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Commentary: Professionals are from Venus, scholars are from Mars☆

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Abstract

Though public relations practice everywhere is suffering from low standards of professionalism, practitioners are hardly looking for support from public relations scholars. The question is why. This article argues that this is not because practitioners are reluctant to adopt the scholarly work that has been done, but because, in defining what professionalism is all about, practitioners and scholars live in different worlds. Coherence in views on professionalism can be seen as a prerequisite for development of practice. This article proposes a new model of professionalism in which certain values of previous views are adhered to and, where appropriate, partially integrated.
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Public relations is a booming occupational field. Mogel (2002) stated that "twenty-first-century PR is on a roll. [. . .]. The Institute for PR Research and Education estimates that there are approximately 250,000–300,000 people employed in PR and public affairs" (p. 7) and concluded that it is one of the fastest growing industries in the US, with a projected growth of 47% between 1994 and 2005. In a book on public relations in Europe, all 27 national expert contributors claimed that it is a thriving field in their respective countries as well (van Ruler & Verčič, 2004). However, in a study on the parameters of the PR field in Europe, the research team concluded (van Ruler, Verčič, Bütschi, & Flodin, 2004): "For almost all

participants, public relations is also to be seen as 'a professional domain' and almost all of them preferred to view public relations as 'a specialized management area' and not only as a view on organization, or as a phenomenon in society. (. . .) However, the data show that, although public relations should also be seen as a professional domain, it lacks an image of professionalism". The recently published *Handbook of Global Public Relations* (Sriramesh & Verčič, 2003) also shows an exploding branch in many countries all over the world. All chapters reveal, again, that practice is rather technical in its approach and that the use of theories is not the norm.

Why do practitioners seem so reluctant to adopt scholarly work? Why do senior practitioners and CEOs keep on hiring practitioners without any public relations oriented education and/or scholarly approach? It is not because practitioners and their clients are "obstinate", but because they hold totally different views on what makes a practitioner a professional. Public relations scholars usually describe a view on professionalism that has been focused on requirements as a well-defined body of scholarly knowledge, completion of some standardized and prescribed course of study, examination and certification by a state and oversight by a state agency which has disciplinary powers over practitioner's behaviors (see Wylie, 1994, see also Sallot, Cameron, Weaver, & Lariscy, 1998, for an overview of much of the literature). The widely cited book of Grunig and Hunt (1984: pp. 64–68) included additionally review by peers, importance to society and a common code of ethics as core professional values that serve as the ethos for the whole profession (see also David, 2004) and Grunig (2000) concluded that public relations has not yet been valued by society, which is also to be seen as a prerequisite of professionalism. Most of these ideas are implicitly or explicitly based on the ideas of Wilenski (1964) and these show a very specific view on professionalism, and far from the only one.

In the next section, I present a historical review of professionalism theories and I will construct a model to typify these theories. This typification enables the evaluation of the different points of view that exist in the public relations field. These views are discussed in the third section of this article. In the final section, I will propose a new, integrated model of professionalism. I follow Grunig and Grunig (1992: p. 286) in their use of the term "model" as "a set of values and a pattern of behavior that characterize the approach taken by a public relations department or individual practitioner to all programs, or, in some cases, to specific programs or campaigns."

1. Professionalism theories

The term "profession" derives from the Latin *profiteor*, which means 'to declare openly where you as a craftsman stand for'. The sociological study of professions as a special category of occupations is a long-standing field of academic research with its own history and distinctive comparative and historical modes of analysis (Evetts, 1999). According to the Indian sociologist Nagla (1993), professionalism is best seen as a "state of mind," because it is a way of thinking about the cognitive aspects of a profession and the characteristics that typify a professional. This means that professionalism has to do with the concept of a profession ('which tasks belong to an occupation and which tasks do not') and with a norm ('what is and what is not good'). Professionalization is concerned with the process to become professional. That is why I view professionalization as the development of an occupation to a certain desired level of quality.

Theory building on professionalism and professionalization started about a century ago. It was based in Durkheim's idea of the division of labor (for details see Ritzer, 2000) and has become a much-

Knowledge model: professionalization is seen as the development of an organized group of experts who implement scientifically developed knowledge on a cluster of tasks defined by the professional group, in order to deliver a unique contribution to the well-being of the client and the progress of society.

