, individuals believe that they can create their own realities in which they would not be subject to these constraints, and herein lies the contingency in this case: although it may be possible for individuals to accomplish the potentialities presented in the statement of benefits and rewards, the probability ratio is actually very small, if not miniscule. According to Luhmann (1996: 342), all forms of organising have paradoxical foundations: "This is, either the paradox of self-negating autonomy or, in systems terms, the paradox of motives, being at the same time part of the environment and part of the system."

In the case of NDSOs, it becomes apparent how multiple subjective realities can be created through discourses that necessarily emerge from the information presented to prospective members of NDSOs, either through interpersonal communication or through other media, such as the Internet. The WFDSA (2011) and DSA SA (2012), for instance, present benefits and rewards such as free training, flexible hours, entrepreneurial skill-building opportunities, leadership opportunities, personal development potential, incentives, international travel, and residual income streams to members.

This information is presented by the WFDSA to all members across the globe, and is translated by DSA bodies in the various participating countries. However, as Deetz (1996: 192) observes, it has to be considered that, while "language does not name objects in the world; it is core to the process of constituting objects. The appearance of labelling or categorizing existing objects is derived from this more fundamental act of object constitution

through language.” With regard to the “zones of indifference” referred to earlier, much criticism is directed at NDSOs and their members, which pertains to the ethics of commercialising personal relations, the low earnings of distributors, and the general impact on members’ and their acquaintances’ social lives (meetings, tea parties, conventions, and other occasions organised under the NDSO banner), and the cultivation of consumers, which is typically the case with NDSOs (Peterson & Albaum, 2007: 320). This is evident in Figure 4.

1.5 Power is not exercised by sovereign individuals in NDSOs

Figure 4 presents the findings of a further analysis of the data provided by the WFDSA, which confirms that salespeople are, effectively, also end users in NDSOs. Research conducted with companies such as Avroy Shlain Cosmetics, Tupperware, Global NeoLife Diamite (GNLD), Honey, and Amway, and confirmed by Clarke (2012), clearly shows that not all people become members of NDSOs to build a business. Peterson and Albaum (2007: 320) also note that internal consumption can create loyal distributors and imply that if distributors do not “believe in” their organisation’s products or services, they are not likely to be effective. Distributors of products such as skincare, healthcare or home appliances, are more likely to be both sellers and end users, such as with the organisations referred to above.

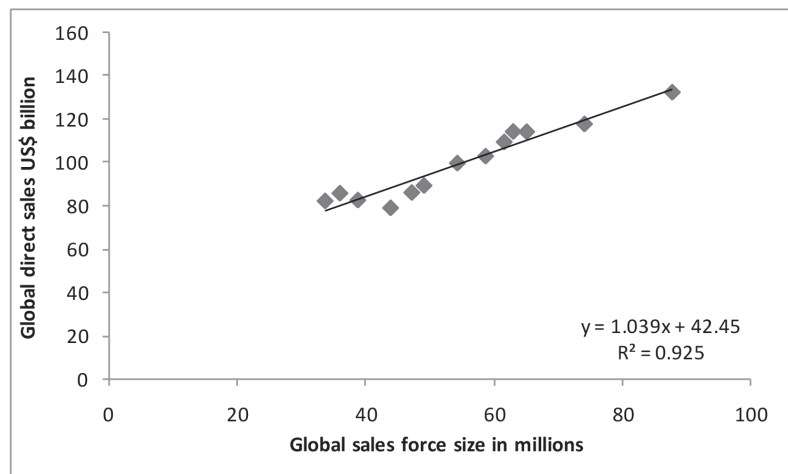


Figure 4: Increase in sales and sales force ratio

Table 2 indicates the number of salespeople in South Africa, and also shows the most recently available consumption ratio in direct selling organisations in South Africa.

Table 2: Number of sales people in South Africa

Number of sales people	2006	2007	2008	2010	2011	Growth 2006-2011 %
Regular users	521000	683000	762000	939000	974000	86.9
Sales people	208000	251000	304000	338000	384000	84.6
Total sales	729000	934000	1066000	1277000	1358000	86.3

Source: DSA SA (2012)

With reference to functional autonomy and functional reciprocity, different kinds of functional reciprocity can be observed in NDSOs. Insofar as the functional reciprocity between a particular NDSO and its members is concerned, it is not surprising that the dropout rate is particularly high. Clarke (2012), for example, shows that 656 000 new members joined NDSOs in South Africa during 2011, while 575 000 left the industry. It can therefore be deduced that those individuals who joined a NDSO solely for material gain would have experienced low or even absent functional reciprocity, and therefore withdrew from the system. However, as Morgan (1981: 26) explains, the degree of coupling between subsystems “depends on the activity of the variables they share in common, particularly with regards to the strength of exchange of inputs and outputs over time.” The distribution of rebate earnings in South Africa in 2007 illustrates the actual degree of functional reciprocity from a monetary perspective. A similar analysis was not included in the annual presentation by the DSA SA in May 2012.

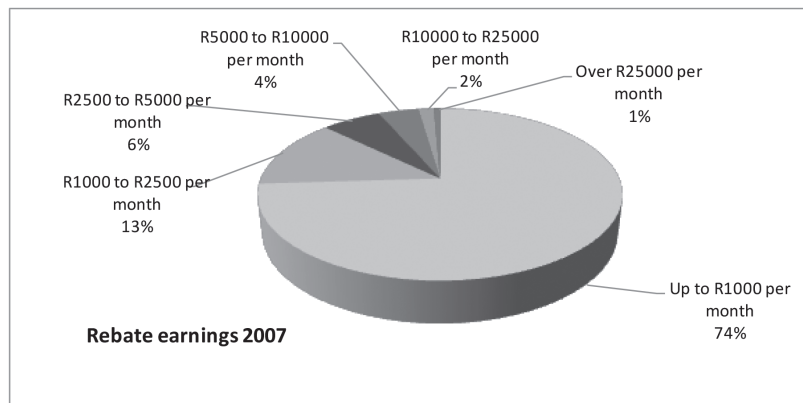


Figure 5: Rebate earnings in direct selling organisations in South Africa in 2007 (DSA SA, 2009 in Davis, 2011)

The strength of networks comes into play again at this point, considering that the increased interaction between members of NDSOs may be where the functional reciprocity that sustains

this industry lies. As Morgan (1981: 29) observes, “social systems appear as networks of strains and tensions generated through the adoption of strategies and counterstrategies concerned with the development and constraint of the autonomy of system elements.”

Members create what they perceive to be potential unities to overcome the constraints of the larger economic system, and create identification between and among themselves as counterstrategies to cope with various aspects of the larger socio-economic system, such as parenting, divorce, social recognition, social affiliation, and so forth. It is further noted, in reference to complementary and symmetrical schismogenesis discussed earlier, that the high dropout rate in NDSOs makes sense in terms of the following explanation: “Among the factors which constrain the development of schismogenesis, the existence and *acceptance* of norms of behaviour which are potentially schismogenic [...] may serve to hold relationships together” (Morgan 1981: 31). It can therefore be argued that the sales and recruitment imperative that is imbedded in network direct selling may manifest itself as a kind of counter-attitudinal advocacy whereby members persuade themselves during the process of persuading others either to join a particular NDSO or to purchase its products. Complementary schismogenesis thus occurs to the extent that members consider it acceptable to merge private and commercial domains, and also to the extent that they identify with other members engaging in the same kind of activities. If or when members do not accomplish success with network direct selling, schismogenesis may emerge and cause withdrawal from the NDSO. Morgan (1981: 31) explains this as follows: “Rules and roles thus act as a double-edged weapon, exerting a constraining influence insofar as they are followed, but an accelerating influence once breached.” The high degree of complexity that is created in all human interaction makes it impossible to identify and describe exactly how schismogenesis is created. The unpredictability of human individual behaviour and the indeterminacy of direct causality in human behaviour explain why Luhmann (2002) insists that individuals cannot communicate, and that communication comes through a synthesis of three selections, as discussed earlier.

