
Theorizing Strategic Communication in Parsimony from the U.S. government perspective

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Young Joon Lim

The University of Texas Pan American, Department of Communication, USA

Abstract: Although the term *Strategic Communication* seems to be a rising topic in communication studies, it is obvious that the term has been hardly visualized and explained from the U.S. government perspective in academic work. This paper theoretically visualizes strategic communication processes. The Department of State and the Department of Defense streamlined the use of strategic communication in different terms but they both focus on using soft power over hard power to gain support from foreign audiences through communication. Both departments especially after the 9/11 attacks have developed programs to win hearts and minds of the target audience. This paper shows the salient process of strategic communication programs and conceptualizes principles of strategic communication from their perspectives. This paper after all illustrates the processes for theorizing strategic communication.

Keywords: strategic communication, Department of State, Department of Defense, public diplomacy

Introduction

It is convenient and safe to mention that the term *strategic communication* carries some kind of meaning holistic but nebulous despite the term's popularity after 9/11 in the United States as the George W. Bush administration popularized it (Halloran, 2007). Over the last few years, a wide variety of industrial, academic, governmental, and non-profit institutions have used the term in a form of their own interpretation, which lead to convoluted confusion while they attempt to preoccupy supreme authority in terms of agreed-upon meaning of strategic communication. Although the term literally seems to refer to conversation, dialogue, and any form of opinion exchanges, these institutions tend to be subordinate to self-obsession of righteousness to insist that definition and usage of strategic communication should be understood and performed under each one's independent guidance. In other words, it will not be feasible to share a common concept of strategic communication until the very representative and unified consensus is accepted among the strategic communication community.

Hence this study explores a host of claims for definitions of strategic communication and its applications being used by multiple institutions and even individuals in pursuit of conceptualizing and theorizing strategic communication. It also offers ongoing processes of domestic and international policy-making of the United States, explained from historical occasions to illustrate the country's strategic communication applications throughout political and social science theories related to processes of communication, including confused usage of strategic communication which the government agencies, academic researchers, NGOs and private sector employees attempt to preoccupy. In a simple way, Figure 1 -- called SC Birth Visualization by this study -- presents the disarrayed abuse of wording to define and conceptualize strategic communication.

Figure 1: SC Birth Vizualization



What is strategic communication?

In accordance with usage of the term *strategic communication* in the United States, operators of strategic communication are supposed to be able to strategically communicate with their audiences. However, now that there are many different definitions of strategic communication with self-interpreted understandings of those definitions from a broad range of claimers, one superior strategic communication definition grounded in a national agreement is definitely needed in minimizing the terminology confusion. In addition, this study explores to increase efficiency of strategic communication, which is particularly emphasized in the area of national security where an official definition of strategic communication, propagated by the White House, not by one of the government agencies or departments, would enforce conformity to other claimers when using the concept and definition of strategic communication.

In doing so, the government efforts to develop strategic communication as an authoritative theory that applies to the sophisticated process of policy-making can result in stable

maintenance of national security because the absence of official definition allows another confusing birth of strategic communication definition and application at the coiner's interests, which can conflict with the government interests (as will be discussed in a later section). A thorough review over definitions of strategic communication is inevitable in generating the superior definition, which should integrate as many adoptable areas of strategic communication as possible in order to settle in social consensus aiming at successful policy-making that will eventually lead to securing national security. It needs to be clarified that the term *strategic communication*, first of all, gets confusing whether an "s" is added at the end. It seems that industrial or public relations organizations prefer to define the term with the "s." Typing "strategic communications" on Google leads to some recognizable definitions for the industry use. O'Malley Communications Inc, a PR company, defines it as "using corporate or institutional communications to create, strengthen or preserve, among key audiences, opinion favourable to the attainment of institutional/corporate goals" (O'Malley, 2012). Another website states that strategic communications is "a process guided by the relentless pursuit of answers to deceptively simple questions [such as] who has to think or act differently for that to happen? What would prompt them to do it?" (Communication Leadership Institute, 2012). Another institution argues: "strategic communications is an art – the art of presenting ideas clearly, concisely, persuasively and systematically in a timely manner to the right people ... maximizing available resources and positioning your organization to be proactive" (Communication Leadership Institute, 2012). These definitions evidently show the discrete usage or meaning of the term, with "s."

Public or non-profit organizations, on the other hand, adopt the term without "s." A study conducted by UNICEF states:

„Strategic Communication is an evidence-based, results-oriented process, undertaken in consultation with the participant group(s), intrinsically linked to other programme elements, cognisant of the local context and favouring a multiplicity of communication approaches, to stimulate positive and measurable behaviour and social change. (UNICEF 2005: xiii)

The System Staff College of the United Nations also sees strategic communication as an important tool to carry out its humanitarian work by defining, "strategic communication takes a client-centred approach, it involves the development of programs designed to influence the voluntary behaviour of target audiences [and actors] to achieve management objectives" (Klaverweide, 2006: 4). Another global organization The World Bank states that strategic communication is "a stakeholder- or client-centered approach to promote voluntary changes in people's knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors to achieve development objectives" (Cabanero-Verzosa and Garcia, 2009: 5). Similarly, strategic communication can be referred to as a process of using communication, "aiming at increasing the level of awareness and creating change in behaviour of actors and the relationship amongst and between actors" (Klaverweide, 2006: 6). In a nutshell, strategic communication in non-profit organizations as opposed to industrial ones is used to emphasize a group rather than an individual, social change rather than personal profit, and relationships rather than goals.

In contrast to moderate efforts from profit and non-profit organizations to define strategic communication(s), those of college level scholars excluding military academies are surprisingly sparse and meager. Few definitions are findable: for example, strategic communication is about "dealing with issues that might jeopardize an organization's very survival"; it is understood to convey the best message "through the right channels, measured against well-considered organizational and communications-specific goals"; and it is about

having “a plan, not simply reacting and responding” (IDEA, 2011). On the other hand, strategic communication as defined in government is more abundant, robust, focused, and cohesive.

Although the U.S. government began to recognize the importance of defining, planning, and implementing strategic communication in less than one decade, it is worth noting that the White House has been reluctant to conceptualize what strategic communication is, and it has been anemic about how President directs the use of strategic communication to his cabinet members as Commander in Chief or Chief Executive Officer. Rather, the highest hierarchical organization allows two paramount organizations in charge of maintaining national security to develop strategic communication from scratch: the Department of Defense (DOD) and the Department of State (DOS). In fact, the former has taken more aggressive approach to developing definition and usage of strategic communication since 2006 than the latter unlikely to use the term *strategic communication* explicitly because the States Department appears to have a tendency of preferring the term *public diplomacy* to strategic communication. A hypothesis is built to explain that these terms are denoting the same meaning in just different spellings. A report by Government Accountability Office states, “We use the terms ‘public diplomacy’, (...) and ‘strategic communication’ interchangeably” (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2009: 1). Of course, both terms can often share the same meaning carrying the connotation: using neither physical nor hard power to engage people abroad in favor of the U.S. government policies and interests.

DOD initiated its official effort to take advantage of preoccupying strategic communication as a pioneer government agency by publishing the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review Execution Roadmap for Strategic Communication. The Roadmap defines strategic communication from the military perspective:

„Focused United States Government processes and efforts to understand and engage key audiences to create, strengthen or preserve conditions favorable to advance national interests and objectives through the use of coordinated information, themes, plans, programs, and actions synchronized with other elements of national power.” (QDR Execution Roadmap for Strategic Communication 2006: 3)

A several years later, 2009, DOD reintroduced the amended definition:

„Focused United States Government efforts to understand and engage key audiences to create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable for the advancement of US Government interests, policies, and objectives through the use of coordinated programs, plans, themes, messages, and products synchronized with the actions of all instruments of national power.” (The Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms 2009: 518)

Since 2006, it has been significant for DOD to be determined to become the chief player of using strategic communication in terms of authority; it offers a host of conceptions and specific points of strategic communication. The 2008 Principles of Strategic Communication report, a short white paper, notes that strategic communication – as an emerging and extremely pertinent joint concept, but still a developing concept – is “the orchestration and/or synchronization of actions, images and words to achieve a desired effect” (2008: 4). The report for the first time among all official documents suggested nine principles of strategic communication, taking a bold step to develop strategic communication. The principles are: Leadership-Driven, Credible, Dialogue, Unity of Effort, Responsive, Understanding, Pervasive, Results-Based, and Continuous. (2008: 4-6). DOD advances the concept of strategic communication in its 2009 report, asserting that strategic communication in a broader sense is “the process of integrating issues of audience and stakeholder perception into

policy-making, planning, and operations at every level.”(Report on Strategic Communication 2009: 1). In light of formulating strategic communication DOD inserted the new word *process*. Strategic communication as “process” appears to refer to an effort of improvement for an alignment of actions and information that requires no structures or facilities. In other words, strategic communication is an intangible entity to communicate with: no need for tangible capabilities since it is just a “process.” DOD mired itself into the common inadvertent process of over broadening and/or overdeveloping strategic communication when creating a new concept. Because strategic communication is a “process,” there should be a roomful of vacant space for others in other industries to create another concept of strategic communication that can even exacerbate DOD’s pioneer efforts in preoccupying the authority of functioning strategic communication. Hence it is necessary for DOD to try to conceptualize strategic communication in a narrow sense, rather than viewing it as a just “process” that could be implemented without any support of organizational and governmental functions.

DOD’s formidable rival is the Department of Defense (DOS) when it comes to using and operating strategic communication despite the absence of explicit definition of the term from DOS. As mentioned before, DOS has never defined what strategic communication is and how it is used for the department’s interests although Bureau of Public Affairs: Strategic Communications serves as one of the divisions for DOS (see US Department of States website). Not surprisingly, the bureau provides no information or definition directly related to strategic communication. It seems to be fair to assume that DOS with its main goals of informing and influencing foreign audiences is unlikely to use the term *strategic communication*, which connotes militaristic meaning that is prone to conscious or subconscious resistance of foreign audiences to the U.S. government foreign policies; rather DOS plays its role with the term *public diplomacy*, which represents apparatus of building state-to-state relations as well as state-to-audience relationships, while DOD’s role is melted into strategic communication when accomplishing its goals in battlefields without using military power. In short, even if the two terms mean nearly same, DOS prefers to call it public diplomacy.

Despite that fact that DOS has barely used the term *strategic communication*, President George W. Bush in 2006 devolved authority to DOS as the lead for strategic communication, placing it “in charge of the administration’s worldwide strategic communication” (Young and Pincus, 2008). And the Bush administration’s Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy Policy Coordinating Committee in collaboration with DOS published a report including an ambiguous but integrated concept of the two terms, stating, “Public diplomacy and strategic communication should always strive to support our nation’s fundamental values and national security objectives” (U.S Department of State 2007: 2). It also adds that communication and public diplomacy activities should:

- Underscore our commitment to freedom, human rights and the dignity and equality of every human being
 - Reach out to those who share our ideals
 - Support those who struggle for freedom and democracy
 - Counter those who espouse ideologies of hate and oppression.
- (U.S. Department of State 2007: 2)

After President Obama took office in 2009, DOS focuses on public diplomacy instead of strategic communication with regard to managing its role. Public diplomacy like strategic communication carries multiple definitions with no unanimous agreement. But defining the term *public diplomacy* is a bit simpler than strategic communication because public

diplomacy, the orthodox field of government operation, limits private industries to interfere. According to the Public Diplomacy Alumni Association website (2011), three agreed-upon definitions are as follows:

1. Seeking to promote the national interest of the United States through understanding, informing and influencing foreign audiences (DOS).
2. Official government efforts to shape the communications environment overseas in which American foreign policy is played out, in order to reduce the degree to which misperceptions and misunderstandings complicate relations between the U.S. and other nation (Hans N. Tuch, author of *Communicating With the World*).
3. Promoting the national interest and the national security of the United States through understanding, informing, and influencing foreign publics and broadening dialogue between American citizens and institutions and their counterparts abroad (About U.S. Public Diplomacy: 2011).

Given the definitions, it is not nonsense to say that public diplomacy can be defined as a government's strategies to implement foreign policy and achieve national interests through communication with people of foreign nations by providing information and outreach programs for them. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton elaborates on the strategy, arguing that successful public diplomacy is embodied by making public engagement "every diplomat's duty through town-hall meetings and interviews with the media, organized outreach, events in provincial towns and smaller communities, student exchange programs, and virtual connections that bring together citizens and civic organizations" (Clinton 2010: 22).

With the combination of confusing usage and connotation of DOD and DOS in terms of clarifying the two terms, Congress played a go-between role in encouraging the White House to address the confusion of strategic communication terminology, introducing the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009. In particular, it required President Obama "to submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report on a comprehensive interagency strategy for public diplomacy and strategic communication" (National Framework for Strategic Communication 2010: 1). In response to the congressional requirement, the White House published a white paper titled *National Framework for Strategic Communication* in March 2010. In the cover letter, President Obama writes, "I am providing a report on my Administration's comprehensive interagency strategy for public diplomacy and strategic communication of the Federal government." (Obama 2010: 1)

After admitting that the term *strategic communication* became popular over the few years but diverse uses of the term causes significant confusion, the white paper epitomizes a wide range of usage, applications, and aims of strategic communication. First of all, the paper refers to strategic communication(s) as: "(a) the synchronization of words and deeds and how they will be perceived by selected audiences, as well as (b) programs and activities deliberately aimed at communicating and engaging with intended audiences, including those implemented by public affairs, public diplomacy, and information operations professionals" (National Framework for Strategic Communication 2010: 2-5). In the definition, the White House apparently subordinates public diplomacy to strategic communication, rather than using them as synonyms. It in turn offers the definition of public diplomacy, which seeks promotion for "the national interest of the United States through understanding, engaging, informing, and influencing foreign publics and by promoting mutual understanding between the people of the United States and people from other nations around the world" (ibid: 6).

To represent the aforementioned definitions in a visible fashion, the following table is added:

Entity of Strategic Communication(s)	Definition
PR Firms	Using corporate or institutional communications to create, strengthen or preserve, among key audiences, opinion favourable to the attainment of institutional/corporate goals.
UNICEF	An evidence-based, results-oriented process, undertaken in consultation with the participant group(s), intrinsically linked to other programme elements, cognisant of the local context and favouring a multiplicity of communication approaches, to stimulate positive and measurable behaviour and social change.
Department of Defense	Focused United States Government efforts to understand and engage key audiences to create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable for the advancement of US Government interests, policies, and objectives through the use of coordinated programs, plans, themes, messages, and products synchronized with the actions of all instruments of national power.
Department of State	Promoting the national interest and the national security of the United States through understanding, informing, and influencing foreign publics and broadening dialogue between American citizens and institutions and their counterparts abroad.
The White House	a) The synchronization of words and deeds and how they will be perceived by selected audiences, as well as (b) Programs and activities deliberately aimed at communicating and engaging with intended audiences, including those implemented by public affairs, public diplomacy, and information operations professionals.

Table 1: Various definitions of strategic communication

In the following explanations, the paper emphasizes the importance of synchronization, which coordinates words and deeds from the beginning of policy-making. Synchronization of words and deeds takes the communicative value of actions into account, and it eventually sends messages to audiences who interpret them, based on their culture and beliefs. In other words, strategic communication through synchronization of words and deeds “as well as the effective execution of deliberate communication and engagement” is the key to accomplishment of successful U.S. foreign policy (ibid: 5). In addition, the report enumerates priorities when communication efforts are made for strategic communication affecting foreign audiences’ belief and behavior. The priorities are to convince foreign audiences to “recognize areas of mutual interest” with the United States, to persuade foreign audiences to “see the United States as a constructive role player,” and to encourage foreign audiences to regard “the United States as a respectful partner in efforts to meet complex global challenges” (ibid: 6). It is clear that this report originating from the White House officially announces the definition, goals, and positions of strategic communication including the boundary of public diplomacy, which is still an essential part of strategic communication. The report implies that strategic communication is critical to upholding global legitimacy and performing the U.S. policy.

Historical and Theoretical Origins of Strategic Communication

The concept or the notion of strategic communication is not built in a day, nor does it come out of nowhere albeit relatively seemingly fresh. Tracing far back to strategic communication's origins rests on the era of Aristotle as the basic theory of communication for individuals and organizations is derived from human nature. In ancient Greece, communication known as the use of language to stimulate the public to think and act in a certain way was synonymous with the art of rhetoric (Argenti 2009). In Aristotle's book, *The Art of Rhetoric*, the root of communication theory is found: "Every speech is composed of three parts: the speaker, the subject of which he treats, and the person to whom it is addressed, I mean the hearer, to whom the end or object of the speech refers" (quoted in Donfried 1974: 35). Aristotle refers to "the speaker" as creator, "the subject" as message, and "the hearer" as the public. After Aristotle, there were numerous elites of developing communication throughout Roman Empire and the Dark/Middle Ages, but it could not be noticed as a form of strategic communication until Pope Gregory XV established a new "papal department," the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, in 1622 (Taylor 1995: 111). The term *propaganda*, then, was referred to as efforts to convince a large number of people about faith in Christianity and political leaders. It appeared that propaganda using a method of persuasion settled in as a model of communication; however, going through modern wars from World War I, propaganda was associated with the negative connotation as a tool for disseminating information distorted, manipulative, deceptive, and irrational. Framing messages with the organized attempt to change behavior, affect belief, and inculcate attitude of target audience is the common theory of modern propaganda.

By relating propaganda with strategic communication armed with "programs and activities deliberately aimed at communicating and engaging with intended audiences," (National Framework for Strategic Communication 2010: 2) it is difficult to deny that strategic communication is eligible to take advantage of both negative and positive sides of propaganda's tenet (Taylor 1995: 111). The former represents lying and deception to make the target audience fall for the message the sender fabricates, whereas the latter underscores the benefit of sharing information so the target audience would have a chance to know better. There exists a tiny line between propaganda and information engagement, depending on who uses which one; shortly, it is propaganda if the enemy uses.

During World War II, the world witnessed vicious propaganda competitions. Political ideologies between totalitarianism and democracy were center located in triggering the battle. Deciding to play the lead for the war, the U.S. government performed not only striking physical blows at the enemy states but also bombarding psychological persuasion or propaganda at audiences of the states. Reluctant to use the word *propaganda*, the government established two organizations by explicitly excluding the word but including information and strategic: Office of War Information (OWI) and Office of Strategic Services (OSS). OWI dealt with white propaganda while OSS was in charge of black propaganda (Taylor 1995: 226). Information covered with black propaganda was used to vilify and demonize the enemy in a covert operation covered with false sources, fabrications, and lies. White propaganda, by contrast, came with overt information sources, informing foreign and domestic audiences that the U.S. government tried to influence and persuade them to support its efforts to win the war in an issue of good versus evil. In order for the government to accomplish the victory of the information or propaganda competition, it cultivated propagandists utilizing any possible media such as posters, advertising, leaflets, radio, books, cartoons, magazines, and newspapers. All the media aimed to foment the foreign audience to resent their soldiers and to urge the domestic audience to embrace inconvenience and sacrifice in the name of

patriotism. The government efforts to win the competition showed that propaganda through media information dissemination at target audience could be understood as psychological persuasion that encourages the audience to change or maintain attitude and belief toward national goals in a form of communication. In a narrow sense, Baran and Davis (2005) argue that communication in terms of sending messages to change target audience's attitude is equivalent to well-organized propaganda as the theory of symbolic interactionism suggests that when people receive meaning on a certain event through symbolic message delivered by media, the meaning controls those people's opinion and attitude. Similarly based on the definition and objectives of the White House, strategic communication with the activities of aiming at communicating and engaging with intended audiences to affect their beliefs and perspectives is not massively different from the core of propaganda. In addition, public diplomacy, according to the United States Information Agency's definition (About U.S. Public Diplomacy 2011), supposed to promote "national interest through influencing foreign publics and broadening dialogue between American citizens and their counterparts abroad" shares common elements with propaganda. In other words, strategic communication and public diplomacy accommodate some amount of conceptual overlap with propaganda even though the U.S. government is likely to dislike this idea.

The end of WWII indicated another advent of war era: the Cold War. The tension between the Soviet Unions and the United States reflected a new faith in the power of propaganda. It was ironic that the world after WWII strived to eradicate propaganda through "denazification propaganda," which aimed at annihilating militarism and imperialism (Taylor, 1995). In light of the efforts to rebuild the world damaged by the war, the U.S. government had to spend billions of dollars to fight against the spread of communism and totalitarianism. But the Vietnam War dragged the government into another battle of propaganda against communism. Since the United States kept itself from using the term *propaganda* in battlefields from WWI, it was necessary for the country to come up with a new communication method to conduct psychological persuasion operations in Vietnam. President Lyndon B. Johnson said in May 1965, "We must be ready to fight in Vietnam, but the ultimate victory will depend upon the hearts and the minds of the people who actually live out there ... for the cause of freedom throughout the world" (Johnson 1965: para. 8.). From his speech, the U.S. army picked the words *the hearts and minds* to develop as a campaign, "Winning hearts and minds of the Vietnamese people" who were encouraged to resist "the North Vietnamese communists and the home-grown insurgents, the Viet Cong" (Bell 2008). Major Gen. Ed Lansdale privileging values on words and music over guns to win the war organized a group of people who could sing and create music in support of the campaign (ibid.). He hoped that people in Vietnam were persuaded to consider American soldiers friends, not invaders.

Though the Vietnam War turned out to be one of the greatest humiliations in the U.S. military history, the spirit of "Winning hearts and minds" has been passed down and regarded as an important part of military operations. Koch points out that the U.S. military planned to use the campaign for the war in Iraq from 2003 with the more sophisticated operational program, called PSYOP or psychological operations. The plan was to deliver public messages to Iraq insurgents and citizens that as long as they do not attack the U.S. soldiers and provide assistance to find WMDs, insurgents would go free and citizens would be rewarded. Disseminating the messages was carried out via PSYOP devices such as leaflets, radio and television broadcasts, and more modernly, cellular phone texting (Koch 2003).

Although no official report on the effectiveness of PSYOP has been out yet, the winning hearts and minds campaign goes on. Gen. Stanley McChrystal, Commander of U.S. Forces Afghanistan, emphasized the importance of maintaining the campaign in 2009. He reported the Obama administration that without the hearts and minds of the people, the war would fail, saying that if Afghanistan people "view us as occupiers and the enemy, we can't be successful

and our casualties will go up dramatically” (Keck, 2009). His approach to the campaign can be conceptually analyzed that winning the hearts and minds of Afghan civilians would lead the U.S. troops to the places Taliban hides. Thus it is safe to point out that the inevitable principle of the winning hearts and minds, at least for the U.S. military forces, is to obtain foreign audience’s support by understanding, informing, educating, and persuading them. Not surprising if the winning hearts and minds campaign is already embedded into one of the main pillars of strategic communication for the forces.