Status model: professionalization is seen as the development of an organized elite who uses general and specific knowledge on a cluster of tasks defined by the professional group, in order to gain status, power, and autonomy for its profession.

Competition model: professionalization is seen as the development of experts who gain value for their clients by implementing those scientifically developed models that match the demands of the client and the determinants of the problem on a cluster of tasks negotiated with the client, and in permanent competition with other professionals.

Personality model: professionalization is seen as the development of experts who gain value for their clients by their commitment and their personality, their creativity and their enthusiasm for a cluster of tasks negotiated with the client.

Fig. 1. Four historical models of professionalism and professionalization.

debated part of social theory. Many authors developed a categorization of theories on professionalization (see, e.g. Abbott, 1988; Biemans, 1999; Modarressi, Newman, & Abolafia, 2001). However, not much effort has gone into interpreting the differences between theories, in order to reveal the consequences of the various approaches towards the practice of professionalization. Here I discuss the approaches of professionalization in a historical review, structured into four different models (see Fig. 1). Later in this manuscript I propose an interpretation of the differences.

1.1. Knowledge model

Most authors on professionalization refer to Carr-Saunders and Wilenski as the first scholars in this field (see Abbott, 1988; Biemans, 1999; Modarressi et al., 2001). Carr-Saunders (1966) proposed that professions are organized bodies of experts who apply abstract knowledge to particular cases in practice. These organized bodies have complex systems of schooling; potential professionals have to pass exams in order to qualify and to enter the profession. Professionals usually underwrote and enforced a code of ethics and were expected to have undergone highly specialized training and have a service-oriented attitude towards the well-being of the client and society (Modarressi et al., 2001). The presence of stated professional characteristics differentiates the profession from the non-profession. Wilenski constructed a developmental model of professionalization and proposed a checklist-like approach of steps towards professionalism (see Box 1).

The knowledge model emphasizes the professional group that develops the profession up to a mature and legitimate state. Any occupation has to go through several stages in order to gain recognition as

> **Box 1: The development of amateurism into professionalism**
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> "Professions begin when people "start doing full time the thing that needs doing." But then the issue of training arises, pushed by recruits or clients. Schools are created. The new schools, if not begun within universities, immediately seek affiliation with them. Inevitably, there then develop higher standards, longer training, earlier commitment to the profession, and a group of full-time teachers. Then the teaching professionals, along with their first graduates, combine to promote and create a professional association. The more active professional life enabled by this association leads to self-reflection, to possible change of name, and to an explicit attempt to separate competent from incompetent. Reflection about central tasks leads the profession to delegate routine work to paraprofessionals. At the same time the attempt to separate competent from incompetent leads to internal conflict between the officially trained younger generation and their on-the-job-trained elders, as well as to increasingly violent confrontations with outsiders. This period also contains efforts to secure state protection, although this does not always occur and is not peculiar to professions in any case. Finally, the rules that these events have generated, rules eliminating internal competition and charlatanry and establishing client protection, coalesce in a formal ethics code" (summary made by Abbott, 1988: p. 10, directly derived from Wilenski, 1964).

a profession. These stages are defined by the definitions of the occupation itself—the development of theories and methods, the regulation of education, and the implementation of these theories and methods. This knowledge development is coordinated and regulated by a professional association. Professionalization is seen as the development of experts who implement abstract, scientifically developed knowledge on a pre-defined cluster of tasks—pre-defined by the community of practitioners itself—in order to deliver a unique contribution to the welfare of the client and the advance of society. The association is there to create an infrastructure for the development of identity and expertise.

1.2. Status model

In the 1970s another model was developed, proposed by, among others, Larson (1977) and Friedson (1986, see also 2001). They stated that professional groups use professionalization mainly as a means to get status and autonomy. As in the knowledge model, an occupation needs a body of knowledge, specialized education in order to transfer this knowledge, a well-structured association, and job demarcation. But the focus in the status model is on a professional ideology with a clear system of rewards and sanctions, the development of rituals and professional behavior, and the demarcation of the market by licensing. As in the knowledge model, the idea is that an occupation has arrived at a professional level as soon as all criteria have been fulfilled. The difference is that professionalization is seen as an economic concept rather than as a socially oriented concept. The concern is not the well-being of the client and society as a whole, but the well-being of the professional group itself, which strives for exclusiveness, autonomy, and status in order to become desirable and well-paid. Development of knowledge is not (only) meant to produce rational solutions for factual problems, but (also) as a ritual by which a professional can guarantee its exclusivity. It is therefore not so much the rigor of the knowledge itself that matters, but the relevance of its gaining status.

