

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE
MEANING OF PUBLIC DIPLOMACY:
A NETWORK APPROACH

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The purpose of this study was to explore public diplomacy from a network approach. Whereas traditionally public diplomacy was conceptualized as a communication function belonging exclusively to governments, the network approach suggested that public diplomacy is a multilateral communication process that includes nongovernmental organizations, governments, publics, corporations, and other possible actors (e.g., Fisher 2008; 2010; Zaharna, 2010). Network approach to public diplomacy accounts for the technological advances, suggesting that digital media is an integral part of public diplomacy networks. This study used the qualitative research methodology to answer three research questions that sought to explore public diplomacy definitions, public diplomacy networks, and the use of digital media in public diplomacy. This research used the network approach as a conceptual framework and not as a methodology.

In addition, this dissertation explored relationship cultivation processes in public diplomacy networks. Fitzpatrick (2007; 2009) argued that relational framework provided a holistic approach to public diplomacy, emphasizing interpersonal relationships as well as long-term plans. This study explored relationship cultivation processes in public diplomacy practice.

Data included 32 in-depth semi-structured interviews with employees in governmental and nongovernmental organizations that were tasked with international communication. Findings confirmed the two approaches to public diplomacy evident in the literature: traditional approach and network approach. Results revealed that some actors viewed public diplomacy as networks, although such view was not common and links between actors were limited.

Data suggested that public diplomacy networks were formed around issues of global concerns. Publics were conceptualized in terms of demographics and interests instead of geographical locations. Findings also suggested two new goals for public diplomacy: to explain global issues to audiences inside the country, and to empower publics. Convening, or network-making power, and expert power emerged as valuable sources of influence. Results showed that competition was a predominant relationship cultivation strategy. Trust emerged as a relationship cultivation strategy as well as an outcome. Last, findings suggested several advantages of digital media use, including its ability to reach many various publics simultaneously. However, results also showed that digital media was used as a “bull horn” rather than a two-way communication tool.

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE MEANING OF PUBLIC DIPLOMACY:
NETWORK APPROACH

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Dedication

To the people around the world who have been marginalized and whose human rights have been violated. To those who have not been heard by governments, organizations, and publics in other countries.

I hope that one day public diplomacy will indeed be *public*.

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My sincere gratitude goes to everyone in my life for helping me to go through this academic journey. Whether we spent years or just hours together, I am sure that in some way or another you have made a difference in my life and contributed to getting me where I am right now. For the interest of space and time, I would like to mention just a few of you.

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Table of Contents

Dedication	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	v
List of Tables	ix
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Chapter 2: Literature Review	11
Overview of Public Diplomacy Research	11
Hard Power	14
Soft Power	17
Smart Power	20
Public diplomacy from a public relations perspective	24
Network Theory and Public Diplomacy	31
Nature of networks	33
Role of technology in networks	36
Network power	41
The network approach to public diplomacy	43
Relationship Management in Public Relations and Public Diplomacy	49
Relationship management defined	51
Relationship management, social capital, and networks	55
Relationship management in public diplomacy	57
Digital Media in Public Diplomacy	61

New media defined	61
Online relationship cultivation strategies.....	63
Research Questions.....	65
Chapter 3: Methodology	67
Rationale	67
Data Collection	68
Sample and recruitment	70
IRB approval and interview protocol.....	74
Data Analysis	76
Validity and Reliability.....	77
Reflexivity.....	80
Methodological Limitations.....	83
Summary.....	84
Chapter 4: Results.....	85
RQ1 : How do public diplomacy actors define public diplomacy?	85
Definitions.....	85
Public diplomacy issues.....	87
Public diplomacy and public relations	89
Goals	92
Public diplomacy strategies	98
Publics.....	104
Context in public diplomacy.....	108

RQ2: How do public diplomacy actors make meaning of public diplomacy as communication networks (if at all)?	113
Nature of networks.....	114
Actors.....	116
Internal and external networks.....	123
Network purposes and advantages.....	125
Network links.....	128
Building networks.....	135
Obstacles in building and managing communication networks	140
Network structure.....	142
Network communication.....	147
Power in networks.....	152
RQ3 : How do public diplomacy actors make meaning of relationship cultivation?	153
Relationship cultivation	155
Online relationship cultivation strategies.....	159
RQ 4 : How do public diplomacy actors use digital media to achieve public diplomacy goals?	168
Generational gap.....	168
Fragmentation	170
Testing the water with digital media.....	173
New media broadcasting.....	176
New media reach.....	177

Open source environment and security.....	179
Organizational digital media use	179
Summary of the Findings.....	182
Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions.....	187
Public diplomacy	188
Empowerment of Publics.....	191
Networks in public diplomacy	195
Public diplomacy context.....	199
Power	201
Relationship management in public diplomacy	205
Digital Media in Public Diplomacy	210
Practical Implications.....	212
Implications for governments and organizations.....	213
Implications for publics	215
Conclusion	219
Limitations	216
Suggestions for Future Research	217
Appendix A: Interview Invitation Script	223
Appendix B: Interview Protocol.....	224
Appendix C: Results	229
Bibliography	236

List of Tables

Table 1: Results for Research Question 1.....	229
Table 2: Results for Research Question 2.....	231
Table 3: Results for Research Question 3.....	234
Table 4: Results for Research Question 4.....	235

Chapter 1: Introduction

Public diplomacy emerged as a field in the middle of the 20th century. Since then, public diplomacy had undergone many changes, which made it difficult to develop a unique definition and conceptualizations of the field. In addition, the technological developments in the 20th century changed the way governments functioned in the world arena (Gregory, 2008). Emergence of the Internet offered new opportunities to government communication with international publics. In the past, governments were bound to go through other governments to reach international publics. The Internet provided a new platform to communicate with the international public without a gatekeeper. Also, the Internet allowed the public to act not only as consumers of messages but also as producers. Thus, governments gained the opportunity not only to speak but also to listen to the people in other countries and communicate with them.

Literature suggested several definitions and approaches to public diplomacy. Public diplomacy is different from diplomacy, i.e., communication between governments (Jonsson & Hall, 2003), and concerns a government's efforts to communicate with publics in other nations "in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation's ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as its national goals and policies" (Tuch, 1990, p. 3). Public diplomacy was traditionally viewed as a way to "inform, influence, and engage in support of national objectives and foreign policies" (Snow, 2009, p. 6). Research explored government roles as they related to interaction between governments and non-state actors (Gilboa, 2008), soft power (Nye, 2004), nation branding (e.g., Olins, 2005; Potter, 2002-2003),

relationship building (Fitzpatrick, 2007; 2009; Zaharna, 2010), sociological public diplomacy (Yun & Kim, 2008; Yun & Toth, 2009), the role of culture (e.g., Schneider, 2006; Yun, 2008), and image management (e.g., Peijuan, Ting, & Pang, 2009; Zhang & Benoit, 2004).

Other studies suggested that political landscape changed in late 20th century, thus changing the role that states play (Gregory, 2008). As a consequence, international organizations and private companies also became important actors in world affairs. Public diplomacy was no longer reserved for governments, but was open for other organizations and publics, possibly forming a network. From that perspective, modern society was viewed as a network society. Manuel Castells (2004; 2009) described it as a global society with technology as its indispensable element. Thus, literature suggested a new conceptualization of public diplomacy, describing it as a network consisting of various international actors who used both digital technology and traditional tools to communicate with each other.

Leaders' efforts to reach international audiences date back to as early as Ancient Egypt and biblical times (Kunczik, 1997), Greece, Rome, and later in the Middle Ages (e.g., Cull, 2009; Melissen, 2005). In the 13th century, Roman Emperor Frederick II sent newsletters to other countries telling about his court's activities (Cull, 2009). The invention of the printing press in the 15th century created new opportunities for public diplomacy, allowing countries to publish newsletters to reach foreign audiences (Melissen, 2005). A more modern example of strategic image cultivation is Kemal Ataturk's efforts to create a new image and identity for Turkey after the fall of the Ottoman Empire. In both World Wars, a more systematic and

coordinated approach to communication with people in other countries is present (Melissen, 2005). In 1965, Edmund Gullion of Tufts University used the term public diplomacy to describe communication between governments and the international public. Since then, public diplomacy has been studied in various fields, including international relations and, more recently, communication.

In 1992, Signitzer and Coombs argued that public relations and public diplomacy share similar goals, suggesting that the convergence of two fields can contribute to the understanding of public diplomacy. Interestingly, the academic study of public diplomacy and public relations emerged at the same time - in the middle of the 20th century (e.g., Botan & Hazleton, 2006; Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2006; Signitzer & Wamser, 2006) and shared several characteristics. First, the definitions of both fields reflect similar goals. Public relations can be defined as “the management of communication between an organization and its publics” (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 6), whereas a broad definition of public diplomacy is that it is a government “task of communicating with foreign publics” (Wang, 2007, p. 26). Second, public relations and public diplomacy share several functions: representational, advisory, intelligence gathering, intercultural, dialogic, and management of public opinion (L’Etang, 1996; L’Etang, 2009a). Third, public relations officers as well as diplomats serve as “cultural intermediaries” between the organization and the public (e.g., L’Etang, 2009a, Curtin & Gaither, 2005). In other words, public diplomacy and public relations practitioners translate messages from management to the target publics. Fourth, both fields have increasingly focused on relationship management as the main

goal of communication between organizations and publics (e.g., Fitzpatrick, 2007, 2009; Grunig & Huang, 2000; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000a; Zaharna, 2010).

The focus on publics and communication is evident from the definitions of both fields. Public relations literature offers several definitions of these concepts, which may be valuable for this research. A public has been defined by Hallahan (1999) as a “group of people who relate to an organization, demonstrate varying degrees of activity or passivity, and might or might not interact with others concerning their relationship” (as cited by Aldoory & Sha, 2007, p. 340). Heath (2007) suggested that “a public can be an advocate as well as the target of others’ appeals” (p. 50). Likewise, Stroh (2007) suggested that publics should not be viewed as passive groups of people to be identified and manipulated, but rather as participants in communication.

Communication has been defined as “behavior – of people, groups, or organizations – that consists of moving symbols to and from other people, groups or organizations.” (Grunig, 1997, as cited in Grunig, 2006). Communication is sharing information “from one individual entity to another individual entity” (Zaharna, 2010, p. 138). In addition, Heath (2007) emphasized problems and issues as the reason for communication, defining communication as “a strategic response to some problem” (p. 51).

Despite the similar goals and nature of both fields, public diplomacy and public relations have witnessed little convergence in terms of research and practice (Taylor & Kent, 2006). The separation between the two fields may be attributed to the predominant view that the goal of public relations is to serve corporate interests

(Botan, 1992). As L'Etang (2009a) argued, "our understanding of public relations in public diplomacy, as well as public relations as diplomacy, is to some extent limited, and, in some cases, may be stereotypical" (p. 612). However, public relations scholars have looked beyond serving organizational interests, using rhetorical (e.g., Heath, 2006a, 2006b; Heath, Toth, & Waymer, 2009), critical (e.g., Curtin & Gaither, 2005; Dozier & Lauzen, 2000; L'Etang, 2005; Woodward, 2003) and postmodern approaches (Holtzhausen, 2002). In other words, public relations can serve the interests of different groups, including activists, nongovernmental organizations, and society at large.

Summarizing previous works, public relations and public diplomacy share similar goals and functions. Interestingly, in both fields scholars increasingly focus on relationship management between publics and organizations or governments. However, public diplomacy and public relations research witnessed little convergence. L'Etang (2009a) argued that the contribution of public relations to public diplomacy is that it can facilitate engagement and relationship building with target publics, problem solving, negotiation, and "construction of shared social realities" (L'Etang, 2009a, p. 620).

Many studies of public diplomacy draw from Joseph Nye's (2004) concept of soft and hard power. International scholars argue that public diplomacy rests on soft power. Soft power, or an ability to influence due to attraction (Nye, 2004), is different from hard power, which is manifested through coercion (i.e., military intervention). To acquire soft power, governments need moral authority or legitimacy and

credibility (Telhami, 2007), reflected by expertise, trustworthiness, and goodwill (Gass & Seiter, 2009).

However, power can also hold states back in successful implementation of public diplomacy. For example, the United States' unbridled power may elicit negative reactions among international publics (Edelstein & Krebs, 2005).

Recent research on public diplomacy has used other approaches that focus on relationships and sharing of power. The network approach to public diplomacy suggests that governments are not the only primary actors in communication between states and publics (Fisher, 2010, Zaharna, 2005). Rather, public diplomacy is a network comprised of several actors, including governments, nongovernmental and international organizations, international corporations, and mass media corporations, to name a few.

Similar to the network approach, the relational approach to public diplomacy focuses on relationships between different public diplomacy actors (Fitzpatrick, 2007; 2009). The relational view of public diplomacy is rather recent and few studies have used empirical data to explore how governments manage relationships with other public diplomacy actors. However, public relations scholarship has a more developed body of research on relationships and cultivation strategies, conducted both offline and online.

Both communication and international relations literature point to the importance of the relationship management perspective in public diplomacy (e.g., Fitzpatrick, 2007, 2009; L'Etang, 2009a; Nelson & Izadi, 2009; Snow, 2009; Telhami, 2004; Zaharna, 2010). A relationship is "the state which exists between an

organization and its key publics in which the actions of either entity impact the economic, social, political, and/or cultural well-being of the other entity” (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998, p. 62). Relationships are transactional, dynamic, goal oriented, influenced by antecedents and consequences, and driven by perceived needs (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000b).

Public diplomacy studies of relationships point to trust (Lynch, 2003), mutuality (Melissen, 2005), and long-term focus (Kelly, 2009) as some of the variables that describe relationship management. A study by Fitzpatrick (2009) of a relational approach to public diplomacy proposed several variables in public diplomacy relationship management, including listening and dialogue, effective interpersonal relationships, long-term focus, credibility, and use of technology. Public relations scholarship suggests that such relationships can also be built online (e.g., Kelleher, 2009; Kelleher & Miller, 2006; Men & Tsai, 2013; Taylor, Kent, & White, 2001).

Traditionally, public diplomacy is associated with mass media. Radio and television were the primary means of public diplomacy in the 20th century. One of the first of such initiatives was the Voice of America, which started its broadcasting in 1942 with the goal to “project American values, culture and life style and [...] advance U.S. policies” (Smyth, 2001, p. 429). More recent examples of media diplomacy are Radio Sawa and Al-Hurra television (Dabbous & Nasser, 2009; el-Nawawy, 2006; Khatib & Dodds, 2009), launched by the U.S. government and broadcasted in the Arabic language to reach Middle Eastern audiences. Examples from other countries include Russia Today, a Russian government - sponsored radio

and television station launched in 2005 (Ioffe, 2010), Qatar-sponsored Al-Jazeera, as well as European channels, France 24, Deutsche Welle (Seib, 2010) and BBC (Sreberny, Gillespie, & Baumann, 2010).

Although media allowed governments to reach large masses of people abroad, not always were mediated messages interpreted as intended. Scholars attributed the challenges of using global media to cultural resonance (Entman, 2008; Sheaffer & Gabay, 2009), which suggests that it is easier to communicate with the people in those countries that have similar cultural values and assumptions, and more difficult to communicate with countries drastically different in terms of culture. Another challenge to mass media channels was the open access to information, which requires governments to synchronize the messages they sent abroad with domestic messages (Sheaffer & Shenhav, 2009). The rising popularity of new media, especially social media, has been little explored in public diplomacy research.

The rise of digital media has offered new possibilities for public diplomacy, allowing all actors to participate, not only governments. The Internet is perhaps the most important force in the network society (Castells, 2009). Although increasingly public diplomacy scholars discuss building and maintaining relationships as an important feature of new public diplomacy, little research has addressed how such relationships can develop online.

Public relations scholars have found several relationships management strategies that organizations can use to cultivate relationships online (e.g., Briones, Kuch, Liu, & Jin, 2011; Hallahan, 2008; Kelleher & Miller, 2006; Kent & Taylor, 2002). Their findings show that cultivation strategies may differ for building

relationships on social media platforms versus other means. For example, studies of blogs suggested that conversational human voice and communicated relational commitment are useful strategies in building relationships with target publics (Kelleher, 2009; Kelleher & Miller, 2006).

The purpose of this study is to contribute to both public diplomacy and public relations research. First, the study will extend the understanding of U.S. public diplomacy networks by looking at how government and non-government employees understand networks. Second, this research will contribute to relationship management research by testing online relationship cultivation strategies, and exploring whether online strategies differ for different new media platforms.

The dissertation consists of five chapters. The current chapter provides the background and the rationale for the study.

Chapter two consists of several parts. The first part provides an overview of public diplomacy research in the communication and international relations fields. The second part offers a discussion of network theory, network society, and the network approach to public diplomacy. The third part provides an overview of public relations research in relationship management, especially focusing on new media use to cultivate relationships in public diplomacy. Research questions for this study are provided at the end of each part as well as at the end of the second chapter.

Chapter three describes the methodology for collecting data and answering the research questions posed in this study. It offers the rationale and steps I took to conduct the study. The chapter also describes how I sought to ensure validity and reliability of the study results.

Chapter four presents results of the study. The chapter is organized according to the four research questions. The findings are supported with exemplary quotations from the interviews.

Chapter five offers a discussion of the study results. In this chapter, I sought to connect the results in the study with previous literature, and highlight the major contributions of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a conceptual understanding and the rationale for the proposed study. Specifically, it starts with an overview of the public diplomacy research. Then, it provides a conceptual understanding of the network theory and how it applies to public diplomacy. Last, it offers a review of the relationship management literature in public relations research, especially focusing on new media use in public diplomacy. Each subsection is followed by a research question based on the reviewed literature.

Overview of Public Diplomacy Research

Although public diplomacy has been practiced for many centuries (e.g., Cull, 2009; Melissen, 2005; Kunczik, 2009), the modern history of public diplomacy dates back to the beginning of the 20th century. After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, public diplomacy has become a regular term both in non-academic and academic literature (Cull, 2008). The widely accepted definition of public diplomacy is that it is “a government’s process of communication with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation’s ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as its national goals and policies” (Tuch, 1990, p. 3). In addition, Melissen (2005) argued that public diplomacy is about “building relationships with civil society actors in other countries and about facilitating networks between nongovernmental parties at home and abroad” (Melissen, 2005, p. 23).

Public diplomacy research can be summarized in four ways. First, public diplomacy research shows little consensus on the analytical boundaries of public

diplomacy (Gregory, 2008). It is studied in different fields, including international relations, public policy, political science, and more recently, communication. Thus, conceptualizations of public diplomacy vary: Some highlight the goal of public diplomacy to influence foreign audiences. For example, Cull (2009) sees public diplomacy as “an international actor’s attempt to manage the international environment through engagement with a foreign public” (Cull, 2009, p. 12). Others focus on the goal of public diplomacy to explain, thus conceptualizing it as one-way communication. For example, a commonly used definition of public diplomacy suggests that it is “a government’s process of communication with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation’s ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as its national goals and policies” (Tuch, 1990, p. 3). Yet others conceptualize public diplomacy through the prism of relationship building, thus seeing communication between government and publics as a two-way street. Fitzpatrick’s (2009) view of public diplomacy is that it is “to help a nation establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with strategic foreign publics that can affect national interests” (p. 105).

Second, despite the fact that public diplomacy has played an important role in world affairs for the last decades, it has only recently started to attract serious academic research (Cowan & Cull, 2008; Gregory, 2008). For a long time, public diplomacy literature was dominated by government officials and policy advocates, who were more concerned with practical implications rather than theoretical development (L’Etang, 2009b). The predominant foci of L’Etang’s (2009b) analysis were the power struggles between different countries and the use of force. “Where is

the academic research and where are the scholarly publications that would give meaning to a field of study?" asked Gregory (2008, p. 275), who was himself a practitioner, serving for more than a decade on the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, but now writing from an academic perspective.

Third, most of public diplomacy research focused on the United States (e.g., Entman, 2008; Fitzpatrick, 2007; Melissen, 2005; Snow, 2009; Wang, 2007; Yun, 2006). Is it not surprising considering the increasing popularity of the term after the terrorist attacks in the United States in September 2001¹. However, the lack of international research creates a risk that a highly international phenomenon is explained with a sample of one country. The handful of studies that focused on other countries' public diplomacy programs (e.g., Cull, 2008; Gilboa, 2006; Peijuan, Ting, & Pang, 2009; von Maltzahn, 2009; White, Vanc, & Coman, 2011; Zhang & Benoit, 2004) have been an important contribution in extending the research beyond the U.S. borders.

Last, public diplomacy literature distinguishes between old and new public diplomacy. The old or traditional public diplomacy is characterized by persuasion and propaganda whereas the new public diplomacy focuses on listening, building relationships, and networking. The concept of power is central to the understanding of differences between those approaches. The very concept of public diplomacy is often discussed using Nye's (2004) distinction between soft and hard power. Hard power is government's effort to influence publics through coercion (i.e., military action or one-way communication), whereas soft power rests on attraction and "ability to shape the preferences of others" (Nye, 2004, p. 5). Nye (2004) argued that soft power will be

¹ September 11, 2001 represents the most deadly terrorist attacks on U.S. soil.

the essential element of international politics and the main force of public diplomacy in the 21st century. However, the distinction between hard power and soft power is not always clear, and consequently smart power was suggested as a more accurate term to look at government's approach to building relationships with foreign publics (Nye, 2008). I will further discuss old and new public diplomacy in view of their relation to hard, soft, and smart power.

Hard Power

Public diplomacy is intrinsically linked to power by the nature of the political environment in which it operates. Nye (2008) defined power as the “ability to influence the behavior of others to get the outcomes you want” (p. 94). Although, Nye's conceptualization of hard and soft power has been heavily criticized for theoretical deficiencies (Gilboa, 2008), it still offers a valuable explanation of the strategies that governments use to communicate with publics. Hard power is influenced through coercion or “sticks” or inducements and payments or “carrots” (Nye, 2008). Hard power is executed with coercive strategies, such as using military, economic weapons, and coercive communication (Ronfeldt & Arquilla, 2009).

Hard power was widely used in 20th century public diplomacy, not only with military interventions but also with propaganda. Smyth (2001) argued that public relations, public diplomacy and propaganda are closely related. One of the earlier examples of propaganda use in public diplomacy include the Committee of Public Information (CPI), formed by President Wilson during the World War I. The Committee had several international tasks, one of which was to disseminate messages targeted at bringing dissension among the enemy powers (Wang, 2007). Likewise,

during World War II, Roosevelt established the Office of War Information, which used white, black, and grey propaganda (Guth, 2008). White propaganda comes from a clearly and correctly reported source, whereas black propaganda is based on false sources, lies, fabrications, and deceptions (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2006). Grey propaganda may or may not have an accurately identified source and it is unclear whether the presented information is accurate (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2006). Another institution established around the same time, the Office of Strategic Services, was charged to use psychological strategies and black propaganda against enemies (Nelson, 1996).

The practices of coercive one-way communication has continued into the 21st century. The War on Terror championed by President Bush after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, strongly resembled Cold War communication strategies according to Guth (2008). One of the examples is the Office of Strategic Influence (OSI) established by Pentagon shortly after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The short-lived agency was closed in March 2002 after media reported the OSI's plans to spread disinformation to journalists abroad (Guth, 2008), which did not fit with a general national strategy of strategic communication and public affairs (Taylor, 2009). Thus, despite the general consensus about the importance of strategic communication, the means to practice it were viewed differently by various agencies. Guth (2008) suggested that military utilized a tactical approach, which justified the use of grey and even black propaganda. Communication specialists in the U.S. government favored an approach that used white propaganda according to Guth (2008).

