Reframing public relations
New directions for theory and practice

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ABSTRACT
In this article we deconstruct the central concepts of public relations theory: 'publics', 'relations', and 'organisations'. In offering a revised version of these concepts as a framework within which to reconstruct theory, we argue that the most seriously inadequate and undertheorised of these concepts is 'publics'. As Moffitt (1994) and Karlberg (1996) contend, the organisational perspective has tended to overwhelm and marginalise 'publics' within public relations theory. Thus the dominant focus on 'relations' has been conceptualised in the absence of a developed concept of 'publics'. As a result, public relations theory has been unable to come to terms with the power differentials between discourse participants.

The primary tension within and between the various definitions of 'publics' to be found in widely used public relations textbooks arises between strategic and dialogic approaches (Baskin & Aronoff, 1992; Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1994; Grunig, 1992; Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Hiebert, 1988; McElreath, 1993; Seitel, 1995; Tymson & Sherman, 1996; White & Mazur, 1995). The strategic approaches, which dominate the field (Gandy, 1992), portray publics as consumers of strategically targeted organisational messages. The dialogic approaches portray publics as active and equal participants in a dialogue with the organisation. Both approaches emphasise the organisational perspective. Both focus on the nature of the 'relations' organisations have or should have with their publics rather than on the publics themselves and, in the second approach in particular, publics are presented as organisational artefacts or constructs. For both approaches, the organisation is always the subject-position from which publics are
understood. Publics thus appear not to be actively or independently involved in the ongoing self-construction of their identity, strategies, and goals.

Public relations theory does distinguish between latent and active publics (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). The former literally refers to ‘paper classes’ (Bourdieu, 1987) constructed out of social data, while active publics are more akin to ‘real classes’, which have a conscious collective identity and purpose. However, even active publics are understood only from the strategic position of the organisation. At the same time, public relations mystifies the relation between publics and organisations by treating them as interchangeable and equivalent entities. First, they are treated as interchangeable, since from the subject-position of an organisation, another organisation is a public. Second, they are treated as equivalent because they are interchangeable, and because in the dialogic approach, in particular, publics and organisations are treated as if they are equal participants in a dialogue. Third, this apparent equality between equivalent and interchangeable entities is reinforced by the complete absence in public relations theory of the concept of power (Coombs, 1993).

ONE-DIMENSIONAL PUBLIC RELATIONS

The current dominance of the organisational perspective on public relations undoubtedly stems from the highly influential, though much critiqued, work of Grunig and Hunt (1984). Working from a systems perspective, they developed four models which, they claimed, reflected both the historical evolution of public relations practice as well as the different approaches still used by practitioners. The four models, in terms of their evolutionary progress, were labelled: the press agent/publicity model; the public information model; the two-way asymmetric model; and the two-way symmetric model (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 13). They argued that the two-way symmetrical or dialogic model represented the most effective and the most ethical way of conducting public relations work. Based in a version of systems theory, the model assumed that it was possible for an organisation to meet its publics on equal terms and to rationally determine mutually beneficial outcomes.

The primary distinction that Grunig and Hunt (1984) drew between the two-way asymmetric and two-way symmetric models hinged on the nature of their ‘relations’ with ‘the environment’. Practitioners working within the asymmetrical model would attempt to control their environment so that it met organisational needs, while those working within the
symmetrical model would attempt to adapt the organisation to the environment rather than to control it. The ethical superiority of symmetrical public relations was, then, rooted in the ‘attitude’ of the organisation and its openness to change. As Grunig and Hunt state:

The two-way symmetric model . . . consists more of a dialogue than a monologue. If persuasion occurs, the public should be just as likely to persuade the organisation’s management to change attitudes or behaviors as the organization is likely to change the public’s attitudes or behavior. Ideally, both management and publics will change somewhat after a public relations effort. (p. 23)

In their extensive study of public relations practice within organisations, Grunig and Grunig (1989), were, however, unable to find many instances of symmetrical public relations. Thus, despite their efforts to create a descriptive theory, Grunig and Grunig reluctantly acknowledged that the symmetrical model was primarily a normative theory.

The Grunig and Hunt model is flawed in several key respects. The concept of power, for example, appears in the model only as an absence (Coombs, 1993). Yet power is a key element in the analysis of social relations in almost all other disciplines (for example, political science, psychology, media studies) and in social theory generally. According to Fairclough (1995), within discourse theory, ‘Power is conceptualised both in terms of asymmetries between participants in discourse events, and in terms of unequal capacity to control how texts are produced, distributed and consumed (and hence the shapes of texts) in particular sociocultural contexts’ (pp. 1–2).