Not only has the government agencies adopted and developed strategic communication, but also politics is another robust field of strategic communication being taken on. With the emergence of television, which became one of the dominant media in the 1950s and 1960s, politicians especially for presidential candidates had to undergo a new adjustment to TV debates as a strategic communication form. Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy fell into the first political TV debate generation who adapted their debate strategies to meet the TV environment. On September 26, 1960, 70 million Americans tuned in to watch “the first-ever televised presidential debate” between the two candidates; the program was titled, “Great Debate” (Allen 1960). Before the debate broadcast, voters thought Nixon would defeat Kennedy by a large margin, but Nixon’s unorganized TV appearance wearing ill-fitting shirt and no make-up that made him look more senile and less handsome than his opponent, who appeared confident and fit to TV, resulted in giving Americans the youngest president then 43. Voters agreed after the election that the first TV debate served as a significant reason for electing Kennedy (ibid). The TV debate and election result became the turning point for those pursuing political career. They began to realize the rising power of TV as media, being concerned more about how to use TV to appeal to voters rather than to promote political engagement such as rallies (Baran and Davis 2005). Politicians on TV had to adjust “their electioneering techniques to meet the presentational demands of the medium” (Owen 1995: 138).

TV changed political strategic communication. Before the TV era, it was likely that candidates focused on campaigns, which let them have a chance to speak for their positions, opinions, and beliefs on certain issues. But after the Great Debate, candidates were prone to staging pseudo-events that TV would cover more of them. Since then, political campaigns became journalist centered, meaning that the TV media spoke for candidates, and TV reporters and commentators, who decided what is newsworthy about candidates and their campaigns, overshadowed performances of candidates (ibid). Politicians, rather than objecting to the phenomena, had no choice but to conform to the new era of media culture as the new strategic communication form. Such surroundings can be explained by the theory of media intrusion. The theory suggests that media intrude into and take over politics to the degree that politics have become subverted (Baran and Davis 2005). If written easily, the media, TV in particular, are capable of controlling politics. But one question is raised: What if the theory would only represent the limited period when TV shockingly served as a new medium. The 1992 presidential campaign could give a clear answer why TV effects are still strong even after the 21st century. The campaign between Bill Clinton and George Bush was considered one-step evolved communication activity, as the candidates appeared on talk shows, local newscasts via satellite, and ads as well as formal debates in order to get their messages out. The influence of TV even got bigger. While appearing on a variety of TV programs, the candidates also spent over \$133 million together including Ross Perot on TV ads (Roberts 1995: 179). Their strategic communication to win voters’ hearts and minds ended up enriching TV companies, which raked in windfall profits in sails of political advertising spots.

The TV influence on politics seems to stay stronger even in the digital age as the most recent presidential campaign records indicate that President Obama spent \$250 million on television

ads in 2008, while John McCain spent \$ 80 million (Gordon, 2008). The theory is vindicated again that political strategic communication for TV is to buy ads and comply with TV stations' requests asking candidates to show up on talk shows, one-on-one interviews, and comedy programs for ratings. There is one assumption why politicians allow the media to control their fate. Because their ultimate goal is not to inform or educate the public but to win the election, they strategically make an approach to the media essential to influence voters' decision. In general, their communication strategy to win the election condones the media control on politics in exchange for obtaining positive coverage.

Historically speaking, the concept and the practice of strategic communication has been gone through the processes of persuading target audiences by using communication tools, including the media. Before the emergence of television, strategic communicators used personal dialogue, print materials and radio. With television and the Internet, strategic communicators take advantage of quick and visual tools to inform and persuade the audiences. Depending on who uses strategic communication, people see it as propaganda, public relations, public diplomacy or simple communication action. However, to better understand strategic communication, all integrated historical approaches are helpful.

Visualizing and Theorizing in Strategic Communication Process

The United States government strives to be the front-runner of introducing concepts strategic communication since its three agencies individually engage in promoting the concept by sticking to their policies. The three are: the Defense Department, the State Department, and the National Security Council of the White House. They adopt tactics of public announcement through publication on the media or those of inside-use-only- classification to develop the concept and usage of strategic communication. They view strategic communication as a persuasive vehicle for informing, influencing, and educating intended or even unintended audiences. In short, strategic communication is the core for the government to persuade domestic and foreign audiences in favor of the U.S. national interests and security.

The government ultimately aims at one goal in terms of maximizing the power of strategic communication: having an impact on target audience with no exercise of physical power. In order for the government to facilitate strategic communication, it organizes elaborating strategic communication processes in hopes that the target audience would not play against the U.S. national interests, but rather they would respond to the interests. This is the right timing for a strategic communication project to be born.

It should not be uncommon that the initiation of the project begins with recognition of the principal problem or issue on which project participants or practitioners need to focus (step 1), followed by research to have deeper understanding of the situation (step 2). Before moving to next step, they need to learn about the basic principle of communication known as the message influence model illustrating that a sender of information and idea intends to transform them into a message or a theme that is conveyed through a channel to a receiver. And the receiver is likely to comply with the same way as the sender's intention, so the receiver acts in a specific manner.

After the step of research, they establish objectives (step 3), which deliberately lead to creation of messages that represent a concept of the project (step 4). These are significant processes of identifying which behavior or attitude needs altering for which group of people. Once the messages are confirmed, they have to define people they want to inform, influence, educate or persuade (step 5). These people are better known as target audiences who are

selected as accessible and amenable through strategic communication, which can be either overt or covert.

Developing specific and articulate strategy in a form of campaign or advertising retaining the intended message or theme is the next step to reach the target audiences (step 6). And then, it is time to implement the communication strategy with efficient use of the media (step 7). In the final step, they monitor a progress of the implementation (step 8), or reorganize detailed strategy if the progress turns out ineffective (step 8-1). When the reorganization process is unavoidable, the practitioners must be determined to go back to the previous or further previous steps until the progress gets back on the right track. Because in a worst scenario they could end up aborting the entire strategic communication that leaves permanent damage on the government, the first three steps require extraordinary effort and elaboration. The entire steps of strategic communication, called the Flow of SC Process, are illustrated in a logical order in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Flow of strategic communication



Today's relationship between Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy

Since 9/11, the U.S. government until 2009 invested at least \$10 billion in improving communication systems designed to advance the strategic objectives of the United States, expecting to increase constructive views of foreign audience toward its efforts. Unfortunately, foreign public opinion on the U.S. efforts of building good relationships with foreigners stayed sour despite the collective efforts by DOS, DOD, and many other agencies.

The U.S. Government Accountability Office of Congress (2009, p.15) suggests a possible means of addressing the cynical foreign view on the United States that “U.S. strategic communication and public diplomacy efforts can play in promoting U.S. national security objectives, such as countering ideological support for violent extremism.” (ibid.). Congress recognizes the inextricable relationship between strategic communication and public diplomacy, which are represented by DOD and DOS respectively in terms of coordinating U.S. communication endeavor.

DOD and DOS pursue nearly identical goals in operating strategic communication: understanding, informing, educating, and persuading people abroad to strengthen conditions favorable for the advancement of U.S. government interests, policies, and objectives. However, the two government agencies organize different styles when moving toward the goals. While DOD’s strategic communication is implemented by people in military uniform, DOS employs civilian staff, mostly diplomats. The White House creates the guideline on positions, processes, and interagency for the departments in case of working in overlapped areas, stressing an appropriate balance between civilian and military operations. The White House announces a process that was “initiated to review existing programs and resources to identify current military programs that might be better executed by other Departments and Agencies” (National Framework for Strategic Communication 2010: 1). Still, it is overt that DOD and DOS have a broad range of tasks to cooperate under the names of strategic communication and public diplomacy.

There is one government agency not to go unnoticed, linking DOD and DOS to the overall goal of U.S. strategic communication. The Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) aiming to support U.S. strategic communication objectives was established in 1999 after the dissolution of United States Information Agency. BBG legally protected as an independent government news agency oversees U.S. international broadcasting while incorporating its five broadcast entities: Voice of America (VOA), the Middle East Broadcasting Networks, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, and the Office of Cuba Broadcasting (US Government Accountability Office 2009: 6). In accordance with the strategic communication objectivities of the two departments, BBG operates 60 foreign language services to “engage, inform, and influence the attitudes and behaviors of global audiences in support of U.S. strategic interests” (ibid.). Monopolizing the five influential media entities, BBG in general makes an acknowledged contribution to strategic communication with the wishful mission in attracting support of foreign audiences for the two departments and the government. But BBG has been under severe criticism because of its weak and disappointing performance. Senator Tom Coburn argues, “The BBG is the most worthless organization in the federal government (...) full of people who know nothing about media or foreign policy. All they are doing is spending money and somebody's got to look into it” (Rogin 2010). It is desperately necessary for BBG to create effective news frame strategy reinforcing and representing values of the United States to achieve its mission before external powers dissolve it.

Strategic communication from the perspectives of the government agencies and the White House is an essentially existing incorporation of tactics, plans, and operations not only to foster mutual interests between the United States and foreign countries but also to create international support of foreign audiences through persuasion, information engagement, and education. At this point, the term *strategic communication* -- albeit vague and nebulous -- leads to a strong assurance to the conceptualization of the U.S. foreign policy-making. In other words, the U.S. government-driven concept and theory of strategic communication leads to implementation of actions for national interests unlike other private actors who pursue individual interests. Therefore this study tried to show that the concept and theory of strategic communication offered by the government agencies needs to be privileged over any other non-government-driven concept and theory of strategic communication.

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No Thing Refers to Nothing On showing the False.

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Marton Demeter
Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church, Hungary

Abstract: This discussion tries to explicate some epistemological problems in connection with negation and the so-called godelian sentences. The paper examines some methods of generating negative formulas from positive bases, and proposes alternative methods which with some antinomic formula could be eliminated. The discussion tries to show, that some epistemological antinomies arise from the natural language, and most formal languages inherit the natural (and maybe false) way of indicating negations.

Keywords: godelian sentences, negation, indication, apophatic, kataphatic, representation

Introduction

This short paper tries to show that some of the problems revealed by Gödel not necessarily hold for any logical system: under specific conditions the godelian problem could be eliminated. Naturally, this fact is dearly reconcilable with the godelian habit of mind, so the proposal of this paper is an alternative method for showing the False, where the rather problematic term is, of course, not 'the False' but 'showing'. Nevertheless, there are rocks ahead, so let's start with the lighter one.

In logic, the falsity of something could be conceptualized many ways depending on the logical status of that entity which is (or thought to be) false. So logicians are referring to false (or contrafactual) cases, false sentences or false propositions as well. In the formalism, just like in most of our languages, the falsity of an entity (and, formally, the falsity of a symbol or, which is not the same, the falsity of a formula) ought to be represented as a true entity labeled with a sign for negation. This paper aims that the above mentioned fact shows an inherent property of symbolic representation systems (such as natural languages and symbolic notational systems), and that this fact tends to misguide the philosophical thinking about the world.

On the False

Suppose that Frege has right when he said that the reference of a sentence is its truth-value, which, according to the classical two-valued logic, could be the Truth and the False. For the purpose of the discussion this paper lets the philosophical problems caused by this two ideal objects unmentioned, and supposes that there could be a possible world where the False is an ideal object being the reference of all false sentences (so, the concept of the False originates in Frege, but the followings would be surely not fregeian).

In addition, suppose that symbols (or, more precisely, notational marks) could be comprehensible as fragment of formulas. The reference of complex formulas is then the False, and the reference of formulas interconnected with the mark of negation is a fragment of the False. It could be said without oversimplification that the symbols or formulas in the scope of the sign of negation has the same reference, namely, the False.

In the case of symbolic representational systems negation marks make formulas more complex, which could deceptively suggest that the so-called negative facts (if there are any), which are in correspondance with negotiated formulas could be comprehended as analysable entities. This paper would like to suggest that an analysis of this kind could not be performed. Philosophers analyzing negative facts always analyzing formulas of symbolic representational systems: in the False, as a reference, there is nothing to analyse.

On representing so-called negative facts

Before proposing an alternative way of showing the False (where 'showing' will be distinguished from 'representing'), the discussion presents some ordinary methods of representing negative facts. The following linguistic and logical representations also shows that negative-fact-representations (NFR) are derived from positive-fact-representations (PFR), so formally, NFRs are more complex than PFRs, when 'complexity' should be measured simply by the number of the constituent marks. For example, consider the following primitive PFR:

- (1) This is a red circle.

The negative of the proposition represented by (1) could be represented at least two ways:

- (2) This is not a red circle.
 (3) It's untrue, that this is a red circle.

In ordinary language, the meaning of (2) and (3) seems to be identical, but their logical structure is different, because (2) negates a predicate (or, in linguistic terms, an open or imperfect sentence), (3) negates a proposition (or a compound sentence). This distinction could be more easily represented with a variation of (1):

- (4) This circle is red.

where the sole logically correct negation is the following:

(5) It's untrue, that this circle is red.

The following NFRs are all originates in (4), but neither in ordinary language, nor in logical formalism are them considered as synonyms.

(6) This circle is not red.

(7) This red (thing) is not a circle.

(8) This is not a red circle.

The above mentioned linguistic examples could be easily represented without the classical demarcation of arguments and predicates. Let all meaningful elements be represented successively with A,B,C,D at this point without referring their usually logical categories, let the \neg represent negation, and \langle, \rangle the ordering of the elements.¹ So (1) – (8) could be formalized as follows:

(1a) $\langle AB \langle CD \rangle \rangle$
 $\langle \text{This is} \langle \text{red circle} \rangle \rangle$

(2a) $\langle AB \langle \neg \langle CD \rangle \rangle \rangle$
 $\langle \text{This is} \langle \text{not} \langle \text{red circle} \rangle \rangle \rangle$

or

(2aa) $\langle A \langle \neg B \rangle \langle CD \rangle \rangle$
 $\langle \text{This} \langle \text{is not} \rangle \langle \text{red circle} \rangle \rangle$

(3a) $\langle \neg \langle AB \langle CD \rangle \rangle \rangle$
 $\langle \text{It's untrue, that} \langle \text{this is} \langle \text{red circle} \rangle \rangle \rangle$

(4a) $\langle \langle AD \rangle BC \rangle \rangle$
 $\langle \langle \text{This circle} \rangle \text{is red} \rangle \rangle$

(5a) $\langle \neg \langle \langle AD \rangle BC \rangle \rangle \rangle$
 $\langle \text{It's untrue, that} \langle \langle \text{this circle} \rangle \text{is red} \rangle \rangle \rangle$

(6a) $\langle \langle AD \rangle B \langle \neg C \rangle \rangle \rangle$
 $\langle \langle \text{This circle} \rangle \text{is} \langle \text{not red} \rangle \rangle \rangle$

or

(6aa) $\langle \langle AD \rangle \langle \neg B \rangle C \rangle \rangle$
 $\langle \langle \text{This circle} \rangle \langle \text{is not} \rangle \text{red} \rangle \rangle$

¹ Of course *all* indication (including \neg and \langle, \rangle) could be represented with the letters of the alphabet (or, with natural numbers, as Godel numbered them). For the sake of traceableness this paper uses special symbols for negation and ordering, but it's formalism could be easily translated to formulas where no distinction should be done in indication. For example, \neg could be substituted in it's any occurances to Z, \langle to Y and \rangle to X.

(7a) $\langle\langle AC \rangle B \langle \neg D \rangle\rangle$
 $\langle\langle \text{This red (thing)} \rangle \text{is} \langle \text{not circle} \rangle\rangle$

or

(7aa) $\langle\langle AC \rangle \langle \neg B \rangle \langle D \rangle\rangle$
 $\langle\langle \text{This red (thing)} \rangle \langle \text{is not} \rangle \langle \text{circle} \rangle\rangle$

(8a) $\langle AB \neg \langle CD \rangle \rangle$
 $\langle \text{This is not} \langle \text{red circle} \rangle \rangle$

or

(8aa) $\langle A \langle \neg B \rangle \langle CD \rangle \rangle$
 $\langle \text{This} \langle \text{is not} \rangle \langle \text{red circle} \rangle \rangle$

Even a bald example like this could show that negations, more precisely, representations of negative statements, derives from representations of their positive bases. Naturally, it could be said that the syntax of a given formal language determines the possible places of signs for negation, but for the purpose of this paper the place of the negation mark does not matters. Representations, so, formulas for negative statements are derives from positive formulas, moreover, they become, by addition of negation mark(s), more complex than their positive bases irrespectively of the syntax of the language they belong to.

c1 *Let the fact, that in symbolic representational systems, such as formal and natural languages, negative formulas are derived from positive bases by addition, be our first consideration.*

From a pre-philosophical perspective one could easily affirm that a negative fact is not a complex one derives from a correlated positive fact but is not a fact at all. So he could also easily say that there are no things in the world (and no one should ask a pre-philosophical one for a definition of „the world”) which could be labeled as negative ones. And, he could conclude that if there are no negative things so there could not be negative facts which are relations of things (maybe our pre-philosophical agent proved to be unconsciously early-wittgensteinian).

An agent of this kind would soon recognise that negative facts could be only perceived as formulas, namely, as negations of representations for positive facts. Negative formulas are in correlation with formulas of a given language: they are grounded in language, and not in the world, as positive formulas being in correlation with facts (now our pre-philosophical agent surely proved to be early-wittgensteinian).

Suppose that an agent of this kind would pose the question if a symbolic representation system could be in correlation with the world. Now he would deny c1 for a language of this kind, and will consider negations as pure absence. When negations are the absence of positive facts then negative formulas should derives from positive facts by

abstraction (he won't say subtraction by design). It means that negative formulas should not be written or said: they should be shown as the absence of positive ones.

c2 *Let the fact, that in a symbolic language correspondes with the world negative formulas derives from positive facts by abstraction, be our second consideration.*

Now suppose that our agent tries to represent the formulas (2a) – (8aa) taking account of c2 (his transformations leaves formulas without negation marks untouched, so formulas of this kind should not be mentioned here). His transformations (\Rightarrow) run as follows.

(2b) $\langle AB \langle \neg \langle CD \rangle \rangle \rangle \Rightarrow \langle AB \rangle$
 $\langle \text{This is } \langle \text{not} \langle \text{red circle} \rangle \rangle \rangle \Rightarrow \langle \text{This is} \rangle$

or

(2bb) $\langle A \langle \neg B \rangle \langle CD \rangle \rangle \Rightarrow \langle A \langle CD \rangle \rangle$
 $\langle \text{This} \langle \text{is not} \rangle \langle \text{red circle} \rangle \rangle \Rightarrow \langle \text{This} \langle \text{red circle} \rangle \rangle$

(3b) $\langle \neg \langle AB \langle CD \rangle \rangle \rangle \Rightarrow$
 $\langle \text{It's untrue, that} \langle \text{this is} \langle \text{red circle} \rangle \rangle \rangle \Rightarrow$

(5b) $\langle \neg \langle \langle AD \rangle BC \rangle \rangle \Rightarrow$
 $\langle \text{It's untrue, that} \langle \langle \text{this circle} \rangle \text{is red} \rangle \rangle \Rightarrow$

(6b) $\langle \langle AD \rangle B \langle \neg C \rangle \rangle \Rightarrow \langle \langle AD \rangle B \rangle$
 $\langle \langle \text{This circle} \rangle \text{is} \langle \text{not red} \rangle \rangle \Rightarrow \langle \langle \text{This circle} \rangle \text{is} \rangle$

or

(6bb) $\langle \langle AD \rangle \langle \neg B \rangle C \rangle \Rightarrow \langle \langle AD \rangle C \rangle$
 $\langle \langle \text{This circle} \rangle \langle \text{is not} \rangle \langle \text{red} \rangle \rangle \Rightarrow \langle \langle \text{This circle} \rangle \langle \text{red} \rangle \rangle$

(7b) $\langle \langle AC \rangle B \langle \neg D \rangle \rangle \Rightarrow \langle \langle AC \rangle B \rangle$
 $\langle \langle \text{This red (thing)} \rangle \text{is} \langle \text{not circle} \rangle \rangle \Rightarrow \langle \langle \text{This red (thing)} \rangle \text{is} \rangle$

or

(7bb) $\langle \langle AC \rangle \langle \neg B \rangle D \rangle \Rightarrow \langle \langle AC \rangle D \rangle$
 $\langle \langle \text{This red (thing)} \rangle \text{is not} \langle \text{circle} \rangle \rangle \Rightarrow \langle \langle \text{This red (thing)} \rangle \langle \text{circle} \rangle \rangle$

(8b) $\langle AB \neg \langle CD \rangle \rangle \Rightarrow \langle AB \rangle$
 $\langle \text{This is not} \langle \text{red circle} \rangle \rangle \Rightarrow \langle \text{This is} \rangle$

or

(8bb) $\langle A \langle \neg B \rangle \langle CD \rangle \rangle \Rightarrow \langle A \langle CD \rangle \rangle$
 $\langle \text{This} \langle \text{is not} \rangle \langle \text{red circle} \rangle \rangle \Rightarrow \langle \text{This} \langle \text{red circle} \rangle \rangle$

Looking on the results of his transformations our agent would recognise that he has produced formulas of the following kinds. First, he has produced open sentences with blank places for predicates (such in the case of (2b), (6b), (7b), (8b)). Second, he has produced agrammatical sentences without copulation (such in the case of (2bb), (6bb), (7bb), (8bb)). And, finally, he has produced, or, more precisely, he has shown the absence of any positive fact, so he has erased all the formulas (such in the case of (3b), (5b)).

Godelian sentences without negation

So, in symbolic representational systems adopting c2 formulas include negation marks could not be represented. Considering a symbolic representation system without negation mark in its vocabulary, this statement on representation is a pure tautology because of the fact that, of course, which has no marks for representing could not be represented. This poses two questions, first, how formulas of a given language including negation marks could be explicated or transformed into c2-based formulas, and, second, how could a representational system without negation marks show so-called negative facts? Let's pose the first question employing two cycloped godelian sentence.

(9) This sentence is not true.

(10) This formula is not provable.

Let's try to formalize (ix)-(x) with the former method of this discussion.