The relationship between propaganda and public diplomacy is exemplified in the “Shared Values” campaign initiated by the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy, Charlotte Beers in 2002 (e.g., Cincotta, 2004; Plaisance, 2005). The campaign consisted of videos and print materials about the life of Muslims in the United States and was meant for the publics in the Middle East and several other nations with predominantly Muslim populations. The “Shared Values” campaign used several strategies common to propaganda (Plaisance, 2005). One such strategy was selective truth-telling. The videos and booklets portrayed the stories of successful Muslims in the United States; however, it did not explain the increasing prejudice towards Arabs (e.g., Hiebert, 2005; May & Modwood, 2001; Shaheen, 2001) and the detention of more than 700 Muslims without any charge shortly after the 9/11 attacks (Plaisance, 2005). In addition, the campaign reflected a gap between the announced goal to establish dialogue and the actual purpose of changing perceptions to better suit American interests (Plaisance, 2005). The evaluation of the “Shared Values” campaign suggested that public diplomacy based on propaganda strategies carries unethical practices and may contribute to failure as the result of the campaign suggested (Cincotta, 2004). It stands to reason that propagandistic techniques in public diplomacy can be defined as hard power due to their goal to influence rather than engage, and due to their insincere approach rather than a genuine effort to build relationships. Moreover, as Nye (2008) argued, the use of propaganda undermines public diplomacy initiatives and reduces country’s soft power.

Soft Power

Soft power is different from hard power in that it is not coercive or manipulative, and it rests on attraction to a country's culture, values, and policy (Nye, 2008). Nye (2008) defined soft power as the "ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes one wants through attraction rather than coercion or payment" (Nye, 2008, p. 94). Nye (2008) distinguished between three main sources of soft power: foreign policy, political values, and culture.

Although soft power is usually discussed in the context of communication between a government and publics, countries also seek soft power by directly engaging with other governments. For example, Arab governments have contracted public relations firms to influence decision-makers in the U.S. government (Al-Yasin & Dashti, 2008). The governments of Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait have used lobbying and positive media coverage to influence policymakers. Al-Yasin and Dashti (2008) found that governments are willing to invest more in soft power when controversial issues may negatively influence the relationship between the countries involved.

Likewise, international political marketing may expand government's soft power (Sun, 2008). Sun (2008) outlined three main principles of international political marketing in public diplomacy. First, governments must engage in political exchange and conflict resolution in a multilateral forum. Second, governments must consider the target country's political and cultural values when designing a strategy for engagement. Third, governments must wisely use modern information technology. However, government-initiated and government-sponsored initiatives are costly and

often lack trust among international publics (Payne, 2009). In addition, the current terrorism threats, narcotics trafficking and global environmental problems require countries to go beyond a bilateral government communication approach according to Talbott (1997).

A more localized and micro-level public diplomacy is conducted through educational exchanges, which allow fostering personal relationships between the citizens of different countries. For the United States, educational public diplomacy has been a cornerstone since before World War II (Smyth, 2001). One of the most famous programs established was the Fulbright program for both American scholars to travel abroad and for international scholars to visit U.S. institutions. A cheaper way to conduct educational public diplomacy is through shorter visits planned at a local level. Hayden (2009) provides an example of a non-government initiative organized by Saudi American Exchange. Students from the United States and Saudi Arabia worked together online and in person to solve a marketing program. Hayden (2009) made two interesting observations. First, technological developments allow going beyond government-sponsored educational exchange to conduct projects with minimal expenses. Second, educational programs that are based on the principles of collaboration encourage students to listen, analyze, and work together. In another study, Payne (2009) argued that the grassroots exchanges foster trust and meaningful relationships as evidenced in the examples of such initiatives between the United States and Russia, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Saudi Arabia.

Sociological globalism offers another approach to soft power. In the age of globalization and world wide mobility, migrants serve as natural links between

different countries allowing for a genuine communication channel between different countries. Yun and Toth (2009) called them the “agents of intercountry and intercultural communications” (p. 498). While contemporary public diplomacy programs are arranged and carry some degree of superficiality, immigrants communicating with their families and friends in the host country is a genuine communication process. In addition, Yun and Toth (2009) argued that attraction to another country’s culture and policies is subjective and public diplomacy programs must be tailored to each region differently. However, countries with diverse populations, like the United States, could utilize its soft power with immigrants.

The study by Yun and Kim (2008) confirmed that governments need to foster both good relationships with other governments as well as interpersonal relationships between people. The study explored the role of three variables; i.e., ethnic relations, quality of relationship between the governments, and the normative performance of a foreign country in building public attitudes towards other countries. Ethnic relations were measured in terms of the degree of intimacy that the individuals were ready to establish with people from other ethnicities. Relationship quality was measured by a number of treaties between the countries. Yun and Kim (2008) found that relationship quality was the strongest predictor of national attraction, followed by ethnic relations. Normative performance of a country was not a significant predictor. In other words, Americans viewed those countries favorably that had a strong and positive relationship with the U.S. government, and who they had a chance to build an interpersonal relationship with. The study suggested that public diplomacy programs should move away from promoting and marketing national images to building

relationships with other governments, and engaging with diasporas inside the country. In addition, the study extends the understanding of soft power: Relationship quality and ethnic relations accounted for 85% of variance in attraction to another country.

To summarize, governments seek soft power to influence other countries through attraction rather than coercion, using political marketing, educational exchanges, and other grassroots-level efforts. Several approaches to public diplomacy highlighted the importance of relationship building both with other governments, as well as publics. The social globalism perspective suggested that governments' engagement with immigrants in their own country may benefit the relationship with other countries.

Smart Power

The strict distinction between hard and soft power has recently been questioned and even criticized. For example, one can argue that the source of hard power is the material means and the source of soft power is immaterial means. If so, trade and financial investments are examples of hard power and the intentions to gain a good image or to build better relationships pertain to soft power (Ronfeldt & Arquilla, 2009). In their study of Cuban and Venezuelan governments, Bustamante and Sweig (2008) found that governments can exercise hard power by providing financial aid and, that way, seek compliance. In the example of Cuba and Venezuela, countries' governments offer medical assistance, petroleum, and other financial aid to other countries, especially in South America (Bustamante & Sweig, 2008), thus making those countries dependent. In other words, the governments are using other countries' weaknesses to advance their future goals. A more telling example is a

practice of the Venezuelan government to support certain candidates during elections in neighboring countries, or even government's offer to support victims of hurricane Katrina, which elicited positive responses among several U.S. Congressmen and the media (Bustamante & Sweig, 2008). The U.S. government has tried to move away from a clear distinction between soft and hard power as reflected in Secretary of State Clinton's rhetoric at a town hall meeting on diplomacy in January 2012, in which she noted that the government has erased "the organizational distinctions between what was once viewed as hard power and soft power [...] in order to look more comprehensively and in depth at an integrated and ultimately more effective approach" (U.S. Department of State, 2012, para. 12).

Likewise, scholars argue that soft power and hard power must not contradict each other. Scholars in the international relations field emphasize that public diplomacy has to align with foreign policy of the country (e.g., Andoni, 2002; Telhami, 2004; van Ham, 2005). The inconsistency between messages and policies weakens the relationship and the trust between states and publics (e.g., Edelstein & Krebs, 2005, Telhami, 2007). Public opinion polls in the Arab world, which is one of the target areas of U.S. public diplomacy, suggested that Arab attitudes towards the United States were shaped by U.S. government policies (Telhami, 2004). Specifically, U.S. foreign policy on the Arab-Israeli conflict became the prism through which Middle Eastern publics viewed the U.S. government. Likewise, the efforts to reach Arab publics with the U.S.-sponsored satellite television station, Al-Hurra, mostly failed due to the disparity between American policies and broadcasted messages (Youmans, 2009). Interestingly, both the publics and some employees

working at the station used humor to show their opposition to the channel's efforts. For example, the channel's name Al-Hurra ('freedom' in the Arabic language) was modified to 'Al-Murra' ('the bitter one' in Arabic) and 'Al-Dhurra' ('the 2nd wife' in Arabic). Thus, governments cannot attain soft power if they exercise their hard power in a contradictory way.

The concept of smart power addresses some of the debates regarding soft and hard power (Nye, 2008). Wilson (2008) defined smart power as a "capacity of an actor to combine elements of hard power and soft power in ways that are mutually reinforcing such that the actor's purposes are advanced effectively and efficiently" (p. 115). Naturally, the smart power approach required increased understanding of the processes in international engagement, as governments need to develop an expertise as to when to use hard power rather than soft power and vice versa. To develop such expertise, Nye (2008) and Wilson (2008) suggested that governments pay attention to several elements of smart power.

In using smart power, governments must consider the importance of credibility, self-criticism and the role of civil society (Nye, 2008). Several studies confirm and re-affirm the importance of these variables. Credibility of the message source was found to influence public perceptions in the context of public diplomacy. Schatz and Levine (2010) conducted a study in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in which participants were asked to rate the same quotation but with varied attribution (i.e., President Bush, Ambassador, an American citizen, and not attributed to anyone). The results suggested a "Bush Effect." Participants who read the quote attributed to President Bush had worse opinions of the United States (Schatz & Levine, 2010). In

other words, the source of the message elicited different reactions among the participants. Gass and Seiter (2009) suggested that governments can build credibility by developing expertise, trustworthiness, and goodwill.

Wilson (2008) added four other elements necessary to exercise smart power. First, publics of the 21st century are different from the 20th century publics. Wilson (2008) argued that the educational level, as well as the access to various types of information, made international publics smarter and more demanding. In other words, governments must understand the changing nature of international publics. Second, governments need to have self-knowledge to understand the challenges and opportunities of international engagement. Third, smart power requires the understanding of the regional and global contexts. Indeed, Hall (2010) argued in his review in the *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy* that public diplomacy has often been observed separately from the environment in which it operates. In the experimental study of publics' perceptions in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, Schatz and Levine (2000) also found that the publics' perceptions of messages was influenced by the context, i.e., group membership, participants' origins within a country, and even other events taking place at that country at a given time. Fourth, smart power requires a knowledgeable use of the tools of engagement. As Wilson (2008) argued, governments must understand the advantages of soft power and hard power tools, how to use them, and when.

To summarize, public diplomacy literature discussed hard, soft and smart power, as something that allowed governments to advance their purposes and influence international audiences. In other words, power was viewed as something

that governments had to have in order to achieve their goals. However, the literature offered little discussion of the role of other organizations or the role of publics in public diplomacy. In other words, discussions of power were predominantly government-centric.

Public diplomacy from a public relations perspective

Public relations will take its conceptualization in this study from two definitions: “the management of communication between an organization and its publics” (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 6) and “the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and publics on whom its success or failure depends” (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1994, p. 6). The key words in the two definitions are management, relationship, and publics. Public relations literature may contribute a better understanding of public diplomacy with the research on management, relationship building, and publics. The following discussion provides a background for the study, necessary to explore the public diplomacy definitions.

Strategic communication in public diplomacy. One of the major streams of research in the public relations literature is the strategic management approach (e.g., Grunig & Repper, 1992; Dozier, Grunig, J., & Grunig, L, 1995; Botan & Taylor, 2004). In his discussion about the connection between public relations and international relations, Grunig (1993) argued that public relations function can contribute to the practice of public diplomacy and relationship building if it is strategic and follows the principles of two-way symmetrical communication. The two-way symmetrical approach attempts to “balance the interest of the organization

and its publics, is based on research, and uses communication to manage conflict with strategic publics” (Grunig, J.E., Grunig, L.A., & Dozier, 2006, p. 47). In contrast, the goal of two-way asymmetrical communication is only to persuade and to advocate. The combination of the symmetrical and the asymmetrical communication behaviors may lend to a more effective communication system (Grunig, 2006). Thus, Grunig (2006) re-defined the strategic management approach to public diplomacy as an approach that moves beyond persuasion and publicity and focuses on relationship cultivation strategies. Public relations in organizations must become the *bridging activity*, in which “organizations build linkages with stakeholders in their environment to transform and constitute the organization in new ways” (Grunig, 2006, p. 171).

Yun (2006) tested the application of strategic management theory in his study of 113 foreign embassies situated in the United States. His results confirmed that the combination of symmetrical and asymmetrical communication was the prerequisite for excellence in public diplomacy among the foreign embassies in the United States. Yun’s (2006) study is particularly valuable in that it confirmed the applicability of public relations theory to public diplomacy work.

Another line of inquiry in strategic communication approach to public diplomacy focused on Benoit’s (1995) image repair theory, which suggests that individuals or organizations use five strategies to restore their image: denial, evading responsibility, reducing offensiveness, corrective action, and mortification. Zhang and Benoit (2004) used image repair theory to study the communication practices of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the United States following the terrorist attacks in

September 11, 2001. Using the method of rhetorical criticism, researchers analyzed texts posted on the Saudi Embassy website, new releases, statements, and speech transcripts. Their results showed that Saudi Arabia predominantly used only two strategies: denial and reducing offensiveness. Therefore, Zhang and Benoit (2004) suggested that the Saudi public diplomacy efforts were only partially effective.

Peijuan, Ting, and Pang (2009) also used image repair theory to study the Chinese government's response to the "Made in China" controversy, when international trading companies questioned the safety of China's produce. In the years of 2006 and 2007, numerous pet food recalls in Europe, South Africa, the United States, and Canada damaged China's economy. As a result of a deteriorating national image and its consequences on economy, the Chinese government initiated a communication campaign. A rhetorical analysis of government statements reflected similar results to the study of Zhang and Benoit (2004): The Chinese government employed denial and reducing offensiveness as their first strategies. However, the factual evidence pushed the government to admit the problem and to use the strategy of mortification, in which the government apologized for the bad quality of Chinese produce. The authors suggested that although governments may be hesitant to use the mortification strategy, it might be the best option to repair the country's image if accompanied with corrective action.

An alternative approach to a nation's image management is the country reputation approach: Yang, Shin, Lee, and Wrigley (2008) conducted a quantitative accessing Americans' attitudes towards South Korea. The results of the survey revealed that public awareness was the key mediator between individual experience

and country reputation. The results also showed that personal experiences (i.e., travelling to the country, having friends from South Korea) had a stronger effect on awareness about Korea than second-hand experience (i.e., information received from others including mass media). The authors emphasized the role of public awareness and personal experience in enhancing country reputation.

Yet, other emerging streams of public diplomacy research used the relational approach (Fitzpatrick, 2007; 2009), culture-centered approach (Dutta-Bergman, 2006), or that focused on community building (Kruckeberg & Vujnovic, 2005). These studies will be addressed later in view of their contribution to the understanding of relationship management in diplomacy networks.

Culture in public diplomacy. Public diplomacy includes actors in different countries. Thus, culture is an inevitable variable in public diplomacy. Public diplomacy research predominantly discussed culture as an instrument in international communication. For example, cultural diplomacy, arts diplomacy (Brown, 2009), cultural and educational exchange (e.g., Smyth, 2001, Hayden, 2009) comprise some of the typical public diplomacy programs. Several studies suggested that culture plays a deeper role in public diplomacy (i.e., Schneider, 2005; Zaharna, 2010), as well as religion (Telhami, 2002). Public diplomacy literature is limited in its discussion of the role of culture in communication between nations, but public relations research suggested several ways in which culture influences communication processes.

Dutta-Bergman (2006) used the critical-cultural approach to assess United States' public diplomacy strategies in the Middle East. He found that the strategies employed by the U.S. government focused on influencing and one-way

communication. Specifically, the themes included U.S. interests in the Middle East, influencing the other, hidden agendas, propaganda-rural population dynamic, and propaganda – national elite dynamic. Dutta-Bergman (2006) further argued for an alternative culture-centered approach that “focuses on building relationships between cultures, foregrounding dialogue, and engaging in process of mutual sharing of meanings” (Dutta-Bergman, 2006, p. 119). In other word, Dutta-Bergman (2006) suggested to move away from one-way communication and persuasion in public diplomacy to a “mutual sharing of meanings”, acknowledging the role of local cultures in shaping those meanings.

The circuit of culture model (du Gay, Hall, Janes, Mackay, & Negus, 1997) could help explain the role of culture in communication. Curtin and Gaither (2005) emphasized that the circuit of culture model accounts for culture and power imbalance between actors in a communication process. The communication process includes five points, i.e. representation, production, consumption, identity, regulation. In the representation stage, actors construct or assign meaning to messages. Actors rely on socially accepted characteristics to shape messages. In the production stage, participants in a communication process produce the message verbally or in a written format, for another actor or a public. In the consumption stage, other actors process messages and assign their own meanings. Identity includes socially developed understandings in a particular group, organization, network, or country. Regulation includes accepted practices in shaping and producing messages in a group, organization, or a network.

Although little research has been conducted on the role of culture in public diplomacy, it stands to reason that national culture may play a role in communication between actors in different countries. Culture-centered approach and the circuit of culture models reviewed here suggest that cultural differences are woven into various communication processes.

Challenges and opportunities. Current public diplomacy research faces several conceptual and theoretical challenges. First, conceptualization of public diplomacy is fragmented. The answer to the question “What is public diplomacy?” is “It depends on who you ask.” Little agreement exists in practice and research as to why, when, and how governments must communicate with international publics and if, how, when, and why they should shape their views (Hall, 2010). Likewise, the influence of soft and hard power has been debated and still no consensus has been reached as to a clear difference between hard and soft power, if such exists at all (Gregory, 2008).

Second, public diplomacy research has been dominated by practitioners. Until recently, public diplomacy has not received much scholarly attention (Cowan & Cull, 2008). Thus, a significant number of articles lack empirical data, or do not have a theoretical grounding. The situation is changing with an increasing number of scholars from different disciplines conduct research that contributes to theory development in public diplomacy. However, public diplomacy theory is still weak (Gilboa, 2008).

Third, public diplomacy research and practice has been slow to adapt to the 21st century society (Smyth, 2001). In the United States, the old machinery of the

Cold War, which ended more than 20 years ago, is still in place according to Smyth (2001). He states that persuasion and influence of publics is still a dominant view of public diplomacy. Plans tend to be short-term and reactive. In public diplomacy practice, governments around the world face new challenges. Paul (2012) discussed the current public diplomacy challenges in view of several issues, including the credibility crisis that many governments face, little coordination between the government agencies conducting public diplomacy, lack of resources, and little understanding of culture as well as context.

At the same time, the challenges facing public diplomacy also create opportunities for future scholarship. The lack of consensus on public diplomacy definitions and purpose calls for more research in at least two different approaches to public diplomacy. Whereas some scholars continue using the traditional hierarchical approach to public diplomacy and seeking ways to better influence international publics, other research is exploring the relational view of public diplomacy and the networks that public diplomacy actors form with each other.

Such research moves away from traditional image cultivation theory (Benoit, 1995) because of several limitations. According to Zhang and Swartz (2009a), it is power based, nation-centered, and unilateral. In contrast, the network theory considers globalization and the technological developments that allow forming networks in an efficient and natural ways (Zaharna, 2005).

Scholars are exploring public diplomacy from a relational or network approach, in which public diplomacy becomes a forum, in which governments, corporations, nongovernmental organizations, and publics participate, negotiate, and

cooperate. Some of this research may focus on issues that are of global importance, such as global public interests (Zhang & Swartz, 2009a), including issues of “ocean pollution cleanup, weather forecasts, monitoring stations, [...] ozone shield protection, global warming prevention, disease eradication, and knowledge creation” (p. 383). Other studies may look at national interests that can be achieved through negotiation and collaboration (Fisher, 2008). Based on prior public diplomacy research, this study seeks to answer the following research question:

RQ1: How do public diplomacy actors define public diplomacy?

Network Theory and Public Diplomacy

This section explores the network approach to public diplomacy, first reviewing the fundamentals of network theory and then discussing the network approach to public diplomacy specifically. The study of networks is not new in science. The first studies of networks appeared in mathematics centuries ago (Tremayne, 2004). However, recently scholars in different fields have applied network theory in their research, making the study of networks truly interdisciplinary. For example, physicists Albert and Barabasi (2002) explained the robust organizational scheme that complex network systems have in both nature and society, providing examples of the Internet as an organized system of multiple linkages. Several scholars argue for a network approach to public diplomacy (e.g., Hocking, 2005; Fisher, 2010; Zaharna, 2005, 2010).

Several characteristics of modern society make the network approach particularly useful in understanding communication between governments and publics. Torfing (2005) suggests three such characteristics. The first characteristic is

the increasing fragmentation of society into relatively independent government agencies and political parties, and private and public organizations. Thus, government communication takes place in a network of various departments internally and different agencies externally. Second, global problems are becoming increasingly complex and involve more risk and uncertainty, thus requiring more expertise among decision-makers. Third, societal dynamics have changed because of the increasing number of players in governance and the less clear boundaries between their roles.

Castells (2008) defined globalization as “the process that constitutes a social system with the capacity to work as a unit on a planetary scale in real or chosen time” (p. 81). The new capacities have emerged due to technological, institutional, and organizational changes. Technological capacity relates to new hardware, software, and the Internet, which allow a more efficient and rapid connection between people and organizations. Institutional capacity relates to “deregulation, liberalization, and privatization of rules and procedures used by a nation-state” (Castells, 2008, p. 81). For example, governance networks now include not only state institutions, but also politicians, administrators, private companies, and other-interest organizations (Torfing, 2005).

The network approach to public diplomacy takes into account the societal changes that are taking place globally. For example, the opportunity for organizations to work together with other agencies outside the government may address the legitimacy crisis that governments around the world face (Castells, 2008). As Aday and Livingston (2008) argued, the state may not be the best source of information considering that many current social problems are global rather than local or national.

The network approach suggests a fundamentally different view of public diplomacy that moves away from a hierarchical structure to a ‘bazaar’ structure that highlights the interconnectedness and interdependence between public diplomacy actors internationally (Fisher, 2008). These changes may especially influence international communication that involves government and publics at the same time. The following sections will discuss what networks consist of, how they relate to power and technology, and how networks relate to public diplomacy.

Nature of networks

A network is a “distribution of similar objects (nodes)” (Tremayne, 2004, p. 238) and the nodes “are connected to each other in the world by some type of relationship” (Contractor, Monge, & Leonardi, 2011, p. 686). Unlike hierarchical structures, a network does not have a center (Castells, 2004), but rather consists of different actors that have different strengths related to their connection to other actors. In other words, connections between actors may be more important in a network than the actors themselves, as evidenced in another definition of a network that describes it as “patterns of contact that are created by the flow of messages among communicators through time and space” (Monge & Contractor, 2003, p. 3).

Networks consist of nodes and links between them. Nodes can be individuals, organizations (Sedereviciute & Valentini, 2011), and can be non-human (Faust & Skvoretz, 2002; Langlois, 2005). In social science research, nodes usually represent humans (Contractor, Monge, & Leonardi, 2011). For example, in organizations, nodes represent employees and the links are communication relations between them (Whitbred, Fonti, Steglich, & Contractor, 2011). The role and meaning of nodes are

situational: They depend on the specific network, its purpose, and the relationship to other nodes in the network. The more network-relevant information nodes possess and share, the more important they are (Castells, 2009).

The actor network theory (ANT) suggests that each member, whether a human or technology, influences the network (Latour, 2005). Actors, or members, are represented by people, technology, or even places, and are characterized by an effort to achieve a common goal (Potts & Jones, 2011). Although technology may play a role in a network, it does not mean that it plays the same role as humans. While humans direct networks, technologies affect the way they do it (Potts & Jones, 2011). Actors see and interpret the network in a limited way, based on their position (Weiss & Domingo, 2010). It stands to reason that positions of an actor define her, his, or its role in the network.