Moeller (2012: 7) says that Luhmann’s radical ecological approach to society minimises the possibilities of steering social developments. In the same way that a species cannot biologically control, or even adequately project, its future, because of its intricate entanglement in highly complex co-evolutionary processes that go on simultaneously between systems and their environments, Luhmann, according to Moeller (2012: 7), proposes that social systems (especially human agents) cannot control social developments, and argues:

Luhmann’s ecological evolution theory means that society has no centre, just as ecosystems have no centre. Therefore society has never been (and never will be) open for creationist interventions by divine or secular sources.

Cooper and Burrell (1988: 99) observe that: “The idea that we are controlled by forces that lie beyond us is fundamentally repugnant to modern rational thought which has constructed, over the centuries, a discourse more or less deliberately aimed at denying this possibility.” However, it is indisputable, given the global reality of NDSOs, that communication networks

create this industry within social systems that are characterised by inherent tensions and contradictions between opposing elements that continuously create themselves through further networks of communication.

2. CONCLUSION

This paper has adopted a schismatic metaphor as a framework for the analysis of NDSOs as a social system. As Morgan (1981: 33) noted, "The social theorist who adopts the schismatic metaphor as a basis for analysis is thus encouraged to view the continued existence of the system under study as problematic, and to regard the propensity for system elements to leave the system as a natural rather than abnormal phenomenon." As such, this paper has tried to generate explanations that go beyond conventional theories and thought. Instead of limiting its focus to an understanding of functional unity within NDSOs, this paper has adopted Morgan's view that an understanding of schism as a (normal) characteristic of social systems is required in order to provide a complete understanding of the inherent tensions and contradictions between opposing elements whereby NDSOs recursively create and recreate themselves through networks of communication. Such a framework has generated powerful insights regarding the disintegrative tendencies of NDSOs, and their ability to sustain themselves despite these forces. The correspondence between schism and current thinking on the communicative constitution of organisations (CCO) has also been revealed by adopting a Luhmannian approach in elucidating the concepts of schismogenesis and close and loose coupling identified by Morgan in the schismatic metaphor. The importance of communicative constitution of NDSOs is evident from Luhmann's (1995: 162) view that:

Once communication is set into and kept in motion, the formation of a bounded social system cannot be avoided, nor can the development of further bounded social systems produced by the transformation of expectations about what is improbable into what is sufficiently probable.

Luhmann's premise that society is an "effect of social reality construction through communication" provides a suitable framework for positioning arguments about the centrality of communication, language, and meaning within the broader framework of constructivist epistemology that has been adopted to develop a theoretical explanation for the existence of NDSOs and their continued sustainability despite poor financial returns for the vast majority of individual members. In this regard, Nassehi (2005: 179) suggests:

What Luhmann offers is the basic premise that all (self-)descriptions of systems are internally generated and, further, that no evidence of what is going on in social systems result from an external point of observation.

Hence, the theoretical explanation presented in this paper includes the observers of the system it describes. This theoretical explanation is illustrated in Figure 6, which provides a schismatic framework for social analysis.

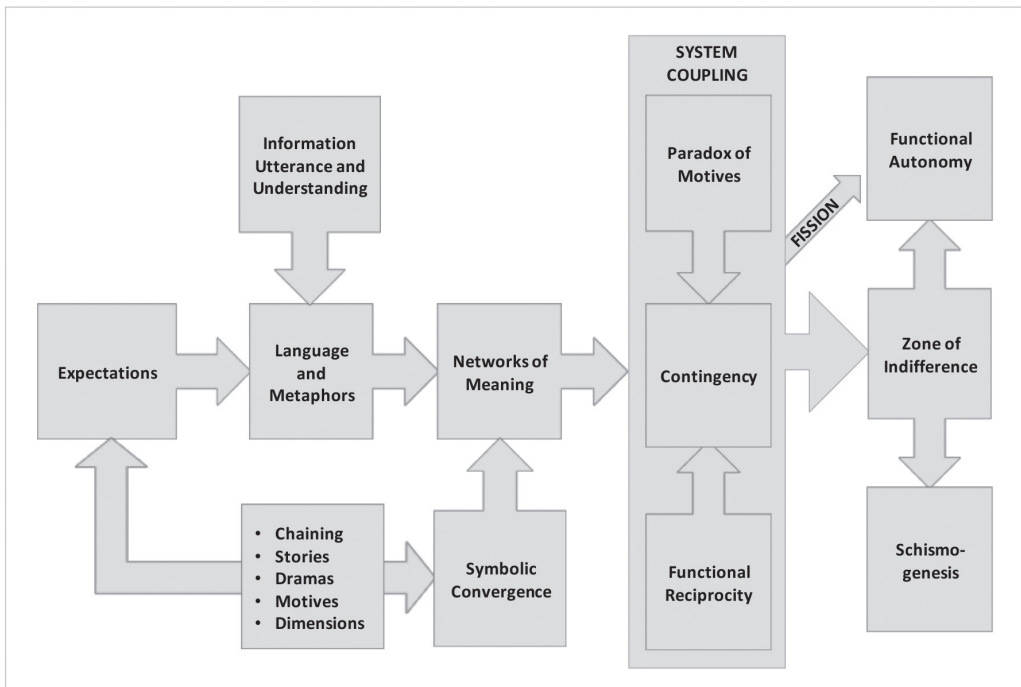


Figure 6: A schismatic framework for social analysis

From the preceding analysis of NDSOs, the following recommendations for further study can be made:

1. The schismatic metaphor does provide a powerful framework for analysis of social systems, and its application to network-type organisations should be explored further.
2. Luhmann's theory of social systems should be further investigated as a suitable framework for positioning arguments about the centrality of communication, language, and meaning within the broader framework of constructivist epistemology.
3. The schismatic metaphor may also offer additional insight into how meanings are created through networks of communication.

As for the propensity of NDSOs to sustain themselves despite the absence of functional reciprocity, it can only be surmised that the high degree of complexity that is created in all human interaction makes it impossible to identify and describe exactly how schismogenesis is created within these types of organisations. What is evident though is:

“... reality is socially created and socially sustained but ties [the] analysis to an interest in what may be described as the pathology of consciousness, by which human beings

become imprisoned within the bounds of reality that they create and sustain" (Morgan, 1980: 609).