(9a) $\langle\langle AB \rangle C \langle \neg D \rangle\rangle$
 $\langle\langle \text{This sentence} \rangle \text{is} \langle \text{not true} \rangle\rangle$

or

(9aa) $\langle\langle AB \rangle \langle \neg C \rangle D \rangle$
 $\langle\langle \text{This sentence} \rangle \text{is not} \rangle \text{true} \rangle$

or

(9aaa) $\neg \langle\langle AB \rangle CD \rangle$
 It's untrue, that $\langle\langle \text{this sentence} \rangle \text{is true} \rangle$

The c2-transformations run as follows:

(9b) $\langle\langle AB \rangle C \langle \neg D \rangle\rangle \Rightarrow \langle\langle AB \rangle C \rangle$
 $\langle\langle \text{This sentence} \rangle \text{is} \langle \text{not true} \rangle\rangle \Rightarrow \langle\langle \text{This sentence} \rangle \text{is} \rangle$

or

(9bb) $\langle\langle AB \rangle \langle \neg C \rangle D \rangle \Rightarrow \langle\langle AB \rangle D \rangle$
 $\langle\langle \text{This sentence} \rangle \text{is not} \rangle \text{true} \rangle \Rightarrow \langle\langle \text{This sentence} \rangle \text{true} \rangle$

or

(9bbb) $\neg\langle\langle AB\rangle CD\rangle\Rightarrow$
It's untrue, that $\langle\langle$ this sentence \rangle is true $\rangle\Rightarrow$

The logical structure of (x) is the very same as (ix)'s:

(10a) $\langle\langle AB\rangle C\neg D\rangle\rangle$
 $\langle\langle$ This formula \rangle is \langle not provable $\rangle\rangle$

or

(10aa) $\langle\langle AB\rangle \neg C\rangle D\rangle$
 $\langle\langle$ This formula \rangle is not \rangle provable \rangle

or

(10aaa) $\neg\langle\langle AB\rangle CD\rangle$
It's untrue, that $\langle\langle$ this formula \rangle is provable \rangle

(10b) $\langle\langle AB\rangle C\neg D\rangle\rangle\Rightarrow\langle\langle AB\rangle C\rangle$
 $\langle\langle$ This formula \rangle is \langle not provable $\rangle\rangle\Rightarrow\langle\langle$ This formula \rangle is \rangle

or

(10bb) $\langle\langle AB\rangle \neg C\rangle D\rangle\Rightarrow\langle\langle AB\rangle D\rangle$
 $\langle\langle$ This formula \rangle is not \rangle provable $\rangle\Rightarrow\langle\langle$ This formula \rangle provable \rangle

or

(10bbb) $\neg\langle\langle AB\rangle CD\rangle\Rightarrow$
It's untrue, that $\langle\langle$ this formula \rangle is provable $\rangle\Rightarrow$

So, in a symbolic representation system meets the requirements of c2 the godelian formulas (9) and (10) could be represented as open sentences (such as (9b-10b) or agrammatical formulas (such as (9bb-10bb) or as absence of formulas (such as (9bbb-10bbb)). But since neither open sentences, nor agrammatical ones have meaning, it seems that the sole meaningful c2-translations of the above analyzed godelian sentences are (9bbb) and (10bbb), so, the absence of any notation.

c3 *Let the fact that in a c2-based language showing the False means the absence of the representation of the negated proposition be our third consideration.*

It could not be overemphasized that, despite the fact that in reality no one could show (or even imagine) negative facts, in natural and formal languages c2 hardly ever holds. Only the capacity of language empowers it's users to form contrafactual representations which are false representations of positive facts, and not representations of the False.

Two proposals for showing the False.

This short paper, naturally, could not analyze the causes of the above mentioned tradition, nor could it examine the possibility of a symbolic system without mark(s) for negation, but only focuses the question if negation could be shown without any special notation. The first proposal could be extricated from c3: marks in the scope of a negation symbol should be erased along with the negation symbol, so no meaningful sentences which entail negation mark could be represented.

p1 *Let this proposal be called the apophatic way of showing the False.*

Since all false sentences signify the False, they could be uniformly represented as an absence of formulas. This pre-philosophical, bald way of representing negation is so evident that no current representational system adopted it. As it had been earlier mentioned this fact may be the result of the natural languages, which have the symbolic capacity for representing contrafactual cases. But, which is far more interesting, diagrammatic logical systems, that could be regarded as alternatives for symbolic systems don't differ them in this regard: consider the diagrammatic systems of Venn, Euler, Peirce, Spencer Brown or Sun-joo Shin. They all have special mark (which could be, of course, diagrammatic) for negation. Still, the author of this paper thinks that the alternative way of showing the False arises from iconic alias diagrammatic logical systems. A logical system of this kind would easily fit for c2, since any representation proved to be a representation of a negative proposition could be erased without serious problems. Setting up such a logical system would be a concern of some account, but it would surely transcended the objectives of this short paper.

The second proposal of this discussion for showing the False is, simply and solely: showing the Truth.

p2 *Let this proposal be called the kataphatic way of showing the False.*

Suppose, that there are no reasonable objections for marking complex formulas with symbols substituting them, so formulas entail marks for negation could be substituted [→] with [E] as follows.

(2c) $\langle AB \langle \neg \langle CD \rangle \rangle \rangle \rightarrow \langle AB \langle E \rangle \rangle$
 $\langle \text{This is } \langle \text{not} \langle \text{red circle} \rangle \rangle \rangle \rightarrow \langle \text{This is} \langle \text{whatever but a red circle} \rangle \rangle$

or

(2cc) $\langle A \langle \neg B \rangle \langle CD \rangle \rangle \rightarrow \langle A \langle E \rangle \langle CD \rangle \rangle$
 $\langle \text{This} \langle \text{is not} \rangle \langle \text{red circle} \rangle \rangle \rightarrow \langle \text{This} \langle \text{whatever but is} \rangle \langle \text{red circle} \rangle \rangle$

(3c) $\langle \neg \langle AB \langle CD \rangle \rangle \rangle \rightarrow \langle E \rangle$
 $\langle \text{It's untrue, that} \langle \text{this is} \langle \text{red circle} \rangle \rangle \rangle \rightarrow \langle \text{Whatever but the case that this is a red circle} \rangle$

- (5c) $\langle \neg \langle \langle AD \rangle BC \rangle \rangle \rightarrow \langle E \rangle$
 ⟨It's untrue, that⟨this circle⟩is red⟩ → ⟨Whatever but the case that this
 circle is red⟩
- (6c) $\langle \langle AD \rangle B \langle \neg C \rangle \rangle \rightarrow \langle \langle AD \rangle B \langle E \rangle \rangle$
 ⟨⟨This circle⟩is⟨not red⟩⟩ → ⟨⟨This circle⟩is⟨whatever but red⟩⟩
- or
- (6cc) $\langle \langle AD \rangle \langle \neg B \rangle C \rangle \rightarrow \langle \langle AD \rangle \langle E \rangle C \rangle$
 ⟨⟨This circle⟩is not⟨red⟩⟩ → ⟨⟨This circle⟩⟨whatever but is⟩red⟩
- (7c) $\langle \langle AC \rangle B \langle \neg D \rangle \rangle \rightarrow \langle \langle AC \rangle B \langle E \rangle \rangle$
 ⟨⟨This red (thing)⟩is⟨not circle⟩⟩ → ⟨⟨This red (thing)⟩is⟨whatever but circle⟩⟩
- or
- (7cc) $\langle \langle AC \rangle \langle \neg B \rangle \langle D \rangle \rangle \rightarrow \langle \langle AC \rangle \langle E \rangle \langle D \rangle \rangle$
 ⟨⟨This red (thing)⟩is not⟨circle⟩⟩ → ⟨⟨This red (thing)⟩⟨whatever but
 is⟩⟨circle⟩⟩
- (8c) $\langle AB \neg \langle CD \rangle \rangle \rightarrow \langle ABE \rangle$
 ⟨This is not⟨red circle⟩⟩ → ⟨This is⟨whatever but a red circle⟩⟩
- or
- (8cc) $\langle A \langle \neg B \rangle \langle CD \rangle \rangle \rightarrow \langle A \langle E \rangle \langle CD \rangle \rangle$
 ⟨This⟨is not⟩⟨red circle⟩⟩ → ⟨This⟨whatever but is⟩⟨red circle⟩⟩
- (9c) $\langle \langle AB \rangle C \langle \neg D \rangle \rangle \rightarrow \langle \langle AB \rangle C \langle E \rangle \rangle$
 ⟨⟨This sentence⟩is⟨not true⟩⟩ → ⟨⟨This sentence⟩is⟨whatever but true⟩⟩
- or
- (9cc) $\langle \langle AB \rangle \langle \neg C \rangle D \rangle \rightarrow \langle \langle AB \rangle \langle E \rangle D \rangle$
 ⟨⟨This sentence⟩is not⟨true⟩⟩ → ⟨⟨This sentence⟩⟨whatever but is⟩true⟩
- or
- (9ccc) $\neg \langle \langle AB \rangle CD \rangle \rightarrow \langle E \rangle$
 It's untrue, that⟨⟨this sentence⟩is true⟩ → ⟨Whatever but the case that this
 sentence is true⟩
- (10c) $\langle \langle AB \rangle C \langle \neg D \rangle \rangle \rightarrow \langle \langle AB \rangle C \langle E \rangle \rangle$
 ⟨⟨This formula⟩is⟨not provable⟩⟩ → ⟨⟨This formula⟩is⟨whatever but
 provable⟩⟩
- or

(10cc) $\langle\langle AB \rangle \langle \neg C \rangle D \rangle \rightarrow \langle\langle AB \rangle \langle E \rangle D \rangle$
 $\langle\langle \text{This formula} \rangle \langle \text{is not} \rangle \langle \text{provable} \rangle \rightarrow \langle\langle \text{This formula} \rangle \langle \text{whatever but} \rangle \langle \text{is} \rangle \langle \text{provable} \rangle$

or

(10ccc) $\neg \langle\langle AB \rangle \langle CD \rangle \rightarrow \langle E \rangle$
 It's untrue, that $\langle\langle \text{this formula} \rangle \langle \text{is provable} \rangle \rightarrow \langle \text{Whatever but the case that} \rangle \langle \text{this sentence is true} \rangle$

As it could be shown by the formalism, p2-formulas use the variable E for substituting negated formulas. Of course, if it is necessary, E itself could be substituted or, more precisely, E could be transliterated to an adequate value of the variable. Transliteration of this kind depends on the logical (or: grammatical) position of the substituted negative formula. Since in reality, as opposed to languages, there are no non-reds but (for example) greens, there are no non-circles but squares etc., p2-formulas could substitute variables with their values as follows.

(2d) $\langle \text{This is} \langle \text{whatever but a red circle} \rangle \rangle \rightarrow \langle \text{This is} \langle \text{a green square} \rangle$

or

(2dd) $\langle \text{This} \langle \text{whatever but is} \rangle \langle \text{red circle} \rangle \rangle \rightarrow \langle \text{This} \langle \text{used to be} \rangle \langle \text{red circle} \rangle \rangle$

(3d) $\langle \text{Whatever but the case that this is a red circle} \rangle \rightarrow \langle \text{It's raining} \rangle$

(5d) $\langle \text{Whatever but the case that this circle is red} \rangle \rightarrow \langle \text{It's raining} \rangle$

(6d) $\langle\langle \text{This circle} \rangle \langle \text{is} \rangle \langle \text{whatever but red} \rangle \rangle \rightarrow \langle\langle \text{This circle} \rangle \langle \text{is} \rangle \langle \text{blue} \rangle \rangle$

or

(6dd) $\langle\langle \text{This circle} \rangle \langle \text{whatever but is} \rangle \langle \text{red} \rangle \rangle \rightarrow \langle\langle \text{This circle} \rangle \langle \text{should be} \rangle \langle \text{red} \rangle \rangle$

(7d) $\langle\langle \text{This red (thing)} \rangle \langle \text{is} \rangle \langle \text{whatever but circle} \rangle \rangle \rightarrow \langle\langle \text{This red (thing)} \rangle \langle \text{is} \rangle \langle \text{square} \rangle \rangle$

or

(7dd) $\langle\langle \text{This red (thing)} \rangle \langle \text{whatever but is} \rangle \langle \langle \text{circle} \rangle \rangle \rightarrow \langle\langle \text{This red (thing)} \rangle \langle \text{used to} \rangle \langle \text{be} \rangle \langle \langle \text{circle} \rangle \rangle$

(8d) $\langle \text{This is} \langle \text{whatever but a red circle} \rangle \rangle \rightarrow \langle \text{This is} \langle \text{a house} \rangle \rangle$

or

(8dd) $\langle\langle \text{This} \langle \text{whatever but is} \rangle \langle \text{red circle} \rangle \rangle \rightarrow \langle\langle \text{This} \langle \text{will be} \rangle \langle \text{red circle} \rangle \rangle$

(9d) $\langle\langle \text{This sentence} \rangle \langle \text{is} \rangle \langle \text{whatever but true} \rangle \rangle \rightarrow \langle\langle \text{This sentence} \rangle \langle \text{is} \rangle \langle \text{simple} \rangle \rangle$

or

(9dd) $\langle\langle\text{This sentence}\rangle\langle\text{whatever but is}\rangle\text{true}\rangle\rightarrow\langle\langle\text{This sentence}\rangle\langle\text{used to be}\rangle\text{true}\rangle$

or

(9ddd) $\langle\text{Whatever but the case that this sentence is true}\rangle\rightarrow\langle\text{It's raining}\rangle$

(10d) $\langle\langle\text{This formula}\rangle\text{is}\langle\text{whatever but provable}\rangle\rangle\rightarrow\langle\langle\text{This formula}\rangle\text{is}\langle\text{complex}\rangle\rangle$

or

(10dd) $\langle\langle\text{This formula}\rangle\langle\text{whatever but is}\rangle\text{provable}\rangle\rightarrow\langle\langle\text{This formula}\rangle\langle\text{seems to be}\rangle\text{provable}\rangle$

or

(10ddd) $\langle\text{Whatever but the case that this sentence is true}\rangle\rightarrow\langle\text{It's raining}\rangle$

It could be seen at first sight that the transliterations above need some explanation. Let's start with the easier problems. The fact that a certain proposition could be uttered different ways depending on the rules of various representation systems makes no any puzzle. In a language containing marks for negation, transliterations of the following kind are free of any problem.

(11) $\langle A \rangle \rightarrow \langle \neg \langle \neg A \rangle \rangle$

(12) $\langle \neg A \rangle \rightarrow \langle \neg \langle \neg \langle \neg A \rangle \rangle \rangle$

Consider that A could substitute any formula, whether atomic or complex, so which holds for atomic formulas holds for complex ones, too. For example, (11)-(12) could be transliterated as follows:

(11a) $\langle\text{This is a red circle}\rangle \rightarrow \langle\text{it's not true, that}\langle\text{it's not true, that}\langle\text{this is a red circle}\rangle\rangle\rangle$

(12a) $\langle\text{It's not true, that}\langle\text{this is a red circle}\rangle\rangle \rightarrow \langle\text{it's not true, that}\langle\text{it's not true, that}\langle\text{it's not true, that}\langle\text{this is a red circle}\rangle\rangle\rangle\rangle$

But in a c2-language, where there are no marks for negations, formulas like (11)-(12) could not be represented as negated marks, so negated formulas have to be deleted (that's what this discussion earlier called as p1, the apophatic way of showing the False), or represented by substitution (that's what this discussion earlier called as p2, the kataphatic way of showing the False). The apophatic method makes no difficulties, if we consider indication and deleting as the reverse operations of each other.

c4 *Let the fact that, for any formula A, there could be constructed a formula B which excludes A, be our fourth consideration.*

In classical logics c4 answers to the law of contradiction, and, using the negation mark it could be formalized as follows.

$$(13) \quad \neg\Diamond\langle A\wedge\neg A\rangle \rightarrow \langle A\nabla\neg A\rangle$$

which means, by c4 and then c2, that

$$(13a) \quad \neg\Diamond\langle A\wedge B\rangle \rightarrow \langle A\nabla B\rangle$$

The problems generated by the logical consequences of formulas like (13) and (13a) are well known; but for the purpose of this paper discussions on the nature and consequences of contradictions need not to be involved. But even if we suppose that the law of contradiction holds for logic, we still have enough puzzle in the realm of ordinary language.

Usually, values for excluding formulas could be easily found in the realm of predicative terms: values for (13a) could be generated from the examples of this paper as follows.

$$(13c) \quad \neg\Diamond\langle A\wedge\neg A\rangle \rightarrow \langle A\nabla\neg A\rangle \Rightarrow \neg\Diamond\langle A\wedge B\rangle \rightarrow \langle A\nabla B\rangle$$

It's not possible, that<...red and not-red> \rightarrow <...red (x)or not-red>²
 \Rightarrow It's not possible, that<...red and green> \rightarrow <...red (x)or green>

$$(13d) \quad \neg\Diamond\langle A\wedge\neg A\rangle \rightarrow \langle A\nabla\neg A\rangle \Rightarrow \neg\Diamond\langle A\wedge B\rangle \rightarrow \langle A\nabla B\rangle$$

It's not possible, that<...circle and not-circle> \rightarrow <...circle (x)or not-circle>
 \Rightarrow It's not possible, that<...circle and square> \rightarrow <...circle (x)or square>

Demarkating predicates to argument makes no difference here, as it could be seen by (14) and (15).

$$(14) \quad \text{It's not possible, that}\langle\text{this circle is}\langle\text{red and not-red}\rangle\rangle$$

\rightarrow < This circle is <red (x)or not-red>>
 \Rightarrow It's not possible, that<this circle is<red and green>
 \rightarrow <This circle is<red (x)or green>>

$$(15) \quad \text{It's not possible, that}\langle\text{this is a red}\langle\text{circle and not-circle}\rangle\rangle$$

\rightarrow <This is a red <circle(x)or not-circle>>
 \Rightarrow It's not possible, that<This is a red <circle and square>>
 \rightarrow <This is a red <circle (x)or square>>

Sentences like (1)-(8) could be easily represented with the above exemplified transformations, because, if the ordering is calculated, the complexity of a given formula will not alter the method of the transformations.

² Alas, it's hard to find an adequate ordinary english term for XOR-operator. The famous english translation for Kierkegaard's *Enten-Eller* has the title Either/Or, which, after all, sounds better than XOR.

Alas, a more serious problem would occur when the range of the negation mark covers the copula directly.³ The root of the hardship is the fact that, in logical sense, there are no generally accepted term excludes „is”. Only negated „is” fits for excluding „is” in any sense of the much problematic term. Still, c4 transformations for the general uses of „is” could be made as follows.

- (16) Mary is not.
 It's not possible, that⟨Mary is and is not⟩
 →⟨Mary is (x) or not-is⟩
 ⇒ It's not possible, that⟨Mary is and ∅⟩
 →⟨Mary is (x) or ∅⟩
- (17) Mary is not Mrs.Grundy.
 It's not possible, that⟨Mary is ⟨Mrs.Grundy and not-Mrs.Grundy⟩⟩
 →⟨Mary is ⟨Mrs.Grundy (x) or not-Mrs.Grundy⟩⟩
 ⇒ It's not possible, that⟨Mary is ⟨Mrs.Grundy and Mrs.Turner⟩⟩
 →⟨Mary is ⟨Mrs.Grundy (x) or Mrs.Turner⟩⟩
- (18) Mary is not a girl.
 It's not possible, that⟨Mary is ⟨girl and not-girl⟩⟩
 →⟨Mary is ⟨girl (x) or not-girl⟩⟩
 ⇒ It's not possible, that⟨Mary is ⟨girl and boy⟩⟩
 →⟨Mary is ⟨girl (x) or boy⟩⟩
- (19) Mary is not beautiful.
 It's not possible, that⟨Mary is ⟨beautiful and not-beautiful⟩⟩
 →⟨Mary is ⟨beautiful (x) or not-beautiful⟩⟩
 ⇒ It's not possible, that⟨Mary is ⟨beautiful and ugly⟩⟩
 →⟨Mary is ⟨beautiful (x) or ugly⟩⟩

It seems that the copulative uses of „is” don't make any problem: identity (17), class membership (18) and predication (19) could be represented in a c4-language. But it could be easily discovered that we can't speak of pure c4-transformations here. Pure c4-transformations substitute negated formulas with the excluders of their positive bases, for example, when B substitutes $\neg A$, because B excludes A via $\langle A \vee B \rangle$. But in the case of formulas like (16)-(18), the „negated is” should be substituted with its positive base, namely, with „is”, and the related formula in the scope of „is” should be substituted with its excluder, too. The logical structures of (18)-(19) make easy to decide which formula is related to the copula. It's obvious that, for example, the statements „Mary is beautiful” and „Mary is ugly” exclude each other, but the same does not hold for statements „Mary is beautiful” and „Sarah is beautiful”. So, here class-terms should be substituted. Unlike (18) and (19), in the case of identity (17), any formula could be substituted along substituting „not is” with „is”. So, the formulas „Mary is Mrs.Grundy” and „Mary is Mrs.Turner” exclude each other, just like the

³ This paper tries not to consider the gigantic philosophical tradition in connection with the copulation and existential statements.

formulas „Mary is Mrs. Grundy” and „Sue is Mrs.Grundy”, while, of course, substituting both formulas effects „Sue is Mrs.Turner” which does not make an excluder, since „Mary is Mrs.Grundy” and „Sue is Mrs.Turner” could be simultaneously true.

The most problematic formula is (16), as it have been expected, because we don't have any term excludes the „is” as substantive verb. Of course substituting the relates of „is” won't help here, because the statement „Sue is” will not exclude the statement „Mary is” at all. So all that could be done is to substitute „not-is” with an arbitrary formula \emptyset which is, by definition, excludes „is”. Let an empty space signify \emptyset , (16) would be described as follows.

(16a) It's not possible, that⟨Mary ⟨is and \emptyset ⟩⟩
→ It's not possible, that⟨Mary ⟨is and ⟩⟩

⟨Mary ⟨is (x)or \emptyset ⟩⟩→⟨Mary ⟨is (x)or ⟩⟩

Alas, what holds for „is” – as a value of „to be” – holds for „true” as well, because the word „false” has no substancial meaning but not-true. Fortunately, in a language fits for c3, „true” can be express without any special indication, or, more precisely, *only* true formulas could be expressed at all. And, considering c3, „not-true” could be shown as absence, which means that the absence and the indication excludes each other, as truth excludes falsity. So a c3-c4 compatible language should not have any special indication for „true” and „false”, because of the fact that indication entails the truth of the relatad formulas, and the absence of formulas entails all negated formulas. When \emptyset stands for formulas should not be indicated in a c2-3 language, the godelian formula (9) could be transformed as follows.

(9e) ⟨⟨This sentence⟩is⟨not-true⟩⟩→⟨⟨This sentence⟩is⟨ \emptyset ⟩⟩
→⟨This sentence is⟩

or

(9ee) ⟨⟨This sentence⟩is-not⟨true⟩⟩→⟨⟨This sentence⟩⟨ \emptyset ⟩ \emptyset ⟩
→⟨This sentence⟩

or

(9eee) It's not true, that⟨⟨this sentence⟩ is true⟩⟩→⟨ \emptyset ⟩
→

It's not a surprise then, that the formula „this sentence is true” could be formalized in a c2-c3 language exactly in the same way like „this sentence is not true”. Since neither truth, nor false could be indicated *per se*, they could not assist in the course of logical analysis. So a c2-c3 language could indicate true statements by formulas correspond true facts, and negative statements could be shown by an absense of formulas.

The godelian formula (9) could not be represented in a c2-c3 language, so the question of it's truth-value could not be occurred. So neither „true”, nor „not-true” is a predicate, but they are opposite states of indication.

Indication is a state, not a statement.

6. Summary

This short paper proposed an alternative method for handling negations. Because there are no negative facts, negative formulas need not to be indicated, but so-called negative statements could be shown by showing the False.

The discussion shows that natural languages and most formal languages derive negative sentences from their positive bases, which method could be called as showing the False by addition (c1). This paper proposed a different method, which derives the False by abstraction (c2). In a c2-language showing the False means excluding it's positive base.