Links between nodes represent a relationship between people or organizations in the network. In their study of 42 human and non-human species, Faust and Skovertz (2002) found that relations between nodes define network structures rather than nodes themselves. In another study, Grossetti (2007) compared personal networks in France and California and found that relational structures are consistent across time and contexts. Network research suggests several ways to measure ties between the nodes. Centrality plays an important role as it reflects interconnectedness of a node with other actors. The three common measures of network centrality are closeness, degree, and betweenness (Sedereviciute & Valentini, 2011).

Closeness reflects the ability of a node to communicate with other actors in the network, and is estimated by the number of steps that a node has to take in order to reach other actors (Sedereviciute & Valentini, 2011). Network *degree* reflects the number of links that connects an actor to other actors in the network (Monge & Contractor, 2003). In their study of media networks, Danowski and Park (2009) suggested three levels of network degree, ranging from first-order degree as the strongest to the third-order degree as the weakest. The difference between degrees refers to how directly actors communicate. Last, *betweenness* refers to the actor's ability to control the information flow to less active or latent actors as well having the ability to connect nodes that are not directly linked (Sedevericuite & Valentini, 2011). In other words, actors with high betweenness serve as a gateway to reach other actors.

It is important to note that communication networks do not necessarily reflect officially established links, which can be viewed in organizational charts. Rather, networks are informal connections between the actors within and outside the organization. In their study of how internal and external factors influence networks, Whitbred, Fonti, Steglich, and Contractor (2011) found that both types of factors influence networks, while internal structural rules have a significantly stronger effect than external factors. Internal structural rules include reciprocity, transitivity, and brokerage. *Reciprocity* relates to one actor initiating communication and the other responding. Reciprocity links two actors in a network. *Transitivity* relates to the relationship between three actors in a network: If actor one communicates with actor two, and actor two communicates with actor three, then actor one and three are likely to communicate as well. *Brokerage* relates to the actor's ability to control

communication flow between two other independent actors. Individuals in a brokerage position have two advantages: They can gather more information and they can control the information flow between other actors that are not connected between each other.

External rules are those that did not emerge from the network and include friendship, participation in common activities, connection in the workflow (dependency on each other to implement work tasks), supervisor-subordinate relationship, spatial proximity, email proximity (ability to communicate by email), and peer hierarchy proximity (Whitbred, Fonti, Steglich, & Contractor, 2011). In their study, Whitbread et al. (2011) found that although external rules were not as strong as internal rules, four external mechanisms influence networks: friendship ties, spatial proximity, workflow links, and supervisor-subordinate relationships. Thus, their study suggests that establishing efficient internal communication mechanisms is important in the beginning, and it is difficult to change networks externally after their establishment. However, the four external mechanisms (friendship ties, spatial proximity, workflow links, and supervisor-subordinate relationships) have the most potential to influence networks even after their establishment (Whitbred, Fonti, Steglich, & Contractor, 2011).

Role of technology in networks

Discussion of networks in the 21st century society is incomplete without looking at the role of technology. Technology can be defined as “the use of scientific knowledge to set procedures for performance in a reproducible manner” (Castells, 2004, p. 8). Castells (2004) described digital technology in view of its three features:

capacity to process large and complex information, ability to recombine information, and flexibility (or adaptability to various contexts). New media is a subset of new technology, or “anything digital that communicates to known and unknown publics in actual (synchronic) or delayed (asynchronic) time (Berenger, 2006, p. 179)

Digital technology and the Internet opened new communication possibilities for organizations and publics. Indeed, global society has witnessed a communication transformation due to technology (Castells, 2009). The rise of the Internet, creation of digital means of communication, computer networking, new software to link various publics and organizations online, and increasing broadband transmission capacity around the world, are all forces that changed the way people and organizations communicate in today’s world (Castells, 2009).

The following discussion draws from the work of Manuel Castells (2004; 2008; 2009; 2011), one of the prominent contributors to the study of the role of technology and power in the network society. The discussion is supplemented with recent studies in communication through telephone, mobile, and new media.

Several features of technology allowed it to make a significant contribution to the network society. Castells (2004) argued that three technology characteristics are particularly relevant in discussing the network society. First, technology allows for an efficient process to communicate information. Specifically, it can handle large volumes of data and process it in a short time, despite the increasingly complex processes involved. Second, digital technologies account for interactivity in communication and allow the combining and recombining of information. In other words, as information is shared, actors use it, transform it, and share again. Third,

technology is flexible in that it can be useful in different fields and at different levels. For example, software is being developed for business, government, military, media, and is used for different purposes, including interpersonal communication, small groups, organizations, and societies at large.

A more direct influence of technology on communication relates to time and space, or what Castells (2009) called “space of flows” and “timeless time” (p. 34). By *space of flows* Castells (2009) meant the “technological and organizational possibility of practicing simultaneity without contiguity” or “possibility of asynchronous interaction in chosen time” (p. 34). In other words, with technology, people do not have to be located in close proximity to communicate. Castells (2009) noted that space of flows consists of nodes, and their role and function is defined by their location in the networks to which they belong. The idea of space of flows allows researchers to explore how information travels through a network, where it originates, and how it is shared among organizations. For example, Weber and Monge (2011) showed how information flows in online news sites, suggesting that some key Web sites can control the exchange of news in a network.

The concept of *time* refers to the sequence of actions or practices. The common pre-technological understanding of time was biological time, or industrial/clock time, characterized by sequencing to maintain order and organization in life. Time in a network society sequence is less important. First, time is more compressed: Technology allows for doing more activities in a shorter time. Second, the order is less salient: On the Internet, future, past, and present all blur together.

Technology characteristics reviewed above allowed technology to significantly change the way networks function, according to Castells (2009). Technology makes networks more flexible in that they adapt easier to changing environments without changing their goals. In addition, networks increased scalability, i.e., they are able to grow or become smaller when needed. Last, networks gained more survivability: Because they are not centered, networks continue to function even if one of the nodes or objects fails or leaves the network.

On an individual and organizational level, one of the biggest contributions of technological development to communication is the ability to reach others inside the network and outside—what Castells (2004; 2009) called ‘*mass self-communication*.’ Whereas in the past, communication to large masses of people primarily belonged to media corporations, now individuals can use technology and the Internet to reach other people online foregoing organizations and even national boundaries. Blogging platforms, social networking sites and online forums provide formats to produce and consume information from other network users. Castells (2009) argued that new technological opportunities prompted publics to be more creative because they have the opportunity to search for information from diverse sources and produce new messages, combining the information received with their own codes and interpretations. In other words, new technology and new media granted publics more autonomy than mass media and other institutions did before (Castells, 2009.)

However, technology itself does not guarantee formation of networks nor does it determine how they function. First, skills and practice are required to engage with others online. In a study of the use of technology and new media in the 2009

Romanian presidential campaign, Aparaschivei (2011) found that none of the presidential candidates succeeded in using new media platforms for their goals because of little strategy and limited understanding of the Internet. As a result, candidates' online presences did not add value to their campaigns, and they had similar results as the candidates that did not use new media (Aparaschivei, 2011). Likewise, individual members in society must develop new media proficiency to engage with others online. Training and proficiency for individual members of society are also determined by social structure already in place (Halford & Savage, 2010). Thus, the relationship between technology and social structures must be addressed in research (Lawson-Mack, 2001) to avoid deterministic conclusions regarding the role of technology in the network society.

Other variables that influence network communication dynamics via technology include network size and heterogeneity, which were found to moderate the relationship between the use of mobile technology and political participation in a study conducted by Campbell and Kwak (2011). Their results showed that the more network members communicated with each other using cell phones, the more engaged they were in political life, provided they had a large network of like-minded members. However, in smaller sized homogeneous networks, political participation decreased even with increased mobile communication (Campbell & Kwak, 2011). Thus, Campbell and Kwak's study suggested that network size influences people's engagement and participation along with heterogeneity.

Finally, Halford and Savage (2010) argued that technology does not have independent causal powers. Although technology offers more opportunities for

individuals and organizations to build and communicate in networks, studies suggest that networks function at their best when supported with face-to-face communication in addition to telephone and online (Wellman & Haythornthwaite, 2002; Urry, 2003). Mok, Wellman, and Basu (2007) argued that networks are best sustained by *communication tango*, a combination of various techniques, including face-to-face interaction. In other words, digital communication is best when “reinforced and enhanced” by offline contact.

Network power

In the network society, communication is power (Castells, 2009). A more nuanced definition of power is that it is “the relational capacity that enables a social actor to influence asymmetrically the decisions of other social actor(s) in ways that favor the empowered actor’s will, interests, and values” (Castells, 2009, p. 10). Thus, Castells’ definition suggests that power is embedded in the relationship, and cannot be abstracted from it. In other words, power is specific to each network and the relationships between its actors.

Castells (2009, 2011) differentiated between four types of power in a network: networking power, network power, networked power, and network-making power. Networking power is “the power of the actors and organizations included in the networks that constitute the core of the global network society over those human collectives or individuals not included in these global networks” (Castells, 2011, p. 774). Networking power belongs to those inside the network. Castells (2011) argued that the fragmentation between those inside the network and outside the network is the important feature of the global network society. The network gatekeeping theory

(Barzilai-Nahon, 2008; Nahon, 2011) posited that each network has gatekeepers that control the flow of information inside the network, among the gated. However, each actor may be a gatekeeper in one network, but represent the gated in another network. Therefore, to identify gatekeeping, one has to look at the boundaries of a network. While in the past the state typically functioned as the network gatekeeper (Castells, 2009), now other organizations also can act as gatekeepers, including as nongovernmental organizations, mass media, and business corporations.

The second type is network power, which results from setting the standards of social interaction in a network (Castells, 2009; 2011). The advantage of network power is that it allows having an order, but at the same time it eliminates opposing views that may benefit a network's members.

The third type of power is networked power and is seen in the network structure, allowing the actor to impose his or her will over another actor based on her or his position in a network. A manifestation of networked power is the ability to set agendas, a function that editorial boards at media companies have.

The fourth type of power is network-making power, which Castells viewed as the most crucial form of power in a network society. Network-making power is the ability to set the structure of a network according to the actor's values and interests, as well as the ability to connect two or more networks to share resources (Castells, 2009). Castells (2009) identified two actors related to network-making power: programmers and switchers. Programmers can set the ideas, visions, projects, and frames, whereas switchers control the connections between networks by sharing resources and working on the same goals. Switchers can be represented by media or

government leadership, to name a few, who forge connections between their networks. Castells (2011) argued that the switching power is a fundamental source of power in the network society.

The network approach to public diplomacy

National governments encounter several challenges in today's world, including a credibility crisis, complexity of problems that are global rather than national, and the increasing role of other actors in the national and international arenas. The new challenges suggest the need for a new public diplomacy structure. As a result, public diplomacy research reflects two worldviews (Hocking, 2005). The first is the hierarchical or traditional model of public diplomacy, which is characterized by a centralized structure with government as the main decision-maker. The second view, or the network approach, is more flexible and has a decentralized structure, in which governments represent nodes in a system of nodes, conducting public diplomacy through collaboration with other networks (e.g., Aday & Livingston, 2008; Fisher, 2010; 2011; Zaharna, 2005; 2010).

In the network model, the government communicates with organizations in both public and private sectors. Its role shifts from control to facilitation of the information flow and shared management. Hocking (2005) also called the network approach "catalytic diplomacy" and defined it as engagement and sharing of resources between various actors with the purpose of managing complex problems.

The network view of public diplomacy is rather new. However, studies have discussed the implications of the network approach to public diplomacy, including the relationship between internal organizational structure and external relationships,

various players involved, view of power, and approach to international publics (e.g., Hocking, 2005; Fisher, 2010; 2011; Riordan, 2005; Zaharna, 2010)

Network theory suggests that the structure of a network may influence how its members connect to the outside environment, or other networks. At the core of the network approach is the idea of nodes and links that are organized in a non-hierarchical manner. The network approach suggests a non-hierarchical structure not only in view of external relationships (for example, between government and nongovernmental organizations), but also inside the organization. The organizational structure sets the interaction rules with external actors and may limit the actor's ability to engage with international publics. For example, several government agencies limited employee access to social networking platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and other communication programs like Skype (Fisher, 2010). Although the nature of public diplomacy work requires creativity and responsiveness, the internal structure of most foreign ministries, which are important players in public diplomacy, follows a clear hierarchy and does not allow for that (Copeland, 2011).

Public diplomacy may involve many different actors. Indeed, the engagement of non-state actors is one of the distinguishing characteristics of new public diplomacy (Melissen, 2005). Examples of non-state actors include nongovernmental organizations (Zatepilina, 2009), business corporations (Reinhard, 2009), and even terrorist organizations (Telhami, 2004). However, because networks are flexible in nature and can shrink and grow with relative ease, it is difficult to identify all the possible public diplomacy players.

Zaharna (2010) suggested three types of networks: cultural-education networks, non-political networks, and polity formation networks. An example of a cultural-education network is the Confucius Institute with University partnerships in different countries both in the West and in the East (Zaharna, 2010), and comprised of formal connections between the Institute headquarters in Beijing as well as informal networks between students in different countries through social media platforms. The non-political networking schema comprises actors collaborating on science, medicine, education, or other issues. The UK Science and Innovation Network is an example of non-political networking. This initiative connects officers in nearly 30 countries who look for possible scientific collaborations and facilitate links. The policy formation network directly involves different governments.

Nongovernmental organizations are increasingly seen as credible actors in public diplomacy (e.g., Aday & Livingston, 2008; Gregory, 2008; Zateplina, 2009). One of the benefits of involving non-state actors is their perceived credibility: Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) do not advance the interests of any particular country and serve humans rather than citizens of specific countries. Zhang and Swartz (2009b) suggested that NGOs are more effective in reaching their target publics than government-sponsored programs. The authors attributed NGO efficiency to the fact that they tend to cooperate with local journalists and editors, are faster to learn and use new technology and tend to establish dialogic relationships rather than rely on one-way communication.

Riordan (2005) suggested that to reach foreign publics and organizations, governments could cooperate with the nongovernmental agencies in their own

countries. This way, governments connect to the global nongovernmental network in a more natural and probably efficient way. Melissen (2005) confirmed that one of the major strengths of nongovernmental organizations is that they are well connected to foreign publics (Melissen, 2005).

Some nongovernmental organizations form transnational advocacy networks (TAN) that also include international organizations and governments as well as scholars and media (e.g., Aday & Livingston, 2008; Zaharna, 2010). Aday and Livingston (2008) defined transnational advocacy networks as epistemic communities in that they possess expertise and “issue framing that is independent of, and even contrary to, frames propagated and supported by the state” (p. 103). In other words, networks not only distribute information like media, but also produce information.

At the same time, Gilboa and Shai (2001) cautioned against fragmentation and difficulties of coordination between the different public diplomacy actors. In reviewing Israeli public diplomacy, Gilboa and Shai (2011) identified several clusters of public diplomacy actors, including advocacy groups, diasporas, academic affairs, media, and specific areas (such as corporate and nongovernmental organizations), in addition to public diplomacy projects directly managed by the government, including tourism initiatives, defense programs, and trade relationships, to name a few. The authors argue that the system is too fragmented and does not address the present-day challenges that Israel faces, including the Palestinian conflict. Gilboa and Shai (2011) proposed a solution that is based on a more centralized structure of public diplomacy; although other scholars argued that a centralized structure is unfitting to the network society (e.g., Aday & Livingston, 2008; Castells, 2009; Fisher, 2010; Hocking, 2005).

A network approach to public diplomacy suggests a fundamentally new approach to power and publics. As Fisher and Lucas (2011) argued, “within a network society, public diplomacy is less and less concerned with asserting an identity or soft power” (p. 7). Fisher and Lucas (2011) further argued that this new approach is what will shape public diplomacy in the future, requiring public diplomats to understand the networks they are part of, their own positions, and their roles in those networks. In addition, participation in networks will be “a process of genuine involvement, rather than a more attractive sounding method of trying to garner followers” (Fisher & Lucas, 2011, p. 9).

The network approach to power also implies a new approach to international publics. Fisher (2011) distinguished between public diplomacy’s role in seeking *power over* an audience versus *empowerment*. Whereas the first approach suggests using publics to attain government objectives by persuading publics, the second approach seeks to achieve objectives by establishing collaborations with publics, negotiating, and helping them meet their goals. Thus, the network approach suggests a different view of publics, from consumers of information and passive objects to active participants and collaborators (Fisher & Lucas, 2011). In this approach, the goal is for all parties to achieve their objectives, rather than one party. As discussed earlier, the present technology allows publics to be more active, to express their views via new media, to organize, and indeed to negotiate with governments.

For example, the open source approach (Fisher, 2008) emphasizes public access to information and involving the public in creating knowledge. The current open source movement, in which such organizations as the World Bank share their

data online, implies that the organization views its publics, which include other nongovernmental agencies and governments, as collaborators able to understand and use the data, and eliminates the unnecessary secretive and competitive atmosphere. Likewise, the open source approach to public diplomacy suggests that organizations share information to engage with target publics and collaborate on common projects. As a result, projects may be developed by the target publics and reflect common goals and values, and at the same time speak the language of the community, considering cultural and social expectations (Fisher, 2008). Thus, an additional advantage of the network approach is that it allows the international actor to learn from the community.

To summarize, traditional and network approaches offer two fundamentally different views of communication between governments and foreign publics, different approaches to soft power, and indeed, different purposes for public diplomacy. The traditional view of public diplomacy relies on a hierarchical centralized structure of diplomatic systems, with top-down information flows (Leonard & Alakeson, 2000). The purpose is to gain soft power and to achieve policy objectives. From the traditional view of public diplomacy, publics become the means to government's goals.

The network approach suggests a globalized view of the world, characterized by interdependence between all actors. As Strobe Talbott (1997), the former U.S. Deputy Secretary of State, noted, "the very word 'foreign' is becoming obsolete" (p. 81). The network approach suggests that communication takes place simultaneously between different actors, moving away from physical space to the *space of flows* and

to communication in a *timeless time*. The goal is not to gain soft power, but rather to establish understanding and to benefit all actors. An important source of power here is network-making power, which allows connecting to multiple networks, sharing resources, and setting the structure of a network. Thus, the purpose of public diplomacy from a network approach is to influence the actors by genuine engagement, collaboration, and empowerment (Fisher, 2011). As Gregory (2008) defined it, public diplomacy is “a communication instrument used in governance broadly defined” (Gregory, 2008, p. 276).

Based on the reviewed literature on network society and network approach to public diplomacy, this study seeks to answer the following research question:

RQ2: How do public diplomacy actors make meaning of public diplomacy as communication networks (if at all)?

Relationship Management in Public Relations and Public Diplomacy

Although the network approach to public diplomacy is gaining increasing attention and more emphasis is being placed on relationships and dialogue (Krause & van Evera, 2009), there is little understanding of how actors build and maintain relationships within a network, and little empirical research on collaborative public diplomacy (Cowan & Arsenault, 2008). Several studies used social network analysis to explore the position of actors in the network; however, there is a knowledge gap in the understanding of the strategies that actors use to build relationships, the nature of such relationships, and the challenges that actors face.

Increasingly, scholars in both fields, public diplomacy and public relations, have turned to relationship management as the central focus of communication. For

example, Lynch (2003) suggested that the failure of U.S. public diplomacy efforts in reaching Arab youth was due to the insincere approach that broke the trust in the relationship. Indeed, relationship-building and management became the distinguishing feature of new public diplomacy that focuses on “mutuality and the establishment of stable relationships” (Melissen, 2005, p. 21), and engagement to build long-term relationships (Kelly, 2009). L’Etang (2009a) argued that “merging PR and public diplomacy perspectives can usefully advance our understanding of relational processes in public communication” (L’Etang, 2009a, p. 611).

Several studies suggested using the relationship management framework in public affairs (e.g., Taylor & Kent, 2006; Toth, 2006) and public diplomacy research (e.g., Fitzpatrick, 2007; 2009; Zaharna, 2010; Nelson & Izadi, 2009). For example, Toth (2006) argued that the relational approach offers a deeper understanding of public affairs because of its focus on actors, processes, and communication strategies, as well as its consideration of challenges to manage issues that influence the communities. Similarly, Taylor and Kent (2006) suggested using the relational approach to study how states can build relationships at home and abroad. L’Etang (2009a) suggested that the relational approach is particularly useful in exploring what she called the revolutionist approach. Drawing from Kant’s writing, L’Etang (2009a) conceptualized the revolutionist approach as a view of international society comprised of different states but forming a moral and cultural whole. L’Etang (2009a) suggested that relationship management might contribute to an ethical functioning of an international society, considering interests and objectives of all parties. To apply it to the network approach to public diplomacy, relationship

management theories may help explore the strategies that different actors employ in building relationships with various other actors in a public diplomacy network.

Relationship management defined

The focus on relationships as the unit of analysis in public relations started with Ferguson's paper in 1984, although the importance of relationship-building has been discussed in public relations literature since the 1950s (Cutlip & Center, 1952). Relationship can be defined as "the state which exists between an organization and its key publics in which the actions of either entity impact the economic, social, political, and/or cultural well-being of the other entity" (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998, p. 62). The relationship management approach views relationships as transactional and dynamic, goal oriented, influenced by antecedents and consequences, and driven by perceived needs (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000a).

The purpose of relationship management is to help organizations reach their goals and at the same time help publics reach theirs (Ledingham, 2003; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000b). Organizations maintain relationships with publics as well as with other organizations (Ledingham, 2006). In a longitudinal study, Ledingham and Bruning (2000b) found that to build a relationship, an organization must engage in community activities and communicate that involvement to the publics. In addition, Ledingham & Bruning (2000b) distinguished between a symbolic and behavioral relationship. A symbolic relationship is based on communication, whereas a behavioral relationship reflects actions. The authors argued that a symbolic relationship can improve and support a behavioral relationship, but a weak behavioral relationship can destroy communication (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000b).

Several relational characteristics allow studying organizational-public relationships in different ways (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 2000). First, organizations develop different patterns of interaction, which form the communication structure. Second, various antecedents determine the existence and nature of such relationships. The antecedents include perceptions, motives, needs, and behaviors (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 2000). Third, relationships have consequences or outcomes. Fourth, relationships are formed with communication linkages, i.e., interactions that help all parties involved to achieve their goals. Such linkages include the intensity of exchange, the valence, and the duration.

Grunig and Huang (2000) suggested a relationship management model in which they propose three stages of building and maintaining relationships. The first stage of a relationship is antecedents, which explain why organizations form relationships with publics. Broom, Casey, and Ritchey (2000) discussed antecedents as perceptions, motives, needs, and behaviors, to name a few. Antecedents can include social and cultural norms, collective perceptions and expectations, needs for resources, perceptions of uncertain environment, and legal/voluntary necessity (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 2000).

The second stage in Grunig and Huang's (2000) model is the relationship maintenance strategies, also called cultivation strategies. Drawing from interpersonal communication research, Grunig and Huang (2000) suggested five dimensions of symmetrical strategies, including positivity, openness, networking, assurances, and shared tasks. Some of these strategies correspond with the conflict management strategies developed earlier in public relations research (e.g., Plowman, 1998; 2007;

Plowman, Briggs, & Huang, 2001). Positivity refers to organizational attempts to make the relationship enjoyable for both parties. Openness, also conceptualized as disclosure, refers to organizational desire to share internal information, thus contributing to more symmetry in the relationship. Networking reflects organizational efforts to build relationships with various individuals and organizations, and especially those that are similar to their target publics. Assurances refer to legitimacy of the organization, and acknowledgement of the legitimacy of other parties in the relationship. The shared tasks dimension refers to parties' common issues and concerns, such as employment, making profits, etc.