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Reframing South African TV news as peace journalism: interim findings from a field experiment

ABSTRACT

This article presents an indicative sample from the results of an experiment that gathered audience responses to television news that was coded as “war journalism” and “peace journalism” respectively, in South Africa, during April 2012. From the peace journalism model, evaluative criteria were derived under a set of five headings for content analysis of two television news programmes and four newspapers. Distinctions under the headings were particularised for individual stories by critical discourse analysis to disclose potential sources of influence transmitted into audience frames. The test material was then coded to fall within the upper and lower peace journalism quartiles of the ‘idiom and range’ of journalism, as currently practised, demonstrated by the content analysis. Transcripts of discussions by focus groups who saw the material, as well as written notes made whilst viewing by a larger sample of participants, were themed according to Entman’s model of framing (1993), where causal interpretation is linked to treatment recommendation. From these interim findings, peace journalism proved to be ideational in the sense that peace journalism viewers were more likely to perceive structural and/or systemic explanations for problems, and more likely to see opportunities for therapeutic and/or cooperative remedies to be applied through exertions of political agency from different levels.

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INTRODUCTION

“The media constitute a major human resource whose potential to help prevent and moderate social violence begs to be discussed, evaluated and, where appropriate, mobilised.” So urged Robert Karl Manoff in the edition of *Track Two* devoted to media and conflict, published by Cape Town’s Centre for Conflict Resolution (CCR) in 1998.

In the same edition (CCR, 1998), Johan Galtung, who conceived the peace journalism model, went so far as to claim that, had more editors and reporters taken what he called “the high road” in their coverage, “the conflict in and around Northern Ireland would have entered a more peaceful phase long ago... Focus on nonviolent outcomes, empathy with all parties and creativity is more likely to bring peace.” Whereas the dominant strand of war journalism is “violence-oriented... elite-oriented... propaganda-oriented [and] victory-oriented,” peace journalism, in Galtung’s model, is “conflict-and-peace oriented... people-oriented... truth-oriented [and] solution-oriented.”

By focussing on violence, often with little if any contextualising material, i.e. events, not process, news assembled according to traditional war journalism methods may become “caught up in the loops and coils” of conflict dynamics, often serving to incentivise conflict escalation and “crackdowns” in response (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005: 216-18). Peace journalism restores context by making salient in news reporting the underlying contradictions that underpin the visible conflict carapace of violent actions, words, and ideas. It seeks to identify a range of stakeholders broader than the typical “two sides,” thereby aiming to avoid contributing unwittingly to a “tug of war” mentality in which each assumes the only way to avoid defeat is to “try harder to win” (ibid.: 7). Peace journalism entails reaching out beyond a narrow range of official spokespersons to grassroots sources, including victims and peace builders. The latter, it is contended, are always present, even if not officially acknowledged. If they are omitted from news about the conflict, the resulting picture reaching readers and audiences is “unwarrantedly gloomy, a serious misrepresentation” (Lynch & Galtung, 2010: 12).

The CCR at the time was one of the first of a large number of civil society initiatives in many countries to adopt, develop and interpret this model in calls for reform of existing media assumptions and practices. Their motivating ethos was to contribute, through such reforms, to the societal resources for responding to conflict with creative, non-violent innovations (Patindol, 2010). Peace journalism researcher and activist, Robert A. Hackett, recalls initiating a conversation with “a California-based public health advocate, concerned with the media’s impact on community violence, about her group’s strategies for changing the media.” In reply, he was offered a useful corrective: “No, Bob, the point isn’t to change the media. The point is to change the world.” Calls for more peace journalism are imbricated with “broader processes and movements to challenge cultural, structural and physical violence and to achieve a more peaceful world” (Hackett, 2011: 33).

Peace journalism has gained impetus in both research and non-research endeavours, from assumptions that its key distinctions in the media representation of conflicts are indeed ideational for readers and audiences, and therefore – if its recommendations are more widely adopted

– capable of influencing the responses of conflict actors at various levels, whether directly or indirectly, in ways conducive to peace. These assumptions, however, have seldom been tested. This article recounts and discusses a sample of results from an experiment designed to address the following questions: What difference, if any, does peace journalism make to audience responses? And in what respects, if any, do audience responses potentially add to societal sources of effective, non-violent responses to conflict?

Kempf (2007) deduced German newspaper readers' "mental models" of post-war political conflicts in the former Yugoslavia from their narrative responses to articles adjusted to exhibit "escalation-oriented" and "de-escalation-oriented" framing respectively. Subjects who had read articles in the latter category, which is closely related to peace journalism, proved more likely to perceive the case for, and the advantages of, cooperative conflict responses, as opposed to a confrontational approach, and common as opposed to "egotistical" goals. The author does emphasise, however, that this experiment took place in a society with only a limited vested interest in the conflict, which could have allowed for greater receptivity to a range of different representations of key issues. Germany had a seat at the table in international diplomacy over conflict episodes in south-east Europe of the 1990s, but no skin in the game.

Kempf's findings, therefore, beg the question of how far the key peace journalism assumptions about likely reader/audience response, and thus potential to feed back into source behaviour can be generalised. Hence the present experiment to devise a "Global Standard for Reporting Conflict" taking place in 10 countries, with four – Australia, the Philippines, Mexico, and South Africa – designated as the setting for procedures to gauge audience responses to bulletins of television news framed as war journalism and peace journalism respectively.

Such a research design immediately poses both opportunities and potential problems. One opportunity is to venture causal explanations for observable effects on a canvas broader than that chosen by Kempf for his study, capable of validating the peace journalism model as possessing wide-ranging applicability. One potential problem can be inferred from McNair's (2006: 8) observation that, even in an age when "the relevance of political borders has been substantially weakened by the expansion of new information and communication technologies... most of what we consume as media is still national in origin and orientation". Attempts to extend Kempf's methods across news agendas may therefore encounter entrenched resistance to efforts to reframe what have become familiar stories in which audiences themselves feel they have a more direct stake.

Such an effect may, furthermore, be expected to be more evident in South Africa than in most other countries. A Media Tenor study found that, of 29 broadcast news services from 13 countries on four continents, the South African ones were, overall, the most likely to report on national and local conflict issues rather than international ones. Any meaningful attempt to detect differential audience responses to war journalism and peace journalism in South Africa must first attend to the idiom and range of locally produced mainstream news about 'home-grown' conflicts.

Shinar (2009) uses the empirical findings from a comparative study of conflict coverage in one Canadian and one Israeli newspaper, using the peace journalism model as a basis for content analysis, to identify “dimensions as viable professional practices to advance peace journalism.” This he presents as part of a “trend [in scholarly research] of deconstructing, evaluating and reconstructing practices of journalistic coverage” (pp 468-9). In other words, agendas for change, informed by research, must arise from carefully examining the news as it is to catalyse “immanent critique” (Hackett, 2011: 59): mobilizing the legitimating norms of journalistic practice to supply impetus to reform agendas. It is important for peace journalism advocates to avoid promoting “unrealistic expectations,” Shinar (2007: 200) argues, if their insights are to lend themselves to effective application.

There are strong arguments for ‘pitching’ peace journalism in media that is orientated towards the country in which they are produced. It is, however, a hypothesis based on the general. “In conflict there is also a clear opportunity for human progress,” Galtung declares in *Track Two*: “using the conflict to find new ways, transforming the conflict creatively so that the opportunities take the upper hand – without violence.” Underpinning peace journalism is a set of ontological claims about human needs and potential, intended to apply across contexts of time and place.