Excluding the False could be achieved two ways. First, the apophatic way of showing the False (p1) means erasement: since all negated formula could be deleted, an apophatic representation indicates only positive facts. So no godelian sentences could be written in a language uses p1. „This sentence is not true” could be written neither it's taught to be false, nor it's taught to be true, so, simply speaking, problems of this kind could not be occurred at all. Second, the kataphatic way of showing the False means substitution, because all negated formula could be substituted with the excluder of it's positive base. Of course, in natural languages there are no defined excluders for any possible indication, but this is a factual and not a necessary state. A formal language without indication for negation, but with defined excluder of any regular formula might be constructed. For example, the indication of the excluder of „to be” or „true”, which are - not predicates – could be the absence of indication, so, the empty space. Which means that in the case of some special terms as „to be” or „true”, their apophatic and kataphatic indication is the very same.

Not to show any indication means showing the False.⁴

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⁴ Frege affirmed, that all true sentence refers to the True, and all false sentence refer to the False. Referring is an extensional affair, so Frege imagined the True and the False as ideal objects, so, extensions. While so many philosophical problems could be postulated in connection with the True, I can't imagine any serious ontological problem in connection with postulating the False. Additionally, it's much more economic postulating the False, which could be indicated by pure absence, than postulating – and indicating - potentially unlimited negative facts.

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Government crisis assessment and reputation management. A case study of the Vietnam Health Minister's crises in 2013-2014

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Tuong-Minh Ly-Le
Bond University, Australia

Abstract: In Vietnam, many government announcements have gathered negative receptions from the public. Among them, Ms. Nguyen Thi Kim Tien, Vietnam Minister of Health, has received more of it. Through the case study of Ms. Kim Tien's many scandals during the 2013-2014 period, this study is interested to see if the health scandals eventually elevated into a government crisis, how they affected the minister's reputation, and what she could have done to better respond to the public. This study examined news articles on such health scandals to confirm whether the health scandals indeed escalated to be a government crisis. It also identified the advantages and disadvantages of Ms. Kim Tien's responses in restoring her reputation to the public to understand what factors contributed to public dissatisfaction toward the minister. This study concluded that poorly-managed health scandals eventually elevated into a government crisis and greatly affected the minister's reputation. It is suggested that PR is what the government needs to deal with such situations. The research also leaves room for a quantitative approach to the case to increase the result's validity and representativeness. Until now, as the health issues and the resignation appeals are still needed, the crisis management effort should get more attention from the government, and such study is needed to better understand the situation

Keywords: government crisis, assessment, reputation management, image restoration, Vietnam, case study

1. INTRODUCTION

A measles outbreak, Asian Games hosting decisions, and 34-trillion-VND education initiatives are among a series of heated events that have affected the Vietnamese government's reputation during the 2013-2014 period. The social impacts of these events have drawn attention to government officials' reactions, especially to their public responses. According to Lan Huong (2014a), from 2013 to the present, many government announcements have gathered negative receptions from the public. Among the politicians with unwelcoming feedback, Ms. Nguyen Thi Kim Tien, Vietnam Minister of Health, has received more of it. According to Kim Linh (2013), the minister's responses to the media

were typically regarded as shocking, unthoughtful, irresponsible and begging the question. Consequently, the recent measles outbreak, together with previous health scandals and crises, led to mounting pressure that Ms. Kim Tien should resign because her reactions and announcements to these events widely displeased the public. To add to the objections, Ms. Kim Tien flatly refused to resign and provided no explanations for the behavior (Truong Son, 2014). While a politician's foremost goals should be to protect his or her image and strengthen the public's trust in them, Ms. Kim Tien and other Vietnamese politicians failed to do these things due to lack of strategic planning and practice in communicating with the public.

Through the case study of Ms. Kim Tien's many scandals during the 2013-2014 period, this study is interested to see if the health scandals eventually elevated into a government crisis, how they affected the minister's reputation, and what she could have done to better respond to the public. The paper examined news articles on such health scandals by analyzing themes of the events, the minister's responses, media reactions, and public feedback to confirm whether the health scandals indeed escalated to be a government crisis and should have been treated more carefully as a government crisis. The paper also inspected the articles further to identify the advantages and disadvantages of Ms. Kim Tien's responses in restoring her reputation to the public, to find a theme in the responses and understand what factors contributed to public dissatisfaction toward the minister.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Government crisis

According to Lee (2009), a government crisis differs from a corporate crisis in both nature and scope. The government is always under the public eye; it has a duty to report decisions and actions to citizens. It requires a high level of responsibility and delicate communication skills. A crisis in this sector can face a degree of both public and media scrutiny that far exceeds a normal corporate crisis, which can lead to a loss of public trust towards the government (Lee, 2009; Liu, Horsley & Levenshus, 2010).

Liu and her colleagues (2010) stated that public perception of a government's communication effort has a major effect on a crisis management outcome. As a result, during a time of crisis, government officials have a greater need to satiate the information thirst of the public than a corporate in crisis does. The government feels more pressure to meet the public's information needs, and thus has to communicate more frequently and more effectively (Liu et al., 2010). Moreover, the media's reaction to government officials is also different from the reactions to corporates. Not only do government responses tend to be covered significantly more often than those of corporate entities in the media, but the responses also are evaluated more negatively (Liu et al., 2010). Hence, the complexity of a crisis result poses a need to clearly define what a government crisis is to better address and respond to it.

In the case of Ms. Kim Tien, in the 2013-2014 period, Vietnam faced elevations in hospital fees, violations in medical ethics, vaccine frauds, and an uncontained measles outbreak. At first, the issues appeared as rumors and scandals, but they soon escalated into crises that shook the health sector. Poor management of the crises by the Ministry of Health caused public trust to quickly deteriorate. This paper argues that the main issue that occurred when the government could not resurrect that trust was that the health crises became government crises, leading to withdrawal of public support toward the government. The first research question that guides this paper is thus formed as follows:

RQ1: *Did the examined health scandals collectively escalate into a government crisis?*

Crisis management in a government crisis

According to Novak and Barrett (2008), a government crisis, especially a crisis for a public health organization, involves communicating with interested parties about the nature, magnitude and significance of the issue. When a crisis happens, government authorities face heightened public and media scrutiny. The media promptly seeks information and will attempt to gather input from different organizational members. Additionally, citizens now have new media, which empowers them to be more involved and communicative during a crisis. With new media, a crisis can spread to a global audience more easily than ever. Novak and Barrett (2008) and Xiao (2008) recommended that governments should thus designate a spokesperson during a crisis to assure the public, express willingness to assess the crisis situation and progress, announce if the government has any countermeasures and avoid secrecy. These steps are vital to uphold the public trust in an uncertain and complex situation like a crisis. Novak and Barrett (2008) believed that formal leader of an organization can be the best choice as the spokesperson. It is the spokesperson's job to maintain the trust and credibility of the government and if necessary, admit fault and accept responsibility.

In the case of Ms. Kim Tien, the continuous poor information about the industry caused the public to place their contempt on the one they thought to be responsible, the Minister of Health. Media articles about the minister received a number of shares and negative comments across social media platforms. Nevertheless, the minister's responding statements to the media were only denials and evasions throughout the scandals. An example of this behavior appears in the article "I can't resign" (2014). The issues largely affected Ms. Kim Tien's reputation and led to an online petition for her resignation, which had received 12,000 signatures by June 2014 ("Minister of Health," n.d.). To understand more about the crisis management effort of the minister, the second research question is formed as follow.

RQ2: *During the examined health scandals, how did the minister's responses affect her reputation to the public?*

A similar health-related government crisis in the region is Hong Kong's SARS crisis. Lee (2009) employed eight assessments to see if the Hong Kong government handled the incident well or poorly, which are (1) *The issue demonstrates the government's ineffectiveness in crisis prevention and containment*, (2) *The issue magnifies the government's existing problem in public communication management*, (3) *The government faces intensified media scrutiny*, (4) *The handling process recalls collective memories of previous crises*, (5) *The issue is perceived as a thematic, regular happening*, (6) *The communication management is reflected as the government's commitment to the public good*, (7) *The issue magnifies the bureaucratic nature of the government*, and (8) *The political, economic and social contexts affect the government's decision*. These assessments will be used to evaluate Ms. Kim Tien's effort during the measles outbreak.

Public relations for Vietnam government

In 2014, Lan Huong's interview series with Mr. Nguyen Si Dung, Vice Chairman of the National Assembly Office, and Mr. Le Quoc Vinh, journalist and PR specialist, chairman of a leading communication group in Vietnam, was conducted to understand more about the nature of the Vietnam government's communication. Lan Huong's (2014a) interview

revealed that most government officials do not care much about reputation or how to manage it. While Western politicians pay more attention to their reputation because they are appointed through public election, in Vietnam, the party selects the candidates and the citizens vote based on these few selections. This selection makes it easier for a candidate to win without having to build public trust. Further, Vietnamese culture encourages people to be modest and discreet, limiting public appearance; even the politicians still embrace this pattern. Additionally, most Vietnamese politicians tend to avoid the media and public opinion. They are afraid of traditional media, social media, and of public speaking. According to Lan Huong (2014b), some politicians stated that they fear dropping the ball and delivering soundbites that the media will use against them. Therefore, government officials generally disregard the issue of reputation management. They are usually not interested in citizens' feedback. No earlier than when a crisis occurs do they seek to solve the problem. As a result, the way the government authorities currently lead and react makes the public feel that authorities can talk and do all they want, regardless of mass opinions (Lan Huong, 2014a).

3. METHODOLOGY

Case study

The method used in this research is qualitative case study, which is an intensive, in-depth interpretation and analysis of a phenomenon, as Merriam (1998) defined it. A qualitative case study aims primarily to develop insight into and interpret a phenomenon, not to test hypotheses.

Based on their overall intent, Merriam (1998) further categorized case studies into three types: *descriptive* (provides detailed description of the studied phenomenon, which may later be used for hypothesizing or theoretical assumption testing), *interpretive* (interprets rich data to develop concepts, and/or to support or challenge theories held before data gathering) and *evaluative* (describes and explains information to evaluate and produce judgment on the studied phenomenon). This case study of Ms. Kim Tien is an evaluative case study, as it analyzed the media information to develop a better understanding of the scandals and to weigh each of the minister's responses.

Case background

In July 2013, three newborns died shortly after their births, only minutes after receiving their routine Hepatitis B shots. Photos of grieving parents were shown across the media, which caused sadness and fear across the nation about the quality of vaccines. This case was not directly blamed on Ms. Kim Tien until she refused to pay a visit to the parents while she was in town, and the cause of death was left unanswered. The Ministry of Health claimed "there was no proof [that the Hepatitis B shots were to blame]" (Bich Van, 2013). As a result, an online petition calling for the minister's resignation was spread across social media outlets.

As discussed by Cam Quyen, (2013), a number of medical mishaps that occurred later in the year continued to erode people's faith in the health sector. It was detected that a major hospital in Hanoi had cloned patients' blood test results for years. By throwing away a patient's blood sample and using the available results, the hospital caused a public uproar about medical ethics. The worst case in the sector soon followed. A woman died during an operation with a well-known doctor from Vietnam's largest hospital. Her death was not

reported and the doctor threw her body into a river to get rid of any evidence. These two cases, together with some minor scandals of doctor corruption and health worker neglect, never saw a thorough solution on how to renovate the health sector's organization and uphold ethics.

The second wave of demands for Ms. Kim Tien's resignation started in April 2014, when a national measles outbreak was reported. In all provinces, almost 21,000 cases were reported (Quoc Thanh, 2014). Despite many doctors' suggestions, the Ministry of Health delayed the public announcement of the outbreak, and in a media briefing, the minister blamed the incident on citizens' poor vaccination awareness, overcrowded hospital conditions (which caused cross-infections) and on the climate changing, instead of taking proper responsibility and seeking solutions (Truong Son, 2014). Although there was strong pressure for her to resign, Ms. Kim Tien refused to step down.

Data analysis

To respond to the first research question, which investigates whether the examined health scandals collectively escalated into a government crisis, this paper examined the most recent scandal for Ms. Kim Tien, which was the measles outbreak. As public reactions had mounted from the previous scandals and collectively hurt the health minister's image, this is when the public followed the government even more closely. All of the articles selected for study were arranged in chronological order. The measles outbreak is the most recent scandal for Ms. Kim Tien. The researcher analyzed the stories, the authors' word choice, as well as the readers' comment sections in the articles to see if the measles outbreak was assessed properly and if it has escalated into a government crisis.

The author consulted local media repository for media coverage on the case. Keywords used include "measles outbreak," "Kim Tien" and crisis, in both Vietnamese and English languages. All articles returned from the keywords were read to further identified if they actually described the case.

Among the articles found, as data for RQ1, this paper used fifteen pieces of media coverage on the measles outbreak on *Tuoi Tre* (5 articles), *Tuoi Tre News* (which is the former's English subsidiary and contained 2 articles), *VnExpress* (4 articles) and *Thanh Nien* (4 articles). As stated by the Golden Communication Group (2013), these publications are the leading and most prestigious media in Vietnam. They are generally regarded as more objective, impartial and credible than other news sources, and thus their articles are more reliable for study. The time frame for this data set is from April 1-30, 2014, which was the period of the measles outbreak.

To answer the second research question, which looked for how the minister's responses affected her reputation to the public during the examined health scandals, all of the minister's responses to the media were extracted and categorized into Benoit's (1995) five image restoration strategies, which will be described in the Results and discussion section. The responses were further analyzed to see if the minister showed any passionate involvement in the issue. The public comments on the articles were also used to support the argument that the minister's reputation suffered due to responses, to reflect the mass feedback.

Data for RQ2 were taken from one medium, *Tuoi Tre* (and its subsidiary, *Tuoi Tre News*), to understand whether the minister's responses, the medium's interpretation and public feedback changed over time, and how. The data included all media coverage on the health scandals, and all the readers' comments and feedback to the articles. The analyzed period is

from July 1, 2013 to April 30, 2014, which included all the aforementioned health scandals for which the Minister of Health was blamed.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

How the measles outbreak should have been assessed

In their study on government decisions in crises and crisis management, Rosenthal and Kouzmin (1997) proposed a five-step framework for government decision-making process during a crisis, which can help a government to assess the seriousness of an issue or a crisis, and to see if a decision is necessary. To answer RQ1, this paper followed these five steps to assess the measles outbreak and to weigh if the minister's reactions were appropriate.

Step 1: Assess whether the crisis poses a threat to the existing social-political system

If the incident has a broader implication, if it is challenging the government's function and development, it has to be taken more seriously and rapidly. In this case, even though the infant deaths from measles first appeared in only some provinces, there was a high chance of an outbreak since measles is an infectious disease. Additionally, the series of health-related cases in the prior year made the public keep a closer eye on the health officials; another uncontrollable scandal could be a fatal blow to the Ministry. Therefore, the first hints of the outbreak should have been handled more seriously.

Step 2: Assess the necessity to respond

According to Rosenthal and Kouzmin (1997), government also needs to decide whether to provide a response to the public, to restore the situation to its previous, stable state, or to adapt and innovate as appropriate. In this case, a need to provide a measles containment plan before the public was much needed. Since the doctor's recommendation to publicly announce the outbreak appeared on media, and since the deaths were publicly reported, the public agenda was fixed on Ms. Kim Tien for a proper response. Thus, the delay in announcement could only be accepted if the minister had provided a reasonable explanation and an action plan for both health workers and the public during the measles outbreak. However, her early denial of the outbreak possibility and her delayed actions (Truong Son, 2014) proved that she had failed at this step.

Step 3: Assess the necessity of a government response

Rosenthal and Kouzmin (1997) further described that if a response is needed, the government must make a proper one. They stated that if government officials do not have the capability and responsibility to respond, a wrong involvement may negatively affect crisis management. The researchers recommended that a capable and knowledgeable spokesperson should take the task, not just anyone from the government. In this case, the minister received the most public attention and she was the main person to speak for the Ministry; nevertheless, many of her responses were heavily criticized. On the minister's defense that everyone makes mistakes and people need to understand for the health sector's oversight (in the measles case), among the heated replies was the following, quoted in Nguyen Mi (2014) in *Thanh Nien*:

I think the minister was wrong. We all know that everyone makes mistakes, but we have to distinguish between unforeseen mistakes and mistakes from incapability and irresponsibility.

This statement indicated that the minister was not the right person to speak for herself and the Ministry. She should have designated a spokesperson to better reassure the public.

Step 4: Decide how promptly the decision should be made, and

Step 5: Commit to making critical decisions

Steps 4 and 5 in Rosenthal and Kouzmin's (1997) framework involve how quickly to make communication decisions and then committing to them. While prompt decision-making may be uncommon in public organizations, if an incident is highly uncertain or complex, the government must respond to it as quickly as possible. And when the incident escalates, the government must commit to making critical decisions to avert or contain the incident at even a shorter notice. In this case, the public announcement delay and poor containment effort, which resulted in more reported deaths and mounting complaints, indicated that the government and Ms. Kim Tien also failed at these steps. Readers' harsh comments could be seen in every article on this case. For example, one reader commented to Nam Phuong's (2014a) article in *VnExpress*:

The health sector responded too slowly and passively during this epidemic. Just like in the vaccine case, there is no effective measure to stop the spread, no information, no announcement to public.

Altogether, it could be seen that the measles outbreak was undermined by the government. It was not taken as seriously as it should have been, resulting in mounting criticism and case escalation.

The health scandals collectively escalated into a government crisis

When the measles outbreak scandal escalated, it was grouped with the prior health scandals to deliver a collective judgment on the minister's dedication and efficiency. To see if the case turned from a scandal to a government crisis, this paper used Lee's (2009) eight challenges that characterize a government crisis to examine the media articles as below.

(1) The issue demonstrates the government's ineffectiveness in crisis prevention and containment.

In this case, the government's ineffectiveness was shown in the inconsistency, and sometimes contradictions, between the official announcement and the reality of the outbreak. At first, Ms. Kim Tien kept assuring the public that there was no outbreak and everything was under control. However, just before she finally admitted to the presence of an outbreak, the number of confirmed deaths due to measles suddenly went up five times compared to the prior confirmed number (from 25 to 111) (Lan Anh, 2014a). It was reported on the media that the minister did not want to display her inefficiency so she kept the number low.

(2) The issue magnifies the government's existing problem in public communication management.

This challenge was demonstrated in the case as the minister lacked communicating with both the media and the public, since during the first week of the measles scandal, she didn't make

any comments. The lack of a spokesperson or proper communication training for the minister was also a problem, as her replies were mostly perceived negatively by the public.

(3) The government faces intensified media scrutiny.

Little media relation effort in this case heightened the media scrutiny on the minister. The mounting pressure for her resignation came not only from the general public but also from the media workers. Many media reports have implied that Ms. Kim Tien should step down while the online petition had gone viral on social media and her containment effort did not succeed. For example, the article “Vietnam health minister” (2014) in *Tuoi Tre News* included the following question from a journalist:

“As a mother, have you extended your apology to the parents whose children have died of measles, and have you thought of resigning?”

(4) The handling process recalls collective memories of previous crises.

During her official meeting with the People’s committee, Ms. Kim Tien was asked several times about the previous cases of medical ethics. In response to the doubts that the Ministry could not improve the situation, Ms. Kim Tien was hesitate to say that she “could make no promise when these issues could be stopped” (Le Kien, 2014).

(5) The issue is perceived as a thematic, regular happening.

Health scandals and lack of communication from the minister began to seem normal to the Vietnamese public. Many concerns were sent to the media regarding the minister’s time and again ineffectiveness over the scandals:

Upsetting! I never saw Ms. Head-of-health-industry made condolences to the victims, and never did she have an immediate plan to thoroughly settle the problems, from the vaccine case to the present measles, and hopefully no more cases (Lan Anh, 2014b).

(6) The communication management is reflected as the government’s commitment to the public good.

According to Lee (2009), the communication effort is perceived as the government’s commitment to the public, as through communication, the government can guide the people on how to protect themselves during crises. However, the lack of communication throughout the outbreak displayed just the opposite. A number of readers voiced their anxiety to the press, as they believed the government didn’t care for people’s lives.

America has the early warning outbreak recognition system, while Vietnam ironically fears that the people will panic (so we waited for more deaths before confirming the outbreak). The old saying "prevention is better than cure" is already thrown away (Lan Anh, 2014a).

(7) The issue magnifies the bureaucratic nature of the government.

The bureaucratic nature of the Vietnam government, especially the Ministry of Health, was shown through its inflexibility and poor communication among government agencies. During the early phase of the outbreak, there were inconsistencies in announcements among the local health agencies, and between the locals and the Ministry. The number of deaths, the

seriousness of the infection, and the need to announce the outbreak were reported differently by different officials, which greatly confused the public (Lan Anh, 2014b).

(8) The political, economic and social contexts affect the government's decision.

According to Ms. Kim Tien, one of the reasons that the Ministry could not announce the outbreak earlier was the political context. Different government agencies functioned independently and the Ministry of Health could not speed up the announcement process (Nam Phuong, 2014b). Even though this explanation did not improve the situation, it showed that external environment might have affected this case.

To review, RQ1 aimed to understand whether the examined health scandals collectively escalated into a government crisis. Altogether, the data demonstrated all eight challenges that characterize a government crisis. Therefore, it can be concluded that the Minister of Health failed to properly assess the measles outbreak that it added to the previous scandals and escalated into a government crisis.

The minister's responses during the crisis

Benoit (1995) emphasized that maintaining a positive image is an important aspect of communication. However, as human beings, people cannot always avoid making mistakes, or satisfy everyone. If the government has to admit fault, they can apply one of Benoit's five image restoration strategies, as listed below, to minimize damage and return to a favorable position.

(1) *Denial*: The accused person simply denies performing the act or shifts the blame to another person.

(2) *Evading responsibility*: The person attempts to evade or reduce the responsibility by stating that the act was to respond to another (wrongful) act, or that s/he lacks the information and control over the act, or that the act was done with good intentions.

(3) *Reducing offensiveness*: The person tries to reduce the negative feeling of the audience by stressing the (person's) good traits, emphasizing that the act was not serious or offensive, putting the act in another context, reducing the accuser's credibility, or compensating the victims.

(4) *Corrective action*: The person vows to solve the problem.

(5) *Mortification*: The person admits responsibility and apologizes.

Among Benoit (1995)'s five image restoration strategies, mortification is favored by the public, followed by reducing offensiveness and corrective actions. Benoit (1997) and Novak and Barrett (2008) made a suggestion that the person at fault should admit responsibility immediately, because denying or evading it can backfire and cause more damage when the truth emerges. Additionally, during the public communication process, the researchers recommended that the spokesperson should be more flexible with diverse public needs, and more passionately involved, showing empathy and concern for the people, instead of trying to reduce offensiveness or making empty pledges of corrective actions or mortification (Xiao,

2008; Novak & Barrett, 2008). It was emphasized throughout the literature that communication should not only be politically appropriate, but also publicly acceptable.

The first news stories about the minister and the health scandals in October 2013 all reported that she “firmly denied media access” and walked away when asked about the issues (Mai Huong, 2013). Da Trang (2013) further described the media’s thought of this reaction in her article as “[the journalists] could only look at each other in disbelief, [when the minister], “who should have been the one to take the initiative, shook her head and refused [the interview].” Regarding the minister’s reaction, a reader commented:

Reading this article is a sad thing. The Ministry head refused to talk; the authorities didn’t talk either. It’s sad. This is not just a medical ethics issue, but also an insensitive and immoral case (Mai Huong, 2013).