Elaborating this view of professionalism, Nagla (1993: p. 3) refers to a much older model of professionalism, which was developed before the period of industrialization. This model focused on such groups as advocates and professors, who saw themselves as elites and strived for licensing, autonomy, their own educational systems, and a strong socialization of new members. Nagla called this view "status professionalism." According to him, these old professions were characterized by their internal systems of older professionals who inaugurate the younger generation and their strong sense of servitude to the power elite. In the status model, professionalization is seen as the process of development of an organized elite who use general and specific knowledge on a cluster of tasks pre-defined within the professional community, in order to gain status, power, and autonomy for its professional group. The focus is on the licensing of certain professionals, a positive image of the occupation, and the professional association as class-related pressure group.

1.3. Competition model

The 1980s, in turn, offered yet another view on professionalism. The emphasis was no longer on the development of a professional structure of the professional group or job demarcation, but on the exclusivity of the job that individuals exert for their clients. Abbott (1988) is a typical defender of this model. He claims that the developmental stages of the knowledge model are hardly followed in practice, but, more important, that they do not guarantee success. It is not the occupational group itself that defines what is good, but the client, Abbott claimed. A professional group's survival and success depend on whether the practitioners offer something unique and effective to their clients. According to Abbott, two things matter for being seen as a professional—the capabilities of an individual to define old problems in a new way and the rigor of the knowledge system used to generate suitable solutions for the client's problems. This has nothing to do with a strong association of experts and job demarcation, but, rather, with individual competencies. Paraphrasing Berlo (1960), one could say: "expertise is in the head, not in the association."

In this approach, the ideal is no longer the free enterprise of the professionals, as in the previous models. The focus is on the tasks of the practitioner—employed or hired—and the fact that the necessary expertise is more than laypersons or other professionals can offer. All professional groups have to prove continuously that they deliver value for money; its representatives are in constant competition with other occupational groups. As in the knowledge model, the emphasis is on scientific knowledge, but the question which knowledge is needed, depends on the situation and the client. That means that a professional needs to be able to search for new knowledge. The life cycle of knowledge is seen as short (cf. Weggeman, 1997), which is why a broad education and life-long learning is more important than a certain educational background. In this model, the role of the association changes into providing knowledge infrastructure and a network of knowledge workers.

1.4. Personality model

The 1990s produced another model again. Maister is one of the exponents of this model. As in the competition model, the emphasis is on the client who eventually decides what is good and what is not. "You cannot say that you are professional, you can only hope that clients describe you as professional" (Maister, 1997: p. 17). The difference between this model and the competition model is that expert knowledge is no longer seen as sufficient for being classified as a professional. General knowledge is

seen as more important. This kind of knowledge cannot be found in books or theories, but has to be acquired through experience. A good professional is not seen as an expert who knows what to do how, based on rational knowledge, but someone who coaches his or her client in difficult times and who puts into service everything he/she can. Mentality is seen as far more important than rational knowledge and relevant skills. Mentality has to be developed and is shown in devotion, passion, and enthusiasm (Maister, 1997: p. 16). It is not what you *know*, it is what you *think*. You can know a lot—the real challenge is to use all creativity you can generate to help the client. That is why the rigor of knowledge is less important than the relevance. Accordingly, models with face value are seen as more valuable than scientific theories, which may be well tested but will always be complex. Not knowledge or knowledge-searching capabilities, but general learning potential and empathy are essential features in this model. For this reason education should not focus on knowledge reproduction, but, rather, on the development of learning capability and creativity in finding acceptable solutions for clients (cf. Schön, 1987). The role of the association, then, is to provide a network of professionals and their experiences.

The four models and their associated variables are summarized in Table 1.

1.5. The four models in perspective: a typology

The first two models emphasize the structure by which professionals themselves can develop their profession. The competition and personality models are aimed at the occupation itself and what is needed to satisfy the client. In interpreting the four approaches to professionalization, the first partitioning is, therefore, based on who decides what kind of knowledge is needed to do the job: does this concern the occupational group itself (directive) or the interaction between clients and individual practitioners (interactive)? As to the second partitioning, there is a striking difference between the views on what kind of knowledge is needed to become a professional. The knowledge and competition models are focused on expert, verifiable knowledge, while in the status and personality models the emphasis is on other things than expert knowledge—namely, devotion, personality, effort, and enthusiasm. Therefore the second dimension is the kind of knowledge that is seen as essential to become a professional.