1. THIS EXPERIMENT

For the present experiment, the distinctions in the peace journalism model were operationalised in the form of a set of general headings, under which evaluative criteria for content analysis were particularised with close attention to the idiom and range of television news as presently practised in each country. Television was the chosen medium, for a variety of reasons: firstly, because it is the part of the news industry in which both the present authors trained as journalists, and with which they are most familiar; secondly, and more importantly, because – even in an era of media proliferation – polls suggest that television remains the most trusted source of news for publics in many countries (Ofcom, 2010, cited in Curran, 2012). The reputation of television news in South Africa may be more chequered than in some other countries; however, for the purpose of generating comparisons between countries, the same medium had to be utilised.

The headings were based on the summary of distinctions applied in the field, furnished by Shinar (2007: 200), building – and, in some respects, elaborating – on Galtung’s original schema. In this, peace journalism can be recognised as:

1. Exploring backgrounds and contexts of conflict formation, and presenting causes and options on every side, so as to portray conflict in realistic terms that are transparent to the audience;
2. Giving voice to the views of all rival parties, not merely the leaders of two antagonistic ‘sides’;
3. Airing creative ideas, from any source, for conflict resolution, development, peacemaking, and peace keeping;

4. Exposing lies, cover-up attempts, and culprits on all sides, and revealing excesses committed by, and suffering inflicted on, peoples of all parties; and
5. Paying attention to peace stories and post-war developments.

This approach, attempting to measure the extent of peace journalism by analysing the content of media reports, has accounted for much, perhaps most of the published research in the field (such as Lee & Maslog, 2005; the studies gathered by Ross and Tehranian, 2008; and, in South Africa, Hyde-Clarke, 2011). An investigation of audience responses to peace journalism must, however, attempt to peer beyond the manifest content into the implicit content: the meanings audiences can be adjudged likely to make in response to particular prompts or “activation tags” for “memory-based information processing” (Scheufele, 2000: 299-300).

For this reason, Nohrstedt and Ottosen (2011: 225) recommend supplementing peace journalism content analysis with critical discourse analysis (CDA), so that “aspects of mediated conflict coverage that are rarely or not at all noticed in debates about journalism, such as the importance of the context, inter-discursive relations and the meaning of omissions, are addressed and integrated with the analysis.” Nohrstedt and Ottosen consider CDA a natural “supplement” to peace journalism, because of its “normative” character and its focus on “explor[ing] communication... with an intention to point out other possible realities than the one under investigation” (ibid.).

An exercise in CDA was carried out parallel to the content analysis, to disclose points where the peace journalism/war journalism dyad is likely to signpost ‘forks in the road,’ invoking alternative frames with implications for receptiveness to cooperative approaches, shared goals, and non-violent responses to conflict issues. Drawing, then, on these two complementary processes, five recent stories broadcast by a daily television news programme, on Soweto TV in this case, were adjusted with new, original visual content – interviews and picture sequences – and re-worked scripts, to produce a peace journalism bulletin. This was calibrated in such a way as to offer both ideational distinctions from the originals, and to illustrate feasible reforms within reach of journalists working in the existing idiom and range of the medium.

The two versions were then shown to a ‘matching pair’ of focus groups, each consisting of six members. None was made aware that a second version existed until after the experiment. Subjects were drawn from the Dimension Data’s call centre in Johannesburg. The respondents belonged to several different races, and consisted of roughly equal numbers of men and women. After the viewing, a semi-structured discussion lasting just under one hour was conducted in each group and recorded. A summary and an analysis of some of their responses are presented later in the article.

This exercise formed one segment of a suite of data collection exercises in the South African branch of the study. The same material was shown to five other focus groups, who represented different demographics, and to larger groups who completed self-reporting questionnaires. All subjects also provided a textual artefact, the notes they made whilst viewing, in boxes on their participant forms, marked as “thought-listing protocols” (TLPs) (Coleman & Thorson, 2002),

inviting them to write down any thoughts or feelings prompted by the bulletins. As well as the focus group responses, a themed summary of part of the TLP results also follows below. The data from these two parallel procedures are presented and discussed as a set of interim conclusions, based on an indicative sample of findings from a larger experiment – itself only one branch of a project drawing conclusions from several similar exercises in different countries. We first set out the results of the CDA and the content analysis, which informed the coding of the two bulletins.

2. SOUTH AFRICA: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

The Hector Pieterse Museum in Orlando West, Soweto, commemorates a 13-year-old school student gunned down by police on the first day of the uprising of 1976: a tipping point in the struggle against apartheid. Poppy Buthelezi was also shot that day, but survived to spend the rest of her life in a wheelchair. Among the exhibits at the museum are images and news reports from the media, one of which is an interview with Poppy, published in the *Mail and Guardian* in 2003: half-way through the 18 years that have passed since the first democratic election in 1994 and the date of the fieldwork for the present research.

Poppy told the paper: “Some people say there has been change in South Africa, but I can’t see it. The schools in Soweto still have no facilities” (in Robinson, 2003: 12). Just around the corner of the Hector Pieterse Museum is the Mandela Family Museum, established after the house in which they lived prior to Nelson Mandela’s imprisonment was taken over by the Soweto Heritage Trust. Among the memorabilia on display is a small selection of Mandela’s very many poignant and memorable sayings and writings. One of them is from a letter he wrote to his wife, Winnie, from Robben Island in 1977, a year after Hector Pieterse died:

In judging our progress as individuals, we tend to concentrate on external factors, such as one’s social position, influence and popularity, wealth and standard of education... but internal factors may be even more crucial in assessing one’s development as a human being: humility, purity, generosity, absence of vanity, readiness to serve your fellow men.

These two artefacts offer a good starting point to appraise the discursive context into which news reports of broadly defined conflict issues are inserted, and to identify possible influences on processes of subsequent meaning-making by readers and audiences.

2.1 Legacy of the struggle against apartheid

The struggle to overthrow apartheid is regarded by many around the world as an inspiring success story of steadfastness and sacrifice. The transition to majority rule with relatively little bloodshed is regarded as an epic of restraint and forbearance, exemplifying the possibility that parties to conflict can identify and share common ground in an effort to end, or at least reduce, injustice (Brewer, 2010).

The notion of South Africa's formerly oppressed masses, vindicated by political transition and now awaiting redress of past injustices, still has considerable political traction. In his 2012 Freedom Day speech to mark the 18th anniversary of that first free vote, President Jacob Zuma drew attention to a 29% increase in the number of people who now have access to mains water. The African National Congress, transformed from liberation movement to progressive government, was here addressing one of the most grating issues of day-to-day life under the old system. In the apartheid-era stage play *Woza Albert*, one of the characters bemoans the lot of Sowetans having to "drink water from rusty tins."

The evening news on eTV gathered 'vox pops' in response to Zuma's speech. One township dweller offered a perspective on the progress to date: "After 400 years of slavery, there's only so much we can expect to change in 18 years."

However, the patience reflected in that statement is finite, especially as South Africa remains a profoundly unequal society, with the world's second-highest Gini coefficient (distribution of household income), second to only neighbouring Namibia (World Bank: 2009). The predicament of urban Blacks, according to *Woza Albert*, was living, not merely in deprivation, but in relative deprivation: "They have people who are living in glass and gold across [from] them." Relative deprivation is defined by Gurr as the discrepancy between what people think they deserve, and what they think they can get, and is identified as a prime cause of frustration and aggression. "The potential for collective violence varies strongly," he concludes, "with the intensity and scope of relative deprivation among members of a collectivity" (1970: 24).