When she finally accepted media interviews, during the earlier scandals, Ms. Kim Tien used *denial* and *evading responsibility* to defend herself. On the vaccine scandal that led to the infants’ deaths, the minister denied that it was a health-related scandal, as “there was no proof [that the Hepatitis B shots were to blame]” (Bich Van, 2013). Later, speaking about the doctor’s body disposal case, she did not take the responsibility to see through the issue as the head of the Ministry of Health. Instead, she victimized herself as an innocent person during the whole issue, that she was clearly lacking control over the problem, stating she “cannot imagine that a doctor like [him] could take such a heartless action” (“Minister speaks out,” 2013). Moreover, Ms. Kim Tien tried to shift the blame to other parties. According to Mai Huong (2013), the minister only talked a little on medical ethics but implied that all of health scandals became more noticeable because of the media. Stating that Vietnam journalists were so active nowadays that they covered a lot of negative news, the minister suggested that media should have proper orientation to cover other positive stories. The minister also applied guilt to the health departments and private clinics, not to any particular individual within the Ministry, as Tuoi Tre News reported that “she also blamed the death partly on loose management and control of concerned agencies over health facilities, especially private ones.” (“Minister speaks out,” 2013).

The other strategy that Ms. Kim Tien used was *corrective*, displaying major changes to prevent the scandal recurrences. From November 2013 to March 2014, it was shown on the media that the minister began to train health workers on medical ethics and etiquette and conducted regular check-ups on hospital facilities. In addition to the corrective actions, the minister also expressed her pain, torment and upset over the decline of medical ethics (Mai Huong, 2013; L. Anh, 2013). However, such expressions were not well received by the public, as many considered those false sympathy.

Ms. Tien is making an empty statement. When something happens, the adage is always “We are extremely pained and tormented” (Da Trang, 2013).

There is no need for the minister to be upset anymore; the whole society has been upset already. The minister only needs to act. All talk and no action is meaningless. (L. Anh, 2013) During the measles outbreak in April 2014, Ms. Kim Tien continued using *denial*, and employed more of the *reducing offensiveness* strategy, combined with showing empathy. Even though the Ministry was late in confirming the outbreak and providing proper containment directions, Ms. Kim Tien attempted to convince audiences that the outbreak was not as bad as it might appear. According to V. V. Thanh (2014), the minister assured the public that there were enough facilities and medicines to fight the outbreak, and the health

sector also had plans to lessen the financial burdens to poorer patients. As the minister tried to alleviate the seriousness of the case, she refused to resign despite the growing petition. She said:

As a mother, I would like to send my deep condolences to all parents whose children have died of measles. [...] But sincerely speaking, I don't think of a resignation at this moment. Currently, the entire health sector is focusing all efforts on saving children from dying from measles ("Vietnam health minister," 2014).

Nevertheless, the late actions from the minister diminished the reducing offensiveness efforts. Since the outbreak spread out quickly, the last minute containment and apology were deemed disappointing by the mass. For example, a reader commented that:

Why are you "afraid" of confirming the outbreak? Confirmation is needed so we can get prepared. Are you afraid of being called ineffective? Why aren't you afraid of your people dying? (Lan Anh, 2014b).

RQ2 aimed to see how the minister's responses affected her reputation to the public during the examined health scandals. From the data, it could be seen that altogether, during the earlier scandals, Ms. Kim Tien employed the two least favored image restoration strategies, which are *denial* and *evading responsibility*. She then moved on with two more favored strategies, *corrective action* and *reducing offensiveness*. However, the strategy of *mortification*, or admitting responsibility and apologizing, was never used by the minister. She also engaged some sympathy in the responses, but when taken together with the timing and unfavorable strategies used, the sympathy was considered insincere and fake. Therefore, it was concluded that her responses to the scandals did not help her win back public trust but damaged her reputation instead.

Public relations (PR) efforts in Vietnam government

As the poor communication seems to be the reason for the escalation of these scandals and for reputation damage, this research turned to seek for a solution for the government in general, and Ms. Kim Tien in particular.

In their research on crisis communication in the public sector, Horsley and Barker (2002) found out that many government organizations do not have enough resources to effectively implement a crisis management plan, nor do they have the budget to hire PR consultants. Lack of professional strategic planning in communication plays down the government's effectiveness in dealing with a crisis, thus making the government more vulnerable to public scrutiny.

The role of PR in a government crisis is essential in all crisis stages. According to Liu and Levenshus (2013), to better prepare for a potential crisis, a PR consultant team can help with environmental scanning, issue management, relationship management, and crafting and practicing a crisis management plan. During the responding phase, the PR team should offer government officials much knowledge of the print, broadcast and online media so that the officials can control interactions with the media and own the information. Sadow (2013) further suggested that the team should also recommend and train the organization's spokesperson to increase the credibility and reputation. Liu and Levenshus (2013) added that after the crisis is contained, the team can help follow-up the information and action from the

public, as well as evaluate the whole process for the government to reflect. As the world is more connected and the media evolves, PR skills become an important asset in a government's communication efforts, especially in times of crisis.

Despite all of the advantages to contain a crisis that PR can offer, the Minister of Health in particular, and the Vietnam government as a whole, still undermines the PR crisis management effort in the government body. In Vietnam, the government's communication efforts cover a number of activities, from propaganda, public announcements, press conferences, party meetings and publicity to social responsibility and public education. Nevertheless, according to Ngo (2012), the government's crisis management is not currently effective, since a number of crises have badly damaged the government's reputation before both domestic and international publics, and even escalated to public tensions, destabilizing the economy, politics, the social order and security.

Therefore, this paper found an urge to insist that a PR role in the government body should be stressed. In Vietnam, politicians underestimate the role of communication and PR. According to Lan Huong (2014a), they choose to approach an issue reactively instead of proactively, and speak on their own accord instead of consulting a media relations professional. However, with the current commotion, it is arguable that this old approach should be changed, and PR can give more insight to politicians on how to deal with the media and the public. As a resolution to the crises and reputation management, this paper assessed the current PR role in a government crisis, what benefits it can offer and if it could be better utilized to uphold the government's reputation. It is suggested that PR is what the government needs to deal with situations like the aforementioned scandals.

5. LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This research sees two limitations. First, it only looked at the traditional media and their readers' comments as data for the study, and ignored the social media dynamics of the case. While the petition for the minister's resignation went strong online, a social media analysis could shed new knowledge into the case and the public agenda. Second, the qualitative nature of this research presented some limitation on the reliability and validity of the results, as the study relied solely on the investigator's interpretation. It is suggested that future studies include social media to make the data more complete, as conduct a quantitative approach to the case to increase the result's validity and representativeness.

6. CONCLUSION

The study concluded that the Vietnam Minister of Health underestimated the importance of the many health scandals in 2013-2014 since they eventually escalated into a government crisis. Additionally, her poor strategies to respond to the public further damaged her reputation and created appeals for her to step down. The study suggested that PR is what she and other Vietnam government officials need to properly deal with such scandals. However, more research with social media data and a quantitative approach is called for to increase the reliability and validity of this case's results. Until now, as the health issues and the resignation appeals are still needed, the crisis management effort should get more attention from the government, and such study is needed to better understand the situation.

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The Internet and the Nigerian Woman: A Case of Female Undergraduates

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Joseph Wilson¹, Aisha Kolo Lawan²

¹University of Maiduguri, Department of Mass Communication, Nigeria

²University of Maiduguri, Department of Mass Communication, Nigeria

Abstract: The Internet has drastically changed information and knowledge sharing processes globally. It is a widely accepted medium for transformation and empowerment. Individuals, groups, communities and nations, including women in their quest for a gender sensitive society have adopted the Internet as a viable tool. However, despite the countless benefits of this important tool of communication, research, entertainment, publishing, and business, there are challenges that affect Internet access and use among female students at the University of Maiduguri, Nigeria. This paper examines Internet access and use among female undergraduates at a Nigerian University. Selected female undergraduates completed questionnaires. The findings shows that the university computer centre (University Cyber Café) is the major Internet access point among the respondents. Research (information searches and learning) ranked first in the uses of the Internet among respondents, with financial constraints as the major challenge to access and use of the Internet. Respondents found women-related websites useful. They derive a certain gratification from these sites. However, most respondents do not post or contribute material or information on the web. Their interaction with the web involves mostly downloading. The study concludes that Internet access and use status among female students at the University of Maiduguri and women in general would be greatly enhanced if women organizations concentrated on addressing the challenges identified in this study. Attention should be paid to this category of women (university students) who have the educational capabilities and Internet potential to impact women empowerment efforts.

Keywords: ICTs, Nigeria, Internet access, women's Internet use, university cyber café, case study

Introduction

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have dramatically reshaped and transformed global socio-structural patterns. They have changed the ways people organize their lives and participate in various spheres of society. Oso (2005) notes that information and communication technologies have raised hopes for fundamental changes and even renewal in many areas of our lives and at all societal strata. ICTs in the 21st century represent a significant opportunity for advancing fast and affordable knowledge sharing and equitable development.

ICTs such as the Internet have emerged as indispensable tools in the 21st century. Internet Access provides basic infrastructure for the contemporary world and a set of tools that, when appropriately used, can benefit people in all spheres of life. Given the convergence with other technologies (mobile phone, traditional media, computer, etc.) they also offer a mechanism for combatting pervasive societal stereotypes and marginalization that continue to hold back progress for equitable development.

In just over two decades, the Internet has stimulated a thorough revolution. Never before has information been so speedily and widely available, knowledge sharing and acquisition made easy, business more efficient, and people better connected to one another. The Internet has been promoted as an important tool in ensuring that marginalized groups, including women, are important participants in the global information society. Women are aware of the power of sharing information and knowledge as strategies for collective mobilization, advancement, and empowerment, with the Internet serving as an important medium. While the Internet alone cannot end gender inequality, it can serve as a catalyst for social change and empowerment. It can be a great equalizer (World Resources Institute 2004; Intel Corporation and Dalberg Global Development Advisors 2012).

Marginalization and gender inequality or discrimination have made it difficult for women to access and benefit from ICTs. Internet gender inequality is particularly salient in developing countries, with very real consequences for women and girls. For example, on average, 23 percent fewer women than men are online in developing countries. This represents 200 million fewer women than men who are online. Similarly, the gender gap is more pronounced in the developing world, where 16% fewer women than men use the Internet, compared with only 2% fewer women than men in the developed world (Intel Corporation and Dalberg Global Development Advisors 2012; ITU 2013). Internet gender inequality reflects and amplifies existing inequalities with respect to gender.

Unless women are actively involved in the planning and use of these technologies, there is risk that ICTs will serve to reinforce rather than overcome gender inequalities. Recognizing the importance of women using ICTs many projects are incorporating gender analysis to address women's access, participation and determination of how such technologies are designed and deployed. It is obvious that many women who use the Internet derive profound benefits through it, including economic and educational opportunities, a community of support, and career prospects.

These benefits of the Internet have increasingly placed demands on users (groups, individuals, men and women) to explore access and uses of this important technology. Studies with improved research technologies reveal that female users continue to increase in percentages of on-line community especially in the western world (ITU 2013). Expanding Internet access for women would provide a significant boost to national income. It would benefit the global community when women around the world are informed, connected, educated, and able to contribute their maximum toward economic and social development (Intel Corporation and Dalberg Global Development Advisors 2012).

The overriding assumption is that the effective use of the Internet by female university students is an obvious boost for women's struggle for equality, as these categories of young women are expected to be educated and possess the potentials to achieve the set goals.

Although the Internet and other ICTs have to some extent been adopted and appropriated in the everyday lives of women in Western countries (United Kingdom, USA, some Asian countries: Indonesia, Singapore etc.), it is not the case in most developing countries. There are challenges that hinder them from harnessing the enormous benefits of these technologies (Wilson, Gapsiso & Usman 2014).

This is not to say that centres for accessing Internet are not available in certain environments. For instance educational institutions in Nigeria, like the universities, have centres for accessing the Internet, owned and operated by the authorities and also a sparse presence of private operators. The university environment is one where various categories of knowledgeable women groups exist. The expectation is that as a centre of learning, young women (female undergraduates) should showcase the potential of women's emancipation through new technologies, such as the Internet. Thus, it becomes imperative to explore the status of female undergraduates in Nigerian universities, with a particular focus on the University of Maiduguri.

Nigerian universities by virtue of their status as the highest centre of learning are among the few earliest beneficiaries of the Internet technology deployment in Nigeria and hitherto enjoy funding from agencies to boost ICT infrastructure. One example is the Petroleum Technology Development Funds effort to provide 100 modern computer workstations at all Federal Universities with VSATs. The inclusion of computer appreciation as part of university curricula has necessitated the setting up of computer centres to enhance knowledge in application and use of computer and Internet technology.

The University of Maiduguri, is located in the North East of Nigeria. The university has a modern computer/Internet Centre. The University of Maiduguri Computer Centre began full operation in 2001 and was formally opened to public users in November 2002. The centre runs various computer-training programmes and a cyber café open to users for 24 hours daily at a reasonable fee. The cafe records high number of users daily, especially when school is in session. Over 300 people visit the cafe daily, including the female undergraduates. There are other Internet Access points in the university, such as departmental and faculty Internet points, the Ramat Library and some administrative offices. The Centre also offers wireless Internet service to interested users. It is also impossible to overlook, the mobile Internet services available on campuses of Nigerian universities. However this study focus on access points established and operated in the university. This is to give an insight into the utilization of these centres by undergraduates.

Since this technology is available in Nigerian universities and with several compelling factors (compulsory computer/Internet appreciation courses, availability of Internet centers, constant enhancement of Internet facilities from 2001 to date) for Internet use, this paper examines the status of Internet access and use among female undergraduates at the University of Maiduguri. The research fills a gap in knowledge with respect to understanding access and use of the Internet among a category of women (undergraduates at the University of Maiduguri, Nigeria).

The use of the Internet in undergraduate education encourages student-faculty exchange, cooperation among students, active learning, prompt feedback, time management, communicates high expectations and respects diverse talents and ways of learning (Chickering and Gamson 1991; Bankole and Oludayo 2012). As the Internet provides access to a massive amount of information, it seems reasonable to point out that it plays a large role in the leisure time pursuit of knowledge.

The educational institutions like the universities where access to Internet and knowledge of its potentials abound among various categories of women, female undergraduates like their male counterparts and other women categories (such as lecturers, housewives, administrative, technical and support staff, other university residents) use the Internet for several purposes

According to Smith and Balka (2005), women have been creative in finding ways to send messages to each other. Whatever it is called, network building among women has been around for a long time. This network building is achieved through many types of transmission, such as information exchange at a well to washroom, mirror notices and in recent times, the use of international communication systems, such as the use of computer networks, to connect geographically dispersed women and facilitate grass-root feminist activism. Messages/ideas exchanged on these networks focus on issues that affect women and discussion about access opportunities and appropriate uses of ICTs to empower women (Smith and Balka 2005, Herring 2000).

Smith and Balka (2005) points out that decision about Science and Technology affects the lives of women; hence the need to be involved if they are to have their interests represented in those decisions. Women must be “technoliterate”, educated consumers, able to understand, advocate and participate in public decision making on issues that affect life generally. All these require knowledge that could be made available through information sharing. Accessing and using Internet technology would not only inform but also encourage women globally to participate in decision-making especially on issues that affect them. Smith and Balka (2005) adds that if information is power, it can be used to empower as well as control. Power can flow up, down and around in an information system, depending on how it is designed. If everyone gets and manages all the information, power is evenly distributed.

In this info-tech driven age, women do not have to rely on the copy machine and postal mail to share knowledge. They can have access to feminist literature online, search for latest development on a full range of feminist issues, leave messages for other rural feminists and connect and chat (Dillman 1985; Wilson, Gapsiso & Usman 2014). The Internet can give women an opportunity to learn and share information on all issues. Smith and Balka (2005: 71) puts it thus:

“(…), I can be hooked up with feminists throughout the country and around the world. I can share resources; I can know I am not alone. This is a particularly significant kind of information to share. For those of us who are part of social change movements, who often don’t feel a part of much of the culture around us, we need to know there are lots more of us out there. I can live most anywhere, places where feminists are few and far between, and still be part of a feminist reality. Then I don’t have to depend on the commercial media which I already know denies me information about feminist projects.”

Internet technology is obviously a useful instrument for women and a very important alternative communication channel. The success of the Internet however depends largely on access and uses. It is only when women have access to the Internet that they can use it and only when it is used appropriately that the set target can be achieved. Morahan-Martin (1998) notes that access and use of the Internet has important economic, educational and social benefits. Many organizations now use the Internet to announce jobs and organizational information. The Internet provides several opportunities for users. It is a mechanism for information dissemination and a medium for collaborative interaction between individuals and their computers transgressing wide geographic distances (Singh 2002; Jagboro 2003). Content created on the Internet ranges from simple e-mail messages to sophisticated documents (sites) incorporating sound, image and words (Evans 1996). It is a “live”

constantly “moving”, theoretically borderless medium with potentially infinite space for the production and circulation of information.

Peter and Lankshear (cited in Jagboro 2003), assert that while printed materials have a certain fixity and finitude, text published via the Internet have a much more fluid character. With texts no longer housed in libraries or bookshop shelves, it becomes impossible to “pin” all or even most of the available materials in given subject areas for archival classification purpose. The Internet might thus be described as an ocean of information subject to the decline and flow of various forces (political, corporate, institutional), creating an ever shifting shoreline (Jagboro, 2003). It is little wonder that women groups worldwide have adopted the Internet technology.

Beijing Declaration number 35 of the Fourth World Conference on women and the follow-up conferences in year 2000, 2005, 2010 and the Beijing +20 emphasizes the determination to ensure women’s equal access to information and communication, among others, as a means to further the advancement and empowerment of women and girls (UN Women, n.d). World Resources Institute analysis on Digital Dividend (2004), highlights that numerous projects and initiative are now being introduced to train women in the use of Computer and other ICTs. For example the Bayanloco Community Learning Centre, Kaduna, Nigeria, trains women in rural areas in Nigeria to use information technology for peace and poverty alleviation. Through these services, women have access to computer and other ICTs training, access to health information and micro credit programmes. Indra Soochna Shakti is another ambitious project led mostly by state government of Chatisgarh to empower an entire generation of a quarter million school girls in all 1,605 government high schools in India by providing four years of high school information technology education for free.

Another programme is Tel-Net that equip rural and semi-rural women in the Bangalore district with vocational information technology skills. Fantsuam Foundation is an initiative designed to provide satellite Internet to villages in rural Nigeria. For example, the Fatsuam VSAT provided the first rural-based Internet access in Kaduna State, Nigeria. In Mauritius, The National Computer Board provides ICT awareness courses and training to women associations of different regions across Mauritius (Association for Progressive Communication 2004, National Computer Board 2015)

People use the Internet for different purposes. A high proportion of female Internet users have done activities such as seeking health or religious information on the web, while a large percentage of male users have sought news, financial information, sports news and political news (gender differences). Those from the high-income households and who have college degree are more likely than those with modest income and education to do a host of things online, including looking for government information, social networking, engaging in online banking and participation in online auction publishing etc. (class differences). Internet adoptions has increased in all demographic groups but there are still pronounced gaps in Internet use along several demographic lines (Duggan 2013).

Ochieng (2002) points out that the formation of e-network in Africa has been an efficient catalyst in disseminating information on issues affecting women organizations at grassroots, national and international levels. The vigour of women’s struggle to make Internet accessible and put to proper use is gaining momentum. Gender in Africa Information Network (GAIN) is an organization that shares information on gender justice in Africa. The Association for Progressive Communication (APC) for African Women is set up to promote gender equity in the design, implementation and use of the ICTs in building women networks. Women’s Net, supports the coordination of the South African women movement through provision of training and facilitating content dissemination and creation that support women, girls, women’s gender organizations and networks to the control of their own content and ICTs use (Women’s Net 2011).

Francophone Africa circulates information on health and rights of women throughout Africa through the Internet. Women Right Watch campaign against gender-related persecution and offer free legal advise to affected women (accessible online). These and many more women organizations work to make the Internet accessible and used appropriately (Foundacion Asseso 2000).

Furthermore, Ochieng (2002) points out that, the use of the Internet, for advancing the interests of the uneducated and rural women must take into account the extent to which education and economic resources determine access and use. Other issues to take into account are ways in which the content generally available on the Internet ignores the information needs of the majority of African people, especially women. Among many supporters of the Internet information revolution, the optimism in the potentials of the Internet to democratize knowledge and ensure the sharing of information and ideas at a global level seriously ignores the fact that the information revolution is occurring in the context of entrenched global power relations. While the Internet makes available numerous possibilities for African women progressive networking and knowledge sharing, they are not value-free or neutral tools that are freely accessible to all.

Brayton (1999a) points out that men may dominate the Internet in term of numbers at present but the Internet offers space that can be used by women for connecting, networking and sharing information with other women. Women actively involved in the Internet culture are true part port. They not only have a presence and a voice; they are spinning new ideas and thoughts through their web pages, making connection with other women and organizations. Women are interested in the Internet as a result of the possibilities it offers for communication. These possibilities, according to Brayton (1999b: 195) can include:

“...having connections to other women and women’s groups, where one’s sense of community is not tied to geography but common shared interests. Having the ability to communicate with a wide range of women is also about the ability to mobilize women. By sharing information across the Internet, access to new methods of communication between women can facilitate social changes. Using E-mail to circulate petitions or placing an international web graphic on one’s web page to show solidarity, increase awareness and share experiences remove our sense of isolation and alienation on-line.”

In this case, the Internet provides a forum where everyone’s voice including those of women are expressed and heard.

The online engagement among women groups globally indicates that women have embraced the Internet as a tool for advancing their cause. This is evident in the numerous women websites and the effort of women organizations to make it accessible and appropriately used. There are, however, the existence of disparities and other problems. Ochieng (2002) observes that most information available on the Internet, for example, relates to and is generated in Western countries especially the United States. However, the combination of massive, untapped markets and weak local content offerings has already inspired some women to work towards addressing this challenge. For example, the SuperMama website cofounded by Yasmine El-Mehairy and Zeinab Sami in Egypt in 2010 offers tools and information in Arabic for new mothers in the Middle East (Weingarten 2013).

Margerison (2001) points out that communication technology increasingly pervades many facets of human existence. This is, however, not the case in developing countries of the world. There are fears that cyberspace technology such as the Internet tends to deepen existing social inequality by giving the wealthy more access to information while shutting out the poor. The United Nation Development Programme (1999) reports that with communication technologies playing increasingly vital roles in economic development, education, health care and governance, the exclusion of those who are poor, illiterate, rural or

non-English speaking has broad ramifications. A large majority of the world's population has never heard of a dial tone, let alone heard of downloading from something known as the World Wide Web.