Table 1
The four professionalism models compared on relationship with client, the role of theory, of education and of professional associations

Model	Variables			
	Relationship with client	Role of theory	Role education	Role association
Knowledge model	Directive; expert decides what to do how	Generates pre-defined BOK	Generates pre-defined expertise	Infrastructure for development of identity and expertise
Status model	Directive; expert decides what to do how	Generates status and autonomy	Generates status and autonomy	Infrastructure for licensing and promotion of interest
Competition model	Interactive; expert and client interact on what to do how	Generates broad reservoir of new knowledge	Generates broad palette of knowledge options	Infrastructure for knowledge options
Personality model	Interactive; expert and client interact on what to do how	Mentality is more important	Generates analytical and creative power	Infrastructure for experiences

Rational intelligence

Knowledge model | Competition model

Directive ——————|—————— **Interactive**

Status model | Personality model
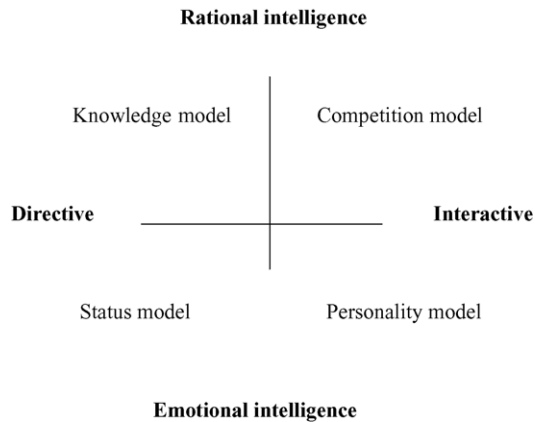
Emotional intelligence

Fig. 2. Typology of professionalism models based on who decides what knowledge is needed and what kind of knowledge is needed.

Maister calls it "mentality." Following Goleman (1996, 1998), I prefer to call it "emotional intelligence," as opposed to "rational intelligence," which is seen as needed in the knowledge and competition models.

These two dimensions define a typology of professionalism models based on who decides what knowledge is needed and the kind of knowledge that is seen as essential. Typology modeling is aimed at categorizing phenomena in real life in order to clarify any differences. Ritzer (2000) claims that "The important thing about typologies is that they are heuristic devices; they are meant to be useful and helpful in doing empirical research on understanding a specific aspect of the social world." Gadourek (1967) distinguishes two types of typology research: inductive-typifying and constructive-typifying. The inductive-typology method is a quantitative method (often conducted via factor or HOMALS analysis) for correlating the relationship between all kinds of indicator with certain kinds of factor. The constructive typology method is a theoretical construct in which certain aspects are highlighted, while others are downplayed. In this research project constructive-typifying is used as a first step to clarify the research question at hand. The typology of professionalism models is shown in Fig. 2.

2. Views on professionalism of academia and practice

Though public relations as an occupation has existed for at least a century and the field is ever booming, many authors state that the development of the practice is slow (for overviews see Sriramesh & Verčič, 2003; van Ruler & Verčič, 2004). Indeed, the former president of the educational board of the Dutch Association of Communication, Ben Warner, recently sighed that hardly any progress has been made in the communication field (Lebbing, 2003: p. 12). The typology of professional models provides an explanation of why public relations practice develops so slowly.

The professionalization of an occupation can be seen as the interaction between two parties: on the one hand you have practitioners, associations, and clients, and on the other hand, scholars. To my knowledge, there is no systematic international research into the views on professionalism of these groups, but we

can find all kinds of references to the models they adhere to. I will first turn to the scholars, and then deal with the other groups.

2.1. Scholars' views on professionalization

Public relations scholars seem to agree on how to understand professionalism in public relations. Grunig and Hunt (1984: p. 66) stated that an occupation becomes a profession when a majority of its practitioners qualify as professionals, yet "Public relations probably will not become a full-fledged profession until its practitioners approach their work as intellectuals" (p. 77). Their view on professionalism was mentioned already and can be typified as a view from a rational intelligence model. According to many leading scholars in the field, especially the solid grounded use of theory and research is extremely important for professionalization (see Pieczka & L'Etang, 2001, for an overview of this research). The widely held claim is that "until theory building assumes a more prominent role, public relations will remain in a metaphysical state" (Terry, 1989: p. 286).