Discourse symmetry is more than an organisational attitude. A willingness to listen to publics and to adapt one’s behaviour as a consequence of this interaction does not address the asymmetries inherent in discourse practices weighted in favour of one of the discourse participants. It is simply absurd to suggest that an interaction between, for example, the Shell Oil company and a public consisting of unskilled workers in a developing country can be symmetrical just because the interaction is symmetrical in form. It is even more absurd to suggest the reverse, that the interaction between this worker public and Shell Oil can be symmetrical if the workers adopt the correct attitude and are willing to compromise. In practice, in cases where access to resources is so unequal, attempting to practise symmetrical public relations may constitute a self-destructive discourse strategy for the least powerful participant.
That organisations may rightly perceive there to be no advantage in adapting to the 'environment' through compromises with their publics is one reason that the symmetrical approach may not be adopted. Indeed, Grunig and Hunt (1984) acknowledge that model selection may be more of an indication of the nature of the organisation, the nature of the public relations issue, and the organisational power of the practitioner, than of the practitioner's expertise or ethics. Implicitly, then, Grunig and Hunt argued that all four models, including the symmetrical model, were strategic choices appropriate in different circumstances. This argument was later made explicit by Grunig and Repper (1992), when they stated that 'we define strategic symmetrically rather than asymmetrically' (p. 123). This definition creates problems for the earlier view that the symmetrical model is inherently more ethical than the other three. Moreover, Grunig and Grunig's (1992, 1996) adaptation of the original model, which attempts to lend ethical respectability to some versions of asymmetrical public relations, serves only to further undermine the model's dialogic basis for assessing communication ethics.

That the Grunig and Hunt model does not adequately distinguish between 'publics' and 'organisations' is a primary reason that symmetrical communication and communication ethics have been so tightly linked within the terms of the model. The concept of 'publics' is understood only in relation to an organisation (Karlberg, 1996). Indeed, Grunig and Repper (1992) take the more extreme position that a public is conceived only as an organisational artefact: 'A public, a market, or any other segment of a population exists only because a . . . [public relations] practitioner uses a theoretical concept to identify it' (p. 129). The act of theoretical construction does not, however, always, or simply, bring a group into being.

In addition, Grunig and Repper's (1992) definition implies that organisations cannot be publics. Within public relations theory generally, however, organisations are explicitly identified as potential publics. The difference between organisations and publics then becomes purely one of perspective. A theory that conceptualises organisations and publics as interchangeable falls into the trap of abstractly representing organisations and publics as equivalent entities. The Shell Oil example related above is an example of the kind of muddled thinking that easily results from such a conflation. If public relations is about the relations between organisations and their publics, then it would seem obvious to more clearly distinguish rather than conflate them. In the next section, we sketch out the basis for a more developed theory of publics and organisations.
IMPORTING THE PUBLIC

To clarify the confusion, we begin by reexamining the key concepts of publics and organisations. The more detailed definition of publics that emerges has major implications for the practice of public 'relations'. Our approach supplements the existing dominant public relations perspectives with social theories of the public sphere (Calhoun, 1992, 1995; Cohen & Arato, 1992; Habermas, 1991/1962); Habermas's (1987) distinction between system and lifeworld; and Fairclough's (1992, 1995) discourse theory. These theorists allow different types of organisations and publics to be identified, along with different types of relations between them.

In Habermas (1991/1962), the concept of 'publics' is related to the concepts of 'the public' and the 'public sphere'. The public sphere—as distinct from the private sphere—can be understood as 'a realm of public discourse in which citizens might address or act on the state' (Calhoun, 1996, p. 241). The public sphere is one element of the lifeworld that is identified with the lived experiences and habitus of people (Habermas, 1991/1962). Democratic debate between citizens in the public sphere occurs in relation to but distinct from the 'system', which includes both 'political subsystems' (state) and 'economic subsystems' (economy). Cohen and Arato (1992, p. 431), drawing principally on the work of Habermas, offer a useful model for integrating the major concepts:

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<td>System</td>
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<td>political subsystem</td>
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<td>or 'state'</td>
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<td>Lifeworld</td>
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In this model, the public sphere becomes the public face of the lifeworld. More exactly, we can think of the public sphere as the ensemble of spaces for debate between citizens.