However, in recent times the situation has changed. U.S. State Department, Intel, and U.N. Women are constantly working to bring hundreds of millions more women online and double the number of female Internet users in developing countries from the 600 million in 2012 to 1.2 billion in 2015 (Weingarten 2013). Although there is still an obvious digital gap between the developed and the developing countries, the world has recorded an increase in the number of Internet users (United Nations 2012). The low number of Internet users in developing countries calls for increased efforts in shaping and implementing appropriate policies to assist everyone to harness the benefits of the Internet and advance sustainable development. It is not just a matter of infrastructure not being readily available, or the cost being too high. Even if the telecommunication resources were available and affordable, most of the world's poor would still be excluded from the benefits of global communication due to illiteracy or the total lack of computer skills (Margerison 2001).

According to Weingarten (2013) two of the most critical factors that can influence whether a woman gets connected to the Internet are availability and affordability. Even though the price of a broadband Internet connection has plunged for many parts of the developing world, it still costs on average more than 40 percent of annual per capita income. Cultural obstacles are also a factor affecting women's Internet engagement especially in developing countries. For example, some husbands forbid their wives from using the family computer because they're afraid of exposing impressionable women to inappropriate sexual content. Other inhibiting factors are poor financial status of women (most women especially in Africa are full house wives without paid jobs), religious and patriarchal restrictions on women in some societies.

Weingarten (2013) further points out that Internet cafes (one of the easiest ways for people to access the Web in many developing countries) are impractical for women who can't leave their homes for religious and cultural reasons "And the stereotype that women just can't be trusted with pricey tech also thwarts potential new users" (Weingarten 2013). Another important reason why many women stay offline is that they often don't know what the Internet is or how it could help them, so they have no incentive to learn about it or seek access to it.

A country like Nigeria with a population of over 170 million has a low Internet access status when compared to countries of the West (such as the United States). In 2014 Nigeria had 37.5% Internet penetration with 67,101,452 Internet users while the USA has had 86.7% penetration with Internet users standing at 279,834,237. This implies that a greater number of Nigerians are still cut off from this technology. Osuagwu (2013) notes Nigeria seems to have two major problems with respect to Internet penetration. One is that of low penetration, another is poor women participation on the web. There is also the challenge of fully engaging on the Internet, which requires feeling conversant (knowing what to look for, how to search and how to leverage networks, knowledge and services, as well as having fast, unrestricted, reliable access).

Significant consolidation has also occurred in Nigeria's Internet and broadband sector, from over 400 ISPs in 2009 to around 120 in early 2012. New powerful players from the fixed wireless and mobile network operator camp have entered the market with 3G mobile and advanced wireless broadband services (4G) LTE networks (BuddeComm 2012). In recent times, the growth in telecommunication infrastructure has led to an increase in Internet connectivity. More people get connected to the Internet through VSAT and even through their mobile devices. Governments in Africa in their ICT reform programmes have made efforts to liberalize the market and privatize the sole carrier. For example, Nigeria's

telecommunication sector has metamorphosed from one (NITEL) to several telecommunication companies (AIRTEL, Globacom, Etisalat MTN etc.). Far reaching regulatory reform has led to hundreds of companies providing virtually all kinds of telecom and value-added services in an independently regulatory market (Oyeyinka-Oyelaran and Adeya 2002; Awoleye, Siyanbola and Oladipo 2008; Lange 2013; Wilson and Gapsiso 2014). Nigeria has Africa's largest mobile market, with more than 140 million subscribers and a penetration above 100% (BuddeComm 2015). These efforts have made Internet access available to millions of Nigerians who own mobile phones, yet there are still millions of Nigerians who neither have Internet access via their mobile phones or other access points. Since the Internet is largely an urban phenomenon, the growth is often urban-based. In semi-urban and rural areas the problem associated with access is even bleaker, where infrastructure is either old or non-existent. Surprisingly, these areas are home to a great majority of women and poor populations in Africa. The Internet as an urban phenomenon definitely leaves the greater part of the African society without access to the Internet. The disparity in Internet availability among communities in developing countries is real (Oso 2005).

Research Questions

To gain more insight into the Internet status with respect to access and use in Nigeria the following research questions were formulated to guide this study

- I. What are the Internet access centers among female undergraduates in University of Maiduguri?
- II. What problems (challenges) do female undergraduates in University of Maiduguri encounter in accessing and using the Internet?
- III. What do female students at the University of Maiduguri use the Internet for?
- IV. Do female students at the University of Maiduguri access and find women-related websites useful? (What gratification do they obtain from these sites)
- V. Do female students in university of Maiduguri post or contribute information/materials on the Internet? (Nature of Interaction with the web).

Methods

The paper used the survey research design. The questionnaire was used as a basic research instrument to generate quantitative data. The questionnaire contained both open- and closed-ended questions (17 structured questions), which were administered to 200 students selected from all the faculties of the University of Maiduguri. 198 were duly completed, returned, and found useable. The respondents were selected using purposive sampling techniques (selection based on the intent of the study, which was access and use of the Internet). The study selected female students who access and use the Internet through various available access points at the university. The generated data was analyzed, out of which different inferences were made in this paper.

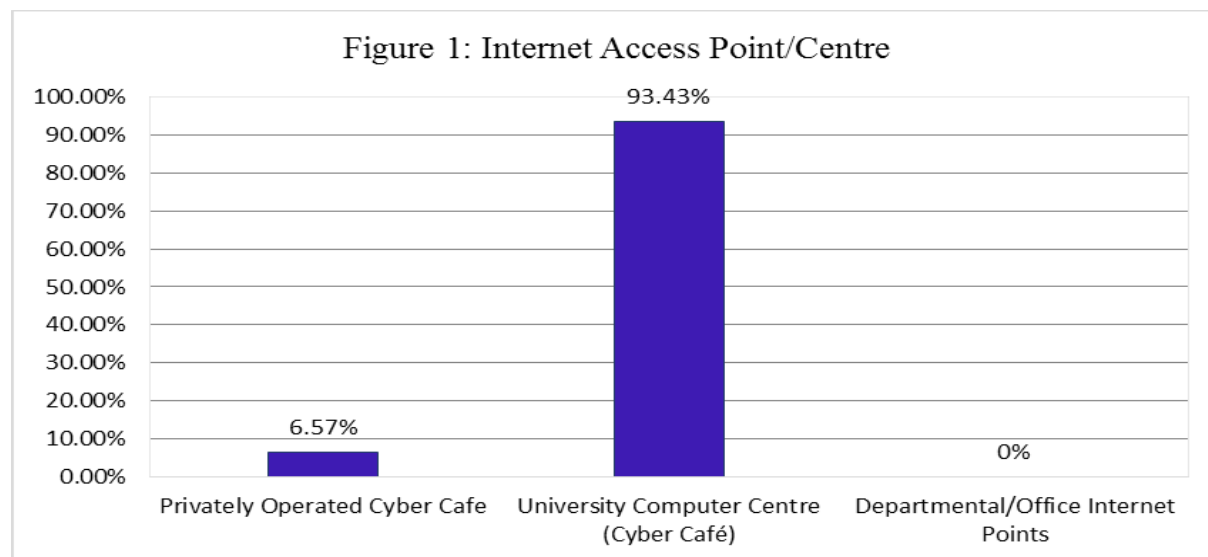
Findings

Most respondents fell within the age category of 18 to 30. This indicates that there are young women that fall within the most active age bracket for women. It is assumed that this age

bracket is the most enthusiastic in learning new things that concern women (health, education, business, marketing, relationship, women groups, etc.).

Internet Access Points/Centre

Respondents were asked to indicate their Internet access point or centre in the institution (where they have the opportunity to use Internet services) from the list of possible Internet access points. This includes privately operated Cyber Café, University Computer Centre (Cyber Café) and Departmental Internet centres. The result is shown in Figure 1.



The University Computer Centre (Cyber Café) had the highest score of 93.43%, followed by the privately operated Cyber Café with 6.57%. The departmental access points had zero. The highest service provider is the University Computer Centre (Cyber Café). This analysis indicates that majority of female students at the University of Maiduguri utilize the University Computer Centre Cyber Café as their major access point. This could be due to proximity and 24-hour service offered by the centre, which makes access to Internet facilities open throughout the day. The zero response recorded for Department/Offices is an indication that there is either limited connectivity in the various departments and offices in the university or the access points are not accessible to students. Effort has however been made by the university authority to extend Internet connectivity to Faculties and departments. For example, the Faculty of Science, Social Sciences, Management Sciences Ramat Library, Department of Mass Communication, Library Science, among others are connected to the Internet. There is also wireless Internet service.

Internet Access and Use Duration

Respondents were asked to specify how much time they spend using the Internet. Figure 2 shows the result.

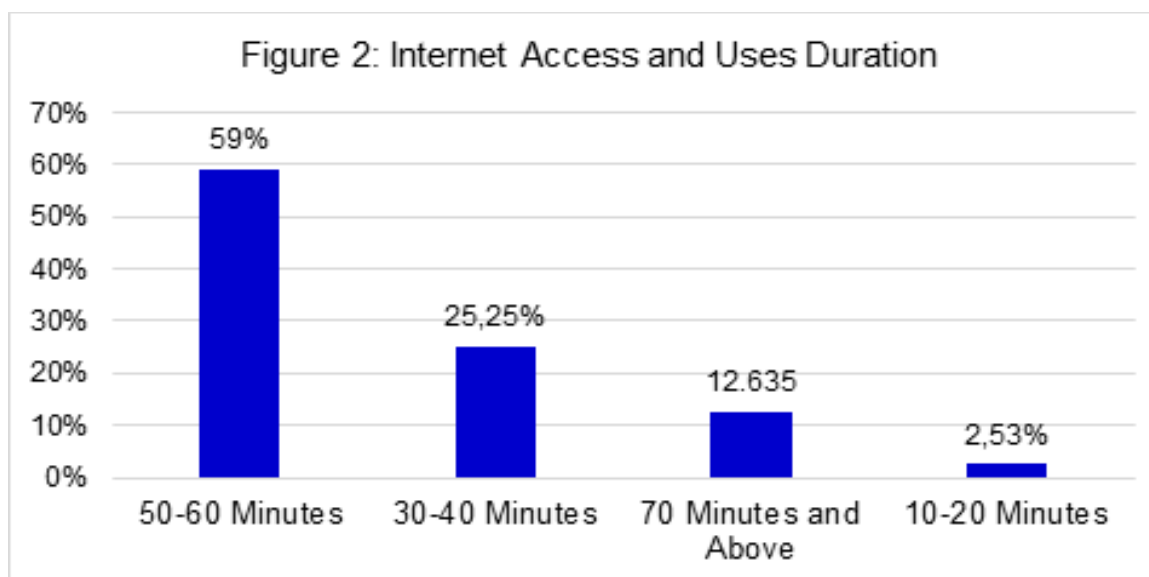


Figure 2 above shows that most respondents access and use the Internet for 50-60 minutes, representing 59%. By inference, the result implies that most female undergraduates at the University of Maiduguri spend between 50 to 60 minutes surfing when they visit the Cyber Café. It is followed by those who spend 30-40 minutes, with 25.25%. Those who spend 70 minutes and above had 12.635%. The 10-20 minutes category of user had the lowest count of 2.53%.

Problems (Challenges) of Internet Access and Use

Respondents were asked to indicate their Internet access/use problems, that is, the challenges they encounter in accessing and using the Internet: insufficient Internet skills/knowledge, financial constraints, and infrastructural constraints (slow and epileptic Internet facilities).

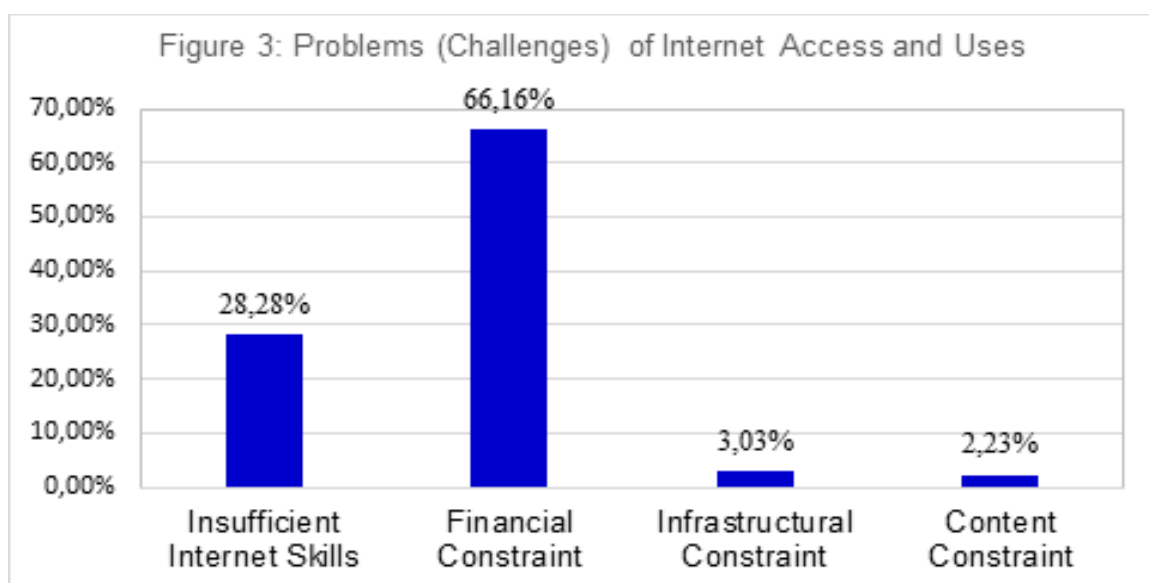


Figure 3 shows that financial constraint, representing 66.16%, is the most pressing problem of Internet access and use among female undergraduates at the University of Maiduguri. It could be attributed to their status as students. However, studies have shown that even in Western countries women see financial constraint as one of the barriers to Internet access and use (Fung, 2006). It is followed by insufficient Internet skills and knowledge, representing 28.28%. Infrastructural constraint had 3.03%. Content constraints had the lowest count of 2.23%, which indicates that Internet contents, although constituting a problem to Internet access and use, is not as much of a barrier as finance. This finding addresses one of the research questions that sought to identify the problems of Internet access and uses. The finding further identifies the most pressing problem.

Uses of Internet

Respondent were asked to indicate their specific uses of the Internet. Figure 4 shows the result: communication (e-mail, chatting, user/news group, bulletin board) research (information search, learning), entertainment (music, movies, games), publishing (bulletin board, books, articles, stories), and business (shopping).

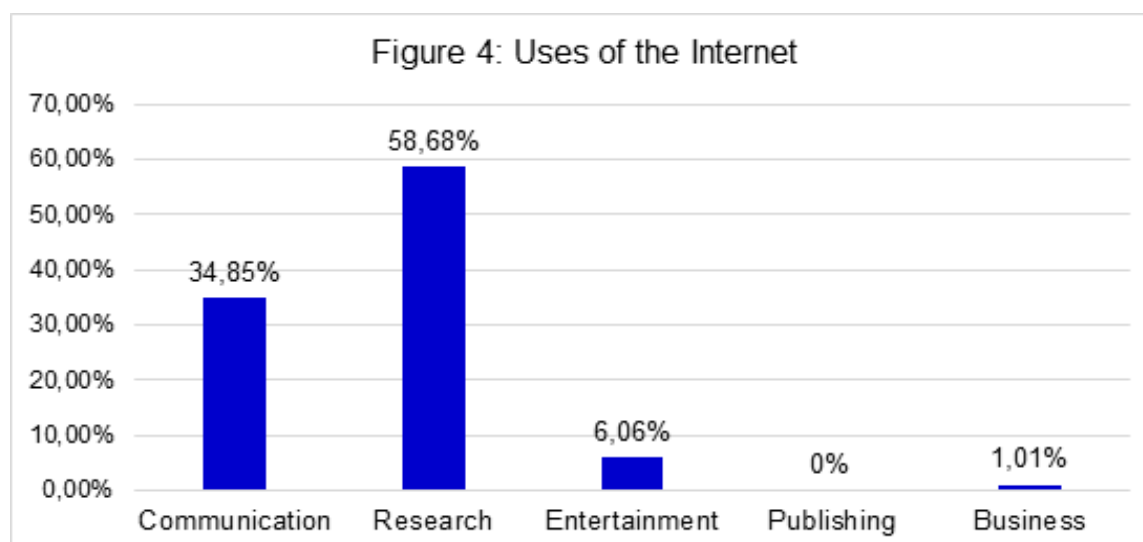
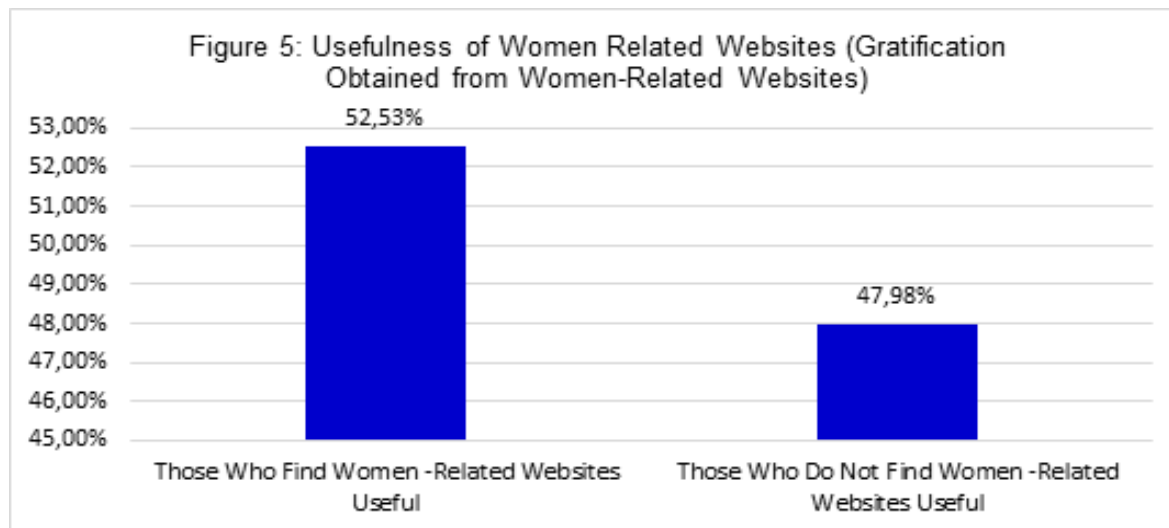


Figure 4 shows that most respondents representing 58.68% use the Internet for research (information search and learning). This is followed by communication with 34.85%. Business uses had 1.01%, and publishing had 0%. This answers the research question about what female students use the Internet for. This finding shows that there is a greater number of female undergraduates at the University of Maiduguri who use the Internet for research purposes (information search and learning).

This could be a result of the status of the study population as university undergraduates who have assignments and papers to write. Hence, they look for material on the Internet. This, however, reflects the trend in society where many women use the Internet for research purposes, seeking information and knowledge by women on areas of interests. For example, women NGOs in Nigeria use the Internet searching for sources of funding for their organizations from international agencies (Akanbi, Alhamdu & Mohammed 1995).

Usefulness of Women-Related Websites (Gratification Obtained from Women-Related Websites)

It was expected that in one way or the other the study population (female undergraduates) surf Internet sites that relate to women. Hence, respondents were asked to indicate whether they find women related websites useful. Figure 5 shows the results.



The percentage of female undergraduates who find women-related websites useful is 52.53% against 47.98% who do not find women-related websites useful. This answers the research question about whether female students access and find women-related websites useful. This is an indication that women-related websites, in spite of one of their major shortfalls being that they are largely irrelevant in content to women in developing nations, still appeal to this category of women (female undergraduates at the University of Maiduguri).

Posting/Contributing Information/Materials on the Internet (Interaction with the Web)

Considering the research questions that sought to determine whether female students at the University of Maiduguri contribute to the Internet or post materials on the Internet, respondents were asked to indicate whether they post/contribute information/materials on the Internet. Figure 6 shows the results.

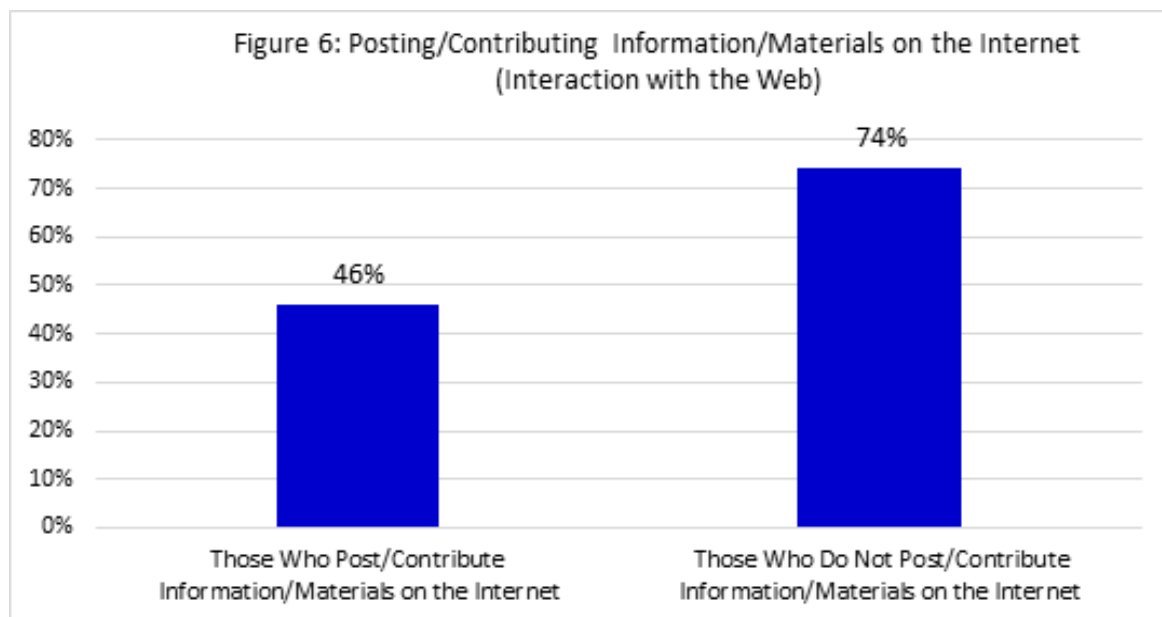


Figure 6 above shows that 74 % of respondents do not post or contribute materials or information on the Internet. This could be attributed to any of the problems highlighted earlier, including financial constraint, insufficient knowledge of the procedures for making such contributions, and lack of interest. The figure also shows that 26% contribute or post information on the Internet.