Cutlip et al. (2000)Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2000, in their seminal textbook, made the following statement on professionalism in public relations:

"In addition to the ethical foundation and moral imperative outline in the previous section, other indicators of professional status include the following:

1. Specialized educational preparation to acquire unique knowledge and skills, based on a body of theory developed through research
2. Recognition by the community of a unique and essential service
3. Autonomy in practice and acceptance of personal responsibility by practitioners
4. Codes of ethics and standards of performance enforced by a self-governing association of colleagues

In summary, for public relations to achieve professional status, there must be specialized educational programs, a body of knowledge, community recognition, individual accountability, and commitment to abide by established codes that protect the public interest and spell out social responsibility" (p. 149).

Cutlip et al.'s view reveals a rather pure knowledge model of professionalization. The same view is found in the Port-of-Entry report on public relations education for the twenty-first century of the 1999 Commission on Public Relations Education (Institute for Public Relations, 1999). One of the main claims in this report is that "these programs will enhance the likelihood that public relations education will produce more successful practitioners and leaders and advance the profession's contribution to society" (p. 44). In their explanation of what is needed in education, the authors of this report specify necessary knowledge and skills, they search for accreditation of certain programs that meet their criteria, and they claim a central role for the associations in this respect. "Excellent public relations education [which is in this report based on rational knowledge, BvR] will be the foundation for preparing new professionals for this dual responsibility" (p. 12).

Although never captured systematically—as in the Port-of-Entry report—European scholars seem to have a somewhat different view. It could very well be the reason why professionalism had not been studied as such by European scholars. Public relations education is booming business in Europe as well, though mainly at Bachelors level, not at the more intellectual Masters or Ph.D. level and often only as an optional course (van Ruler et al., 2004). It could well be that the professionalization model of some of the European scholars were better qualified as a knowledge-production model than as knowledge model per se. This means that public relations scholars in Europe are perhaps more oriented to their own scientific

discipline than to a certain occupational need of practitioners. Günter Bentele confirmed this at the 2003 ICA conference when he stated that academia and practice have totally different logics. Still, it fits in the knowledge-model approach: rational intelligence and a pre-defined body of knowledge and skills are the prerequisites of a profession (Szyska & Bentele, 1995: p. 19). Other European countries show the same ideals (van Ruler & Verčič, 2004).

We may conclude that, at a scholarly level, expert knowledge and a pre-defined body of knowledge and skills are seen as the means to become professional. Besides, it is obvious that a pre-defined body of knowledge and skills are seen as necessary.

Nevertheless, research shows that practitioners do not apply theories and, moreover, that they are not interested in applying theories (e.g. Pracht, 1991; van Ruler, 1996; Terry, 1989). And all studies of the practice show that having a specific education is not the norm (e.g. Grunig, Lance Toth, & Childers Hon, 2001; Röttger, 2000; van Ruler, 2000). On the basis of the scholarly studies of the practice of public relations in several countries (Grunig et al., 2001; Pracht, 1991; Röttger, 2000; van Ruler & de Lange, 2002; van Ruler & Verčič, 2004; Sriramesh & Verčič, 2003; Terry, 1989), we can conclude that public relations is far from professionalized.

It is not clear if this is also the view of the practitioners themselves. Dillenschneider (1989: p. 3) noted, "Strictly speaking, public relations has not yet attained the full status of a profession in the sense in which law, medicine, and accounting, for example are professions. [. . .] We have, however, achieved a high level of development toward genuine professionalism." It is not difficult to find claims like this in professional books and journals. The question is why practitioners seem to be ignoring the scholarly work that has been carried out and why senior practitioners and CEOs still hire practitioners without any public relations oriented education. And, moreover, why they view themselves as (nearby) professionalism. It could well be that this is not a matter of an "obstinate audience" (cf. Bauer, 1964) but that it is due to the fact that the views of practitioners, associations, and clients on what needs to be done for a practitioner to be considered a professional are different from the scholars' views on this.