The public can, then, be understood as all private citizens who may participate in the public sphere. Within public relations literature, however, there has been a near-universal abandonment of the notion of 'the public' in favour of multiple publics. Cutlip, Center, and Broom (1994), for example, declare that 'there is simply no such thing' (p. 360) as the general public. It is, however, both unhelpful and unnecessary to abandon 'the public' and its associated macrofocus at the level of the...
nation state in order to validate the microfocus on organisational relations. Rather, the concept of ‘the public’ can be retained as representing one possible configuration of individuals within a framework in which multiple configurations are possible. Conceptualised in this way, publics are groups of individuals who develop an identity and perhaps a representation of their collective interests in relation to ‘the system’ in general or aspects of it. Individuals who participate in multiple public spheres as members of diverse publics may simultaneously hold a number of different subject positions within these spheres and publics (Motion, 1996). Thus publics are made up of intersecting, overlapping, and changing sets of individuals. From an overall macro perspective, there are multiple, intersecting publics, including ‘the public’, interacting within an overarching public sphere, which itself comprises multiple, intersecting public spheres (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985).

Having reframed the concept of publics, we now turn to organisations and the nature of their relations with publics. Before looking at organisations in more detail, however, it is necessary to distinguish between the different kinds of relations within current public relations practice. Three distinct types of organisation-centred public relations practice can be identified:

1. Intersystem organisation relations
2. Intraorganisational relations
3. Organisation-public relations.

In this article, we focus on the relations between organisations and publics rather than on the other two elements of public relations practice. This focus stems from our definition of publics as groups of individuals participating in a public sphere and our concern here with addressing the nature of relations between organisations and publics. The other two areas of public relations work are important, but lie outside the scope of this article.

Organisations can be broadly conceptualised as frameworks of action that are defined by their own rules and goals but are limited by broader social frameworks. Organisations have generally been understood as ‘system’ based entities. The system functions according to the logic of strategic or instrumental rationality while the lifeworld is associated with communicative action. Whereas instrumental rationality is goal-driven, communicative action is rooted in ‘negotiated intersubjectivity and normative thinking’ (Dahlgren, 1995, p. 99). Thus a strategic approach to public relations, for example, would use organisational objectives as
a starting point, while a communicative approach would assume that objectives would be formed, intersubjectively, as part of the communication process. Habermas (1987) states that:

In communicative action participants pursue their plans cooperatively on the basis of a shared definition of the situation. If a shared definition of the situation is first to be negotiated, or if efforts to come to some agreement within the framework of shared situation definitions fail, the attainment of consensus, which is normally a condition for pursuing goals, can itself become an end. (p. 126)

There are obvious parallels between Grunig and Hunt's two way asymmetrical model and Habermas's theory of instrumental rationality, and between Grunig and Hunt's two way symmetrical model and Habermas's theory of communicative action (Grunig & Grunig, 1996). However, a major point of departure between the two lies in Grunig and Hunt's attempt to attribute communicative action to system organisations, whereas Habermas's communicative action is a characteristic of the lifeworld alone. By 1992, Grunig and Repper were, moreover, writing of strategic symmetry which, in addition to creating major problems for the Grunig and Hunt models, is clearly at odds with Habermasian theory.

Within Habermas's work, then, the emphasis is placed on communication between individuals within the public sphere, the focus of which is the actions or policies of system organisations. It is, however, possible for publics to develop their own organisations. Cohen and Arato's (1992) major work on contemporary civil society has noted the increasingly institutionalised character of the public sphere. Therefore, a distinction needs to be made in public relations theory between the lifeworld organisations of the public sphere and the system organisations of state and economy. One might argue that, as social movements develop professional organisational bases, they become part of the system. More exactly, however, they become part of the system only to the extent that they are incorporated into the decision making control centres of the system. The institutionalisation and incorporation of the trade union movement into the normal functioning of the system is the classic example of this process.

A lifeworld organisation may be distinguished from a system organisation to the extent that, in the former, organisation develops as an artefact of the communicative interaction of a public. System organisations, in contrast, represent the dominant logic of capitalist modernisation. A simple typology from this basis can distinguish three different types of organisations:
1. system organisations
2. lifeworld organisations
3. organisations that have some characteristics of both.