Discussion

Like other Internet users in most Nigerian universities and universities in African countries who rely heavily on the university computer centres and cyber cafés, this study found that the University of Maiduguri computer centre ranked first, with 93.43% among the access points. The department/office Internet points had no score (0%), which is a clear indication that respondents have no access to Internet facilities at departments/offices. This result strengthens the finding by Jagboro (2003) who notes that present low levels of Internet utilizations among university students in Nigeria is attributed to the low level of connectivity and the high cost of Internet facilities. He notes that there is a need for more Internet access points at departmental and faculty levels. Improving Internet access points will greatly reduce the pressure on the computer centres, which often results in overstretched facilities. Although recent development in mobile phone penetration in Nigeria has made access to the Internet through mobile phones easy, university students still rely on the university computer centres for serious Internet use, such as research because it is comparatively affordable. Time spent on the Internet is an important factor that is determined by availability of finance to pay for longer hours. The user's Internet skill also counts. The more Internet manipulation skill, the more time a person spends. The less Internet manipulation skill, the less time spent on the Internet. This study revealed most respondents access and use the Internet for 50-60 minutes, representing 59%, which is slightly higher than those who spend 70 minutes and above, which had a representation of 12.635%. The major reason in this case was financial constraint. Not many female undergraduates would want to spend more than one hour at the

university Internet café, especially when they use Internet for things other than research. Other less intensive Internet uses such as chatting and social networking are done using mobile Internet devices.

The study revealed that financial constraint (66.16%) is the major challenge to Internet access and use, followed by insufficient Internet skills and knowledge (28.28%). These problems, according to Jagboro (2003), are not limited to female undergraduates in Nigerian universities; rather, they are global constraints to women Internet users. Kole (2001) points out that women's ability to be actively involved in Internet use is troubled by the financial costs connected to Internet, especially in developing countries where a greater number of women are not involved in paid employment. In this study, the financial constraint is so overwhelming that content constraints had the lowest score of 2.23%. This falls in place with the common notion among Internet users that if one does not have enough surfing time, it is impossible to make much sense of the Internet materials. Money is required to pay for more surfing time.

The study further revealed that the use of the Internet for research had the highest score of 58.68%. This is an indication that most respondents use the Internet for research. This is in line with the trend in most universities and reflects Internet use among women generally, especially in the developed world. This finding supports the observation by Morahan–Martin (1998) who notes that women use the Internet more for research (information gathering) than for fun or entertainment. More than half of online women log on to the Internet primarily to search and gather information or do research. They go online to seek solutions to problems or tips that will make their lives easier.

The use of Internet for publishing (posting of information e.g. seminar paper, literary works, visual art work, etc.) had the lowest score of 0% which indicates that Internet publishing is not common among the respondents. This could be due to insufficient Internet publishing skills/knowledge or financial constraint. This finding also brings to light the uses and gratification theory that perceives the audience as active and chooses to attend to or use the media on the basis of their needs. Interaction with the Internet is explained by respondents' use of the Internet for research and other purposes. Blumler and Katz (1974) note that people's needs play a part in leading them into different patterns of media exposure. This finding is in line with what McQuail (1987) notes as the common reasons for media use, which includes information (finding out about relevant events and conditions), learning (self-education, gaining sense of security through knowledge), personal identity (finding reinforcement for personal value), integration/social interaction, and entertainment.

On the issues of women's websites, 52.53% of the respondents find women-related websites useful, while 47.48% do not find the sites useful. That is to say a greater percentage find the women websites useful. This finding corroborates the observation by Smith and Balka (2005) and Dillman (1985) that the Internet provides women an opportunity to learn and share significant information on all issues, and every online woman has several useful issues to learn, especially from sites operated by women organizations. Mutume (1993) notes that while the issue of relevance of content, especially in developing nations, still lingers, women who use the Internet derive a lot of benefits from the useful information and tips on health, beauty, business, jobs, and several other issues.

Finally, the findings showed that most of the respondents do not post/contribute information/materials on the Internet. Tashiwa (2005) notes that most Internet users in developing countries are "downloaders" and very few "upload" to the Internet. This is however changing with the growth of social media. The most popular and dynamically

developing social media in Nigeria is Facebook. With only over 1 million users in early 2010 and over 4 million users in October 2011 (Fink et al. 2012: 165), currently some 11 million Nigerians on Facebook represent the largest group in sub-Saharan Africa. The 2012 #Occupy-Nigeria Protests and the 2013 #Bring-BackOurGirls campaign has brought Nigeria, the continent's third largest country on Twitter to the centre of international attention and further propelled online activism (Valenzuela et al 2014: 5). Social networking sites (Facebook, Instagram, etc.) now afford many users, including women, the opportunity to post information easily.

Conclusion

The study has shown the status of Internet access and use among female undergraduates at the University of Maiduguri. It showed that the university cyber café plays a vital role in the provision of Internet services to users, especially in the university environment. It revealed that in spite of the issue of finance posing a major challenge to Internet access and use, female undergraduates still spend time using the Internet, mostly for research purposes, and they find the women-related websites useful. A greater percentage of the respondents, however, do not contribute information or materials on the Internet.

The cause of women as pursued by women organizations worldwide would be highly enhanced if women organizations concentrated on improving the present level of Internet access and use among this important category of women (female undergraduates in Nigerian universities) who have the educational capability and Internet potential to effectively pursue the realization of the cause of women in Nigeria and worldwide. "Catch them young" is a solution to the effective pursuit of the cause of women, especially in this age of information technology. This is possible only when the challenges identified are addressed.

Recommendations

Considering the findings of the study, the following recommendations are therefore put forward for policy and practice:

- The University of Maiduguri's computer centre cyber café is the major Internet access point to female undergraduate, thus the managers should ensure that standards in terms of facilities and other services are maintained.
- The University management should subsidize the cost of Internet surfing time for students.
- Women organizations such as University Women Association, Association of Women Lecturers in Universities, among others should organize education of female undergraduates to improve their Internet skills/knowledge and to enable them to harness the enormous benefits of the Internet. These organizations should also establish Internet cafes for cheaper access for female students.

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Taking a Break. Some Thoughts about Media Consumption.

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Mira Moshe

Ariel University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Israel

Abstract: This article examines the structural characteristics of media consumption as a routine break from habitual activity. While acknowledging the existence and importance of “taking a breather” in everyday life, one may ask if and when it is possible to characterize taking a break in today’s media field. The “media break” refers to communications consumption that is not directed at finding out what is occurring in the outside world, correlating between parts of the social and/or political system or responding to the environment and/or passing on the social heritage to the next generation. During the media breather, individuals cut themselves off from their obligations to surveillance, adaptation, connection, continuity, and enlistment. They isolate themselves from systemic constraints and needs and delay any overt contribution to the system. The media break can occur at any hour of the day, or even several times a day. In light of the contribution of routine activity to the stability of the social fabric, this article suggests that media consumption of the “breather” type can provide a structural basis for social stability.

Keywords: media theory, mass communications, media consumption, consumer behaviour

More and more we are gradually becoming aware of the importance of the break. Whereas until today modern thought has concerned itself with action, doing, current social thought (and not necessarily that which considers itself post-modern) tends to deal, to a greater extent, with inaction rather than with action. The most striking example of this is taking a break by watching television, stopping what one is doing in order to give one’s brain a rest in front of the flickering screen. Whereas until now media researchers have tended to concern themselves with passive viewing, the time has come to examine the structural characteristics of the “break”. The purpose of this article is to examine the advent and establishment of media consumption as “taking a breather”.

Address for Correspondence: Mira Moshe, email: miram[at]ariel.ac.il

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Break Research

Although academic research has rarely dealt with the break as an independent topic, it has appeared in various studies and in assorted contexts. These include: using the break as a coping strategy; the advantages and disadvantages of taking a break at work; gender and cultural distinctions involved in taking a break; the problematic nature of taking a break from ideological-ethical obligations; the importance of the intellectual-study break; the break as a tool for social bonding or distancing and of course the space where the break takes place.

Taking a break as a coping strategy: Research relates to taking a break as a strategy having possible added value (Simister 2004). Taking a break is a way of calming down, a “time out” that aids anger management, distancing oneself from others, etc. (Lundeberg, Stith, Penn and Ward 2004). By means of taking a break, people can stand back from complex issues, potential quarrels and unpleasantness and they can also get a new perspective on these problems (West, Watts, Trepal, Wester and Lewis 2001). Taking a break also promotes learning (Dyson 2008) and can even help in the mourning process (Golish and Powell 2003).

Taking a break in the workplace: Taking a break is part and parcel of professional company routine (Lammers and Garcia 2009). Short breaks are considered less detrimental to the worker’s efficiency and effectiveness, thus they are regarded more profitable. Furthermore, skipping “time outs” or preventing them is perceived detrimental to workers’ efficiency (Gray 1999), as they are an effective way of coping with various pressures that build up during the day (Lea, Auburn and Kibblewhite 1999). In certain circumstances, taking a break can serve as a technique for coping with crises and disagreements in the workplace and may even be a way of creating a dialogue between the warring parties (Wall and Druckman 2003). Organizations can also convey positive feedback to workers during meals with their superiors (Farrell and Geist-Martin 2005). However, the break can also put pressure on the workers, since it might deter them from keeping up with their workload (Farrell and Geist-Martin 2005) and employees might even be fired for taking too many breaks (Roscinno, Garcia and Bobbitt-Zeher 2007).

Taking a break - gender differences: Women take relatively few breaks so as to rest or take care of themselves. Since they see home and family as their chief responsibility, they hardly ever take time out and consider it a luxury. Many women find it impossible to stop working, but if they don’t take time out to recharge their batteries, they may have trouble putting their household tasks in perspective. They feel guilty about having a rest since there are not enough hours in the day to complete their chores even if they work straight through. Women consider taking a break as an indulgence and not as a basic human right. In fact, in order to cope with hardships, they must learn to have a breather and acknowledge that this is essential for further functioning (Hallman, Thomsson, Burell, Lisspers and Setterlind 2003).

Taking a break - ideology-ethics: In some cases people take a break from ideological-ethical responsibility (Halley 2006). Although it is debatable whether individuals can actually allow themselves to do so (for example, an obligation to feminism), there is an obvious difference between stopping activity altogether or temporarily taking a break from it (Jagose 2009).

Taking a break - intellectual activity: An academic or a student might take a break from intellectual activity as a result of mental exhaustion (Chakravarty and Zhao 2008). A “time

out” may be beneficial in successfully coping with the pressure that builds up from long hours of studying (Schmid and Abell 2003)

Taking a break - social life: Taking a break could be an excellent chance to socialize with work colleagues (Farrell and Geist-Martin 2005). During a rest period, people can take a break from the “symbolic play” (Hutton 2004) and become engaged with their surroundings. It seems, then, that the break can serve both as a bonding technique and also as one that serves as a respite from irritating social interaction or role play.

Taking a break - the recreational space: A break can be taken in a space where it is possible to rest or even take a shower (Lammers and Garcia 2009). Many times the break takes place in a coffee shop (Ertep 2009) since people tend to take time out in semi-public spaces (Hampton and Gupta 2008). According to Gofman (1963), spending time in such places justifies “having no purpose”. In certain circumstances, taking a break can involve sitting down (as opposed to standing or dancing) or indulging in an activity such as smoking (Bhavanani 2008). In other cases, the break involves nothing more than leaving the room, drinking a glass of water, etc. (West, Watts, Trepal, Wester and Lewis 2001).

Taking into account the importance of the break in daily routine, one may ask if and how one can characterize the media-related break. What is a “media break”? When and how does it take place? What needs does it fulfill, etc.? But before approaching definitions and aspects of the media break, this concept must be placed in a social and media context.

Taking a break - the structural-functional theory

The idea of taking a break is stimulated by the structural-functional works of anthropologists such as Malinowski (1922, 1926/1970, 1945) and Radcliffe Brown (1952). According to structural-functional theory there is a large degree of integration between different parts of the social system; all standard social and cultural forms and structures perform a positive function; all normal aspects of society are essential to the integrity of the system; and all structures and functions make a socially necessary contribution. The basic assumption of a structural-functional society is that the existence of the social system is contingent on a structure that regulates and controls the social order. This is accomplished, among other things, by means of the functions that human beings fulfill, functions that must be performed in order to preserve that social structure (Parsons 1937, 1951, 1961, 1967; Merton 1949, 1957; Coser 1975; Parsons and Shils 1976; Ritzer 1983; Craib 1992; Holmwood et al. 2005). The performance of the various functions contributes to a sense of activity creating a kind of learning curve, promoting progress and meet individual needs, while also making a contribution to the collective. It is thus obvious that by “taking a breather” from performing any function within the system, individuals can improve their efficiency. Just as societies employ symbols to cope with doubts, worries and tragedies of human existence that threaten the social order (Toby 1977), taking a break helps individuals to cope with doubts, worries and pressures that impair their ability to function over time.

The structural-functional approach to media was greatly influenced by the work of Talcott Parsons and his ideas regarding the social system as a homogeneous unit striving to achieve social goals and achievements and preserve the social order (Parsons 1951, 1967). The media, according to this approach, creates communal values, symbols and norms, and disseminates them to members of the system. As a result, the system preserves its stability over time: “...a stability which must extend between individuals and over time, [and] could probably not be

maintained unless it functioned in a communication process in the interaction of a plurality of actors” (Parsons 1951, p. 11).

Inspired by this theory, social research has focused on the roles of social institutions and their accepted behavior in society, especially the relationship between social behavior and social institutions (Adams and Sydie 2001; Wallace and Wolf 1995; Ritzer 1992), based on the assumption that people act according to their values and that their actions are deliberate and accord with the norms and values of those around them: *“People act on the basis of their values; their actions are oriented and constrained by the values and norms of people around them; and these norms and values are the basis of social order”* (Knapp 1994, pp. 191-192).

Furthermore, it is the responsibility of the social structure to construct and disseminate meaning and the communicative processes generated by human beings (Luhmann 1986; Parsons 1968; Maturana 1978). While not denying the strong link between behavior and values, the present article suggests that human beings sometimes do take a break from deep ethical commitment. The idea of the break does not necessarily collide with the idea that mass communication describes and broadcasts social values and norms and correlates between values and behavior. It does, however, direct attention to the fact that while the media construct and broadcast values and norms, they also legitimize “taking a breather” from those same values that they support. Moreover, since Parsons, influenced by Weber, emphasizes the importance of social action (Turner 1991) while legitimizing taking a personal (but also a social) “breather” from responsibility and activity, this can be a way for individuals to reinforce their commitment to future collective action.

Systemic social action is represented in Parsons’ book *The Structure of Social Action* (1966) as depending on a basic action unit containing four elements: “actor,” “ending,” “situation” and “normative orientation.” By normative orientation, Parsons refers to the strategy the actor chooses in order to achieve his desired end (King 2009). At the end (and perhaps also at its beginning), the action unit is directed at solving problems that arise in the social order (Holmwood 2006a; 2006b). In other words, the social fabric is preserved intact by the deliberate actions of the actors, who strive to achieve goals that accord with their ethical and normative attitudes, performing these actions as a way to self-determination (Graça 2008). According to Parsons, the performance of a certain actor is influenced by both rational-economic and normative pressures (Heiskala 2007).

Later on, the question naturally arose regarding reciprocity between the environment and the actor. For example, is this an “up-down” process or one involving mutual construction, is it two-way or is there simply no connection between the structure and the actor? Ritzer (2006) identifies four prominent promoters of current European social theory who can shed light on the integration between structure and action. The first is Anthony Giddens (1984), the second, Margaret Archer (1982; 1985; 2007)¹, the third, Pierre Bourdieu (1977)² and the fourth, Jurgen Habermas (1985; 1987)³. The work of these thinkers indicates that later social thought

¹ Archer (1982, 1985, 2007) rejected the idea of the dual nature of action and structure and preferred to view them as entities that could and should be divided, since only thus was it possible to study the connection between them. Internal conversations, for example, mediate the influence of the social structure on culture and actions. In her opinion, one must examine the relationship between culture, actions and structure, and among other things deal with the nature of reflexive communications that aid in coping with problems and maintaining the stability and continuity of social structures.

² Bourdieu (1977, 1990, 1994) translated the matter of structure and action into the connection between “habitus” and “field”. Habitus is the internal intellectual or conscious structure by which we deal with the social world. Habitus creates society while being created by it. The field is the network of interactions between attitudes; a dialectical relationship exists between habitus and field.

³ Habermas (1987) dealt with the connection between structure and action by relating to the “life-world,” a microcosm in which interaction and communication are maintained. The system stems from the life-world, but in the end it develops structural traits of its own. The greater the power and independence attained by these structures, the greater the control they establish over the life-world. In modern society, the system “colonizes”

also dealt with the systemic dynamic between structure and actors, examining wider aspects of this dynamic, for instance language. Despite the great interest aroused by the work of the theorists indicated above, the present article will focus on the implications of Giddens' ideas regarding the importance of the break in general and the media break in particular. According to Giddens, action and structure are entities that cannot be divided. Action necessarily stems from structure, while structure is inextricably linked to action. Giddens (1984) claims that social structure is reciprocally constructed by means of action: "*To enquire into the structure is constituted through action and reciprocally how action is constituted structurally*" (Giddens 1993, p. 169). Furthermore, Giddens is convinced that social structure is supported by daily routine activity: "*In all societies the vast bulk of daily activity consists of habitual practices in which individuals move through definite 'stations' in time-space*" (Giddens, 1981, p. 38).

Based on the assumption that habitual performance contributes to the stability of the social structure, the present article suggests relating to media consumption as a routine break from routine activity. Accordingly, media consumption of the "breather" type can provide a structural basis for social stability.

Traditional media use in light of the structural-functional theory

The Structural-functional theory led Lazarsfeld and Merton (1948) to concentrate on the contribution of the media to systemic social activity. The media grant status to public issues, personalities, organizations and social movements. But parallel to contributing to the enforcement of social norms and conformity, they also drug the public and encourage superficiality and indifference (Lazarsfeld and Merton 1948). The basic tendency of communications is to engender trust by means of anchoring social objectives in close-knit value networks. Conversely, in certain social situations, newspaper coverage and public debate can engender cynicism and undermine the trust that has been established (Simonson 1999). In the words of Lazarsfeld and Merton: "*Many make the mass media targets for hostile criticism because they feel themselves duped by the turn of events*" (Lazarsfeld and Merton, 1948, p.96).

Charles Wright may be identified among the prominent thinkers that formulated an approach to the communications system. In his book, *Mass Communication: A Sociological Perspective* (1959), he defined the roles of the media as supervising the environment, correlating between parts of the system in reacting to the environment, transmitting the social heritage to the next generation and of course providing entertainment. Over the years these became accepted as the four classic functions of communications. Wright (1959) and his followers based their theories on the assumption that media used is performed in a social, cultural, institutional and organizational context (Pan and McLeod, 1991). Meaning, watching TV, reading the paper or listening to the radio is an expression of civilian's participant position rather than of consumers' preferences. If so, taking a break from current affairs and news broadcast basically allow individuals to overcome a sense of hostility and cynicism; to better deal with the constant stream of events; to rethink the political positions and to reassess civic obligations.

Inspired by Giddens' ideas regarding the contribution of routine to social stability, researchers of functional media theory determined that people relate to broadcasting as part of their daily round. Scannell (1986, 1988, 1996), for example, suggested examining media use in terms of a broadcasting schedule adapted to the media consumer's timetable. In his

the life-world; in other words, gains control over it.

article "Radio Times: The temporal arrangements of broadcasting in the modern world" (1988), he broadened the structural-functional aspect of "time-space" and later illuminated the importance of routine processes of dissemination and consumption of mass communications: "...a daily service that fills each day, that runs night through the day, that happens as a continuous, uninterrupted, never-ending flow through all the hours of the day, today, tomorrow and tomorrow tomorrow" (Scannell, 1996, p. 149)

Moreover, perceiving the media as having a ritual function and expressive significance on a daily cultural basis gave rise to creative processes producing content directed at day-to-day needs of individuals whose purpose is, according to the functional-structural theory, to create an emotional routine for the viewer (Morres 2005). Television in particular plays an essential role in constructing cultural sources that run parallel to everyday patterns, the domestic interior and exterior of the media consumer (Silverstone 1993). It even appears that the location of the TV set in the domestic space has a considerable influence on media use patterns (Holloway and Green 2008) and the number of receivers in one's home encourages the development of an individualistic viewing pattern and weakens family supervision of consumed content (Holloway and Green 2008).

New media consumption in light of the structural-functional theory

Development of new information technologies significantly changed the manner of media use as well as the nature of the break. While at the era of traditional media, i.e., TV, Radio and Newspapers, the main role of the media use was the construction of well informed, involved and active citizen (Couldry, Livingstone and Markham 2007) the new media era is much more socially oriented. Social networks, for instance, have a considerable influence on the way news as well as infotainments are consumed (Hagen and Wasko, 2000; Hornik, 1989; Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955). For instance, immigrants appear to maintain contact with their countries of origin through media consumption of information emanating from their homelands via satellite (Karanfil 2009) and/or through the Website, including Facebook, Twitter and other social media. Doing so helps such individuals to overcome a feeling of isolation (Greenwood and Long 2009) and continue to be involved in the life of those whom they left. Research also shows that media consumption has the ability to develop a sense of community (Downey and Koenig 2006) and hand in hand with the social media they encourage social integration, affording diffusion of information and knowledge about values, meanings, and identity. They also support linguistic preservation, communicative competence and the reduction of loneliness aroused by social distances (Arnold and Schneider 2007). At the same time media consumption is also a day-to-day activity associated with the way of life a person establishes for himself/herself (Scannell 1996) [sometimes alongside his/her political and public existence (Couldry and Markham 2008) but other times at the expense of civic and political commitment]. Hence, it generally appears that the current trend today is focused on specialized, polarized, individualistically-oriented media consumptions (Ots 2009, Morris 2005). It is thus necessary to seek broader common characteristics of media consumption that deviate from labels such as news seeking vs. entertainment seeking and it seems as conceptualizing media consumption as "taking a breather" could provide such common ground.

To sum up, traditional communications devices were planned to convey information from one to many. The service provider controls media in terms of information, production, distribution and consumption, whereas lately as a result of widespread technological changes (including Internet Protocol TV, digital radio, on-line media) we are witness to significant

changes in consumption patterns of mass communications (Trappel 2008; O'Neill 2009; Pyungho 2009). These changes have resulted in new anxieties, for example, the fear that media information gathering will infringe on the individual's right to privacy (Baruch 2007), but it is clear that such innovations have led to the demand to rethink traditional ideas regarding production and consumption of mass communications (Hartmann 2009).

Features of the media break

When examining the status, power, and roles of the media as a separate sub-structure in the social system, it is worthwhile examining the reflexive nature of media consumption as taking a break. Inspired by Habermas, one could claim that despite the fact that the media, as part of the system or as a sub-system, developed structural qualities, thus gradually consolidating their power in the "life-world," they simultaneously offer the option of taking a rest from it. Since the "post-modern" life-world blends different elements of the private sphere (work-study-home) with the public-political sphere (activities within the social-civilian framework), taking a breather by means of mass media consumption almost becomes a necessity. But first let us start with some definitions of the media break.

The media break refers to any period of time during the day in which communications consumption is not directed at finding out what is occurring in the outside world, correlating between parts of the system responding to the environment and/or passing on the social heritage to the next generation. During the media breather, the individuals **cut themselves off** from their obligations to surveillance, continuity and enlistment, **isolate** themselves from systemic constraints and needs and **delay** any overt contribution to the system. The media break can occur at any hour of the day, or even several times a day. The media break can be taken by means of consuming specific media genres or avoiding the consumption of genres or other content. The duration of the media break is not consistent, nor is its frequency. The media break may serve as a technique for coping with personal, social, public or political pressures, as a tool for increasing social closeness or distance, as a way of preserving ethical-ideological commitment and even as a tool for enhancing intellectual abilities. The space in which the break takes place can be domestic, organizational or even public (such as a coffee shop or mall). It is important to clarify that the media break does not refer to an advertising break.