The enduring inequality does not straightforwardly divide Blacks and Whites, since waves of 'economic empowerment', and drives to make public service occupations more representative of the population as a whole, have lifted more Blacks into the ranks of the wealthy and the professional middle class respectively. Analysis by an economics think-tank found that:

In 2000 the average black South African earned 15 percent of the average white South African's income, whereas in 2011 a typical black person earned 40 percent of a typical white person's income (Sapa, 2012).

This progress has, however, also brought problems in its wake, notably a perception that political leaders tend, in some cases, to parlay their prominence and connections into personal wealth for themselves and their families, regardless of their fitness – or otherwise – to add value to the enterprise at hand. In one typical example, a gold mine beset by cash flow problems was seemingly about to be rescued by a company, Aurora Empowerment Systems, "with two powerfully connected surnames attached", the *Times* newspaper noted: "Khulubuse Zuma, the nephew of President Jacob Zuma, and former President Nelson Mandela's grandson Zondwa" (*Times*, 2012: 6).

Hopes were raised that miners employed by the original owner, Pamodzi Gold, would now be paid and miners' employment secured, only to have been dashed. "Aurora was removed,"

the paper went on, “after the directors were accused of destroying the infrastructure of the mines... and causing the loss of over 5 300 jobs.” At the same time, Khulubuse Zuma’s assets were being sold off to pay debts from another business deal, revealing how many luxury cars and other valuable consumer goods he had amassed.

3. “TRADITION OF LUMPEN RADICALISM”

Forde (2011) identifies a “long South African tradition of lumpen radicalism” in which “power is first conquered on the street before it is translated into... formal institutions.” This has been “kept at the margins of the liberation movement’s core ethos” – exemplified in the Mandela quote – but rises and falls on a “cyclical” basis. Forde suggests that the latter-day form of expression of lumpen radicalism includes “the conspicuous display and consumption of wealth” as a response to a historically transmitted experience of “shame, social humiliation and dishonour... that became the hallmarks of black urban experience under apartheid” (2011: vi-vii). In the Discourse Historical Approach – a variant of CDA – discursive uses of such historical connections and analogies are emphasised to disclose the potential inter-textual meanings to be made in response to new episodes (Wodak, 2001).

The ongoing dramas surrounding service delivery to improve the living conditions of the poor, on the one hand, and venality among their representatives (elected or otherwise) on the other, inform a broad stream of news coverage on public affairs by South Africa’s media. There is a closely related ‘watchdog’ role, played by many media, exposing malefactions by public officials, notably the police. In April of 2012, journalists covered several cases of alleged brutality, including one that saw officers stand trial over the fatal shooting of a demonstrator who was taking part in a service delivery protest, effectively drawing the threads together in one story.

4. ROLES OF SOUTH AFRICAN JOURNALISM AND MEDIA

The role of South African journalism draws on a rich, if contested and conflicted, tradition. Johannesburg’s Apartheid Museum exhibits examples of coverage by the liberal English-language press during the 1970s and 1980s exposing the wrongful detention and torture of activists. However, Lewin (1998) characterises the prevailing mood at the session of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission set aside to enquire into media roles under minority rule as one of “simmering rage.” The findings of the session confirmed the “essentially complicit role of most of the media,” albeit with exceptions, e.g.,:

At the media hearing Max du Preez [editor of the banned Vrye Weekblad] spoke as one of the latter-day ‘alternative’ editors whose publication was forced out of existence for its remarkable exposés of a number of apartheid’s dirty deeds, all consistently ignored (or denounced) by the established media.

Another strand comes from the black press under apartheid, including *Drum Magazine*, whose writers and photographers faced arrest and imprisonment after reporting on the “fantastic cost”

incurred by South African capital due to the campaign of sabotage adopted by the ANC in the early 1960s. Later, the mantle of a campaigning newspaper representing the urban black population was taken up, to some extent, by *The Sowetan*. Alongside it was generated, out of the “wave of mass struggles” following the Soweto uprising, “an upsurge in alternative media addressing many of the linguistic and cultural groupings in the country. The majority were radical and leftist in their orientation” (Sparks, 2009: 199).

South Africa’s transition has inserted a paradox into the familiar analytical factor of “power distance” when categorising journalism in its relationship with political authority. Hanitzsch (2011: 481) describes it as a continuum in the following terms:

The adversary pole of the continuum captures a kind of journalism that, in its capacity as the “Fourth Estate,” openly challenges those in power. “Loyal” or opportunist journalists, on the other hand, tend to see themselves more in a collaborative role.

The Sowetan today projects into the public sphere the experiences and perspectives of those on the wrong end of inequalities in South African society, but, paradoxically, in a, generally, loyalist mode: those now occupying positions of formal power, after all, drew their initial political impetus from the same place. Within the constraints of public service media, Soweto TV, which has a community licence and produces a daily news programme, takes a similar approach. In the written press, a recent addition has been the more openly pro-ANC *New Age* – which, according to its website, pursues a mission of “be[ing] critical, but fair and constructive... [and] celebrat[ing] the achievements of a united South Africa” (New Age, 2012). It publishes a regular column contributed by the head of the Government Communication and Information System.

The TRC media hearing was held, Lewin (1998) notes wryly, “with symbolic irony, in a studio at the SABC, apartheid’s loudest mouthpiece”. The SABC was foremost among what MacGregor calls “formerly white-dominated media [that] are now significantly transformed” (2004: 91). She records how the broadcaster took a proactive role in drawing up codes of conduct for covering early post-apartheid elections, including working with civil society groups to identify credible, non-elite interviewees. This was one example, MacGregor argues, of “an understanding [among senior journalists]... of the media’s social mission” (ibid.).

South Africa’s media today, then, contain elements of all three of the major models of media system development identified by Hallin and Mancini (2004) in their comparative study of West European and North American democracies. The pro-ANC press, counterposed with publications highly critical of the government such as the *Times* and the weekly *Globe and Mail*, is reminiscent of Polarized Pluralist models, but the continued ownership of most media by commercial (not political) entities retains a key characteristic of a Liberal model; while the enduring salience of the SABC and the tight regulatory regime governing public service broadcasting might indicate a Democratic Corporatist model.

The case may, indeed, bear out some of Curran's criticisms of the Hallin and Mancini schema, and lead us, in our search for historically transmitted and inter-textual influences on processes of meaning-making by today's South African readers and audiences, to pay closer attention to some of the factors he nominates as potentially more salient in appraising the relationship between media and democracy. The countries of western Europe, while superficially divided between Hallin and Mancini's three media models, actually share important features, Curran argues, which differentiate them all, in turn, from the United States: "they are welfare democracies that redress inequality through redistributive politics... They also have media systems shaped by a conception of the public interest realised through the state" (Curran, 2011: 44).

Redressing inequality through redistribution, and the role of the state as the vehicle for realising public interest (not only in media) are political ideals still cherished by many in post-apartheid South Africa, and are in keeping with the legacy of a successful liberation struggle. Perceptions of progress towards and relevance of these ideals may be viewed as inversely proportional to the cyclical ebb and flow of lumpen radicalism, and these ideals may lose legitimacy if public perceptions are tainted by the ostentatious wealth and/or corruption of those in or connected to authority, which is revealed by journalists in their role as watchdogs.