A motorway developer and the regulatory agency responsible for planning a motorway would constitute a type one organisation. A public that organised to oppose the construction of a motorway through a suburban neighbourhood would constitute an example of a type two organisation. An established environmental organisation, which received some state funding and representation in official forums, and which assisted the antimotorway public by negotiating with the system organisations, might constitute a type three organisation. Note that only type two organisations are also defined as 'publics', in the sense that we have outlined above, as groups of individuals operating within the public sphere who develop an identity and, perhaps, a common purpose in relation to the system. That is, lifeworld organisations can be said to constitute a subset of lifeworld publics.

Different types of organisations have different types of relations with publics. The challenge is to develop a theory of publics that views publics—and their associated subject positions—as constructed and reconstructed through an ongoing process of discursive struggle. We will now briefly sketch out some of the elements central to the development of such theory before moving on to consider the second of our key concepts, 'relations'.

1. Publics in relation to system organisations

When publics relate to system organisations, they may offer defensive responses to system encroachment or what Habermas termed the 'colonisation of the lifeworld'. For example, a local citizens' group opposing a new motorway is acting to defend an existing habitus or lifeworld. Publics may, however, also adopt strategies and goals that are offensive in character (Cohen & Arato, 1992, p. 531). That is, in addition to opposing colonisation by the system, they may also pursue their own goals for modifying the terms of modernisation. Thus the antimotorway group might embark on a campaign to promote objectives such as clean air, safe places for children to play, and public transport in response to system initiatives to facilitate the continuing dominance of the motor car. Second wave feminisms have this dual character. At one level they are a defensive response to the patriarchal form of capitalist modernisation in the Fordist period (Lipietz, 1994). However, at least one feminist response goes beyond a defence of a preexisting lifeworld.
pattern, towards the system adoption of new institutions, norms, and values that recognise gender equality and/or difference (Habermas, 1987, p. 393).

2. Publics in relation to lifeworld organisations

Habermas (1987) referred to publics as 'new social movements'. These social movements engage in defensive or offensive direct action. As struggles develop, publics may invent their own organisational structures that make more permanent the goals of the movement, as well as cementing in place a formal membership, and a structure of leadership entailing formal rules of election, tenure, and so forth. Thus lifeworld organisations are publics with a formal organisational structure.

The development of publics into organisations signals an emerging distinction between the core nucleus of the organisation with its 'paid officials' and different publics in relation to that organisation: paid up members, nonpaying supporters, and opponents of various kinds. The feminist movement has these characteristics. Although there are feminist organisations, these organisations do not encompass or even represent feminism. Thus lifeworld feminist organisations have relations with a variety of publics, including those who offer different versions of feminism, supporters of traditional patriarchal values, and their own public(s) of origin.

Given that some lifeworld organisations go beyond the nation state, some of the publics to which they relate may be global in character. For example, environmental organisations, such as Greenpeace, engage with system organisations at the local, national, and international levels and promote global lifeworld solidarity between publics. The possibility of global publics arises out of the growth of communication technologies including satellites and the Internet, and of international forums such as the United Nations and the World Court. The necessity of creating such global publics and of using global public spheres arises for two reasons. First, the issues that lifeworld organisations combat often cross national boundaries. Environmental, labour, and feminist concerns offer obvious examples. Second, the system organisations with which the lifeworld organisations engage are increasingly transnational in their operations.

3. Publics in relation to mixed organisations

This category of organisation shares characteristics with the previous two in terms of relations with publics. Generally, it comprises mature lifeworld organisations whose operations have become intertwined with
those of the system, particularly of the state (Offe, 1990). In becoming intertwined, they may exchange their offensive and defensive roles for amelioration roles. That is, rather than oppose the system, they work with the system to reduce the negative effects of system operations on the lifeworld. Charity and labour organisations may fit into this category. While mixed organisations retain their association with the causes of the lifeworld, their operation may in fact assist system colonisation. That is, while such organisations may have been created as defensive responses to system encroachment, their operations may actually assist the introduction of the logics of the system into the lifeworld. Relations between publics and mixed organisations will, therefore, often be of an ambivalent nature and will occur on the 'seam' between the system and lifeworld, which is the territory occupied by mixed organisations.