Relating to media consumption as a break serves to compensate for the structural-functional theory's neglect of the individual's need to rest on a daily basis and not as part of a planned vacation. In order to preserve the furthering of social solidarity and stability, the communications system generates legitimate rest channels for individuals through media consumption that does not demand identification with the state/society or accepted social order. Thus it is possible to establish that the main "roles" of the media break are: cutting off, isolation and delay. To the degree that it succeeds, each of these functions contributes to the success of the break, thus helping individuals return to their active and functional roles.

- **Cutting off** – the cut-off function means the disturbance of the free flow of internal interaction between the actors and themselves. An actor might take a break by media consumption through cutting off, interrupting, or breaking the line of communication between himself/herself and his/her internal and/or external world. i.e., thoughts, ideas, feelings, results from their physical and psychological needs. The nature of the situation, the beginning, as well as the ending, is self determined, but once it operates, it allows sustaining order and stability. Hence, the content, the genres, the duration, the span and the rhythm of cutting off is subject to the actor's characteristics. There is

evidence that cutting off by means of communications (especially the internet) is perceived (especially for young people) to be a negative, unwanted activity that damages the interaction of the youth with their surroundings (Sourbati 2009). The act of cutting off is surrounded by negative and violent contexts and connotations (Groebner 2004; Shenhav 2008). But today we generate information at a faster rate than we are able to consume it. This situation has been called “infoglu,” “data smog” or “information overload,” and its implications are that a sense of pressure is engendered that can influence the work quality of individuals and organizations (Hahn, Lawson and Lee 1992; Shenk 1997; Eppler and Mengis 2004; McShane and Von Glinow 2005; Thomas et al. 2006). If so, it is suggested that cutting off allow individuals to recover a bit from the amount of data engulfing them, to rest by taking time out, and then to “plug themselves back in” to the media flow.

- **Isolation** – the isolation function refers to the loss of the environmental context, the inability to be in touch with one’s surroundings – either social or political. Thus, actors take a break by media consumption through isolating themselves; withdraw the external world, the social surroundings, as well as the political surroundings. The nature of the situation, the beginning, as well as the ending, is self determined, but once it operates, it allows sustaining order and stability. Media consumption through *isolating, withdrawing from* contact between the actors and their *social surroundings* -- their spouse, family, friend neighbors -- results from the actors’ physical and psychological needs. Similarly, the nature of media consumption through *isolating, withdrawing from* contact between the actors and their and elements in the *political surroundings* -- their ideology, political activity, political engagement -- is a result of the actors’ social and normative orientation. Hence, the content, the genres, the duration, the span the rhythm of isolation is subject to the actor’s characteristics. Accordingly, mass communications consumption isolates the individuals from social, political, and other contexts to which they are accustomed during active periods. While in the past a clear line was drawn between individuals' private life and their social existence, in today’s information community there is actually a tendency to blur the boundaries between private, social, professional and political life. According to the isolation premise, individuals' private lives are conducted in what has been called the private sphere, whereas their professional and social life takes place in the public sphere (Friedlander 1994; Ely and Meyerson 2000). The differentiation between these two spheres has led to the assumption that abilities that are demanded in the private sphere are not relevant to the public one (Fletcher 2005). In actual fact, it is clear today that drawing a line between the private and public sphere is no longer viable and that activities inside and outside the home are interconnected (Dominelli 1991). The information community has made it possible to encompass both these spheres within the Internet. The result is a society suffering from occupational, emotional, and social overload. Therefore, media consumption constructs a unique kind of break which allows individuals to isolate themselves from both the private and the public sphere. By means of such temporary isolation, the loss of contact with one’s surroundings, both social and political and the inability to connect with those around us, individuals can cope with the pressures that build up in both their private and public existence.
- **Delay** – Delay is the period of time that passes between two events, two actions. Actors might take a break by media consumption through delaying, creating a time interval between two events – one that the actor has taken part in the past and one that

the actor has to take part in the (near) future. The nature of the situation, the beginning, as well as the ending, is self determined but once it operates, it allows sustaining order and stability. Delaying, creating a time interval between two events in the actors' internal and/or external world appears when a need to propound decisions or actions - personal, social, professional or political -- appears. Once again, the content, the genres, the duration, the span the rhythm of delaying is subject to the actor's characteristics. According to this definition, mass communications consumption creates a time interval in which individuals delay their functioning and utilizes not to create an event, to refrain from action. Unlike the cutting-off function that has negative connotations, the delay function is sometimes linked with organizational advantages, at other times with economic or communication failures (Steinmaurer 2009; Hibberd 2001) and yet at other times as a factor hindering interaction (McMillan and Hwang 2002). In any case, it is generally accepted that temporary delay is a kind of necessity (Linden 1999). The view that media consumption is a type of break facilitating delay is expressed by Compton and Pfau (2005), who claim that delay is the time interval required by a person in order to formulate a position, therefore rendering it essential. It is important to clarify that this does not refer to ignoring the need to take a stand, but a necessary personal coping process. Media consumption of the "breather" type can provide the conditions for such a delay, to act more slowly, to postpone an activity or decision and to let some time pass between two events, two actions.

In conclusion

As previously mentioned, the structural-functional approach established the idea that one of the basic functions of mass communications is the distribution of information (Merton 1949; Wright 1959; Schramm Lyle and Parker et al. 1961). Later on it was claimed that through this information, the citizen as media consumer could acquire tools for active participation in social, media, cultural and political life (Carpentier 2009; Cammaerts 2009). However, the theoretical basis of the participation function -- encouraging involvement -- did not always correspond with the actual behavior of the media consumer (Sparks 2007). It appears that the media consumers do not necessary seek involvement in public life. It could be that they simply need a break from pressures in their personal life, active participation in society, politics, etc. Meaning, traditional media consumers as well as new media consumers might take some "time out" by means of media consumption whose chief aim is to take a break. Furthermore, since social research has related to taking a break as an activity having positive added value when it is necessary to deal with personal and public difficulty (Simister 2004; Lundeberg, Stith, Penn and Ward 2004; West, Watts, Trepal, Wester, and Lewis 2001; Dyson 2008; Golish and Powell 2003) it is clear that media breaks are a popular tool available for self-treatment.

It seems that that when individuals are exposed to a variety of sources that do not fulfill their needs, complex structures are formed that generate weak cognition (Lang 2000; Fox 2004; Fox, Park and Lang 2007; Lang, Potter and Bolls 1999). Namely, a person who is subject to a pressure system and experiences rational, emotional or cognitive overload can help himself or herself by taking a media breather according to the model described above. In the same way as political, cultural social organizations can sink into overload of demands (Rossi 2009), so can individuals find themselves swamped by demands from themselves, their families, their social milieu, and generally from the society they live in. In such situations the added value of taking a media break becomes apparent. Moreover, since the cutting off function lets the

media consumers to temporarily discontinue the stream of communication within themselves and with their surroundings, the isolation function enables them to detach themselves from their private and social environment and the delay function allows them to put off their need to act individually, professionally and politically, it appears that the media break is a simple technique that can aid people in dealing with mental and personal overload.

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Issues in science publishing: what's hot and what's not?

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Jaime A. Teixeira da Silva¹

Abstract: Science is in crisis: a crisis of trust, and a crisis of values. Yet, this is an opportune moment for scientists to examine the issues that underly science to discover how they may be of use, beyond their laboratory or field experience, to improve the research and publishing landscapes to create an environment that suits their needs more. Traditionally, the science publishing landscape had been controlled by the science, technology and medicine publishers, who have always taunted their peer review systems as being fail-safe. Yet, considerable moss has been gathered by the post-publication peer review (PPPR) movement over the past few years, indicating that the voice of the average scientist now carries more weight, and more value, than ever before. Despite this, most scientists are unaware of their potential power of opinion. Especially when it comes to commenting on, and correcting, the already published literature. Commenting by name, or anonymously, is the new PPPR publishing reality. There needs to also be a concomitant movement away from artificial metrics, such as the impact factor, which serve only as ego-boosting parameters, and which distract the wider readership from the weaknesses of the traditional peer review system currently in place. Increasing cases of the abuse of peer review, such as the creation of fake identities, affiliations or e-mail addresses further highlights the need for scientists to be vigilant, without necessarily being vigilantes. The discovery, within a matter of years, that the literature is more corrupted than was previously thought, in some cases caused by clear cases of editorial cronyism, or abuse, has resulted in a need for scientists to exceed their functions as mere scientists to evolve into whistle-blowers. Some ethical guidelines are in place, such as those by COPE, yet what is being increasingly witnessed, is a discrepancy between preached values by select COPE member journals, and the literature that they have published. Authorship issues continue to be plagued by inconsistencies in the application and verification of the ICMJE's definitions. In a bid to expand their publishing options, open access has also reached a crisis with wave upon wave of

¹ The author was at the Faculty of Agriculture, Kagawa University under various positions between 1997 and 2013, where he retired at the end of March, 2013. The author currently holds no teaching or editorial position, and is not affiliated with any publisher, journal or academic institute and is now an independent, free-lance scientist, science writer and consultant.

Address for Correspondence: Jaime A. Teixeira da Silva, P. O. Box 7, Miki-cho post office, Ikenobe 3011-2, Kagawa-ken, 761-0799, Japan. email: jaimetex[at]yahoo.com
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predatory journals, leaving scientists in a quagmire. This paper serves two purposes: to raise red flags and to call for greater awareness and discussion of these issues.

Keywords: authorship, COPE, editorial oversight and responsibility, erratum, ethics, expression of concern, ICMJE, peer review, post-publication peer review, publishing issues

In my every day dealings with scientists, editors and publishers, and in my interaction in the blogosphere, by name or anonymously, I often encounter individuals who appear to be unaware of many critical issues that underlie the dynamics of science publishing, or its challenges and problems, despite their position and prominence in several fields of study. Drawing attention to some pressing issues currently affecting scientists is the sole purpose of this paper. Unfortunately, in my opinion, there is potentially still a large swathe of scientists who believe that their role in science is simply a passive one, namely of conducting research and of getting that research published, but without being pro-actively involved in aspects associated with the publishing process, without being sufficiently critical of the key players within the publishing process, or without being actively involved in the correction of the already published literature. The passive nature of the vast majority of scientists may be related to a fear of negative repercussions for speaking their opinions openly. This trend may be changing as more and more scientists take to blogs and social media not only to expand their avenues of more widely disseminating their research results and views (Costello 2015), but also to express their dissatisfaction. The passive role of a scientist within the publishing process should not be confused with a redundant or ghost/guest author, whose role in a scientific manuscript is negligible.

A scientist's choice of journal tends to center around the Thomson Reuters Journal Citation Reports (JCR) impact factor (IF), often (incorrectly) equating this metric with quality (The PLoS Medicine Editors 2006). This incorrect notion that the IF is associated with quality – very unfortunately cemented by a “ranking” system that relies almost exclusively on the IF – is fortified by the fact that increasing numbers of retractions are correlated with higher IF journals (Fang et al. 2011). That wide perception is not necessarily the fault of scientists but may in fact reside at the level of their institutes or even ministries of education who propose reward systems that require quantitative factors, like the IF, to validate their productivity. Yet, the issue of having one's work in open access (OA) format, which would facilitate wider dissemination and more citations, may be a more pertinent aspect to decide the journal of choice and could trump a decision based on the IF, although the selection of the OA format is not without its fair share of risks (Kamat 2015). The issues of abstracting and indexing are also important, as are the probability and speed of acceptance and cost of publication, and articles that can be easily searched on major scientific data-bases, or even on Google, tend to sway the choice of journal that scientists make, fortifying the notion that there is an increasing trend towards OA. However, recent reports have indicated that academic profiles on Google Scholar may be manipulated or distorted caused by the inclusion of fake citations (Beall 2014a; Ferguson 2014). Therefore, employers who hire scientific personnel, or peers who judge and value other peers, but who simply look at h-indexes, Altmetric values or other scores that rely on such metrics need to factor in these risks and need to evaluate profiles very carefully. The mind-set of scientists, and their institutes, thus needs to evolve away from such artificial metrics and needs to consider a more holistic approach (Fanelli 2015) and also a wider range of academically sound metrics to validate academic excellence or productivity (Teixeira da Silva 2013a).

This need to quantify productivity using artificial metrics, as well as a parallel movement of resistance against the dominance of the IF (DORA 2015), has led to the unprecedented emergence, in 2014, of *neo* or pseudo metrics (Beall 2015a), currently listed at 32, all with the ultimate aim of swaying the authorship in the direction of their member journals. In some cases, these metrics have the potential of being deceitful by feigning a valid JCR IF. Within a very short time span, a wide array of questionable metrics and equally questionable OA journals (numbering 693 publishers and 507 stand-alone journals to date; Beall 2015b) has emerged, commonly referred to as predatory open access journals, or POAJs. Within the POAJs, hijacked journals, currently listed as 59 (Beall 2015c) pose a different danger because their web-sites and content appear to be legitimate, but only because content has literally been lifted from the original, copied web-sites. The Beall lists and blog, however, have documented flaws (Oransky 2014). A recent analysis quantified the number of references in the entire journal fleet of Global Science Books that contained references of journals listed on the 2013 list of Beall's POAJs (Teixeira da Silva 2014a). One of the lessons of that small meta-analysis is the difficulty with which editor boards can control the choice of references that authors can include; for this reason, POAJs can now use legitimate journals to deposit their often flawed findings, as a cuckoo does its eggs in the nest of another unsuspecting bird. Dealing with the issue of the "gaming" of the IF or other metrics, as well as the risks of POAJs, would require a reorganization at the level of universities or ministries.

A curious note in a recent acknowledgement to reviewers by the world's leading horticultural journal, *Scientia Horticulturae*, published by Elsevier (*Scientia Horticulturae* 2015), reads "Peer review is the cornerstone of the scientific publishing process. Experts volunteer their time to provide scientific critiques of manuscripts submitted to our journal that assist the editors make informed decisions about which to accept. The increased pressure to publish in high-impact journals, the growing the demand to turn around articles in a timely manner and the emergence of many new journals have placed great strain on our valued pool of reviewers." This indicates a veiled concern that the world of science publishing is getting more cluttered, and that the communal peer pool is both getting more stressed and stretched more thinly as the pool of competing publishers – legitimate academic ones and POAJs – rival for the increasing pool of scientific papers. One of the more serious and unintended consequences of this strain placed on the peer pool, which is often not remunerated for its professional services, but should be (especially for peers conducting work for for-profit publishers; Meo 2014), is that the peer reviews themselves may become more lax, rushed, or less precise (Gernert 2008). When peer review becomes lax, the basic premise of traditional peer review, which is to ensure strict quality control, fails. When traditional peer review fails (Teixeira da Silva and Dobránszki 2015a), then post-publication peer review (PPPR) must step in to cover for the gaps caused by editorial oversight, or worse, editorial incompetence (Teixeira da Silva 2013b, 2014b).

The main function of PPPR is to correct the literature by adding critical or supportive comments (Kriegeskorte 2015). However, the discovery of errors in the literature can sometimes reveal more serious issues, some of which are breaches of publishing ethics, or of publishing protocols (Knoepfler 2015). In more obvious cases, this can lead to retractions, which are either called for by scientists, or which may be enforced by the editors and publishers. A spotlight on select 2012-2014 retractions in the plant sciences reveals several serious issues with the current publishing model across a wide array of publishers and journals, affecting prominent and lesser known scientists (Teixeira da Silva 2014c). Some of those issues include a lack of uniform standards that guides editors when faced with a claim from the scientific community, or when faced with ethical issues within papers. In some extreme cases, the editor board must be called out publicly, especially when they fail to

respect their own editorial responsibilities, resulting in, also in extreme cases, the resignation of entire editor boards (Beall 2014b; Tatalović 2014). The issue of whistle-blowing to raise awareness, or to call out issues that are evidently wrong, but that appear to be protected by the traditional publishing establishment, also brings into focus new challenges about how the core of science activists, who see errors in the literature, but who are unable to get these errors corrected, are able to interact with the authors or editors of the journals in question. Whistle-blowing, by nature, carries a negative connotation, but within the realm of PPPR, serves an extremely important function: to point out the flaws and errors of the literature (Yong et al. 2013), or to point out the flaws of the editors or journals. An issue which appears to be more wide-spread than is being reported – or is only now beginning to be exposed – is that of false or pseudo peer review and the abuse of online submission systems to fake peer review (Ferguson et al. 2014). Such actions by scientists, supported in part by weak systems in place by publishers that lend the system to abuse, all ultimately weaken the integrity of the literature that has been published because the following three key questions linger: i) has a paper really been peer reviewed and what proof is there that this is so? ii) who actually peer reviewed a paper, and were those peers suitably qualified, taking into consideration the number and qualification of peers (Teixeira da Silva 2013c)? iii) can a peer reviewed paper be challenged, even for such issues as snubbing (Teixeira da Silva 2013d, 2014d)?

The answer to question iii above is a resounding yes. Without PPPR, the literature remains fouled by errors to varying degrees, including incorrect claims or methodologies, false or unsupported statements, unreproducible data sets, duplications (partial or full), falsifications, plagiarism and self-plagiarism. Two tools have emerged as very powerful means to list errors in and concerns with the literature, namely PubPeer (<https://pubpeer.com/>), which allows for identified, or anonymous, commenting, or a site that only allows for registered (i.e., by name) PPPR comments, i.e., PubMed Commons (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedcommons/>). The code of conduct for journal editors by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) that is currently in place indicates that editors have the responsibility of following up claims made about journal articles, even those that are made anonymously (COPE 2015). Thus, the final onus of correcting the literature lies squarely on the shoulders of editors while the onus of reporting those errors lies on the authors' and peer pool's shoulders. Closely associated with PPPR is the issue of anonymity, an essential aspect to the reporting of errors within the literature, in particular to avoid reprisals that may result from such reports. Despite this essential ingredient to PPPR – which admittedly can lead to abuse in select cases – the fact that recent papers are somewhat denying its importance (Bastian 2014) indicates precisely why the issue needs to be debated more widely in public forums (Pubpeer 2015a).

Figure manipulation has become increasingly prominent in recent times as the techniques to create novel composite figures has improved, and thus detection of manipulation has become more complex. So much so that only in December 2014 were new and more comprehensive policies put into place by the American Journal of Botany (Jernstedt 2014). As one example, several figures by Dr. Oliver Voinnet and Sir David Baulcombe have become a passionate talking point at PubPeer (Pubpeer 2015b). Had PPPR not taken place at PubPeer, the claimed forthcoming retraction (Oransky 2015) and identification of problems associated with figure manipulation would never had been possible. Unless journals have clear and established policies regarding figure manipulation, such claims and concerns cannot be resolved. And without the public participation of the scientists whose work is being questioned, difficult decisions will have to be made by editors.

There is widening consensus that data sets should be made OA to allow the underlying data to be verified, for example, in a challenge on the paper's findings. Despite this call for wider OA data and open source technology (e.g., Gezelter 2015), it seems to be taking place

without an equivalent scrutiny of the possible risks involved, such as data theft or data manipulation by third parties (Teixeira da Silva and Dobránszki 2015b).

The final issue to be addressed in this paper is authorship. Readers are drawn to the fact that the ICMJE guidelines for authorship includes four clauses, and not three, as from October 2013 (ICMJE 2015): “Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work; AND Drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content; AND Final approval of the version to be published; AND Agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.” This is extremely important since many publishers and science journals continue to apply the old (2006), three-clause definition, which may have wide-ranging repercussions on the validity of authorship.

Science publishing is without a doubt in crisis. Yet, crisis provides an excellent opportunity for change and improvement, including the pro-active participation of authors and editors in PPPR, the reform of education systems to de-emphasize the IF and other metrics or to apply them in a more balanced reward system that is not based exclusively on them. Authors have to be held accountable for what they have published as equally as editors and publishers must be held accountable for what they have approved for publication. Only then can public trust in science be regained and sustained.

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Lewis, Justin: *Consumerism and the Limits to Imagination* (2014); Duration: 42 min. Media Education Foundation, ISBN: 1-932869-89-1

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János Tóth

Corvinus University of Budapest, Doctoral School of Social Communication, Hungary

Infotainment and pedagogical objectives often mix well together and, increasingly, educational films rely on that combination in order to convey their intended messages. This is in clear contrast to another branch of educational films which includes *The Silent Scream* (1984) and *The Finishing Line* (1987). Such films effectively and therapeutically generate emotional reactions (including shock, angst, fear, disgust, etc.) among average viewers by making us aware of our mortality and ontology. After viewing *Consumerism and the Limits to Imagination* (2014), however, the boundaries between infotainment and therapeutic angst media become less obvious than previously perceived.

Professor Justin Lewis basically presents a popularized version of his [2013 Polity Press book](#). The film begins by outlining the core ideas of consumer capitalism: an image of an economically structured „good” life, well-being based on the accumulation of consumer goods, and perpetual and infinite economic progress. These core ideas, Lewis argues, constitute a fundamental limit of imagination which does not permit us to imagine a state where we have enough stuff; instead, we are condemned to a permanent state of wanting. The tendency towards a, somewhat, alarmist narration is evident through the use of cleverly placed video clips which make complex relationships and meanings more accessible through visualization, as well as excerpts from classic economic articles which provide scientific legitimacy. Both techniques reinforce the message, and as viewers we are essentially faced with a critique of the consumer-capitalist model. Firstly at the meta-level, the model's proposed solution to one of the most basic questions of humanity is contested; namely, by consuming more, are human beings able to achieve happiness and be healthier? By listening to arguments which are potentially familiar and relatable to many high-schoolers and undergraduates, we learn that increases in GDP and economic well-being only influence human well-being up to a certain point, past which there is no link between GDP growth and quality of life. Secondly, this film successfully conveys a normal-level critique of the neo-liberalist model of capitalism by pointing to problems that may be viewed as leading to internal inconsistencies. Examples include people having only a limited time to consume and the inability of some consumers to act in a rational manner economically speaking when making purchasing decisions. Midway through the film, a third problematical area emerges; namely, environmental damages and the relationship between the demand for infinite growth and a finite ecosystem. The main conclusion of this part, which is structured logically to link with the two previous problematical points, is that society should not preserve an economic, social, cultural and political system which is not only economically incoherent and incapable

of making people happier or healthier but also risks destroying the biological foundations of human life; however, the mass-mediatised, inherent epistemic violence of the system makes it difficult to reject.

The overall impression is that this educational film is a product of a Frankfurt School-ish perspective; this is evident in terms of its method of drawing attention to the need to reform the capitalist enterprise by attempting to make young adults cognizant of some binding axioms and influences on which a *Kulturindustrie*-produced uniform system relies. The main strengths of this production lie in its potential to encourage critical thinking and its ability to connect the viewers with an alternative culture and information industry.