In addition, organizations use asymmetrical strategies, including contending, avoiding, accommodating, compromising, and distributive (Hung, 2007). These strategies were primarily drawn from conflict management literature. In using the contending strategy, organizations try to persuade publics to accept their position. The avoiding strategy means that organizations avoid possible conflicts in a relationship. With the accommodating strategy, organizations agree to yield their positions at least partly to accommodate other parties' interests. Compromising strategy means that each party yields its interests but none is completely satisfied. Last, distributive strategy is used when organizations asymmetrically impose their position without any concern for others' interests.

The third stage of organization-public relationships consists of outcomes or consequences, which include trust, control mutuality, relational commitment, and relational satisfaction. Trust refers to the other party's perceptions of an organization's reliability and integrity. Control mutuality refers to power distribution

in a relationship. Grunig and Huang (2000) posited that power asymmetry is inevitable in a relationship, and control mutuality reflects the parties' agreement as to how much each of them can influence the other. Relational commitment can be affective in that it relies on emotional feelings towards another party. In addition, relational commitment can be continuant suggesting a party's dedication to the relationships independent of the costs associated with it. Last, relational satisfaction relates to a party's emotional attitude, usually related to a party's expectations and the extent to which they were met in the relationship.

The dialectical approach to relationship management proposed by Hung (2007) suggested that relationships do not necessarily follow a logical pattern and are constantly changing. Hung (2007) argued that both publics and organizations have different expectations. The dialectic approach suggests that relationships are characterized by contradiction, change, praxis, and totality (Hung, 2007). Contradiction represents tensions between parties, which naturally occur in any relationship, and constitute the integral part of a relationship. Change happens after contradiction is resolved. In other words, contradiction is the agent of change. Praxis reflects the idea that humans are both proactive and reactive in human interaction. In other words, parties in a relationship make conscious decisions, but oftentimes in view of their previous experiences. The principle of totality suggests that relationships are not built in a vacuum, but rather are linked to other events and situations. Thus, Hung (2007) argued that relationships are dynamic and are influenced by multiple forces within the relationship and outside the relationship.

Organizations need to maintain a constant dialogue, looking at relationships as a process rather than an outcome.

Relationship management, social capital, and networks

Building and maintaining positive relationships are useful not only to achieve the goals, but also because positive relationships contribute to an organization's social capital. Social capital was defined by public relations scholars as "the ability that organizations have of creating, maintaining, and using relationships to achieve desirable organizational goals" (Kennan & Hazleton, 2006, p. 322). In fact, Ihlen (2005) posited that "relationships can be called the social capital of an organization" (p. 492). Another definition of social capital suggests that it belongs to a network rather than to an actor: Lin (2002) described social capital as the "resources embedded in social networks accessed and used by actors for actions" (pp. 24-25).

The connection between networks and social capital is also highlighted in Edwards' (2009) research, in which she found that access to organizational networks was the most important element for successful department functioning. Edwards (2009) looked at a public relations department within the organization to explore its symbolic power, or "power to present a normalized version of reality to other members of the field, which reinforces their own position" (Edwards, p. 253). Her study showed that the public relations team maintained formal and informal networks on different organizational levels, which in turn granted them social capital. Social capital came in different forms, including technical or logistical information, institutionalized cultural capital, distinction from other departments, practical information, and contextual information (for example, events in the organization and

related events outside of it). Particularly interesting in the study is the transformation of social capital into symbolic capital through letters, presentations, speeches, press releases, and emails.

Another study illustrated the role of internal social capital in an organization's ability to build collective social capital outside the organization. Using social network analysis, Sommerfeldt and Taylor (2011) measured trust and support in a Jordanian government organization. The study results showed little trust in the organization by its publics, which the authors attributed to the overall low national scores of trust levels in the Jordanian society. The authors suggested that a weak internal network structure might hinder the organization from forming positive and stable external relationships.

Social capital may contribute to public diplomacy (L'Etang, 2009b): Governments typically work with other agencies that focus on humanitarian assistance, cultural and educational exchanges, to name a few. In the example of the United States, several government agencies work on public diplomacy with the United States Department of State having the leading role in public diplomacy efforts. Other agencies include the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Institute of International Education (which administers educational programs, such as the Fulbright grant), the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Rotary Club, and the National Democratic Institute. L'Etang (2009b) posited that interpersonal as well as strategic/organizational communication foster relationships between these agencies. Interpersonal communication is personal connections between individuals working on public diplomacy, and strategic communication

includes formal connections between organizations. Both of these relationships foster government's social capital in public diplomacy according to L'Etang (2009b).

L'Etang (2009b) suggested that to expand social capital to other countries, a government may want to expand those networks to local organizations in the target countries. To build social capital, governments must have strong relationships inside and outside their network(s).

Relationship management in public diplomacy

Fitzpatrick (2007) outlined several implications for studying public diplomacy from a public relations perspective. First, the relational framework would establish a defining worldview based on symmetry, mutuality and dialogue. Second, relationship management emphasizes the holistic and management view of public diplomacy, focusing on long-term and proactive planning, which has been lacking in public diplomacy practice. Third, Fitzpatrick (2007) suggested that the relational framework could advance public diplomacy from a normative to a practical paradigm.

Fitzpatrick (2009) interviewed more than 200 former officers of the United States Information Agency to explore her previous relationship propositions (Fitzpatrick, 2007). The USIA alumni study explored the views of former public diplomacy officers, who served both abroad and in the United States. A number of themes were reiterated by the participants. First, effective public diplomacy requires listening and dialogue. Participants emphasized that the "hard-sell" diplomacy no longer applies. Second, interpersonal relationships are central in building international relationships. Third, participants emphasized the importance of long-term relationship building. At the same time, a skillful management of short-term

policies is also important. Fourth, participants emphasized the importance of telling the truth for building credibility, suggesting that gaining credibility is “a tough slog” (Fitzpatrick, 2009, p. 237). Fifth, new public diplomacy requires a wise use of technology. Participants suggested that although new media offered new opportunities, it also has limitations and does not allow cultivating trust.

Likewise, Fitzpatrick (2009) questioned whether public diplomacy is and should be an instrument of power. Although traditionally public diplomacy has been discussed in view of government’s effort to advance national interests, its role may be changing in the new political and communication environment. In discussing the relational approach to public diplomacy, Fitzpatrick (2009) suggested that public diplomacy might have a new purpose of enhancing relationships between governments and other people to achieve mutual understanding.

Fitzpatrick (2007, 2009) argued that the relational framework offers a holistic approach to public diplomacy, which considers both actions and communication, as well as interpersonal relationships, which are central to cultivating country image (Yang, Shin, Lee, & Wrigley, 2008). In addition, Fitzpatrick (2009) emphasized the pressing need to agree on the fundamental concepts and aspects of public diplomacy in order to establish an ethical approach and avoid the negative perceptions of public diplomacy as one-way persuasive communication that benefits only one country. Fitzpatrick’s research (2007; 2009) is among the few empirical studies testing relational perspective in public diplomacy.

An information framework approach can also help to understand relationship management in public diplomacy. From the informational perspective,

communication problems are viewed as information problems (Zaharna, 2010). In other words, misunderstanding occurs due to lack of information. The informational framework is characterized by the ability to control the message, use of a variety of channels, and ability to play a role in advocacy. The most familiar informational initiatives are international broadcasting (i.e., Voice of America, Radio Free Europe), various information campaigns (i.e., the Listening Tour initiated by Karen Hughes), and media relations. Although the informational model has not always been successful, Zaharna (2010) argued that it could support the relationship model.

In discussing the relational approach to public diplomacy, Zaharna (2010) suggested three levels of relational initiatives. The first level includes cultural and educational programs. The second level reflects the collaboration between public institutions and private organizations, societies, and institutions. The third level is the relationship building between state institutions, nongovernmental organizations, and other non-state actors to achieve policy objectives. Zaharna (2010) argued that public diplomacy problems arise when a state uses only one framework. According to Zaharna, ignoring communication and information sharing is as damaging as ignoring the relational dimensions of trust, openness, involvement, investment, and commitment suggested by Grunig and Huang (2000).

A critical cultural view of public diplomacy also supports the relational perspective. In the study of recent U.S. public diplomacy strategies, Dutta-Bergman (2006) found that public diplomacy has not moved beyond one-way models of public relations. He reported five central themes in communication between the U.S. government and the Middle East: U.S. interests in the Middle East, influencing the

other, hidden agendas, propaganda-rural population dynamic, and propaganda—a national elite dynamic. Dutta-Bergman (2006) further argued that the U.S. government still employs persuasion as its main strategy. As an alternative, Dutta-Bergman (2006) suggested the culture-centered model for practicing public diplomacy, which focuses on building relationships, co-creating meaning through dialogue, and offering a space that equalizes power between the countries. The culture-centered approach reflects the broader discussion of the relationship management approach to public diplomacy in that it “focuses on building relationships between cultures, foregrounding dialogue, and engaging in the process of mutual sharing of meanings” (Dutta-Bergman, 2006, p. 119).

To summarize, the emergence of the relational approach to public diplomacy is promising. Although some empirical studies have been conducted using the relationship management theory (Fitzpatrick, 2009) and network approach (Fisher, 2008; 2010) in addition to conceptual literature on the role of both in public diplomacy (e.g., Fitzpatrick, 2007; Zaharna, 2005; 2007), there is little understanding of how actors form relationships in public diplomacy networks. Network research and relationship management theory could contribute to theory building in public diplomacy and extend understanding of new public diplomacy, in which publics are not consumers, but rather active participants. Considering the promising opportunities offered by new technology in allowing publics to participate in public diplomacy networks, the following section will review research in new media and online relationship management.

New media defined

As Kent (2009) posited, new media is only new in that they offer new ways to accomplish tasks that have always been part of communication and public relations practice. Specifically, networks have existed for a long time, and technology, especially the Internet, has offered more time and space-efficient ways to connect. Berenger (2006) discussed several features of the Internet that make it especially important for communication practices. The Internet is less dependent on national borders and time than traditional media (Berenger, 2006). Its global nature does not allow for unquestioned patriotism or nationalism. In addition, opinion formation online largely depends on the fact of whether the individual knows, trusts, and can relate to the source of the message/the sender.

New media has several advantages (Berenger, 2006). First, new media is convergent: It is possible to converge and synthesize different media. Second, it is ubiquitous, or available to more people. Third, new media has an agenda-setting function: Research suggests that new media sets the agenda for mainstream media. Fourth, new media is perceived as credible. For example, blogs quickly acquired credibility because citizens were telling their stories. Fifth, interactivity allows all actors to express their views without mediation or editing. Sixth, messages on new media are transferable: Actors can cut and paste information, or forward it.

Social media is a particular type of new media, representing “any interactive communication channel that allows for two-way interaction and feedback” (Kent, 2009, p. 645). Social media includes e-mail, listservs, and even radio call-in

programs (Kent, 2009), but more recently, new social media usually relates to such platforms as Twitter, Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, blogs, to name the most prominent ones. Organizations are being cautious in adopting new social media (Men & Tsai, in press) due to lack of understanding and expertise, which carried some degree of fear about changing the usual ways of functioning (Price, Haas, & Margolin, 2008). Thus, organizations tend to adapt new technology to their existing structures. Price, Haas, and Margolin (2008) suggested that a more efficient alternative to adoption is transformation, in which organizations change their organizational structure to relate to the dynamic and flexible nature of new media. The authors argue that transformation is an inevitable step, however, despite the advantages of using social media, many organizations are slow to take the steps to transformation, as they are seen to bring major changes to organizational structure (for example, reduction in personnel).

Several studies found that adoption of new media, especially social media, has contributed to decision-making power and social capital in general (e.g., Diga & Kelleher, 2009; Porter & Sallot, 2005; Porter, Trammell, Chung, & Kim, 2007). For example, Sallot's (2004) qualitative study of 35 public relations practitioners suggested that the use of new media empowered practitioners in several ways. First, new media use helped them conduct research. Second, new media provided direct access to target publics. Third, practitioners could bypass 'filters' and 'gatekeepers' which typically are represented by journalists. Fourth, practitioners experienced better productivity and efficiency when using new media for media relations, i.e., communicating with journalists, disseminating public relations materials, etc. Fifth,

new media allowed practitioners to hear consumers' feedback, thus providing quicker evaluation. Sixth, new media provided instant access to unlimited information from highly diverse sources. It stands to reason that new media can be an important tool for all public diplomacy actors, including publics, to gain empowerment.

Online relationship cultivation strategies

The first studies of online relationship management explored strategies to engage publics through organizational websites (Kent & Taylor, 2002; Taylor, Kent, & White, 2001). More recent literature examining online organizational relationship management incorporated cultivation strategies developed in public relations and interpersonal communication literature (Hallahan, 2008). Emerging research suggests that cultivation strategies may differ for online relationships.

Two such strategies are communicated relational commitment and conversational human voice. In the study of organizational blogs, Kelleher and Miller (2006) found that conversational human voice and communicated relational commitment were relationship cultivation strategies that particularly related to relational outcomes. *Communicated relational commitment* incorporates relational strategies of openness and assurances, emphasizing “expressed commitment to building and maintaining a relationship” and underscoring “the nature and quality of the relationship” (Kelleher & Miller, 2006, p. 403). *Conversational human voice* emphasizes “human communication attributes capable of being conveyed in a computer-mediated context” (Kelleher & Miller, 2006, p. 403). Their results showed that three relational strategies (communicated relational commitment, human voice, and positivity/optimism) correlated positively with all four relational outcomes. In

addition, task sharing is correlated with all outcomes but control mutuality.

Responsiveness/customer service is correlated with the outcomes of trust and commitment. Moreover, the study showed that blogs were viewed as more conversational than organizational web sites.

In a later study, Kelleher (2009) confirmed his previous results, finding that two relational maintenance strategies, conversational human voice and communicated relational commitment, correlated positively with relational outcomes. Kelleher (2009) argued for a distributed public relations model, in which a wide range of people from an organization communicate interactively with target publics, thus giving a human voice to communication.

The study of social media at the American Red Cross (Briones, Kuch, Liu, & Jin, 2011) highlights the importance of social media in facilitating communality, meaning that both an organization and publics can identify with each other. The study suggested that platforms like Facebook and Twitter can facilitate the relational outcome of control mutuality, recommending that organizations communicate directly with journalists, volunteers, and community members. In addition, Briones et al.'s (2011) study noted two major barriers in building online organization-public relationships. First, organizations must have consistent staff working on social media engagement. Second, the staff must be trained in social media use. Similarly, Men and Tsai (in press) found that Chinese and American organizations use the same online relationship cultivation strategies, proposed by Kent and Taylor (1998). The three strategies included disclosure/openness, information dissemination, and interactivity/involvement.

Research Questions

To summarize, the research in public diplomacy and public relations suggests a shift from a dyadic one-way persuasive communication model to a two-way multipolar relational model of public diplomacy. However, little consensus exists regarding the definition of public diplomacy. Thus, the first contribution of this study sought to explain the changing nature of public diplomacy in modern society. Network theory literature suggests that modern society is a network society with increasingly interconnected actors. The second contribution of this study sought to explain whether and how practitioners see public diplomacy as networks. Public relations research contributes to the network approach to public diplomacy by offering guidance on how actors (i.e., organizations and publics) build relationships offline and online. However, little research has empirically explored how actors cultivate relationships offline and online, within and outside their networks. Thus, the third contribution of this study was providing a better understanding of online relationship cultivation strategies. Last, research suggested that digital media offered new opportunities for public diplomacy. This study sought to explore how digital media could help build communication networks and sustain relationships in public diplomacy.

Based on the reviewed literature, this study sought to explore the meanings that public diplomacy actors attributed to these key concepts that have been posited as defining the field. The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: How do public diplomacy actors define public diplomacy?

RQ2: How do public diplomacy actors make meaning of public diplomacy as communication networks (if at all)?

RQ3: How do public diplomacy actors make meaning of relationship cultivation?

RQ3a: How do public diplomacy actors approach relationship cultivation online versus offline?

RQ3b: How do public diplomacy actors build relationships (if at all) within their network (organization) versus outside their network (organization)?

Chapter 3: Methodology

Rationale

The goal of this study was to explore how concepts of networks and relationship cultivation strategies have meaning in public diplomacy practice. The framing of the research problem leads to a particular method (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008). Qualitative research allows for exploration because qualitative methods are used to understand how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences (Merriam, 2009). This study viewed social interaction as a process of construction (Woods, 1992), meaning that social patterns are established through individual interaction and constant confirmation by participants' actions. Such a view also suggested that individuals made meaning of events and various phenomena through an interpretative process, based on personal experience (Woods, 1992).

Qualitative approach allowed a more holistic approach to the study of a phenomenon. Public diplomacy networks function in a highly political context and researchers must “understand the external context as well as internal context” in which networks operate (Fisher, 2010, p. 72). Qualitative methods allowed a researcher to incorporate the influence of a context into the analysis. Context could be defined as “structural conditions that shape the nature of situations, circumstances, or problems to which individuals respond by means of action/interaction/emotions” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 87). Political context was expected to be especially prominent in this study, as discussed earlier. Government networks had more political power than publics, and in many circumstances, more than NGO networks. In a study

of innovation in networks, Weiss and Domingo (2010) found that power relationships shaped innovation processes. Qualitative methodology allows considering these power differentials.

Second, qualitative methods allowed for the exploratory nature of research studies: One of the strengths of the qualitative approach is its flexibility and the emergent nature of study designs that allows for changing conditions and needs (Merriam, 2009).

Data Collection

To answer the research questions, I conducted interviews with public diplomacy practitioners. Interviews are the most common method of qualitative data collection (e.g., Merriam, 2009; Fontana & Frey, 2005). A qualitative interview can be defined as a conversation “in which a researcher gently guides a conversational partner in an extended discussion” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 4). Both qualitative interviews and ordinary conversations have a continuous flow, allow parties to clarify meanings, and facilitate the exchange of details. At the same time, in-depth interviewing is different in that interviewers guide the conversation by following up with additional questions and focusing on the research topic. The interviewer has to keep balance between showing some familiarity with the topic to avoid superficial answers and stepping away and asking for the explanation of the basic concepts or technical terms that help clarify the issue (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

Rubin and Rubin (2005) suggested that “qualitative interviewing projects are especially good at describing social and political processes” (p. 3). It stands to reason that such in-depth interviews were a fitting strategy to conduct this study. In-depth

interviews with public diplomacy actors allowed me to explore their experiences, the context in which these experiences occur, and guided me in exploring areas that had not yet been discussed in the rather recent literature on network public diplomacy.

Qualitative interviews vary in structure. In a highly structured interview, the interviewer asks all participants the same set of pre-determined questions (Fontana & Frey, 2005). In a semi-structured interview the researcher uses the interview protocol with pre-determined questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). However an interviewer can modify the order of the questions according to the flow of the conversation and add questions that may illuminate unexpected topics related to a research (Merriam, 2009). Unstructured interviews tend to be open ended, and completely guided by the interviewee. Although Corbin and Strauss (2008) suggested that unstructured interviews offer the most dense data, they also may diverge in unrelated topics, since the researcher is not following any interview guides.

This study took the semi-structured interview approach to ensure that interviews provide data for answering the research questions and to allow flexibility for discussing unexpected topics. The interview guide (protocol) ensured that participants answered the questions related to the nature of public diplomacy, networks, and the cultivation strategies used in social media. At the same time, I was open to themes that emerged within those topics, and I explored them. Qualitative in-depth interviewing has several strengths, including the ability to see visual and audible cues (Berg, 2009), flexibility and adaptability to a participant or interview situation (Merriam, 2009), and a deep understanding of individual experiences that form social life.

However, qualitative interviews also have weaknesses. A first weakness of qualitative interviews is that the interviewer's personality plays a role in the research process. To address this weakness, scholars suggested that researchers reflect on their personal experiences and understandings prior and during the data analysis. To address the issue of personal bias in conducting this study, I wrote reflexive memos during the data collection and data analysis processes.

A second weakness of the interview is that the research process depends on the skill of the interviewer. Thus, research projects must ensure that interviewers understand the fundamentals of qualitative research and develop strong active listening skills. To address this weakness, I referred to the qualitative research methodological literature for guidance and clarification. For example, Kvale (2005) suggested that good interviewing skills included careful questioning and regular checking of information obtained from the interviews. Thus, in designing the interview protocol and during the data collection I asked follow-up questions to account for missing evidence. I was also open to unexpected data emerging from the interviews and added research questions when such data emerged, as suggested by Rubin and Rubin (2005). In addition, I discussed the data collection process with my advisor and colleagues at the Department of Communication, University of Maryland, as well as public diplomacy scholars, during conferences that I attended.

Sample and recruitment

The unit of analysis was the individual, or, to be more specific, the individual perceptions of public diplomacy actors. Because this study sought to explore public diplomacy from the perspectives of different actors, it did not limit participants to

public diplomacy officers only. Limiting the participation pool to public diplomacy officers could lead to having only participants in the government, because traditionally public diplomacy was viewed as a government function. However, the purpose of this study was to explore public diplomacy as communication conducted by various actors. Thus, participants were identified by their responsibilities rather than their titles. Specifically, I sought participants who worked in a government or in an international organization, who were responsible in their workplace for communication with international publics, and who have held that or a similar position for at least six months.

I conducted 32 interviews with 31 government and international organizations' employees, whose responsibilities included communication with international audiences. I interviewed one participant twice, because he held a senior position in his organization and had many experience related to public diplomacy. Participants included 15 government employees and 16 officers from seven international organizations. Interviews were conducted between August 2012 and January 2013. Thirty one interviews were audio recorded and fully transcribed. Because one participant asked not to be audio recorded, I took detailed notes from that interview. Interviews lasted between 25 minutes and 1 and a half hour. Due to the political context of the research, many participants agreed to be audio-recorded only if their identities would be fully protected. Thus, I removed all identifiable information about a person or an organization.

The sampling in this study was purposeful, theoretical, and relied on the snowball sampling method. This study used purposeful sampling in that it included

participants with a certain experience. I started by contacting participants who conducted public diplomacy in the U.S. government and in international organizations and by asking if they had public diplomacy roles or expertise. During the four years at the University of Maryland, I had made several acquaintances with communication officers at various governmental and nongovernmental organizations. Thus, I started my data collection by contacting them and employees that worked on outreach communication. I have also obtained e-mail addresses from organizational websites and contacted communication staff, using the interview invitation script included in Appendix A. I used the same script for inviting participants to the study by email and by phone.

In choosing nongovernmental agencies, I looked for organizations that focus on international publics. I researched the organizations online, but also attended formal and informal events for public diplomacy professionals. When I did not get replies, I asked friends who worked in those organizations or who knew someone in those organizations, to forward my e-mail with a script for inviting participants to the study.

The sampling process was also theoretical. Theoretical sampling is “a method of data collection based on concepts derived from data” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 144). Theoretical sampling is useful in that it allows flexibility in data gathering letting the researcher “go where analysis indicated would be the most fruitful place to collect more data that will answer the questions that arise during analysis” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 145).