However, the larger, more structural threat to their articulation and implementation is relatively seldom named or critically examined. South Africa attained its freedom in the era of ascendant neo-liberal orthodoxy. At the time of the negotiated handover to majority rule, Klein (2007) shows how parallel talks – where the ANC was represented by Thabo Mbeki, whom no-one has accused of using office for personal gain – effectively established important policies for more rapid progress towards greater equality.

Others at the table – international financial institutions and the National Party – held sway over key issues such as rejecting nationalisation of strategic industries; the ANC's inheritance of government debt obligations contracted under apartheid, and the creation of an independent central bank. Entry into the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade – forerunner of the World Trade Organisation – constrained subsidies to industry to lock in the benefits of technology and create ladders of opportunity out of poverty.

The rich world was, in the words of the Cambridge economist Ha-Joon Chang. "kicking away the ladder" (2002): depriving a middle-income country, in this case, of access to the same policies wealthy countries had themselves employed to build their wealth in the first place. In the process, Klein records, "the ANC found itself caught in a new kind of web, one made of arcane rules and regulations, all designed to confine and constrain the power of elected leaders" (ibid.).

Klein interviewed prominent journalist and former editor of *The Sowetan*, William Gumede, who endured legal harassment in response to his book about the affair, Thabo Mbeki and the Battle for the Soul of the ANC – written, he told her, in belated redress for a journalistic error of historic proportions. By paying so little attention, in relative terms, to the economic talks, "we missed the real story."

Writing ten years into majority rule, MacGregor noted that "media give space to development problems and achievements; editorial pages are often committed to solution-seeking analysis"

(2004: 91). However, as the constraints on elected leaders have created, in the period since, what Tormey calls “a crisis of representative politics across the liberal-democratic world” (2006: 139), so the receptiveness of media, their readers and audiences to the proposition that political actors can effectively tackle inequality by channelling the public interest has been increasingly challenged. And it is against this backdrop that readers and audiences in South Africa today make meanings in response to media representations of episodic developments along key thematic lines.

5. CONTENT ANALYSIS

The exercise in content analysis was performed on two television news bulletins, on eTV and Soweto TV respectively, and four newspapers: *Mail and Guardian*, *The Times*, *The Sowetan* and *The New Age*: arguably encompassing, between them, the different traditions and orientations of South African media. In this small portion of a larger global study, one edition of each newspaper was selected, along with three episodes of eTV’s main evening news programme, *Prime Time*, and a total of 17 stories from Soweto TV, all published or broadcast between mid-March and late April, 2012. A fuller sample of South African media was gathered – comprising more editions of each newspaper selected, for example. Analysis of these will follow in later publications, but for present purposes, interim findings from this limited sample were used to supply indicative results.

The number of stories about conflict issues in South Africa in these media reached 115, and each story was scored by operationalising the peace journalism model under Shinar’s five headings, using evaluative criteria, particularised in each case according to the CDA. The period from which the sample was drawn saw extensive reporting of alleged wrongdoing by figures of authority, notably the police, and of shortcomings in service delivery to township dwellers.

A story that included material satisfying criteria under any one heading scored one point. One that included all five, scored five points. The maximum score for any story was therefore 5.0, and the minimum was 0. The *Mail and Guardian* attained the highest mean average score of 2.26 (and the highest of any single medium included in content analysis for the global study in any of the four countries). *New Age* and Soweto TV scored the lowest in this indicative South African sample, each under 1.0.

Table 1: South Africa content analysis

Medium	Date of edition	Number of stories	Total score	Average score
<i>The New Age</i>	April 24	32	28.5	0.89
<i>Mail and Guardian</i>	April 20 to 25	23	52	2.26
<i>The Times</i>	April 19	13	21	1.62
<i>The Sowetan</i>	April 19	14	22.5	1.61
eTV <i>Prime Time</i>	April 22, 23 and 27	16	23.5	1.47
Soweto TV	Stories from Mar 13 to April 18	17	13.5	0.79
Totals		115	161	1.4

To further explain the operationalisation used to attain these scores, some examples are now briefly discussed to illustrate the upper end of the peace journalism codings of South African media. News items in both the *The Sowetan* and Soweto TV highlighted the work of Thuli Madonsela, Public Protector, in drawing attention to, and advocating for, the plight of the poor – in this case, illustrated by incidents in Soweto and the Free State, where township dwellers' water supplies had become contaminated by sewage (Seleka, 2012).

In the Soweto TV report, Madonsela explains her role as: “to assess and make sure that the needs and rights of people are granted” by taking up community grievances with institutions, such as local authorities, where their own attempts to do so had proved unavailing. Madonsela was shown on a follow-up visit to Braamfischerville to check that the water contamination, detected on her previous trip to the township, had been rectified. Community members who had turned to her office had taken an “exemplary” approach, she explained. “They understand that the Constitution gives them accountability mechanisms.”

As the same package also included pictures illustrating the nature and extent of the continuing problem with contaminated water, as well as the views and perspectives of township dwellers, it scored highly in content analysis. It provided for a range of voices (all sides), and gave space to creative ideas for conflict resolution (the Public Protector's office) after a patient and thorough (in the context of a single news piece) explanation of context and background. This package therefore attained a score of 3 out of 5.

In the newspapers, opinion pieces were also included, and their content analysed using the same criteria. One example from the *Mail and Guardian*, titled “Pity the ANC's traffic warden,” profiled the party's Secretary General, Gwede Mantashe (Calland, 2012). This shed new light on the paradox of power distance in South Africa today, discussed briefly above, quoting from an internal (but public) ANC document, prepared as part of its 100th anniversary reassessment exercise titled “Organisational Renewal: Building the ANC as a Movement for Transformation and a Strategic Centre of Power.” The report notes: “a key and recurring theme arising from our [the ANC's] own research and independent surveys... that protests [over service delivery] are not against the ANC, but are often in its name... the adverse socioeconomic realities affecting communities are used by disgruntled or opportunistic elements within our ranks to out-manoeuvre sitting councillors.” By quoting multiple sources, by exploring contexts and backgrounds and by equipping the reader to inspect rival iterations of meaning in critical and comparative mode, Calland's analysis scored 3 out of 5 under Shinar's first, second, and fourth headings.

A higher score of 4 out of 5 was attained by the paper's own editorial in the same edition (*Mail and Guardian*, 2012), which focused on a gang rape that sent shockwaves through both the national and the international media. The victim was an intellectually disabled young woman of 17, and the perpetrators filmed their attack on a mobile phone, creating a video that then went ‘viral’ on the Internet. The incident was symptomatic of what the paper called “an epidemic of violent abuse” connected, the editorial suggested, with the continuing relative deprivation endured by impoverished communities of the kind in which the attack had taken place, in Soweto weeks earlier.

The *Mail and Guardian* further stated that the state of service delivery to such areas was “disastrous,” both in visible form, like the integrity of the water supply, and hidden, such as the “huge strain” under which social services had to operate, “starved of cash and staff... none more [so] than mental health care, through which this exceptionally vulnerable girl ought to have been protected.” The remedy, the paper went on, must build from a recognition that for communities to be consigned to living with “shit-soaked streets... disconnected from economic opportunity” is to “reproduce [the conditions for] sexual violence.” It called for “national leaders to campaign against both rape and the contempt for women that underpins the act,” but also for the provision of “social infrastructure.” Both located the problem definition and causal interpretation, and the treatment recommendation, firmly in the realm of the political, thus being solution-oriented, and earned this editorial a score of 4 out of 5.