2.2. The views on professionalism of practitioners, associations, and clients

The first thing Dutch practitioners say when they talk about students doing work placement in their firms is that they have to start all over again and make them forget whatever they have learned. In a survey among the communication managers of more than 500 companies in The Netherlands, three quarters of the respondents said that general knowledge and personality are the most important characteristics for a career in public relations. Detailed expert knowledge was not seen as important at all (van Ruler, 1996). In a larger study, van Ruler (2000) found that 90% of the Dutch communication managers do not have a communication-oriented education. The best-selling Dutch post-initial courses for seniors and managers in communication are aimed at personal development and sharing of experiences (van Ruler, 2003). There are hardly any courses in which rigorous knowledge plays a role. We may conclude that in general, Dutch practitioners are not interested in expert knowledge, but all the more so in mentality. This refers to an emotional-intelligence model of professionals. The fact that only a fraction (5%) of all practitioners are members of a professional association suggests that most Dutch practitioners subscribe to a personality model of professionalism. This was confirmed recently by a project by one of the most successful headhunters in the Netherlands, Jim Kraaykamp, investigating the future of the profession, by interviewing his clients on necessary competencies. According to Mr Kraaykamp, professionals in public relations do not need intervention techniques any more, they need to know "how to inspire" (VPRA, 2002).

"Emotion first, skills later", he learned. "Energy, presence, sensibility, a broad orientation, and, most of all, 'guts' is what a practitioner needs to succeed," he said, and "that has to do with personal development, not with education." He is convinced that the successful consultant in 2005 will not be educated or experienced in this branch at all. In their presentation of priorities of 2002, the Dutch Association of Communication agreed.

There are indications that this situation is not confined to The Netherlands. The Delphi research project on the characteristic features of public relations in Europe (van Ruler et al., 2004) revealed a similar view on theory building and education all over Europe. And outside Europe, studies on the practice of public relations in the United States, for example, show that formal education is not seen as necessary to succeed (Institute of Public Relations, 1999), nor is the use of planning and research (Dozier, 1992; Pavlik, 1987). All this fits into the emotional-intelligence models of professionalization.

Turning now to professional organization, the new *Handbook of Global Public Relations* shows that there are not many strong professional associations. The European Delphi Research project revealed that in Europe, only Sweden and the UK have flourishing associations. But even the Institute of Public Relations in Britain, which is the biggest association in Europe, incorporates only a small portion of all British practitioners. Ehling (1992: p. 456) stated that in the US "only a fraction of those who claim to be engaged in public relations work belong to one or both of the two major public relations organizations or to any of smaller specialized public relations groups, and only a minority of practitioners seek to be accredited by either PRSA or IABC, which is regarded as a status of professionalism attained by meeting established standards and passing a series of examination." Considering the many statements of spokespersons in the professional journals about the high level of achievement of public relations, combined with the fact that only a small part of practitioners are members, we may assume that, on the whole, this generation of practitioners adhere to a personality model of professionalism.

There is no indication that practitioners themselves see this as a problem. Those professionals who claim that education and research do matter are not very successful in changing the application policies of departments and agencies in public relations or in the development of structural sponsoring of knowledge production—to the best of my knowledge, knowledge production is sponsored only structurally by IABC. We may therefore assume that most of these claims are empty. Alma Kadragik (2002)—president of Alcat Communications International, former president of the Polish Public Relations Association, and author of several books on public relations—showed a different stand in her presentation at a congress on Public Relations Education in Europe. She did not mince words: "If theory makes applying public relations more difficult, then theory is a burden that can lead the practitioner into making serious errors, and there is no need for theory in PR. I am an extremist in my views of PR but not a complete extremist". [. . .] "The potential PR practitioner must learn that business or non-profit or government depends on budget; that usually no one is willing to pay for the brilliant ideas; that behavior and packaging are often more important than content or substance; and that education—no matter how much, not even the Ph.D. which I have in English literature—does not teach you about client relationships. [. . .] My recommendation: put students to work in internships; let them talk about what they are doing outside of work in an educational or internet setting; and balance the two" (pp. 155–156). It is questionable whether this is an extreme point of view in practice.

There are no real signs that the associations fear for un-professionalism. In Europe, there are hardly any structural contacts between associations and scholars, and no European association, apart from the Swedish association, sponsors scientific research. The Dutch association has a funded chair on professionalism in public relations, but is not able to provide any funds for complement of the chair or research.

Many associations in Europe claim on their websites that public relations has matured, and has developed as a strategic function on the management level. It is hard to find any interest in expert-knowledge development—not in Europe anyway.