Snowball sampling was another strategy that I used in recruiting participants. Snowball sampling is a type of purposeful sampling researchers use when conducting studies with hard-to-reach populations (Merriam, 2009). The recruiting strategy involved establishing contact with several participants and asking them to refer the researcher to more participants. As I conducted interviews, I asked participants to direct me to other public diplomacy actors. One of the weaknesses of the snowball sampling method is that the participant pool may be homogenous, as interviewees may refer to the researcher to people with similar views and values. In my study I contacted employees in different departments and organizations, which allowed me to expand to a wider pool of participants working with international engagement.

At the start of the study, I sought to interview 30 participants, and reached saturation with 32 interviews total. A saturation point is a time in data collection when no additional information or views are being found (Glaser & Strauss, 2009). In other words, it is a point in data collection where the researcher becomes empirically confident that the phenomenon has been described (Glaser & Strauss, 2009). It also means that a researcher must “go out of his way” and look for a more diverse sample to make sure that saturation is based on various viewpoints (Glaser & Strauss, 2009, p. 61), which I did. As a result, I conducted interviews with employees from seven nongovernmental organizations and ten governmental structures. After 32 interviews, I reached a saturation point, which can also be called redundancy. When a research reaches a saturation points, it means that sampling can finish (Merriam, 2009).

IRB approval and interview protocol

Before data collection, I sought approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Maryland. The purpose of the IRB approval was to ensure that the study was conducted in an ethical manner and that it did not harm participants. I received the IRB approval in July 2012, and pretested the interview protocol in early August 2012. Specifically, I conducted three pilot interviews and asked the questions in the interview protocol to ensure that they helped to answer all the research questions. I modified the interview protocol accordingly.

During data collection, in the beginning of each interview, I explained to a participant the purpose of the study and participant's right to withdraw at any time. I sought each participant's consent to participate in the study and to be audio-recorded. If a participant did not want to be audio-recorded, I took detailed hand-written notes during the interview. Only one participant refused to be audio-recorded. The other 31 interviews were audio recorded and transcribed shortly after interviews.

Several participants expressed concern about including quotations in a dissertation, which is a public document. Thus, I promised those participants to verify quotations before including them in the study, which I did.

The interview protocol (Appendix B) was structured around the three initial research questions. The first research question sought to explore how public diplomacy actors defined public diplomacy. The interview questions asked participants' understandings of the nature of public diplomacy, their responsibilities and activities, and their perceptions regarding similarities and differences between public relations and public diplomacy.

The second research question sought to explore participants' perceptions of public diplomacy as networks. Guided by the literature, the interview questions asked participants about internal organizational networks, the actors (nodes), and the links between them. In addition, the questions ask about public diplomacy networks outside participants' organizations.

The third research question asked how public diplomacy actors made meaning of relationships management. Accordingly, interview questions explored whether participants perceived their work as building relationships and if so, how these relationships developed. In addition, interview questions focus on online relationship cultivation strategies, and participants' use of new media in cultivating relationships within the organizations and outside the organizations.

Initially, the third research question had two subquestions: one explored the use of digital media in relationship cultivation, and second looked at cultivation strategies with internal network actors vs. cultivation strategies with external network actors. Because discussions of external network actors were limited, the subquestions were dropped during the analysis process. As a result, I incorporated the data about online cultivation strategies with other data on relationship cultivation. However, interviews provided an extended discussion of the use of digital media in public diplomacy. Thus, I added the fourth research question, which sought to explore how participants used digital media to reach public diplomacy goals. See Appendix B for the formal connections between research questions and the actual questions.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is “a process of examining and interpreting data in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 1). It is also a process that leads to answering the study’s research questions (Merriam, 2009). The data analysis process involves making sense out of the data through combining, reducing, selecting, and interpreting participants’ reflections and experiences (Merriam, 2009). This study took the grounded theory approach as a method of data analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Corbin & Strauss, 2008), an inductive analysis that drew concepts from data. Data analysis from the grounded theory approach centers around generating, developing, and verifying concepts derived from data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The grounded theory approach to data analysis is especially useful in exploratory studies due its inductive nature. It allows the researcher to start data analysis without pre-determined categories and hypotheses.

To analyze data in this study, I followed formal coding procedures, using the analytical tools developed by Corbin and Strauss (2008). To analyze interviews, I followed the three-step process (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The first is open coding, when the researcher looks for concepts or blocks of raw data. During this step, the researcher analyzes all possible meanings of a concept, and assigns codes based on those concepts. Open coding starts soon after the first interview, guiding the researcher in further data collection and analysis. The second step is axial coding in which the researcher connects data to broader concepts and theorizes about the relationships between codes. Corbin and Strauss (2008) recommended asking

questions and making comparisons as analytic tools during axial coding. The third step is selective coding, in which the researcher identifies broad themes or categories. Corbin and Strauss (2008) suggested several techniques in the final stages of research, including writing the story line, moving from descriptive to theoretical explanations of the phenomenon, and using diagrams.

Throughout the data analysis process, I used several analytical tools, or “thinking techniques used by analysis to facilitate the coding process” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 65). First, I used questioning in analyzing data, in which I asked who was involved in the processes described in the data, when, where, how, and with what consequences. Second, I made comparisons between pieces of data. Constant comparison suggests “comparing incident with incident” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 73) and theoretical comparison focuses on the properties of the incident or phenomenon. Third, I explored the meaning of words used by participants. For example, participants in this study talked about “pushing” messages out and “empowerment.” I asked participants to define those words. Likewise, I asked participants to describe the meaning of networks. Fourth, I looked for negative cases and explanations that did not fit the patterns emerging in the data. Fifth, I wrote memos throughout the data analysis process, to explore relationships between concepts and to develop explanations and conclusions.

Validity and Reliability

Validity in qualitative research can be defined in several ways. Guba and Lincoln (2008) emphasize that validity is not objectivity. Rather, validity can be explained as authenticity, resistance, and ethical relationships (Guba & Lincoln,

2005). In discussing *validity as authenticity*, Guba & Lincoln (2008) suggested the fairness criterion. To be fair, researchers must present all possible views and perspectives. *Validity as resistance* suggests that the data analysis process can be likened to “examining the properties of a crystal in a metaphoric sense” (Guba & Lincoln, 2008, p. 275). Researchers must explore hidden assumptions, question them, be attentive to details, and explore different properties of a phenomenon. *Validity as ethical relationships* emphasizes the researcher’s role and the participants’ roles in the investigative process. Guba and Lincoln (2008) argued that “the way in which we know is most assuredly tied up with both what we know and our relationship with our research participants” (p. 277).

Similarly, Kvale (1995, 2002) conceptualized validity in three ways: craftsmanship, communicative validity, and pragmatic validity. He suggested specific ways to ensure validity in qualitative studies. First, validity is craftsmanship in that researchers must continually check the data for credibility, plausibility, and trustworthiness of the findings; question the findings to ensure that the study is exploring and measuring what it intends to; and seek to interpret data theoretically to explain the nature of the phenomenon under investigation.

Second, research should have communicative validity (Kvale, 1995, 2002) in which the investigator validates interpretations and results with the participants, general public, or scientific community. Thus, study conclusions and results are validated through debate between those who know the phenomenon through experience or through academic learning.

Third, researchers can ensure pragmatic validity, i.e., that the results of the study are applicable and can serve the greater good. Pragmatic validity relates to the idea that “truth is whatever assists us to take actions that produce the desired results” (Kvale, 2002, p. 316). Here, knowledge goes beyond observation and becomes action. Two ways to evaluate pragmatic validity is to explore whether the results are accompanied by action or instigate some social change.

To ensure validity in this study, I took several steps suggested by Guba and Lincoln (2008), and Kvale (2009). First, I looked for various views on public diplomacy, networks, and relationships, and analyze all data to develop comprehensive answers to the research questions. During the interviews, I asked participants to define public diplomacy, networks, and relationships. Second, I explored public diplomacy, networks, and relationships from different perspectives, questioning participants’ and my own assumptions emerging during the interviews. I reflected on my own experiences and interpretations through writing and analyzing reflexive notes, or memos. Third, to ensure communicative validity, I consulted with my dissertation advisor, communication scholars, and other public diplomacy researchers throughout the analysis. In designing the study, I sought to utilized communicative validity strategies by contacting several public diplomacy scholars to share my research plans and I received their feedback. Fourth, I sought to establish rapport in the beginning of each interview, and I kept all interview data safe to ensure participants’ confidentiality. Last, I sought pragmatic validity in exploring and suggesting practical implications for the practice of public diplomacy.

Reliability can be explained in terms of internal and external reliability.

Internal reliability is a degree to which other researchers would make similar conclusions given the same data. Lincoln and Guba (1985) called it consistency. To ensure internal reliability, researchers carefully choose research methods to investigate the research questions posed, focus on theoretical concepts in analyzing data, and provide raw data in the final report to explain conclusions. In this study, I used the in-depth interviewing method because it allowed exploring individual *perceptions* and experiences related to public diplomacy, networks, and relationships. I have also connected the research questions and actual interview questions to the concepts in reviewed literature. During data analysis, I focused on the theoretical concepts developed in public diplomacy, network theory, and relationship management literature.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined external reliability as transferability of results. To ensure external reliability researchers communicate the procedures in the study and the data analysis steps. I used the steps suggested by Goetz and LeCompt (1984): describing participants, explaining contexts and structures, and providing definitions of concepts. Specifically, during the data collection process, I took notes about participant's affiliation with organization, the time and place of each interview, and the position of the participant within the organization.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity is another way to ensure the validity of research findings. Data analysis relies on the investigator's analytical skills and interpretation, and the researcher is part of the research process (Altheide & Johnson, 1998). Interviewing is

not a neutral exchange, but rather a collaborative effort (Fontana & Frey, 2005) that involves mutual influence (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The result of an interview is “a contextually bound and mutually created story” in which each participant “is a person, historically and contextually located, carrying unavoidable conscious and unconscious motives, desires, feelings and biases” (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 696). Thus, qualitative researchers seek reflexivity, or ability to enter a state of consciousness or “high quality awareness” (Reason & Rowan, 1981). Reflexivity is necessary in the data analysis process as it allows “to understand psychological and emotional states before, during, and after the research experience” (Lincoln, 2002, p. 337) and explores the influence of researcher’s experience in data interpretation.

One of the common ways to facilitate reflexivity is by writing memos. Increasingly researchers share “confessions” in their research process, which although are ‘overdone’ at times (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 714), prove to be valuable in making readers aware of the research process and the struggles that investigators face. Fontana and Frey (2005) argued that such reflections provide more realism and veracity to research. In my study, I addressed reflexivity through memos throughout data collection and data analysis process.

My worldview indeed is aligned with the network view of society. I believe that people are of one human race, and that governments must facilitate interaction and unification of the world rather than establishing competition. Although I am aware of political complexities and the current world order, I believe that they only corresponds to the old system of governance and does not fit the globalizing nature of

today's society, where people around the world increasingly believe that people of all races, nations, genders, classes, and ages are equal.

Due to travels and living in different countries, I have also developed intercultural competence and appreciation of diversity. I am Russian by nationality and Tatar by ethnicity, which is a minority in Russia. When I was 15 years old, I spent six months in the United States as an exchange student. I have also studied Arabic and Spanish and have spent several months in the Middle East and South America. Thus, I developed sympathy for different cultures. Although this may be helpful in understanding and appreciating public diplomacy, I also tend to be critical toward efforts of U.S. governments in using cultural appeals in its communication with other nations.

My work experience, likewise, has shaped my understandings of role of international organizations. I have spent about three months in an internship at the United Nations headquarters, the Department of Public Information. I worked in the United Nations radio section, and one of my projects included reaching out to international radio stations. The experience allowed me to see the potential of public diplomacy as well as challenges and weaknesses.

I believe such a worldview is necessary to conduct this study, but at the same time I will try to guard myself against looking for connections between actors that may not exist, or relationships that may not be for the purpose of building a truly network society, but rather to attain political goals. In other words, I have to be aware of political realities of research involving government and related institutions, and

remain open to alternative explanations and data that contest theory, as well as to ideas that I had not anticipated based on the reviewed literature.

Methodological Limitations

This study has limitations, some of which are embedded in the nature of the qualitative research. First, personal bias and character of a researcher may influence the conclusions in the study. In order to address such bias, I wrote reflexive memos throughout the project, keeping in mind that a researcher's role in interpreting data is inevitable.

Second, the study reflected public diplomacy networks in the United States, and may not be applicable to other countries. Countries differ in culture, political history, and power differentials, which may also influence how networks are constructed and how relationships are maintained. Especially important is the notion of technology and new media, which was more available in the United States than in some other areas in the world.

Third, the interview method may elicit responses that reflect more wishful thinking rather than real experiences. Employees working with public diplomacy and communication may subconsciously try to see only the advantages of using social media, and not be realistic about the possibilities that they offer. To avoid wishful thinking, I asked follow-up questions, asking for examples based on participants' experiences. For example, some data suggested that participants indeed claimed their focus on relationship building and listening. However, when asked to give examples, participants provided limited actual experiences related to those two goals.

Fourth, the study involved government employees, which constituted difficult-to-reach populations. In addition to busy schedules, government employees were limited as to how much internal information they could share. Two participants, both having received clearance from the employer, told me in the beginning of the interviews that they could not provide detailed information. However, the majority of participants did not mention having received clearances and did not warn me of any limitations in terms of sharing views or experiences.

Summary

To summarize, this study was an exploratory study of public diplomacy, networks, and how actors used the cultivation strategies to build and maintain relationships online, if at all. This qualitative study sought to contribute to the understanding of the network approach to public diplomacy, which theoretically had suggested that various actors participated in international communication and could be more successful if they built strong links between each other. Through in-depth interviews, I explored the definitions of public diplomacy, public diplomacy networks, and relationship cultivation within and outside organizations. This study also sought to have an additional value due to its focus not only on government, but also nongovernmental organizations, which were understudied in public diplomacy as well as in public relations.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this chapter is to present the results of the study. The results reflect the analysis of 32 interviews with government and international nongovernmental organizations employees whose responsibilities included communication with international audiences. The chapter has four parts, each part answering one research question.

RQ1 : How do public diplomacy actors define public diplomacy?

The purpose of the first research question was to explore the definitions and elements of public diplomacy. Emerging themes related to public diplomacy definitions, goals, publics, strategies, and context. Table 1 presents the summary of results for RQ1 (see Appendix C).

Definitions

Interview participants pointed out that one unique definition of public diplomacy had not yet developed. For example, in answering the question about the public diplomacy definition, one participant said:

It is something that we, something that public diplomacy officials grapple with all the time. It is really fascinating about a year or two ago, even the PR industry came together and agreed on one sentence definition of public relations. [...] I wish we would do something similar in public diplomacy, because I think it is important, and you know, the academic community vs. the practitioner community, vs. sort of other world leaders or other governments, all refer [to public diplomacy] in a different manner.

Although Interviews did not suggest one unique definition of public diplomacy, two predominant approaches emerged. First, participants viewed public diplomacy as government communication. Participants described a traditional approach to public diplomacy as government communication with international publics with the goal to influence them. Participants viewed governments as the main players in public diplomacy. Here participants either did not mention other organizations, or viewed them as a means to achieving government goals. One participant said:

I would generally agree [...] that public diplomacy is the attempt by governments to speak directly to foreign audiences, not through their governments to the foreign audience. So it is either by people to people exchanges, by broadcasting, by acts of various kinds, benevolence type things. That for me is true public diplomacy. It is one government to the people, not the government of another country.

The second approach suggested that public diplomacy moved away from traditional “ping-pong” communication between two governments or publics to a multilateral global communication process. Participants defined public diplomacy as communication between various international actors, including civil society organizations, nongovernmental and non-profit agencies, publics, to name a few. Some participants described public diplomacy as a “multilateral” process, in which various organizations had their goals and played different roles. For example, one participant said:

I tend to take a broader view of public diplomacy and I believe that it can be conducted by actors that are non-state actors, as well governments, as well as people, individual citizens, and organizations. And I believe that [...] public diplomacy is essentially taking the paradigm of government to government public diplomacy and inverting it, enabling people to influence other peoples, foreign peoples.

Public diplomacy issues

One of the most prominent themes regarding public diplomacy was that it focused on issues rather than countries. The examples of topics include nature conservation, elections, women's rights, technology, health, relevance of NATO, human rights, justice reform, to name a few. Focusing on topics allowed governments and organizations to have meaningful discussions about values and priorities in a context. For example, in discussing elections, the U.S. government communicators could discuss U.S. views on democracy, values of freedom, and "peaceful transition" to new governments.

Interview data suggested that nongovernmental organizations generally focused on specific issues, and had experts in the field. In the government, public diplomacy topics were mostly generated by leadership. For example, several participants mentioned Hillary Clinton's passion about women's issues and youth. As a result, several programs focused on women entrepreneurship, education broadly and STEM education specifically. Likewise, one participant told of Secretary Clinton's interest in wildlife conservation close to the wildlife conservation day. He said,

[The] Secretary has thrown us a little curve and said, I am really interested in wildlife conservation and particularly illegal wildlife trafficking. So at 11:15 this morning, it was a launch of that whole concept, anti-wildlife trafficking [where] secretary made opening remarks. We made the video for them. And we will make another video for the wildlife conservation day. You know there are all kinds of days during the year. History month, wildlife conservation, there is women's day, there is child's day.

Participants said that the focus on topics was particularly valuable because it allowed connecting to everyone, whether they were interested in politics or not, and whether they had positive attitude toward the government/organization or not. The topics that “affected human beings around the world and [did] not recognize boundaries,” allowed to develop “a common understanding” of global problems. It also allowed publics to learn something from that communication. For example, one participant discussed a conference they organized on youth empowerment and innovation, something that the publics were “passionate about.” The organization invited guest speakers, who shared their knowledge, and also started a discussion which became a “platform to better communicate with each other.”

Topical public diplomacy also allowed building relationships with like-minded organizations in the field, and expanding connections with various groups. For example, one organization worked on women empowerment, and connected to “people in business” and corporations in the target country, to explore “the role women play in the workforce there” and “the barriers to getting women to the top in that country.” Another participant spoke about individuals who were on an organized

exchange program, and upon their return connected with individuals who had served in other countries, based on interests and passions, like fair trade coffee.

Focus on public diplomacy topics could also foster interdepartmental collaboration within a government or an organization. Several participants spoke about drawing expertise from various departments depending on the topic. For example, one participant spoke about organizing a conference on an issue, saying that “internal” resources were easier to find because they related to a theme. She said, “if the topic is gender, then you identify all your gender experts.”

Public diplomacy and public relations

Participants discussed similarities and differences between public relations and public diplomacy. The participants suggested that the two fields had similar strategies and tactics, but differed in complexity, ethics, and evaluation approaches.

Similarities. First, participants suggested that both fields were discussed as strategic communication. From participants’ views, best practices in both fields included background research, objectives, tactics, and evaluation. As one participant said, in both fields “you do articulate the message, you do have target audiences, you are trying to accomplish particular goals as a result of it.”

Second, participants said that both fields employed similar strategies and tactics. For example, press briefings and media relations tactics were mentioned as elements in both fields. One participant thought that “public diplomacy practitioners would do well to borrow some of the tools and mechanisms that public relations uses as a field.”

Third, participants mentioned that both fields do similar things, i.e. having conversations with publics, responding to publics' concerns, questions, etc. In addition, some participants said that practitioners in public relations and public diplomacy "are both selling, [...], selling information" and "selling what we are doing."

Differences. At the same time, several participants did not see public relations similar to public diplomacy and discussed several differences between the two fields. First, some participants viewed public relations as marketing and one-way communication, and argued that public diplomacy was different in nature and instead sought to inform and to educate. For example, one participant said:

And in public relations it can be about a product, or company, but you are trying to educate the population on it, and trying to get them to like it, and in public diplomacy it is the same thing. I mean it is a different end goal, you are not asking somebody to buy a product, but you are using, you know, strategic communications and programs to educate people on certain things [...], hoping that they are going to like something. So I think the two are very similar, I think the way to achieve the end goal is different.

Second, participants described public diplomacy to be more complex and as carrying more responsibility because public diplomacy is about policies and "actions that influence people's lives." Complexity of public diplomacy was associated with pre-existing public perceptions about other countries and their governments. Participants spoke about their efforts to change those misconceptions. In addition, participant said that explaining policy questions was a hard task. Moreover, a lot of

government communication is politically sensitive and may involve many considerations.

Third, public diplomacy was perceived to be more “ethical,” “genuine,” “authentic” than public relations. Some participants said that public sector in general “[had] an ethical code” which distinguished it from public relations.

Fourth, public diplomacy was perceived to have a long-term focus and public relations to have a short-term focus. Interview participants suggested that changing attitudes and perceptions in public diplomacy required more time than making the public buy something, which was perceived to be the goal of public relations. For example, the exchange programs were not designed to give instant results. Results could become visible years after the program, when participants become influential in their societies. One participant said:

You send someone on exchange program, you might not see the results of that for decades, but you look back at some of the leaders who have been on exchange programs and I think it’s tremendously influential and it can really build these long term relationships. So I'd like to think that's the key difference [between public relations and public diplomacy].

The participants also suggested that public diplomacy and public relations programs differed in their approaches to program evaluation. Public relations programs were perceived to be easier to evaluate, because they could be measured by sales. If “individual consumers” bought a product as a result of a public relations campaign, “you’ve done your job.” Results of public diplomacy programs were

perceived to be long-term, indirect, and difficult to measure. For example, one participant said:

I mean, [...] you are not selling a product as discrete [in public diplomacy]. You know, if you are selling cornflakes and the sales are going up, you can have two different boxes and you can test them with focus groups to see which box they like the best. And you can test it in Minneapolis before you roll it out nationwide to see if people buy it or not. So there is lots of ways to test things in the private sector that are not as easy to do when [...] your product is more ephemeral, not as substantial, not as concrete.

Goals

The participants suggested several goals for public diplomacy. The goal to influence emerged as the most prominent theme in the data. Other less prominent goals included efforts to explain policies and culture, to build relationships, to explain and counter terrorism, to educate the U.S. public about global issues.

To influence. The participants said that the purpose of public diplomacy was to influence international publics, with the ultimate goal to change opinions and/or to change actions. One of the participants said that “it is easy to disseminate information,” but not as easy “to influence [publics’] actions and thoughts.” Another participant mentioned that while informing the publics is important, influencing is key. Yet another participant said that influencing opinions and attitudes is “not a negative thing” because it does not necessarily have a political agenda, often relies on educational exchanges and citizen training. In the words of a participant:

The goal is to allow people to participate in these programs, to make up their mind for themselves, based on not just observation, but actual participation and experience. Because I think that's the more powerful way [...] for them to understand, through their own eyes and their own background experiences, to make up their own minds about who we are, and what we stand for, and what we are trying to do.

One of the examples of changing opinions was given of the Peace Corps program during the Cold War. The purpose of the program was to change public attitudes towards the United States in the Eastern Block. One participant viewed the Peace Corps as a successful program because surveys conducted during that time reflected the change of opinions in the places where the Peace Corps volunteers resided.

Another goal was changing actions and/or behavior. Here participants said that although the goal was to "push information out," the ultimate goal was "to help people do something, think something, respond." While the goal was not necessarily to reach an agreement, the best outcome or "best case scenario [was to] change [publics'] actions." One of the most obvious examples of changing publics' actions relates to counter-terrorism work. Several participants mentioned that in their work they try to craft messages that can prevent publics from pursuing extremism. For example, communication officers participated in online forums where terrorist groups recruited potential members.