Generally, however, investigative journalism by the better newspapers, and the strong location reporting offered by eTV, was less likely to score under Shinar’s third and fifth headings, projecting into the public sphere the live possibility of creative solutions by exertions of political agency, and images of peace and post-conflict developments. Context and background, multiple sourcing, and challenging propaganda are characteristics of peace journalism that were generally more evident.

One of the exceptions was provided by a full-page, illustrated report in *The Sowetan*, examining the plight of poor residents in Snake Park, an informal settlement in Soweto, who were stealing public resources, endangering themselves in the process, by paying local ‘cowboy’ operators to connect their shacks to mains electricity. The headline and sub-head neatly encapsulate the moral evaluation and problem definition inscribed in this particular framing of poverty as a conflict issue:

*Desperate: Illegal Connections: Izinyoka-Nyoka¹ is a way of life
Why people have to steal power*

Snake Park resident Nozipho Rwacaza told the paper: “We know it is illegal but what can we do? I have a fridge, a stove, a television and other electrical appliances, and I can’t use them because I do not have electricity” (Mashaba, 2012). By offering context and background, hearing from multiple sources, and featuring creative ideas for conflict resolution, both explicitly stated (in a sidebar examining schemes to roll out mains supply to the poorest and providing amnesty for the thefts) and strongly implied (more effective redistributive policy mechanisms to alleviate poverty and relative deprivation), this story also scored 3 out of 5.

6. RESEARCH MATERIAL

The two versions for the research material were framed so as to fall within the upper and lower quartiles of the content analysis scores. Of all the stories examined (n = 115), these boundaries

¹ Electricity theft

fell at the ratings of 2.5 and 1.0 respectively. All the war journalism stories were therefore coded at < 1.0, and all the peace journalism stories were coded at > 2.5, to represent the opposite poles of the idiom and range of South African news as presently published and broadcast.

In each of five stories, the war journalism version was provided by a package from the recent output of Soweto TV. A peace journalism version of each story was created by gathering original material (interviews and picture sequences), and restructuring and re-scripting the package in a similar style and duration as the original. Each of the two versions was voiced by a 'real' Soweto TV reporter, and the 'bulletin' was created by recording links read to camera by a Soweto TV newsreader, in the same studio setting as that used by the programme.

For purposes of abbreviation, we concentrate on the coding of, and responses to, two of the five stories. One was a development in the horrifying gang rape video story, discussed in the *Mail and Guardian* editorial referenced above. We present responses to this story, both from a 'matching pair' of focus groups and from thought-listing protocols (TLPs) from all participants in this branch of the study, a total of 96 individual viewers.

In our story, the alleged victim had just been handed over to police by a 37-year-old Braamfischerville man, in whose house she had been staying. In the original package, broadcast by Soweto TV on April 18, police were seen taking this man into custody, his hands cuffed behind his back and a jumper pulled up over his face. Faith Mazibuko, MEC for Community Safety, appeared in an interview to confirm that the man had been charged with abduction, with an additional rape charge under consideration. The story failed to register under any of the five headings, and therefore received a score of 0.

The other story featured complaints from residents of Meadowlands informal settlement in Soweto that basic services, such as sanitation and refuse collection, were still not being provided, in spite of years of requests. In this case, responses from the focus group members are provided, but not the TLPs. The original package was 'pegged' to a visit to the settlement from a deputation of the opposition Democratic Alliance. DA Spokesperson Khume Ramulifho told reporters that "our observation is that there is no allocation for the houses," houses which, the programme reported, had been promised the previous year. The story therefore garnered 0.5 for its partial challenge of a claim that turned out to be unfounded, and 0.5 for giving voice to more parties than those usually represented in 'he-said-she-said' political reporting. (The other speakers were three local residents who called for toilets to be installed as a top priority). This story's total score was therefore 1 out of 5.

In the peace journalism version of the gang rape story, the development at Braamfischerville was dealt with briefly before raising the question of how the "contempt for women" postulated by the *Mail and Guardian* in contextualising the incident, could be rolled back. It featured an extensive interview with Dumisani Rebombo, who runs workshops challenging men and boys about their attitudes to women. It was revealed that Rebombo had himself, decades earlier, taken part in a gang rape, which he attributed to both his own weakness and peer pressure in a culture of

violence towards women. He now wants to show every man how he could make a difference, and has called for such initiatives to be amplified and connected in a national strategy to reduce gender violence. In adding context and background, and highlighting a creative idea for conflict resolution, the story scored 1 under the first and third headings. In drawing a voice into the debate that had previously remained unheard, it scored an additional 0.5 under the second heading, thus earning a score of 2.5.

In repackaging the Meadowlands story, we followed a hunch, suggested by the critical discourse analysis set out above, that the predicament of residents denied basic services was certain to prompt sympathy and sadness among most viewers, but there was also the risk of the situation being seen as an inevitable fact of life. Dorling (2010) identifies this belief as one that has been fostered by political rhetoric in unequal wealthy countries, and one of the five main reasons why social inequality persists. To adjust its content, therefore, a picture sequence photographed in the Sandton Mall, one of the most conspicuously wealthy locations in Johannesburg, was inserted, with the reporter’s voiceover script re-written to note that “South Africa is one of the most unequal countries on earth.”

Vox pops of passers-by outside the Mall were recorded, and two of these – both from young, black men – were added to the package. “It needs to be equal to some degree,” one opined, “but there is nothing we can do, right now.” The other said: “The rich ones had their own way up, they did their thing.” A commentator, Delphine Serumaga, Director of the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, observed that leaders in a position to make decisions who are “socially and politically correct” are, in some cases, also benefiting personally from the imbalance. To redress the situation might involve them “giving up some of their personal wealth.” Meadowlands might not need merely “more efficient service delivery,” the reporter concluded, but perhaps “a more fundamental debate about who gets what.” Due to the fact that voices were added, together with the context that inequalities had been constructed and were being perpetuated by identifiable political agency, the score was raised to 3.

7. AUDIENCE RESPONSES: FROM THOUGHT-LISTING PROTOCOLS

Table 2 (below) shows the number of references in written notes by participants, made whilst viewing the story on the gang rape video, with categories suggested by Entman’s model of framing (1993).

Table 2: The number of references in written notes by participants

Gang Rape TLPs	War journalism	Peace journalism
Number of participants	48	48
Causes – individual	32	12
Causes – system	31	46
Treatment – punitive	16	8
Treatment – cooperative	3	31

To frame, Entman says, is to “make... more salient in a communicating text” certain aspects of a perceived reality “in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (1993: 51-52). This has been influential in peace journalism scholarship, because it links differences in the representation of an issue with audiences’ receptiveness to different initiatives put forward, by way of response.

If journalists add context and background to the report of a violent incident, this experiment suggests, audiences gain the opportunity to consider and value non-violent responses. The cause of a problem is also more likely to be interpreted as structural, rather than as aberrant behaviour by identified individual malefactors. The appropriate treatment therefore appears to involve not only punishment of the individuals concerned, but also a far-reaching reform of social relations, requiring cooperation by many parties. The claims made in support of peace journalism in *Track Two*, referenced above, now began to gain evidential support.