Moreover, following PRSA, many associations are striving to accredit or license their members in a certain way; accreditation is also one of the themes the Global Alliance is working on. These are elements of the status model of professionalism, which is why one may assume that associations tend to see their role most of all from a status-model point of view.

Finally, we turn to the role of clients. In the Netherlands, we have tried to encourage client organizations to discuss the role of public relations practitioners. However, only the central government is taking this seriously; it went as far as organizing state committees to discuss the roles and tasks of communication experts. None of the other sectors shows any interest in any discussion on the role of public relations or its professionalization (van Ruler, 2003). There is no research done on the view of clients yet. Outside The Netherlands, very little research is carried out to discover the whishes and view of clients; a lone example is Danny Moss and his colleagues, who are researching the views of top managers of public relations practice (Moss, Warnaby, & Newman, 2000; Wanaby & Moss, 1997). Tellingly, in the 1999 Commission on Public Relations Education, which produced the Port-of-Entry report, the client is the big absentee. This seems also true for research in public relations in the USA (see, e.g. Heath, 2001; Pasadeos, Renfro, & Hanily, 1999). Professionalization of public relations could well be a matter of the practitioners only, without much contact with scholars or clients.

2.3. Conclusion

We tentatively conclude that scholars are clear about professionalization: their perspective is a rational-intelligence oriented one and, perhaps predominantly, a knowledge model. Practitioners seem much more inclined to the emotional-intelligence perspectives, and maybe even to a large extent, to the personality model. Associations, finally, seem to favor a status model. An empirical analysis of these models in the Netherlands showed that there is indeed no agreement between these parties on what is needed to become a professional in public relations (van Ruler, 2003). It is doubtful whether the situation is much different in other parts of the world.

In an article on core professional values, Grunig (2000: p. 23) concluded that public relations has gained a great deal of attention, but this attention "probably has produced more suspicion, fear, and antipathy than respect". We can safely assume the problem is widespread—it is reported in the *Handbook of Global Public Relations* and in *Public Relations and Communication Management in Europe*, both of which have wide geographical coverage. Things have not improved lately, with the recent problems with trust in and credibility of a number of leading politicians (George Bush, Tony Blair, Berlusconi) and leading companies (Enron, Ahold) and the resignation of Alistair Campbell as Mr. Blair's spokesman. All these events have sparkled a public discussion on the role of spokespersons and public relations consultancy; they are evidence of Grunig's claim.

Ehling (1992) reported that, as early as 1989, Grunig claimed that the required education resources for strengthening existing public relations educational programs were not forthcoming, even where enrollments are rising. "In the words of Cutlip et al. (1985), public relations still is seen [by schools of journalism or communication] as an unsavory activity committed to cluttering the mass media with the debris of pseudo-events and phony phrases leading to channels of communication being corroded with cynicism and credibility gaps." (Ehling, 1992: p. 457).

The same statement can be found—though more politely—in the Port-of-Entry study of 1999. The study claims that it is critical that graduate programs have full-time faculty with Ph.D.'s, capable of teaching public relations theory and doing research; they should also be qualified to supervise graduate theses and dissertations in public relations (p. 37). This shows that scholars themselves have not yet been able to convince their principals that public relations should be seen from a knowledge model. It may well be that this is because they are isolated; they get no support from practice. This, in turn, may be the case because practitioners and scholars are from different planets.

There is yet another question to be discussed. Is any of the models optimal? If this is so, should that model be chosen to the exclusion of the other models? We now turn to these questions.

3. Towards an integrated model of professionalism

Pieczka and L'Etang (2001: p. 228) concluded that the way in which professionalism is understood by academia reflects a very specific, normative view, drawn from a knowledge model of professionalism. They argue for the replacement of this model by the competition model, as I have called it. I doubt the value of this replacement. There is no evidence that one model is better than the other. In an emancipated and democratic society, the directive models can indeed be seen as outdated. Professional groups can no longer decide for themselves what is good and what is not, as the health sector shows. But focusing on the broad demands of clients—which modern models value most—is problematic as well. The profession becomes invisible and undefinable, and it is impossible to develop a professional identity. I agree with Pieczka and L'Etang that professionalism is not only about finding the right solutions, but also on "convincing others about the legitimacy of these solutions and the professional's right to deal with the problem in the first place" (p. 214). This is precisely where the competition model fall short. For this a professional identity is needed. Modern theories of branding show that a strong brand is important for the sales of products and services. Yet it seems that we cannot consider public relations as a "strong brand" in the sense that it is seen as a valuable contribution to business and society. The quality of the directive models should therefore be combined with the quality of the interactive models in a dynamic professional development model.