In addition, participants discussed the purpose of public diplomacy to shape or influence foreign policy. Results suggested that the desired outcome of all public

diplomacy programs was the selling or the shaping of foreign policy. For example, some participants discussed public diplomacy as the process of selling the “foreign policy product.” In other words, the purpose was to make the publics “buy” the U.S. perceptive and arguments for certain policies. Likewise, the participants suggested that educational exchanges targeted potential international future leaders who could influence foreign policy and play an important role in their country’s future international relations.

To engage. Public diplomacy as engagement, “dialogue” and “conversation” with international publics was one of the prominent themes in the data. Participants said that the purpose of public diplomacy was to have a conversation and a dialogue with the audience, and not necessarily to agree. As long as parties shared their perspectives, and had a conversation, the goals of public diplomacy were achieved. Several participants spoke about policies in digital media spaces and said that even negative comments were valuable. In fact, negative comments created opportunities for explaining values and policies, and also reflected transparency, self-criticism, and willingness to communicate. One participant said:

It does not necessarily mean that we try to get other people to necessarily like us, but at least even if our government policies are completely different, to have the opportunity to have seat at the table, and through, for example, international exchanges, [...] to at least sit down and have a dialogue when other avenues do not necessarily work.

Participants said that opportunities for conversation and dialogue existed both offline and online. Educational exchange allowed people from different countries to

interact face-to-face. The Internet allowed people to utilize online space for dialogue. Participants said that publics were “genuinely excited” to have conversations.

To explain and counter terrorism threats. The goals to explain and counter terrorism emerged somewhat in the data. First, participants said that they tried to explain a country’s culture, values, and policies. Participants talked about telling the American story, explaining certain cultural values. For example, the democratic values in the U.S. could be explained by explaining the history and importance of the Independence Day on the 4th of July. Various exchange programs had the goal of explaining “what it means to be an American in all the different ways.” Participants also spoke about explaining government policies as a purpose of public diplomacy. One of the roles of public diplomacy officers abroad was “to translate U.S. policies and messaging to a foreign audience.” Although the participants would not interfere with local government decisions, they would “speak out on issues that are contrary to U.S. policies.”

Second, several participants talked about public diplomacy as a way to address terrorism threats. Their organization housed a special office that was tasked specifically with seeking new media spaces where potential recruitment to terrorist groups occurred. One participant described the rationale behind creating the office in the following words:

Oh yes, it is an unusual office, because after 9/11 [...] there was an obvious need to create some sort of messaging unit within the U.S. government. To do this [...] not a lot was accomplished quite frankly, and there was a tendency to think that we - like, what we did in the Cold War we must do the same. And

which was not very in depth analysis, very superficial. [...]. And there were several attempts to do something, and this is, I would say, the first really serious attempt to come to grips with this problem, how do we use messaging to try [to] reduce recruitment to violent extremism.

In other words, the purpose of counter-terrorism public diplomacy was to reduce recruitment to violent extremist groups. Participants explained that the goal was not to change the views of recruiters in terrorist organizations: Terrorists were not viewed as target publics in this communication. The purpose was to change the minds of those who possibly were considering joining terrorism organizations, and were recruited online. As one participant said, an “ideal candidate” was “someone who is anti-American, but yet has an open mind.” The goal of engaging with these publics is to encourage them “to step back, think twice.” To accomplish that, these participants specifically conducted research to find data about negative influences of Al-Qaeda and share it with the publics.

To empower publics. One of the emerging themes in the data was organizational efforts to empower their target publics. Participants spoke about creating networks and holding trainings for publics as the means of empowerment. Programs targeted at women and youth, as well as representatives of specific professions (i.e., musicians), did not only allow for exchange of ideas, but also connected them to experts and social leaders. Those connections were unique to some of those populations, either in view of social structures (in case of women), or because of limited financial opportunities.

Trainings and international exchange, likewise, equipped participants with knowledge and skills to take local action. Participants conducted or “helped fund” several social media trainings for social media experts from other countries. Others trained individuals, including NGO employees and journalists, to collect and use data for their benefit. In other words, data reflected an effort to “include” target publics to “be part of the conversation.”

To bring international perspectives to internal publics. The participants suggested that another public diplomacy goal was to educate U.S. publics about global issues and about public diplomacy. Some governmental structures were limited by the Smith-Mundt Act². Participants discussed the outdated purposes of the Smith-Mundt Act. But several other departments had more freedom as long as the messages were designed specifically for U.S. publics. Participants found it was an important “function of public diplomacy” to build an awareness about global issues.

Participants suggested several reasons behind this goal. First, the American public had “the right to know what their government [was] doing.” For example, one participant said that it was important for the government to “tell inside the Beltway, in Washington, what IIP [Bureau of International Information Programs] is [...], because they [public] do not have a clue.” Government initiatives were sponsored by taxpayers, who had the right to know how their money was spent. Messages were intended to be descriptive, explaining public diplomacy projects and their purposes.

² Smith-Mundt Act, or the United States Information and Education Exchange Act, was approved in 1948 and had the purpose of promoting a better understanding of the United States internationally. The Act also “restricts dissemination of government propaganda to Americans.” (Palmer & Carter, 2006, p. p)

Second, one participant suggested that U.S. citizens returning from other countries served as advocates and “reversed public diplomats” for other countries. When someone went on an international exchange, they represented their country internationally, but when they came back they became “ambassadors for host countries,” sharing with “[their] families, [their] friends, and [their] communities what it is like to live in a Muslim society, or what it is like to live in these different places.” In addition, they formed groups to advocate for those countries on Capitol Hill, to gather funds for international projects, and to continue having a positive impact in the countries they had visited.

Third, awareness about global issues was perceived as a way for internal audiences to become cognizant citizens. International exchanges also allowed U.S. citizens to bring home “experiences and knowledge and skills [they] gained overseas and share them here in the United States,” to help internal publics develop a global worldview. One participant described a project that linked young citizens in the U.S. with successful international professionals around the world, saying:

And really what the clearest outcome we see is that they come out of that training, that leadership training, with much better understanding of global issues [...] And I think it’s sort of priming these [citizens] to be able to work in international issues and to be more cognizant American citizens. So in that way I do see it as public diplomacy.

Public diplomacy strategies

The participants suggested several strategies to achieve public diplomacy goals. The most prominent themes included cultural and educational exchanges,

empowerment of publics, broadcasting/media relations, and listening/local data analysis.

Cultural and educational exchanges. International exchange appeared as the most frequent topic in discussing public diplomacy. Some participants described it as a tool “as old as time.” One of the participants argued that “there is no better public diplomacy than that.” Educational exchanges were perceived to be highly effective and “most impactful” public diplomacy programs. International exchange was also one of the “big money operations” in public diplomacy. Examples of educational exchange programs included the U.S. government-sponsored Fulbright program as well as privately sponsored exchanges, in which students’ families paid for their children to study abroad. Although privately sponsored programs were “not a deliberate public diplomacy effort,” they were still perceived to achieve foreign policy goals.

The influence of educational exchanges was perceived to have an affect on both the exchange students as well as the people they interacted with. One participant described students coming back from their study abroad in the U.S. as “really informed,” “knowledgeable,” and “confident,” suggesting that such exchanges contributed to building the confidence and “willingness to share [one’s] own culture.” Such exchanges also helped U.S. families to understand international issues, helping U.S. publics to “grow and learn from other folks.”

Other exchange programs included exchanges targeting musicians, women, and health professionals. Several participants spoke of virtual exchanges, in which musicians provided lessons to music students abroad, and high-school students

worked “together on projects with specific goals and tasks.” In other words, the exchange did not necessarily involve “physical transportation, but exchange of ideas, and the exchange of better understanding.” Virtual exchanges were like a “first little step” that provided “a taste of something [one] may want to have more of” and that potentially opened “the door [...] to actual exchange.”

Journalism exchanges took documentary crews from “local news stations” in other countries and “[helped] them produce documentaries that involved [...] topics relating to American culture.” For example, journalism exchanges took reporters for a tour around the United States and included “interviews with prominent people all on one subject.” Those documentaries were seen by “thousands, hundreds of thousands people, because they were [broadcast by] prominent news stations” in their countries.

Broadcast and media relations. A common strategy to do public diplomacy was to use traditional media and new media to “push out [a] public diplomacy message.” Participants discussed the importance of identifying “key messages” related to organizational goals and target publics. One participant said that her organization had been “pushing” a lot of messages explaining how funds were spent for development projects, which was important for stakeholders to know. Another participant described it as a struggle between maintaining a “bilateral relationship but also the need to push these principles that [they] believe in.” In other cases, the purpose of communication was just to say “we are there.” For example, the Voice of America radio station allowed “to talk to people, some of who [...] listen to that because the situation with their government or where they are, has limited personal liberties.”

For media relations, participants reflected on the importance of an “interesting story.” Cultural diplomacy presented opportunities for such stories. For example, “Americans coming and teaching break dance” in a foreign country could elicit media attention from local media companies. Likewise, new media channels were used “to push out” messages, especially the Twitter platform.

Interpersonal relationship. Participants said that interpersonal communication was one of the most efficient ways to conduct public diplomacy. First, participants spoke about efforts to connect to international publics, to foster relationships between people in one country and people in another country. For example, one participant said:

... so with regard to those programs the idea is to connect, for people to connect and to have the feeling that through that personal connection, that they can learn and grow and interact, and expand their view on ideas in the world, through that interaction. That's what Facebook also offers. Because it [...] allows you to talk about and learn the range of emotions that somebody has, the kinds of things they do, [...] to find out what is important to you.

Second, participants said that communication between a government or an organizational employee and publics was also interpersonal. One participant said, “person-to-person contact [was] still the only way to both create an environment and implement public diplomacy.” Participants said that communication staff sought to interact with publics by having informal meetings, for example meeting up for coffee or tea.

Participants described interpersonal relationships as the “real bit of public diplomacy,” as “relationship from citizen to citizen,” “people to people engagement,” and “sip and spit method,” suggesting that interpersonal contact was “the only way to create [...] an environment and implement public diplomacy.” The offline relationships were particularly important, and were often perceived as more effective than online relationships. For example, one communication officer described an experience:

This one Bagdad volunteer [...] saw my Jewish shirt, she said, “You are Jewish!” I said, “Yes.” I said “na'am, ana yahodi,” cause I speak some Arabic. And she counted to ten in Hebrew and said, “shalom aleikhom.” And it’s these little things that you would never imagine possible, [...] that connect us on a visceral human level, that we are never gonna get from a Facebook post.

Interpersonal relationships were perceived to be important in fighting terrorism, which was described as “dehumanizing of the other, demonizing of the other.” Personal relationships could address the process of dehumanization by citizen-to-citizen encounters, whether offline or online. One participant believed that citizens appearing as “open and genuine and human” had a “dampening affect on terrorism.”

Local research and listening. Participants discussed the importance of gathering local data and understanding the needs of the target publics. Public diplomacy was perceived to be successful in the areas where governments and agencies addressed local needs. One participant described “the best example” to be the “Bush administration’s HIV AIDS assistance program,” which had “a huge success” because “it was desperately needed.” Local publics “understood the

program” and it “made sense for their needs.” The participant joked that George Bush “was so popular” that he “could run for president” in Africa.

Listening to international publics was perceived to be an important strategy in data gathering and understanding the local needs. To be “in receive mode” was necessary to “understand [one’s] counter part.” Listening allowed knowing how and what “resonates with [...] local audience,” “what it is that people are looking for,” in order to “move in a particular direction.”

Participants described listening as opposed to advocacy and “pushing out information.” For example, one participant said that for him public diplomacy is “not just about advocacy, it’s more about [...] cultural diplomacy to listening.”

Participants described listening as “the hardest thing” but also as the “first job” of a public diplomacy officer. Listening also meant to observe and to understand, however, participants spoke vaguely about the analysis and use of data they received by listening. As one participant described below, listening could be the end goal of communication:

...it’s the hardest thing to do for smart people, listen to other people, [...] to find out, discover what the people with whom you are meeting, the people with whom you are interacting, what is important to them. Why is it important to them, is there anything you can do about it? And if so, what? And sometimes the best thing to do is nothing at all.

Participants were not always clear what they could do with the data that they receive by listening to publics. The act of listening itself was perceived as important, to make the publics feel heard and to keep up the conversation.

By doing so [...] you empower foreign audiences because you are listening to and responding to what they have to say, and that is the crux of it. If you can do that, then people will feel that you are listening, and they will, more importantly, feel that their voice is heard and appreciated. And if their voice is heard and appreciated, you may not necessarily agree with them, but at least you are responding to them, you make them feel special. And if you make them feel special, they are going to have their little tiny corner of their heart, where they may not like us because we are backing Israel, in its on-going conflict with Gaza. But you know what? That American public affairs officer took the time to respond to me, and my own government does not even do that. But here is this American guy and he did. That's a pretty powerful message.

Publics

Participants discussed two approaches to target publics. In one approach, participants believed that it was the distinguishing feature of public diplomacy to focus on international publics. In contrast, public affairs focused on audiences inside the country. For example, one officer mentioned:

We call it public diplomacy here in Washington. At the embassies they tend to call it Public Affairs. Here in Washington we call it public diplomacy. What we do is aimed to overseas [Our offices] are exclusively oriented towards overseas audiences, as part of the old USIA, by law.

However, several participants discussed the difficulties with defining public diplomacy as communication directed to exclusively international audiences.

Whereas in the past, governments could control the communication trajectories, it has become difficult to do so with public access to the Internet. The Internet provided access to anybody and any information, and thus changed the flow of communication. Several participants discussed the Smith-Mundt Act which restricted the access of U.S. publics to information intended for international publics. From one participant's perspective, the separation between public affairs and public diplomacy required unnecessary government spending, when that funds could be allocated to the actual "items of the budget" rather than to building a firewall. In discussing the possible changes in Smith-Mundt Act, the participant said:

I don't necessarily view it as a complicated issue, it is an antique issue, its origins are very clear. Its intention and the restriction that it places [are] all very clear and simple. It's not an esoteric thing, we all know what it means [...]. The key is to get it changed. And it's one of these things we all are, - you know, - we are doing okay without changing it, so why would we change it, as far as capital priority. It is just hard to add a steam behind it [...].

Interview data suggested that the Smith-Mundt Act could not be applied in modern-day communication between the U.S. government and international audiences. Interview participants felt sure that the Smith-Mundt Act was outdated and doubted the possibility of its full application. For example, in one interview, a participant raised several questions related to the Smith-Mundt Act:

As you are probably aware, you know, the U.S. government has a wall [...], and [...] the question coming up is - can we still have a wall in the age of the social media and the Internet? But there is a wall presumptively between

public affairs that is focused toward the United States, and public diplomacy which is focused everywhere else. Is that realistic in 2013? I don't know. And how is that, as a law that is written in 1948, when we were dealing with bipolar world of communism vs. capitalism slash democracy. Is that a realistic model for 2013? I think I am hearing for the first time Congress seriously thinking about this.

One participant discussed target publics in terms of countries and demographic groups. The countries with target publics were described as those "that are pulling themselves out of conflict or isolation" or places "where things are tough, whether it is a tough economy or authoritarian government or [...] conflict." Such places were easier to reach because publics shared "common experiences" and "common struggles" and were looking for possible solutions to resolve the situation in their country.

Women and youth appeared as predominant target publics in the interviews with governmental and nongovernmental organizations. For example, one participant said:

I don't think we've ever had a Secretary that has focused more on women and youth than this one. And you know a lot of what we do, whether its women or entrepreneurship, you know exchanges for women, education, stem issues related to women, we've tried to tackle them from a variety of different angles.

Youth were seen as a target public due to two factors. First, youth appeared as the "largest sector" in many countries of the world, forming "46 percent of a world's population." Second, youth were seen as the "leaders of tomorrow" who "are going to

be influential for decades to come” and maybe “one day they will be leaders [...] and have the opportunity to influence decision-making. An example of a project targeting youth is an initiative by one U.S. embassy to form a youth council with local individuals “between 20 and 30 [years old] who are charged with being youth advisers [...] to Washington. Interview participants explained that social media channels have become particularly relevant with youth being the target audience.

Overall, the participants suggested that there has been recently a shift in how governments and organizations viewed audiences, and that publics had become more “demanding.” This theme emerged only somewhat in the interviews, which may be attributed to the fact that the shift has happened fairly recently. Equipped with new digital communication tools, publics have learned to demand information and to mobilize. For example, one participant said:

People are getting information faster, information is more transparent more democratic. And that affects how you engage using public diplomacy. And also people now can use a lot of the [...] grassroots mobilization for public diplomacy too. So yeah, it is definitely has changed.

Moreover, publics were perceived to make organizations more accountable. Because of the access to information, publics “very easily and very quickly can find information.” One participant defined public as “social police” who can trace organizational actions, evaluate them, and communicate them to the wider audiences. She said that “organizations and governments cannot just send a press release and give a compensation.” Participants suggested that agencies have to offer something “extra” in communicating with publics.

In addition, publics were perceived to be educated, critical, and difficult to be persuaded. Being exposed to foreign governments' actions and different sources information, publics could evaluate their credibility and possible agendas. For example, one participant said that international agencies often claimed that their purpose was to serve the public needs in other countries. However, if publics had other information from other sources, such messages could lack credibility and would not achieve the intended result. Last, participants spoke about skills that could help publics to participate in public diplomacy. For example, access to information encouraged technologically savvy publics to "create apps." Such skills could allow publics to be collaborators.

Context in public diplomacy

In discussing public diplomacy programs, participants discussed some of the forces that were not directly related to goals, strategies, and publics; but still influenced public diplomacy. Specifically, participants discussed the political and financial context, limited resources, and role of culture.

Political and financial context. Both political and financial interests of different actors influenced the nature of communication. Interestingly, even NGOs who preferred to be "never outwardly political" could not "avoid that element to it," as one participant explained it when talking about the relationship between his organization and the U.S. government. Participants said that "politics [played] a much more important role in what [they did] than [they had] realized," and it reminded them that they were "not in this by [themselves], and there [was] a lot more going on behind the scenes than [they were] realizing."

Political sovereignty influenced governments' control of the flow of information between their citizens and the outside world. As one participant noted, "government approaching a foreign citizen [was] always somewhat problematic, because they sort of want to know why." Likewise, the interference of nongovernmental organizations could be perceived negatively by the government. For example, during certain disasters, governments said "things are just fine, things are ok, the death count is really not that bad, where in reality [international agencies] knew the accounts were much grimmer." With the rise of new media, which was perceived to be ubiquitous, the control of information flow may become a bigger issue in the future.

In addition, political tensions between countries and/or agencies created a tense communication space. Interview participants suggested that online communication differed significantly in different countries depending on political relationships between countries involved and the political situation at the time. For example, some embassies adopted a "formal and polite and diplomatic" communication style because of the "tone of political situations in particular countries. In addition, "political motivations" could "drive a government to react in a certain way" reflecting on "levels of assistance they provide, who they provide assistance to."

Internal politics also appeared as a potential challenge. For example, governments' attitudes and relationships with various groups within the country could influence access to certain populations. For example, one participant spoke of a government that "did not want [an international organization] to serve a particular

tribal community, because they did not vote the way [the government] wanted them to vote.” Likewise, some publics may have negative attitudes towards their government, and the relationship between their government and an outside entity, whether an international organization or another government, could influence how publics perceived and interpret messages.

Financial interests of the governments also influenced the environment in which international communication took place. Participants mentioned the “politics of the beneficiary,” suggesting that some organizations financially depend on governments, and may be restrained in their communication with the public. For example, one participant spoke about the U.S. government being a “major share,” which impacted how certain funds were allocated. The beneficiary also had the final word on the course of the project and the public to be involved.

Limited Resources. Interview participants talked about limited resources allocated to international communication. First, their communication staff were described as “overworked” and “overwhelmed.” In smaller departments or organizations, communication officers were in charge of other tasks, not always directly related to their duties.

Second, resources allocated to communication and public diplomacy had been on the decline. The “restricted,” “dwindling budget” and “budget cuts” were common themes in the interviews. Several participants indicated that communication and/or public diplomacy was not perceived as an absolute necessity in their agencies. For example, one participant described areas in different countries of the world that served the function of libraries, open to the public. Those establishments offered

materials about the United States among other things. However, “in the early nineties Congress killed the budget for that.”

At the same time, communication needs were still expected to be fulfilled. As one public diplomacy officer noticed “our role in the world is not reduced, the requirement for us being out in the world is not reduced, but budgets have [been].” Participants suggested that initially the rise of new technology was expected to address the communication needs without allocating the same financial and human resources, however it became apparent that “you have to resource it.” Participants shared that in the current “budgetary climate” they have to be “really creative.”

Role of culture. Participants suggested different ways in which culture influenced public diplomacy. Participants described the role of culture as “huge,” saying that “you cannot make a move in public diplomacy without thinking about the culture.” First, participants spoke predominantly about language differences. Organizations made an effort in hiring employees that were proficient in the languages of target publics and could do translations. For example, one participant said that it is because cultural differences that “[they] operate [their] 450 websites in 53 languages” and “[translated] almost everything in seven languages.”

Second, cultural assumptions played a role in reaching and communicating with international audiences. While translation was one part of communicating with foreign publics, shaping the messages was another important element. In other words, some things were “literally lost in translation in different customs and tradition,” suggesting that the public diplomacy officers did not only need to have the language skills but also understanding of other cultures. Thus, oftentimes agencies hired

employees who either grew up in a target culture or spent significant amount of time abroad in a relevant area. For example, one participant described communication officers who communicated with publics in the Arab countries:

Well, for example, [...] we hire Arabic speakers, they are fluent in Arabic. And I don't know, I can't tell you where they are from, or maybe they were raised here, or maybe they were raised overseas, but they certainly have a much better sense of the culture, and how to approach people, than an average American. Even if I were to study Arabic and spoke it perfectly, well I would have picked up some of the culture, but it is not as if you grew up in the culture. [...] That's a huge part of it.

Cultural assumptions were perceived as an obstacle to public diplomacy. A lot of communication relied on cultural values and assumptions on such topics as freedom, democracy, and equality, to name a few. Participants were not always aware of their own cultural assumptions, thus making their own “cultural norms a barrier to reaching out to other cultures.” For example, people’s understanding and experience of freedom in the United States could be different from those in the Middle East. One participant spoke about the film “Innocence of Muslims” which led to a wave of anti-American protests in several Arab countries in the fall of 2012. He said:

And I look at the Middle East. And I think that in many instances you have Western oriented diplomats and communication specialists, largely white older males, coming up with our policy. Some have great experience in the Middle East, some don't. And I came to the realization [...] particularly over freedom of expression, [...] the video that came out and the conflict that arose.

[...]. And it sort of dawned on me [...] that we are approaching it from a very Western American-centric starting point, and culturally that's very difficult. It's difficult to explain freedom of expression, when people have not necessarily experienced it in the same way that we have. [...] It is very difficult to tell people, 'no, freedom of expression is wonderful. it's vibrant, it's messy.' When you have not experienced it, it's very difficult to understand it. And yet, our messaging is based on that foundation. So I think that's where culture can be problematic.

Culture also influenced the nature of the messages. For example, one participant spoke of new media messages addressed to the President of the United States. The participant said that she was surprised at how "formal" some of the messages were.

Last, culture was perceived to influence the organizational culture and structure. While some cultures could encourage hierarchy, others could assume a more "flat" relationship between staff and departments. One interview participant suggested that lack of hierarchy may help the organizational culture to be innovative. Another participant discussed different consultation techniques and decision-making methods that were influenced by organizational culture.

RQ2: How do public diplomacy actors make meaning of public diplomacy as communication networks (if at all)?

Participants said that there was interest in both governmental and nongovernmental organizations in building and developing networks. In discussing networks, participants predominantly discussed internal networks as collaborations.