Redefined relations

Having defined 'publics' and distinguished between organisations and publics, and between different types of organisations, we now turn to the concept of 'relations'. In public relations theory, the form of the relation has taken precedence over the function or purpose of the relational strategy. Public relations is concerned with the different forms of communication between publics and organisations, but it is also concerned with power, strategy, objectives, and the manifold ways each articulates and overdetermines, constructs and deconstructs, organises and disorganises, the other. Public relations is about the many ways in which different types of publics interact with different types of organisations, and vice versa, on a strategic terrain of competing discourses and unequal access to power and resources. Our aim here is to examine more specifically different types of communicative relations in terms of strategy, objectives, and power and resource differentials.

In relating with publics, the system organisation may engage in a range of discourse practices that differ according to the public that is being addressed and the objectives that are being pursued. However, in general, the overriding objective of system public relations is strategic in the Habermasian sense: that is, to maximise the support of publics and to minimise or neutralise (for example, through disorganising strategies) opposition, in order to facilitate the achievement of other organisational objectives. Thus public relations texts attempt to articulate the norms and values of the individuals who make up the various publics to the objectives and perceived requirements of the organisation (Motion & Leitch, 1996). Concession in terms of some objectives, in order to achieve such an articulation, is one possible public relations strategy for
ensuring the continuing survival and success of the organisation. Thus, as was discussed above, the symmetrical model of public relations is one possible strategic choice.

The extent to which the system organisation can achieve its objectives and minimise the opposition—if not gain the support—of publics for these objectives is related to a host of factors. One starting point for gauging the kind of public relations strategies that an organisation will need to deploy, and the form of relations to be adopted, is obviously the extent to which the organisation invades or destroys the lifeworld or conflicts with the more offensive goals of lifeworld movements. The more the organisation’s goals are seen as neutral to or even as enhancing the lifeworld, the easier to achieve them. The nature of the system organisation’s objectives and actions will, then, at least partly determine the depth of outrage or support expressed by publics.

Support for or opposition to system organisations by publics is not, however, completely predetermined, but is also a product of the relations between publics and organisations. Perceptions of the system organisation’s objectives and actions are always negotiated intersubjectively through discourse. Thus public relations practitioners engage in discursive struggles with a variety of organisations and publics over the lifeworld and system level interpretations of their objectives and actions (Fairclough, 1992, 1995). This intersubjective process occurs regardless of the form of the public relations practised by the organisation (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). That is, the meanings publics attribute to organisational objectives and goals are not purely organisational constructs, and nor are they purely constructs of the publics themselves. They arise out of the interactions between publics and organisations at a variety of levels including the discourse of the public sphere and the lived experiences of individuals.

System organisations, then, deploy different forms of public relations, depending upon the nature of their objectives and the initial subject positions of publics in relation to these objectives. Their task is to facilitate the creation of particular interpretations of and responses to their objectives. The ability to produce and carry out discourse strategies will, however, also depend on the discourse resources available to the organisation. These resources include the ability to enlist the support of other system organisations. Further, outcomes will also depend on the abilities, resources, and will of the publics themselves. Here, we can distinguish between unorganised and organised publics. Publics that
lack an institutional structure, legitimated spokespeople, a clearly articulated agenda, and/or significant discourse resources, will not relate to system organisations from a position of power.

The relations between a system organisation and its publics are not, however, only about communicating to achieve objectives. They are also about altering or constructing to varying degrees the nature and composition of the publics themselves. This process may occur through the subject positions offered by public relations texts to individuals within publics (Motion, 1996). (Texts may be either spoken or written discourse so that an oral exchange between an organisation and a public may be analysed as a text.) When public relations practitioners create texts, they are generally offering individuals within publics the subject positions that are most likely to articulate with the interests of the organisation (Hall, 1986; Moffitt, 1994; Motion & Leitch, 1996; Slack, 1996). Whether individuals are positioned as citizens or as consumers, for example, has consequences for their ability to participate, and for the nature of their participation, in struggles over socio-cultural change (Fairclough, 1992, 1995). The construction of subject positions within publics can thus be seen as a site of ongoing contestation between organisations and publics.

At a more fundamental level, however, the organisations may attempt to create publics that have no existence outside of the public relations discourse (Grunig & Repper, 1992, p. 129). Members may have experienced no sense of shared identity or solidarity prior to becoming the object of public relations attention. When members of such publics do relate with the organisation, it is, at least initially, only within the discourse domain of the organisation itself (Fairclough, 1992). The ability to construct and reconstruct publics is centrally related to the discoursal and strategic resources of the organisation relative to its publics.