Biemans (1999) researched the professionalization of personnel management, showing that the legitimacy of the professional is an important factor in the development of the occupation. Power and influence of professionals are accepted only if clients are willing to acknowledge their expertise. It is not clear that this can be achieved by individuals alone, she shows; associations are in a better position to accomplish this.

As to the kind of knowledge that is needed, we can use expertise theory. A professional identity is as strong as its weakest professionals. The bottom line is that professionals add value via their valued expertise. Theories on expertise show that value cannot any longer be based on just mentality. Dörner & Schölkopf (1991) say that an expert is someone who is able to do the right thing at the right moment. Holyoak (1991: p. 309) claims something similar: "In general, an expert will have succeeded in adapting to the inherent constraints of the task." He distinguishes routine expertise and adaptive expertise. Routine experts are able to solve problems by learned procedures; adaptive experts are able to solve problems by finding new procedures. Routine expertise is important for routine tasks, adaptive expertise is important for complex and unpredictable tasks. Adaptive expertise comes from learning "through forward search, rather than through goal-dominated means-ends analysis" (p. 311). Schön (1983) emphasized 'flexible expertise'

for complex duties—this compares with Holyoak's 'adaptive expertise'. Flexible expertise is created by the ability to gain deep understanding of a situation. This insight is based both on personal experience and on expert knowledge: personal experience and motivation make it possible to use knowledge in practical situations. If we follow Schön in this, both rational and emotional intelligence are required.

Biemans (1999: p. 35) uses a *I/T* ratio, stating that professionalism needs two things:

- *Technicality*: These are the documented knowledge and skills, necessary for the profession, learnable and relatively easily transferable.
- *Indetermination*: The recognition that situations and problems can change and may need different approaches and solutions depending on their context. There are no fixed rules and algorithms for the solution of a problems: each problem needs to be addressed individually, which requires creativity and intellecual independence in the professional.

This dichotomy fits the routine/adaptive dichotomy.

Biemans claims that technicality and indetermination are the extreme ends of a scale, and that most professions can be classified as technicality oriented or indetermination oriented. But this classification is not necessarily fixed; indeed, most professions will oscillate between situations as well as periods of increased technicality and periods of more intense indetermination. As to legitimation, a profession defined by indetermination only cannot be taught and is therefore unverifiable and more difficult to legitimize. In contrast, a high degree of technicality makes a profession highly predictable verifiable, and, therefore, easy to acquire for beginning professionals. However, the applicability of the profession will be low as it can be used only in standard situations, and its external status will be under pressure unless there is a high degree of specialization (Biemans, 1999: p. 35). As there is hardly any specialization in public relations, Biemans would say that we need not only a professional identity, nor only expert knowledge and mentality in general, but also job specialization.

In conclusion, all four models could be useful for the professionalization of public relations. We need to combine the relevant and useful aspects of each model in one integrated model of professionalization, in order to create a strong brand and valued expertise. This will be possible only if scholars and practitioners are willing to accept each other's ideas about professionalization. That means they must be willing to meet, to discuss their ideas and work together on a professional identity that stipulates parameters but leaves scope for the width and the dynamics of the practice. Associations are best placed to organize these discussions; and strong associations are needed to accomplish this.

The closer collaboration of scholars and practitioners also means that scholars have to admit that rational knowledge needs to be combined with emotional knowledge. For this Schön's (1987) concept of 'Teaching artistry through reflection-in-action' could serve as a basis. What aspiring practitioners need to learn most, professional schools seem least able to teach, according to Schön (p. 8). It is not enough to state that there is a totally different logic between academia and practice and a yawning gap between these two. Schön claims that "professional education should be redesigned to combine the teaching of applied science with coaching in the artistry of reflection-in-action" (p. xii). This means that we might have to reconsider our methodology as well. In the community of management scholars, anthropological methods and action research are emerging as important and valuable research methodologies for certain practical questions. In view of the kind of problems that confront public relations practitioners, we also might need to reconsider our methodology and find methods that are more in line with public relations planning than the normal, classical social-sciences methods.

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