Discussion of external networks was limited, and some participants mentioned that it was a developing area in their work, and that “historically they have sort of been [working] on [their] own.” Although organizations and governments were “just at the beginning of really partnering with other organizations,” there was “a strong interest [...] to really do a lot more collaboration with other [...] organizations.” The themes that emerged in the data related to the network actors, purposes, structure, links.

Table 2 reflects the results for RQ2 (see Appendix C.)

Nature of networks

Participants conceptualized networks in terms of “people” and “technology.” The main emerging theme in the discussion of the networks related to the idea that networks form around “issues” or “goals.” In other words, organizations and governments “engaged with different networks depending on what [their] issue [was] and what the goal [was].” Issues reflected organizational values or goals, and included such topics as women empowerment, intercultural understanding, trading, etc. One officer in the U.S. government said:

... we have many bureaus and all those bureaus have different activities. [...]

That is where you may find connections because of the topic, or the theme, the issues, that certain parts of State are better connected there. But our focus is very directly related and tied to exchange and trading activities. So we are working with those subsets of other agencies that also do that. ... If the exchange is, for example, working with law enforcement, then you are connecting the police or some legal organizations in a foreign country with

our FBI or it could even be New York Police Department. And you are working to have that develop a partnership or other opportunity.

Participants suggested that focusing on specific issues was the way to build public diplomacy networks, because both large and small organizations focused on specific issues. One participant said that “there was really no NGO that [did] public diplomacy.” Some examples of “issues” included health care, deforestation, development, poverty alleviation, “medical things.”

While actors may have different goals, they all need to “get something out of it,” and that something had “to align with their missions.” Interestingly, participants did not think that organizational missions had to be “identical,” but they had to be “enthusiastic” about what they were working with and had to have “some commonality of purpose.” Networks actors had to agree on the “end objectives.” In addition, networks were based on “common interests,” when organizations and governments could align what they “[were] trying to do” and “work together toward a common end.” Some participants suggested that the collaboration in such networks could include shared tasks of “marketing” and “resourcing” the activities.

However, participants suggested that practically external networks were mostly used for data gathering rather than for active collaboration, as reflected in the following words of a participant about networking:

... obviously no matter where, government does not have a monopoly of wisdom. Someone from outside government has more expertise. That's a good thing. And you can work with them, you know. There [are] lots of nongovernmental organizations that are concerned with violence and

extremism also. [...] You can learn from what they are doing, conceivably work with them, but we tend to not. It's not as if we are working together on projects. We want to be in contact with them and learn from them.

Participants suggested that actors in a network should not just delegate the work to each other, because oftentimes their goals did not always "line up." Instead, collaboration assumed joint decision making and "active" partnership.

Actors

Participants suggested that several actors played a role in international affairs and were or could be part of public diplomacy networks. Participants said that corporations and large businesses engaged in international communications and companies, such as Google, had their own foreign policy. Businesses on the ground were also viewed as important/potential partners. Civil society organizations that were working on issues similar (i.e., human rights) to government priorities were included in some networks. Religious communities were tapped, especially in counter-terrorism work. Musicians and music groups were actors in cultural diplomacy. Academic communities, universities, served as a gateway to reach students and to arrange exchange programs. Local grassroots organizations and networks were important actors to be "eyes and ears on the ground" that help to understand the culture and context. Networks of technology-savvy professionals were also mentioned as actors who worked on developing new software and applications, and also as communicators who used new media to reach larger populations in their countries. Media professionals (i.e., journalists and editors) were groups who "knew each other." Last, various ministries (ministries of culture, ministries of foreign

affairs) were also mentioned in the interviews. Participants suggested that government organizations and nongovernmental organizations had different advantages and disadvantages.

Government affiliation gave “weight” to communication. Speaking “with the authority of the U.S. government” and representing senior government officials was perceived to carry “a ton of weight.” Governments also had expert power in that they knew the situation in the localities. For example, during disasters, international organizations could not easily travel and engage with local populations because some areas were dangerous. Last, governments had decision-making power. If nongovernmental organizations wanted to implement a policy change, they could not do it without working and building relationships with respective governments. As one participant from an NGO said, “the closer [they] are to people at [government] the more likely [they would] be able to have [their] voice heard on [their] issues.” He added:

...if you are going to change policy, you cannot do it without the government. [...] If it is legislation or if it is appropriation, you need their 'fine' [approval]. So, I mean I don't see how if you are in policy, how you can do job effectively if you don't engage the government.

At the same time, participants suggested that governments had political and financial interests that blocked certain initiatives from nongovernmental groups. For example, one participant spoke about the challenges in working with a government after a disaster. An international organization wanted to assist a marginalized segment of a population, but the government blocked the assistance due to “internal politics,

prejudice, and possible financial interests.” Specifically, the government wanted to spend the money on relocating one marginalized group to an area that would restrict their access to food, medicine, education, and the international organization did not agree to that. The participant explained the situation, saying,

...there are definite challenges, [...] especially when it comes to political motivations that may drive a government to react in a certain way, levels of assistance that they provide, who they provide assistance to. [...] But even internationally, we don't want to be seen as the arm of the government, we want to be seen as good partners. And a couple of examples internationally, certainly in [one country] there were a lot of political interests, it was election year [...] And we had 53 million dollars, donated dollars, that we could not spend because the [...] government said – [no], we've got to sign off on the plan, if you are to spend that money. Otherwise, we are kicking you out.

Corruption was another problem that was raised in discussions about governments. Participants suggested that collaboration with a government that is known to be corrupt could decrease the credibility of all actors working with that government.

Participants said that nongovernmental organizations had their strengths and weaknesses. First, smaller nongovernmental organizations had limited resources and “had to work harder because [they did] not have the resources, [they did] not have the weight.” One officer at a nongovernmental organization spoke of a similar government-affiliated agency, saying:

I mean, they are [...] the federal agency. I mean, they've got a lot of resources, they have got a full building, full of people, lots of money. We've got – this is a very modest office, and we've got a modest number of staff.

In addition, one participant mentioned the lack of political power in nongovernmental organization as a weakness. Specifically, the interview data suggested that nongovernmental organizations do not have political power and thus should not interfere with local initiatives. The participant said,

... I think in the States there is kind of this perception that NGOs, certain NGOs anyway, particular in Washington, kind of try to come in and, you know, they think that they know everything. And they think they know everything about foreign policy, and, you know, they know a lot, but ultimately the decisions are made at the government level. [...] We've had some situations here where, you know, we certainly always support civil society and nongovernmental organizations, creating awareness about important issues, but it also becomes, it becomes a zero-sum game [...].

Nongovernmental organizations were perceived to be more ethical than governments, and brought their own “rules” and “fundamental principles” to the countries where they operated. Participants suggested that international organizations sought to “act in a very neutral way; [...] and] do not take sides.” Impartiality assumed equal treatment of all publics independent of “race, religion, color, sexual orientation, all sorts of categorical beliefs that may impose trouble for government.” In other words, international organizations were perceived to have a code of ethics that was universal and unbiased towards any group. For example, one participant said,

I think you know they are all apt to believe international organizations at times because we come with a different set of ethics, a different set of, you know, operating rules to live by.

Another distinguishing role of nongovernmental organizations was that public diplomacy was that they advocated for all countries involved. Whereas governments cared about the image of their country only, nongovernmental organizations sought to benefit all participating actors. First, in arranging exchanges, nongovernmental organizations did not only seek to influence international participants' view of the country where they traveled, but also to educate people in the country of their destination. For example, one participant spoke about musicians from Iraq being on NPR, and thus helping their country's public diplomacy by showing a peaceful side of Iraq, its educated citizens. Second, nongovernmental organizations encouraged citizens coming from international exchange to advocate for the countries where they spent time and which they learned to understand on a deeper level. One participant said:

So typically, [...] we would think public diplomacy is us to the world, but you know, I think we are also oftentimes considered ambassadors for host countries even when we come back home. So I think what we do as return [individuals], I think we practice public diplomacy on behalf of our host communities here in the United States. You know, we share with our families, our friends, and our communities, what it's like to live in a Muslim society, or what it's like, you know, to live in these different places.

Moreover, in some countries, international organizations facilitated communication between citizens and their governments. This was particularly relevant to those international organizations that worked directly with governments and data suggested that international nongovernmental organizations could be a “good liaison between the government and these organizations and the society.” Nongovernmental organizations were well connected to publics and knew the situation in the field, which was perceived to be one of their strengths. Participants said that nongovernmental agencies’ employees had “access to what the actual needs are.” One participant explained:

We're closer. We're closer to the ground. I think that we talk about capital cities and, you know, other cities, where we might have a presence in the capital, we also have a presence in other communities. [...] No other single government entity has that footprint outside of, maybe, the post office. [...] And so, having that close to-the-ground [office] allows us to [...] build that trust. [...]. You could be a trusted resource.

Expertise was suggested to be a strength among nongovernmental organizations. NGOs were perceived to have a specific knowledge because they managed to dedicate the organization “to a very narrow cause” and thus possessed a “certain expertise.” In other words, nongovernmental organizations had a focus, such as educational exchange, women’s issues, youth leadership, to name a few.

Nongovernmental organizations were perceived to have a “much more frequent contact” and “a better overall network” with local groups. Participants suggested that the close interaction with publics in the field allowed for a better

relationship. Having a narrow focus on issues allowed nongovernmental organizations to build long-term relationships with other actors that had similar goals and worked in the same field. A participant from a government agency said:

So in that sense, relationships could be deeper than the ones that we [government] develop, cause we have so much on our plate, there are so many issues on our portfolio, that it is. And certainly there are some NGOs that cover a huge variety of issues too. But I tend to think they are [narrower], and have, you know, a narrower focus, so therefore able to devote more resources to that.

Participants spoke about international organizations and governments having different goals. International organizations had universal goals that were “not driven by a country-specific political goal.” Rather, nongovernmental organizations’ mission was “to help [a] country to achieve development goals.”

Because governments and nongovernmental organizations were perceived to have different ethics, values, and goals, it was suggested that it was difficult to foster cooperation between them. Although governments offered access to resources in the field, it also carried certain costs in terms of public perceptions. One participant described the effort in his organization to disassociate from development work conducted by U.S. military structures, saying:

...a lot of the NGOs don't want to have anything to do with the United States government for fear there might be backlash in their efforts. And that was, of course, one of the problems with the Department of Defense doing a lot of development work. Because they would have guys in uniforms doing the

digging and then also they would go away, and then the NGOs would come, and then there is - oh are you a soldier. And if you are soldier you might be a spy, especially if you are not wearing a uniform. And there was great consternation out there in the NGO community.

Internal and external networks

Participants discussed internal networks. Internal networks were of two types: departmental networks (within a bureau, agency, department, embassy, etc.) and organizational networks (within a federal government or a large organization). Participants emphasized that it was important for the public diplomacy officer to know everyone in the internal network and to maintain “very good communications with the heads of all those different sections.” Trust was important for a valuable relationship: Without trust communication officers were perceived to “not be good at anything else.”

Internal interagency networks became a prominent theme in the data. In the U.S. government, several structures appeared as actors in internal public diplomacy networks, including the State Department, Department of Justice, Department of Defense, Department of Education, and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Likewise, within the State Department several agencies engaged in international communication, and did similar work. For example, some bureaus within the State Department focused on issues such as culture, education, civil society, while others focused on regions, such as South and Central Asia, or the Middle East. Several interviews reflected efforts to create links between government agencies to avoid redundancies in their efforts.

Participants suggested that such interagency collaboration was developing but “complicated” because each department or agency had their own goals and “their own time schedule.” Communication was described as informational rather than collaborative. As one participant said, “there is some collaboration, and more of a ‘FYI [for your information]- this is what is happening.’” In discussing U.S. government internal networks, another participant found it challenging to foster links between the State Department and other departments, including “Department of Education, Department of Defense, USAID, Peace Corps,” saying that “it may be possible, it may not be possible” to foster such collaboration.

Several interagency groups were created at the State Department. As one participant mentioned, “In terms of going beyond just the Department of State, [...] there [was] a big focus on the whole of government way of doing things.”

External networks were described as “ecosystems” and “public and private partnerships.” Participants suggested that external networks differed in localities, and specifics of a country must be taken into consideration to identify relevant networks. For example, participants mentioned networks of clerics, educational networks, networks of media professionals where “they all know each other,” network of youth NGOs, to name a few. However, participants offered little detail about the nature of external networks, suggesting that external networks were not yet prevalent in public diplomacy. To answer the question whether public diplomacy communication could be viewed as a network, one participant said,

I would agree with that, if the people that practice public diplomacy also thought of it that way. What you see oftentimes is governments acting just

because they either don't have time, or they don't understand the value of including those [external actors].

Another participant said that although there was an interest in building relationships with external actors, most relationships were based on financial needs (i.e., nongovernmental organizations government funding to survive). Thus, participants suggested that "it was not really a collaborative relationship," and organizations were "not in coordination [...]." One government officer said speaking about the relationship between international nongovernmental organizations and the government, "I want to say we are not in coordination [...], we have our programs, they have their programs, and they are independent of one another." Another participant said that she would not emphasize "this relationship, because it [was] a relationship that [did not] necessarily exist the way you would think it would.

Network purposes and advantages

Participants said that networks allowed for "leveraging the strengths" of "actors" and "networks." Participants spoke about different strengths that could be shared in the network and different ways to utilize those strengths.

First, the most discussed advantage of networks was that they allowed using the resources more economically and wisely. Participants said that communicating about projects insured that departments did not duplicate each other's work. It was particularly relevant at the time of the financial crisis, when public diplomacy faced limited funding and human resources. Thus, the interagency work "minimized the potential for being inefficient" because they are duplicating each others efforts and "doing the same things." In contrast, when actors shared tasks, they would "not have

to do all the lifting, other groups [would] do many of the things [one needs] to do, but [...] may not have the personnel or the time to do.” Participants often discussed the limitations of funding in public diplomacy, even in the government sector.

Participants suggested that one way to address financial strains “creatively” is by engaging “the private sector” and “other organizations.”

It was suggested that skills and expertise could be shared in a public diplomacy network. For example, one participant shared his experience in an inter-agency public diplomacy network that included experts from various bureaus, specializing on human rights, environment, science, climate change, etc. Access to experts allowed creating thematic materials on specific issues in the United States.

Second, networks allowed for gathering and sharing of field data. A participant said that field knowledge or “country” and “region expertise” was a sought-after asset in a network. Field offices and embassies possessed unique knowledge that headquarters did not have, but it was often perceived necessary for informed decisions. Field offices had access to local populations and could conduct local research “on the ground.” In addition, networks provided access to topical expertise. Participants said that a network or “an extensive web” offered them access to experts in various areas, which allowed them developing materials on various topics, tapping on expertise across the networks.

Connection with local organizations also helped in conducting the actual programs according to participants. For example, organizations working on exchange worked with other organizations on the ground to select individuals for their programs. In this case, networks helped “pick the best targets for [...] public

diplomacy, the best audience.” Naturally, connection to more organizations allowed connecting to more individuals and professionals and thus allowed for “better selection” and “the right candidates” in the case of exchange programs.

Third, a network approach allowed connecting to closed networks, provided that organizations knew the correct actors. Participants spoke about such closed networks as religious, or marginalized ethnic groups. Several participants described experiences where they were “introduced” by someone, saying, “someone has to validate you, someone has to say – this guy is cool, you know, he is not gonna do anything.” One participant said that getting that initial access was important because it allowed building more relationships with other actors in the network. One of the participants shared how his organization had an opportunity to connect to a community through a member of a network. He said:

At the communities that I worked, we were able to gain access to those communities because we had a volunteer network in place, that had relationships with the locally-elected officials and other key NGOs in that community, and they would set the foundation. [...]. I was only able to meet with that tribal chief because two of the volunteers [...] grew up in that community, still had connections. And so they were able to set the meeting with the tribal chief, gain access to the community.

The special value of connecting to those closed networks was gaining access to their networks, and sharing the messages. Finding the “influential” members of the closed communities was especially important because there was typically a structure set up for them to share their views and influence others’ opinions. For example, one

officer spoke about a radical Islamist community, which the U.S. government sought to reach. They invited the religious community leader, the Imam, to the United States. As a result of the visit, the Imam shifted his views about the United States and shared them on a local radio. The participant said:

And we found out that the Imam was giving very [...] hateful Friday prayers. So someone had a brilliant idea: Let's send this Imam to the United States. Well that was [an] enlightening experience for both the United States and, of course, the Imam. But, one of the best outcomes, when this Imam went on a radio, a Quranic radio, and someone said, "You hate the United States?" And he said, [...] "I really hate the U.S. and its policies, but the Americans I met were really nice people." [...] That's huge. And then that person is going back to his mosque, with that change in attitude, so he may not be the most influential Imam, but he has influence over key, over any number of people. A hundred people were turned away from something that could have become violent - that's a success.

Last, connections with local actors were not only beneficial in terms of finding the right information, but also building credibility. Participants said that being "on the ground" was an important part of being credible. Having local partners showed publics that an organization is there to stay, that it is "not just a one-off."

Network links

The two most prominent themes related to network links were "communication tango" and digital links. Specifically, participants discussed the different ways in which they combined digital media and offline communication,

suggesting that digital media was not enough to conduct efficient public diplomacy. The other emergent themes included informal and formal connections, interpersonal communication, and financial links.

Communication tango: Online and offline communication. The participants said that public diplomacy program must include offline communication, saying that “there is no substitute for face-to-face” communication. Participants said that engagement on digital media was “better than no engagement” at all, but was not better than face-to-face interaction. One participant compared communication to food, and hoped “we [would] never get to the point where we [were] replicating our food instead of eating it.” In other words, face-to-face communication was viewed as “real experience,” and digital engagement had a supporting role. Specifically, digital media offered opportunities in terms of reach, but did not allow for building rapport. Participants discussed different ways in which face-to-face communication can complement online interaction and visa versa.

First, participants said that digital media was not a strong enough link to conduct public diplomacy and that one needed to complement it with “that person-to-person interaction.” Participants recalled the saying of Edward Murrow, the former head of the U.S. Information Agency, in which he argued that public diplomacy should cross “the last three feet” and that it is only possible to achieve that in face-to-face conversation. Participants said that a lot of the meaning in communication came from face-to-face interaction, including “people’s body language,” when “people paused,” making face-to-face interaction “irreplaceable.” However, connections could be strengthened and sustained through other means. For example, one participant

reflected on blog interactions, saying that many of the active participants did meet each other offline. The participant said:

But then also this [...] blog I was telling you about. I think many of the people who run that blog, also actually know in person many of the people who are commenting on the blog, or the readers of the blog, just because they are all in the same business. So I don't know. I guess my feeling is that on the one hand, the whole point of social media is that you don't have to meet anyone, but on the other hand maybe like the channels that are actually pretty good are the ones where you do have some kind of a relationship offline as well.

Thus, data reflected an effort “to be doing both [...], to be promoting the physical relationship as well as the virtual relationship.” Participants said that online conversations were valuable in that they reached “a boat load of people,” and then could be sustained by offline interactions. Participants said that field offices and embassies were an “advantage” and served an important function in interacting with publics on the ground.

Second, participants said that digital media could serve as “a tool” that created opportunities for meeting publics offline, “a tool to get from one [digital communication] to the other [face-to-face interaction].” One participant suggested that offline interaction was “the ultimate goal” and “the real bit of public diplomacy that [needed] to be done.” For example, to use social media as a tool, one diplomat held a contest on her twitter page and invited the winner together with the family to meet with her, and afterwards posted pictures online of the encounter. Likewise, some government agencies hosted offline meetings with the twitter communities, invited

facebook followers to events, and “asked social media communities to re-design their social media logos.”

Third, digital media allowed using less resources and reaching more people than face-to-face communication. Participants discussed limited funding and human resources, suggesting that digital media could address some of those limitations. Moreover, digital media could reach more people without investing much more resources. One participant said:

But if we are gonna be really successful [...] at a broader scale, we have to utilize both, because we have limited staff, limited resources. And technology allows us to reach, many many many many more times exponentially more people than one person could ever do in a lifetime.

Although digital media links allowed “to reach out to more people,” connections tended to be weaker than in face-to-face interaction. Participants discussed different preferences regarding the importance of bonds versus amounts of people reached. For example, one participant said:

You know, we are talking about the ability to reach fewer people, better communications [...], where you have more people but [...] you have a more tenuous bond with those people. And I think it is always better to go with the fewer and stronger bonds than more bonds that are more tenuous, you know.

Finally, participants underlined that “frequent touch [was] important” meaning that communication had to be regularly, whether online or offline. Participants said that interaction could take “all different shapes” and

organizations/governments had to design their approach “depending on the community.”

Digital media links: Purposes. Although participants suggested that online interactions were not as effective or valuable as face-to-face communication, they discussed some of the cases in which digital media was valuable in public diplomacy.

Digital media was particularly useful when communicating with target audiences in areas with little established or formal connections. In some cases, countries had politically complicated relationships. In other cases, there was not an established field office on the ground. Digital media allowed those publics to participate through “video conferencing, or they [could] listen to a podcast, or they [could] comment on it.” Participants said that such links allowed to “establish connections” and to “generate interest.” For example, the United State government did not have a physical embassy in Iran, but had a virtual embassy. One participant also reflected on his experiences in Saudi Arabia, saying:

But you know, living in Saudi Arabia, we had really really controlled security environment. So if I wanted to travel outside of Riyadh, Jeddah, or Dhahran, it was nearly impossible. So if I wanted to communicate with someone in Ha’il, or Al Jawf, electronic was the only way to do so. So there are benefits to it. But it can't be the only way you engage with somebody.

Participants said that digital media could “amplify” the message. While face-to-face interaction was limited to relatively small amount of people, participants hoped that digital messages could be shared and re-posted to other publics. In addition, digital media allowed connecting people from areas that had complex

political relationship among governments. For example, one participant spoke of a project that connected publics in Pakistan and Israel, two countries that have a cold political relationship, to collaborate on an online project. A participant described another project that connected Israeli and Palestinian students. He said:

Another good example is a thing called Yalla [...]. It was connecting Israelis and Palestinian students online on this huge Facebook page [...], because they don't often get to see each other, right. They are just in two separate worlds.

Formal and informal connections. Participants spoke about formal and informal links between actors. The formal links could be links to the other governments, or established partnerships, interagency departments. Formal links were reinforced by “regular meetings” to “update each other [on] what [they] were doing.” However, participants predominantly spoke about informal connections that linked actors and networks. Informal connections were also important in keeping formal connections effective.

Participants said that informal links were important for quick exchanges of information and allowed for a more frequent interaction between actors. To foster informal links, participants got together for food and/or drinks. For example, one participant spoke about the relationship between two government structures. He said:

But that's where these people-to-people connections come into play. You know, it is easy as going for beer with somebody. It sounds silly, beer, a cup of coffee, inviting them over to your house for dinner. For example, we used to have an okay relationship with DOD, the Department of Defense, and their press people. We invited them over for beers one day. And now [if] they have

questions, they call us up. – “Hey guys, George Little is going to brief on this in 15 minutes. What do you guys have.” - “Oh, here you go. Thanks a lot[...]. So I mean, you got to do a little bit of diplomacy with DOD, and Department of Treasury, and commerce and, you know, the intelligence community.

Participants suggested that sustaining informal interpersonal links were a challenge in public diplomacy because of a high turn-over of employees. Some government posts had public diplomacy officers stay for two or three years. One participant spoke about the frequent employee changes saying:

The challenge is: [...] frequently in different agencies you have turn-over. So somebody who is your contact retires, goes to another job, does something else, and the new person there may not be interested or have the background, or they may not fill that role. Then who is the next contact? That is a constant challenge.