Lifeworld organisations will obviously share some of the characteristics of system organisations in terms of their relations with publics. There are, however, at least two unique features of lifeworld-public relations. The first feature is the relations between a lifeworld organisation and the public from which it has developed. The second is the relations between lifeworld organisations and system organisations. In the first instance, the public constructs the organisation. That is, the aims and goals of the movement, and even the form of leadership, can be understood as the outcome of the struggles and activity of a public. However, once an organisational nucleus is established and becomes permanent, the dynamic may change. The relations between the lifeworld organisation...
and its public(s) of origin will begin to take on a more reflexive construc-
tion. For example, the organisation may employ public relations practi-
tioners to increase membership, to mould and develop the member-
ship’s consciousness, and, at the same time, to neutralise or win over,
opponents. At this point, relations between the lifeworld organisation
and its public(s) of origin will take on many of the characteristics of
orthodox public relations practice associated with intraorganisation rela-
tions.

In terms of the second feature, lifeworld organisations, as organised
publics, engage in strategic ‘wars of position’ with system organisations.
Here, public relations becomes not only about organisations relating to
publics, but also about how publics can strategically interact with
system organisations. The form of communicative interaction can vary
considerably, and may involve a range of popular actions, texts, images,
public spectacles, collective actions, and so forth. It should be noted
here that the form of relations is unlikely to be symmetrical. The goal is
to maximise public sentiment and consciousness in order to put pres-
sure on the system to concede some of the demands and goals of the
lifeworld organisation. At some point, however, system concessions may
mean incorporating the principles of the organisation into the system
itself—thus modifying the system but also perhaps undermining the
popular public base of the lifeworld organisation. The lifeworld organi-
sation may then become a mixed organisation with characteristics of
and allegiances to both the system and the lifeworld.

Potentially, lifeworld organisations may equal system organisations in
terms of access to resources, including public relations expertise. Rather
than simply participating in discourses that centre on the system organ-
isation, they may draw it into their own discourse domain. Or they may
engage with the organisation in domains such as that of official or
government discourse or via the public sphere of media discourse. While
the Grunig and Hunt model assumes that the form of public relations
adopted is defined by the organisation, it is clear that publics, particu-
larly if they develop their own organisational bases, may themselves
make strategic choices about the approach to communication.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS
The above discussion has purposely raised more questions than it has
answered. Our intention has been to deconstruct the concepts that have
formed the building blocks of public relations in order to provide a
framework for a more robust body of theory. ‘Publics’ and ‘organisa-
tions’, which are conflated in dominant public relations approaches,
were more clearly distinguished. A framework was then constructed for identifying different types of organisations, different types of publics, and different types of relations between the various organisations and publics. This framework has provided the beginnings of a new approach to public relations theory. Such an approach not only provides organisations with a more strategic knowledge of publics, it also provides the basis for a public-centred approach to public relations. A more developed framework, however, would need to draw more fully on scholarship in the areas of organisation communication and social theory. In our concluding statements we would, then, like to sketch out some specific issues for theory development raised within this new framework in the hope that it will stimulate debate and further research.

In terms of 'publics', some of the major issues we have identified requiring further development stem from the notion of multiplicity: of multiple subject positions occupied by individuals within multiple publics within multiple public spheres. Multiplicity cannot be accommodated within the simple strategy models commonly taught to public relations students (for example, Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1994; Tymson & Sherman, 1996). Such models imply a unidimensional world in which both publics and the opinions they hold can be readily identified through simple research techniques. The task for public relations practitioners, then, would appear to be to design the texts most likely to influence these publics and then to recalibrate texts on the basis of a further stage of feedback research. However, publics are not fixed categories waiting to be identified, but are constructed and reconstructed through discourse. Opinions are discursively negotiated constructs rather than artefacts waiting to be recorded (Moffitt, 1994). The meaning of texts is created and recreated intersubjectively and so texts cannot be simply recalibrated. The dominant models are, therefore, clearly inadequate as tools to guide public relations practice.

Further development of the conceptual framework is also required before we can begin to develop links with appropriate theory on communicative ethics. The notion that public relations ethics is rooted in textual form has gained dominance precisely because of the inadequacy of existing theory. Surface characteristics are easy to identify, quantify, and assess. Measuring such characteristics allows us to avoid difficult questions about power inequalities between discourse participants. Such inequalities are, however, barely visible when viewed from the perspective of organisation-centred public relations theory.
REFERENCES


Reframing public relations