Peace journalism viewers offered ten times more cooperative treatment recommendations to the problem than war journalism viewers, who tended to favour punitive responses. This clearly arises from differences in causal interpretation. Peace journalism viewers predominantly identify various aspects of ‘the system’ as the problem, offering 46 such comments, compared with just 12 blaming the individuals. Many of the comments echoed elements of the high-scoring editorial on the issue in the *Mail and Guardian*, discussed above. War journalism viewers, on the other hand, were divided on issues of causality, equally blaming the individual and society.

Peace journalism viewers made 31 references to cooperative treatment recommendations, compared with just three war journalism viewers. Some peace journalism viewers referred specifically to Sonke Gender Justice, one saying: “They have done a great job.” Others referred to feeling “hopeful for a change”; “hopeful that movements against sexual violence will change views” and, from a woman who, in earlier comments, expressed strong emotions of disgust at the rape story: “Wow, at least some men can change” These comments suggest an openness to the transformation narrative within the story.

The war journalism viewers exhibited a markedly stronger sense of blame towards the perpetrators of this offence, and, in some cases, what they constructed, in various terms, as an “out-group” to which the perpetrators belonged. “I really do hate him for what he did,” one said, while another noted “distrust of township men.” A third viewer wrote: “I also feel that some men out there still do not have respect for women.” Peace journalism viewers, on the other hand, attributed the problem to some form of peer pressure or a culture of violence against women, and viewed the incident as symptomatic of a “societal issue.”

8. FOCUS GROUPS

Viewers of both versions of the gang rape story were united in condemning the act. However, again peace journalism viewers were less likely to *explain* it in terms of the moral shortcomings of the individual perpetrators, and more likely to conceptualise the incident as symptomatic of more

structural and/or systemic failings. “It’s all about morality,” one war journalism viewer said, in a typical observation, whereas a peace journalism viewer summed up the prevailing mood in that group with: “It goes deeper... our system needs to be corrected.” War journalism viewers were more likely to criticize failures by police to arrest the alleged rapists earlier – a much commented-on aspect of the case in other media reports of the time – whereas one peace journalism viewer acknowledged that “group pressure is a big factor” in gang rapes. Another went so far as to insist that “We must first start having empathy to [sic] people; put ourselves in their shoes.”

The story of Dumisani Rebombo, related in parallel with the incident itself, prompted peace journalism viewers to express optimism that exertions of political agency from various levels could, in time, improve the portrayed situation. One viewer said: “It gives you a lot of hope” that what another called “mindsets” could be changed. Everybody needs to stand together,” another said, evidentially picking up on Rebombo’s campaign slogan of “One man can” (make a difference). In contrast, there was widespread pessimism among war journalism viewers regarding political agency being able to make any difference. One viewer commented: “Parenting is fading away,” and several agreed with a statement by one participant that “the government can’t do anything.”

Again, responses were themed according to Entman’s categories, and informed by aspects of the CDA and content analysis, with the following results:

Table 3: Themed responses

Gang rape story	War Journalism viewers (number of comments)	Peace Journalism viewers
Explanation: Individual blame/moral shortcomings	4	1
Explanation: Systemic and/or structural factors	3	5
Punitive remedies	2	1
Therapeutic and/or social engineering remedies	1	4
Agency pessimism	5	1
Agency optimism	0	7

War journalism viewers of the Meadowlands story agreed that the situation as presented was “bad” and “sad.” One appeared to blame Meadowlands residents for their predicament in stating: “Education also plays an important role... You can send people out there to clean the place, to fix the broken pipes, the sewer, and people will come and trash the place again, so I would also say, lack of education, because you can’t clean a place, then somebody comes and trashes the place.” Another (Black) viewer observed: “There are suburbs where more black people are moving in, than white people move out, and what happens [is], after five years, the place deteriorates... There are all the facilities, the running water, they pick up the rubbish, but what makes the place

deteriorate? I mean, if I move in, you are white you make sure your lawn is clean... Like with me, maybe I won't try and maintain it... you are not going to blame government for that."

Peace journalism viewers were generally more likely to diagnose Meadowlands's plight as the result of injustice, and referred to concepts of inequality: "They don't want bigger houses, more car garages... they just want more water." The Gauteng provincial government has spent billions on new roads, one recalled, when instead "they could have built lots of houses and then those homeless people would at least have something." Another was moved to contrast her own situation with that of Meadowlands residents: "Look[ing] at them in that big screen... [we], having everything, [we can] just press the remote and they would disappear." Peace journalism viewers were more inclined to regard the provision of services to the poor as a work in progress: "The government did build a lot of houses," one said, while another stated: "People must understand it's not something that happens overnight... they just need to be more patient."

Once again, responses were themed according to Entman's categories and informed by aspects of the CDA and content analysis, with results are set out in Table 4, below:

Table 4: Themed responses

Meadowlands story	War journalism viewers (number of comments)	Peace journalism viewers
Causal interpretation individual failings by residents	3	2
Causal interpretation (systemic) injustice	0	4
Agency pessimism	2	0
Agency optimism	0	2

9. CONCLUSION

"Media projects purposefully designed to intervene in specific conflicts can and do have critical and positive effect," Melissa Baumann editorialised in the Introduction to *Track Two*, in 1998: "The task remains – at least for those of us committed to changing the way we report – to shift these 'alternative' practices further into the mainstream." This article has presented preliminary findings from an experiment to show how audiences respond if mainstream television news about conflict issues in contemporary South Africa is adjusted in the critical and positive directions provided by the peace journalism model.

Viewers of peace journalism are more likely to explain problems in terms of structural and/or systemic failings, and perceive potential for solutions to be applied by exertion of political agency on various levels. This is in keeping with the watchdog role of locally produced journalism, and is flourishing in today's media, while adding new and important dimensions. More peace journalism will accentuate the positive in the idiom and range of existing conflict reporting, and is worth

pursuing, since the distinctions in the model, when encoded in television news about conflict, have proven to be ideational among viewers, in ways that are significant within the South African discourse.

Although this conclusion is based on only two segments of the data collected in a single branch of a larger experiment, it is broadly supported by findings elsewhere. In the Philippines, for example, “The strongest effect (of watching peace journalism as opposed to war journalism versions of television news stories) comes when viewers have the opportunity to consider backgrounds and contexts of violent incidents... In such cases, peace journalism viewers become much more likely to volunteer, unprompted, and think about, solutions to the problem highlighted... [and they] offer predominantly more creative, nonviolent ideas for solutions” (McGoldrick, 2011: 76). What has been characterized in the present article as ‘agency optimism,’ clearly echoes the above finding.

How could this kind of reporting be shifted further into the mainstream? A clue is to be found, perhaps, on the inside front cover of the *Mail and Guardian* in a statement disclosing that its excellent investigative reporting is subsidised with foundation money from the Open Society Institute. “Journalism... is a good thing,” the present authors argued, in launching this worldwide research project, “but one that cannot be sustained or delivered satisfactorily by markets; there is both a need and a justification for non-market mechanisms to be applied” (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2010: 90). For foundation or other donor funds to be used to subsidise good quality journalism, arguments must be able to be made in favour of this practice. The evidence from this branch of the study, a small portion of which is presented and considered here, can add to those arguments.

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