Informal links relied on personal qualities rather than organizational traits or job descriptions. Thus, they were difficult to predict, and could be difficult to sustain with a high employee turn-over. Collaborations with other agencies often depended on “who is across the street, at what time.” For example, one participant suggested that links between organizations heavily relied on the skills and personal qualities of the communication officer. He said:

I mean it is all about relationships in the end of the day, and so you can have a great NGO rep in the area, and maybe a person who is not the most personable you know, individual who is public diplomacy person. And so, that NGO might have a leg up. [...]. So, I think everything is relationship based.

Financial links. Data suggested that the main link between governments and international organizations was the financial link. “Grant programs” was the “most visible” link between NGOs and governments. Many projects were monitored by both organizations, but participants suggested little actual collaboration. For example, one participant spoke about the relationship between governments and nongovernmental organizations in the field saying:

... Again, it's not really a collaborative relationship. And so that's difficult. I guess I would look at [...] the type of work they do, if they are working in the area maybe where there is a lot of funding going into, we might pull back because there is enough going on, you know. [...] So I would not, again, I would be very careful to say it was a collaborative relationship between governments and NGOs, working in the foreign area.

Building networks

Data suggested that the main task in building networks was to connect various actors and networks to each other. Participants spoke about “building a space” and a “sphere” in which “others communicated together.”

Data suggested that networks were built around themes or issues. Participants found other actors based on their expertise or historical connection to the issue. For example, one participant spoke about two societies, Pakistan and Israel, having cold relationships in the past, but with “networks of people who were interested in human rights, in fighting military establishment, and fighting the religious establishment.” Public diplomacy networks connected “like-minded individuals [...] who would not normally associate with each other.”

Focusing on a common goal, a common purpose, or a common target audience was one of the most discussed strategies to connect to networks. Participants talked about finding “organizations that [had] a common interest” and that wanted “to reach the same audiences,” or “people who [were] enthusiastic” about the cause. Organizations “did not have to agree with everything,” but needed to have some commonality which would serve as a base for a partnership.

Participants said that it was important to have a “neutral platform,” where none of the actors impose ideas or actions on each other. Those platforms were meant to “bring [people] together, introduce them, give them a space to talk about their goals” and also “find some synergy.” Participants suggested that neutrality was harder to achieve for governments, with publics and other agencies wondering “why are they contacting me?” At the same time, government officers perceived it as an “ideal” situation in which they “make all the introductions and just get out of the way.” International organizations were perceived to be more neutral than governments, able to “get people together and get them to talk.”

Governments were perceived to have limitations in building networks. One participant from a government said that her office worked with various partners outside the United States and “had great relationships with [their] partnerships that were nongovernmental,” but “governmental actors [were] harder to engage.” Governments chose their partners more carefully, because it could influence their reputation and could ultimately “reflect on the foreign ministry and [...] the government.” Some organizations were considered as “very good allies” and other “not the appropriate collaboration.” Participants mentioned several considerations

such as “the quality of organization,” the level of transparency, or “affiliations with which [governments] may not be completely comfortable.”

Governments operated in a complex political environment, and engaging with certain actors could be seen as a political statement. For example, one participant spoke about the U.S. engagement with the United Nations, suggesting that there were “political tendencies to say that the U.S. government should stray away from the U.N., [...] they want limited involvement from the U.N.” Navigating across those political spaces complicated network building.

Time was another issue. Participants said that building networks was a long-term project and required a long time. Consultation and decision-making took longer because everyone had to participate. Some participants found it “a little frustrating” and “a huge challenge.” When “mission and goals of every agency [was] different, they were busy to accomplish those” and thus “taking time to work together collaboratively” was “an ideal concept” but “difficult to actually implement.”

Snowballing. Participants discussed several network-building strategies, and the most important tasks in building networks was “finding the right partners” and connecting to the right networks.” Snowballing was a strategy, in which actors “tried to learn from each contact who their contact [was],” and then found opportunities to connect to those contacts. Participants suggested that the network-building process was hardly predictable, because one “never knows whether that [...] meeting or that event [would] be just that perfect connection for some project, some activity.” Connecting actors to each other was also perceived to be part of the network-building process, with the connector ending up in the center of the relationship.

Events. Another strategy to connect various people was to host special events, including conferences, anniversaries, parties, exhibits, to name a few. Participants talked about events as an opportunity to share experiences but also create networks. Several organizations initiated conferences for participants that had similar expertise or similar experiences. For example, one international exchange organization encouraged its former participants to organize events in their area with the purpose of finding other participants and connecting with them, with the ultimate goal of further collaboration.

Digital media. Digital platforms provided the space to build networks. Data suggested that the use of digital media to build networks was limited. Only a few participants shared network-building strategies that related to social media.

Social media websites allowed finding like-minded individuals or individuals with similar experiences. Several participants spoke about social media connecting publics between each other and building relationships directly without the organization's intervention.

Participants preferred not to use social media websites such as Facebook and Twitter for collaboration between organizations, but widely used them for projecting messages to publics and creating space for publics to interact. One organization hosted regular chat sessions in which affiliated members got together on Twitter and shared their experiences. Several organizations attempted to create new platforms for internal collaboration. For example, one participant spoke of a site for development in one of the African countries. She said:

We created an online platform for rural farmers from Africa to connect with the African Diaspora, the [...] volunteers and academics to exchange ideas, develop ideas and sort of really try to from the bottom up identify projects and ideas that can be scaled up. So that's the way we sort of tap our communities.

In addition, social media platforms allowed finding and connecting to influential individuals in a country, which was as valuable as reaching influential people offline. One participant in the field said that she used Twitter to find influential people, connect to them, and gain access to their digital networks. She said:

I actually think social media can be helpful in some way for that. Like when I came in, I found the top hundred tweets on twitter [...] with the highest number of followers, and we started following them. And I reached out directly to some of them, and I've met some of them, and I think that was a good place to start [...], because their influence is really strong. So through them you meet other influentials [individuals in the country]. But, plugging yourself into the right network I think is one of the most challenging things.

Digital network connections were easy to analyze. Organizations could gather data and see where their organization was located in the network. Surprisingly, only one participant mentioned that his organizations conducted network analysis, despite the opportunities it provided. One participant said that after analyzing networks in a given country, they found “massive circles of influential people” such as bloggers and media companies. The results showed where actors were getting their information

from and “how they [were] connected to other people,” and that was useful in planning the organization’s further steps.

Obstacles in building and managing communication networks

Participants discussed several obstacles in building internal networks. First, organizations differed in their missions and daily tasks, which made it hard to collaborate on a regular basis. For example, one participant said that “there is so much happening on a day-to-day [basis], it is hard to keep track with other agencies.” Participants mentioned the issue of timing, suggesting that interagency communication “isn’t as fast-paced,” and organizations have to adapt to each other’s working pace.

Second, differences in organizational cultures and organizational structures were perceived as a barrier for building communication networks. “Knowing how each agency operates” was a prerequisite for interagency work, because organizations varied in the departmental structures and the flow of information. As one participant said “you have to know how that system works in order to make [collaboration] happen.” One participant even discussed the language barriers during interagency meetings: Organizations used different abbreviations, even those within a government. One participant elaborated on the relationship between two government structures, saying:

... also DOD [Department of Defense] is really complex. Their organizational structure is very complex, they've gotten combatant commands, and they've got Pentagon and OSD [Office of the Secretary of Defense], and they don't always link [...]. And you know, [...] it's a very different culture, and they

like to stick within their missions. And so we made progress, but we are not... If I were to take my State hat off, and just look as a private citizen [...], I'd want DOD and State to cooperate a hell lot more, because [...] one, there is areas of overlap; and two, you know, there are areas where the combined forces could be significant.

Third, participants said that organizational bureaucracy was an obstacle in internal and external networks. While networks in public diplomacy were perceived as a positive development offering “a huge space for collaboration,” some participants did not think those “spaces” existed “just because of the bureaucracy and the way [agencies] work.” Participants spoke about bureaucratic structures slowing down the communication flow between organizations. Specifically, each organization/government agency had a firewall and there was “little connection between the firewalls.” Every agency “has to get permission” to get any information outside the organization, and “that slows down everything.” Governments were perceived to be especially bureaucratic in comparison with nongovernmental organizations. As one participant mentioned, “with anything [related to] government, I am sure you've learned from your interviews, everything moves a little bit slower than you want it to.”

Data suggested that information got lost while travelling through communication networks. Because some information went through several people and structures before getting to the final point, “the interpretation or the nuances may get watered down.” Participants described it as an “old telephone call,” where it was “a challenge of making sure that the filters [did not] filter out the key assets.”

In addition, the nature of communication and recent technological developments contrasted with the controlled communication environment so prevalent in large organizations and governments. Specifically, participants said that “informality,” “authenticity” and “lack of privacy” were the integral qualities of the 21st century communication, and that “bureaucracies, of course, [were] gonna be lagging on this.”

Interestingly, interview participants suggested that networks were easier to manage in the field offices rather than the headquarters. Public diplomacy sought to reach publics in other countries, and it was easier to manage communication between agencies on the spot. For example, participants spoke of embassies, saying that all represented agencies of the government work well in the field. One participant said:

You want to have all members, what they call country team, ambassador and all the people who work for him, you want them all working together. That tends to happen anyway, because they are out there, they are all, you know, in it together. They tend to work much better overseas than the bureaucracies work with each other here in Washington.

Network structure

Two themes emerged related to organizational structures: Hierarchical structures and closed networks. Participants said that in their organizations had a hierarchical structure and there was little interaction between units, as well as between organizations.

Hierarchical organization. Many participants, both in governments and nongovernmental organizations, talked about hierarchy and “vertical” structure in

their establishments. Participants said that it was difficult to navigate the organizational space in a vertical structure. Establishing more horizontal connections was not easy, because the relationship with the boss could be jeopardized. Moreover, when those horizontal connections were established with individuals in other departments, they were not long lasting: as soon as the person left the job, officers were “cut off again.”

Communication flow was influenced by rank of staff. First, participants said that it was not advisable to contact an officer of a higher rank, especially in the beginning. One participant said that it was “the official rule,” even though it was not too strict. Second, rank was perceived as a credibility issue. Participants said that communication from higher rank officials mattered more to the people and it was more likely to be read and answered than letters from employees in lower ranks. He shared an occasion when he needed to contact an employee of a higher rank who he knew personally, he still requested the director to send the e-mail. He said:

So for example, [...] we decided [to start a] partnership [with a country in Africa]. And I actually know the country manager there, but I know also my Director knows the country director actually even better. So, I drafted an e-mail for my director, he sent an email and the other guy wrote back, [...]. But if my director would not have been here, or anything, I would not ask him. I would do it myself.

The limitations of a hierarchical structure were particularly felt in the field. Participants said that employees located in field offices knew the situation, the culture, and their target publics. However, decisions were made at headquarters. For

example, one participant said that “programs in the field [were] largely driven by what Washington D.C. [was] providing,” and the plans were “created from far away.” Several participants described their organizations in three levels: the field, the middle level (where “the policy is made”) and the “high levels” (i.e., “level of national security adviser”). Data suggested that “there [was] a partnership [...] at a higher level,” and there was some interaction at low levels, but little synergy in the middle level. One participant said:

At the working level it happens at post, as I said, you talk to the defense attaché regularly, you talk to the commercial council, you talk to counselor chief, you talk to the political-economic section chief. It happens at post, it happens, so it happens high and low. It’s [...] the middle, where sort of [...] the policy is made. You know, that I think we are still working on.

While data suggested that the interaction within the organization, in the locale, was possible, it was more complicated for communication between different organizations. The hierarchical structure limited field offices to collaborate with other organization of similar hierarchical structure, because they were, likewise, dependent on their headquarters. One participant spoke about governments working with nongovernmental organizations saying:

... I mean, well do they know of each other? Sure. Do they go out to dinner together? Probably. But it’s not, it’s not collaborative relationship. But what each of them are providing is not gonna be depending on the other one, because both of them are getting directions from central headquarters somewhere else.

Participants suggested that using social media in hierarchical structures was complex, but possible. One participant wondered, “How could you get an organization that’s very hierarchical to deal with the least hierarchical medium on earth?” Participants talked about the generation gap in their organizations and a cultural change that organizations had to go through to adapt to the new media environment. Some of the messages continued to be controlled by the headquarters, which provided template messages to be distributed around the world. This was particularly the case in the government. There was also a structure in place to approve messages, but that could be done in the field without the approval of the headquarters. For example, one participant said:

... He [communication officer in charge of Twitter] runs sensitive things by me [...]. We get some daily products from Washington, it's pre-cleared, it's like a social media feed. So he can basically take that and plug it in, and send it. And if we ever did get any [condemnation from headquarters], we'd be able to point to that and be like, - but it was in the feed, it was cleared. So there is a lower level of risk there [...].

Closed networks. Participants described their organizations as “closed networks.” Participants said that it was something that they were trying to change in their organizations. For example, one participant spoke about government embassies, saying that it was “a closed networks, but [they did not] want it to be a closed network.” Participants said that interagency collaboration within governments was not usual either, and described it as something “new.” For example, one participant spoke about his work in an interagency department:

... Well it's unusual in Washington, [...] People just operate in their own, these bureaucracies are like walls unto themselves. Some people never ever venture outside. But our organization happens to be different in that it is deliberately formed that way as an interagency organization to overcome this.

Another participant spoke about her organization's efforts to open up the conversations to external publics. However, conversations seemed to still occur among "the same players talking to each other over and over again," so the organization continued trying but was not "quite there yet." There were also risks associated with making networks more open. Specifically, organizational weaknesses could be revealed, which was quite damaging to organizations with an established name. For example, one participant spoke about possible collaborations between his organization and the government, saying:

... There are risks associated [...]. On our end we would have to be [...] weighing those risks with the benefits. And on their end, you know, [...] they don't necessarily understand the whole [international organization] network. So, they may not understand what our relative strengths and weaknesses are. We certainly are not all as strong as we are domestically [...], and they probably know that, but they don't necessarily know what the weaknesses are and we are not necessarily going to tell them. So, you know we might be a little bit transparent, but not completely because ultimately we are this great organization.

In other words, each organization had their own program, and “they [were] independent of one another”; Governments and nongovernmental organizations were “not in coordination.”

Participants also spoke of closed digital networks. Some of the communities, like the “jihad websites” were “pretty much closed” and if U.S. government officers working on anti-terrorism tried to access them “they would be immediately kicked off.” Organizations were careful in sharing content from external networks. For example, one participant from a government agency said that they tried “to share [other U.S. agencies’] content pretty often, and that [helped] draw followers,” but “not so much” with “other non-U.S. government organizations.”

Network communication

Participants discussed two processes related to monitoring of external communication. On the one hand, organizations tried to make their messages consistent across the organization, and implemented various approval processes. On the other hand, there was a push for distributed communication. These two themes are discussed below.

Centralized communication. Participants spoke about organizational efforts to have one hub where outgoing messages and/or channels would be approved. In some organizations, such a system was in place. In others, organizations were trying to set something in place. Levels of centralization varied. Some organizations required all messages to be approved by the communication department; others required all press materials to be approved but allowed more flexibility in terms of social media messages. Participants predominantly spoke of requirements to use

approved or cleared messages, especially for the press. For example, one participant said that communication department was like “air traffic controllers,” overseeing what was going on in the organization and directing the communication content and flow. He said:

But I worked very closely with them because they were the decision makers, so if we wanted to [send] a press release, or any kind of material, they were the ones that had to approve that to make sure that whatever we were saying was in line with organization, their mission, all that, and we weren't saying anything out of term. And I think that's how a lot of programs worked with communications team. [...] So, there was a chain of command. And everything that we produced for our team could not move forward without the approval of the people at the central hub of communications.

Field offices and embassies also sought to have a centralized structure for messages. One officer at a government agency said that the communication department served as a communication hub for several U.S. government agencies represented in the country (i.e., USAID, Department of Defense). Such inter-agency public affairs model required “everything that’s going to appear to the public eye” from all agencies to be stamped by the communication department’s head.

Participants discussed several reasons for message and channel control.

First, the centralized communication system assured “quality” control. Communication departments reviewed content as well as communication channels. For example, one participant spoke about “an approval process” for launching new websites. She said that they made sure “that there [was] staffing” behind the website,

“that it was [...] professional, that it [would] not die after the first three days.”

Although it was perceived “cumbersome,” participants said that it assured that “not one unit within the organization [was] doing some things that would be detrimental to [the organization].”

Second, a centralized communication system facilitated consistency in branding and marketing organizations. The logos “were not exactly the same,” or there were too many different messages from different departments. In large organizations, communication departments struggled with developing key messages to communicate across all departments. One participant compared it “a thousand flowers blooming,” suggesting that it was difficult to see which ones were the most important ones. Thus, organizations sought to develop “an overarching content strategy” to have “consistency and uniformity and branding,” which required closing some communication channels, such as websites.

Third, a centralized communication system was efficient in providing professional pre-packaged materials, which were either distributed by e-mail or available at an internal website. One agency doing it for all departments within a government or organization could be seen as efficient in that it avoided duplication of efforts. Content could include materials for press, but also Twitter and Facebook ideas. The packages could be thematic focusing on issues such as “entrepreneurship” or “international education.” Participants did mention that the approval process could “sometimes slow down the process.”

Distributed communication. Although organizations tried to have consistent messages, most of communication was distributed. Data also suggested that materials

for traditional media required approvals, but social media messages were not as controlled. In other words, each department or bureau communicated with their target publics and stakeholders. Although it may seem contrary to a centralized communication system, the two approaches co-existed in both governments and organizations. Organizations had communication departments, or departments dedicated to online communication, but had communication staff in various organizational substructures. Communication staff in various departments “had their own audiences to reach.”

In some organizations, the communication department was in charge exclusively of traditional media. Other departments directly engaged with publics. For example, one participant said that he did media relations, but “the organization itself [did] public diplomacy.” Another participant spoke about his role as a “PR guy,” saying:

Our role is to basically bring the two [organizational experts and audiences] together, right. So you have to have a platform, or you use the platform to do that. Yeah, but for one way, we do a lot of packaging, we write feature stories, we write press releases. All that stuff.

Interview data suggested that communication by experts on topics was better than by public diplomacy or communication staff. Because many departments had a topical focus, they were expert in their field, and were in a best position to speak or write about it. Communication from experts was perceived to be a “genuine discussion.” One participant said:

I think honestly in most cases like our, the best thing we can do is get out the way. And let these guys just do what they want. [...] i mean a lot of times we don't really understand the issue that they are discussing anyway [...]. If there is a huge discussion on some HIV related thing, we are not following the HIV on a day to day basis, in terms of what people are talking about, so we don't know.

Several participants spoke of departments that focused solely on training other departments in strategic communication. For example, one participant spoke about her department setting “the standards” for communication on the web and helping agencies manage their own communication appropriately. She said:

But what my department [...] is basically setting all of the standards in web best practices, online best practices, for engaging with anyone outside [the organization]. So a lot of my focus is helping of our decentralized web teams and online teams to do the work that they do that eventually gets to external user or the external stakeholder. A lot of times the folks who are communicating online may not be aware of what makes sense to do, what's kosher, what's the reputational risk, and part of web governance is to oversee that, put all the policies and procedures for them to do what they want to do. But also kind of looking at protecting the [organization] in [...] different ways.

In other words, departments in charge of online communication mainly targeted internal audiences and trained staff in other departments in strategic communication. In some cases, training related to the use of digital media channels

(i.e., Facebook, Twitter). Online communication teams viewed themselves in “advising” or “training” roles.

Web content, such as blogs or social media messages, required less approval than materials for traditional media. Participants said that it had been a fairly difficult process for their establishments to change the nature of external communication in order to adapt to modern communication environment, and to the fast pace of message flow. Data suggested that there was still a split in the approach towards social media. For example, one participant said:

I am a firm believer of social media; I think it is here to stay. There are people that are saying, ‘We should not engage on Twitter, we should not engage on Facebook,’ and I believe they are off their rocker [...].

Power in networks

Participants spoke about several types of power, including financial, expert, and convening. First, financial power referred to the ability of some governments and organizations to fund project, and thus impose certain requirements. The nongovernmental organizations got government grants which “[did] dictate” the content of the project, because they were “looking for certain things.” The government that granted money required an organization to “tell how [they would] spend it,” then they would give “requirements for spending it,” which was perceived “pretty restrictive.”

Second, expert power allowed nongovernmental organizations to work with governments. Each nongovernmental organization typically focused on one issue and had experts in that field. For example, on participant said:

The fact that, say, USAID is giving grant to an NGO like [an organization], I mean obviously there is a need [...]. There is certain NGOs bringing certain expertise to the table that may be a foundation or a government cannot do, which is why they are putting out a grant to begin with.

Last, participants spoke about the “convening” power, or the ability to bring various actors together for a conversation or possible collaboration. Hosting conversations and linking participants was perceived as an advantage to the organization. Some government officers attributed the convening power to Hillary Clinton, who could “bring together lots of different people.” Some participants discussed convening power as to be able to bring together “the decision makers in the room.” However, participants did not elaborate on the topic, suggesting that organizations and governments were “just at the beginning” or developing such power.

RQ3 : How do public diplomacy actors make meaning of relationship cultivation?

Initially, the third research question had two subquestions. The first subquestion sought to explore differences between online and offline relationship cultivation. The second subquestion asked about the differences between relationship cultivation strategies with actors inside an organization and actors in other organizations. However, interview data was not sufficient to answer the subquestions. At the same time, participants discussed the use of digital media in public diplomacy. Thus, during data collection I replaced the two subquestions with a fourth research question, which explored the use of digital technology in public diplomacy. The results to the fourth research question are presented further in the chapter.

As results to the first research questions suggested, there were two approaches to public diplomacy. Likewise, data suggested two approaches to relationship cultivation. Several participants primarily spoke about image-making and changing of perceptions among international publics. At the same time, data reflected several cultivation strategies that organizations and governments used to build relationships with publics. The summary of results is presented in Table 3.

Data suggested that one of the prerequisites for cultivating a relationship was a positive and accurate image of a country or an organization. Participants said that public diplomacy was “all about showing foreign cultures” because oftentimes audiences had “a negative perception” about the country and what it stood for. Various forces within a country could contribute to a negative image. For example, Hollywood fostered certain perceptions of the United States, but “[did] not necessarily reflect accurately who Americans [were], what American government goals [were].” Participants said that developing a more accurate picture was important in order to have a dialogue with international publics. Participants deemed it necessary to confront misconceptions and to let publics “have a greater understanding,” in order start a relationship.

In addition, participants said that to build a relationship, actors must “gain” something from it. To build a relationship, actors asked “what’s my interest?” In the case of educational exchanges, “students [got] a more professional education” in their area, nongovernmental organizations received grants to conduct their work. Participants said that actors had to be clear about “what they should get out of it [relationship], or what they are bringing to the table.”

Participants discussed needs in information, financial assets, services, and access to local publics. In discussing informational needs, participants said that one could “build a relationship [...] if you have the ability to directly engage” and if the other “can provide the information you need.” Financial assets were important for nongovernmental organizations that depended on funding, or, in some cases, governments who needed funding provided by international organizations. Services referred to nongovernmental agencies’ work, such as educational exchange, or crisis assistance. In the inter-agency work, services related to training and digital media services. Last, organizations and governments needed to have access to international publics to conduct public diplomacy, and thus looked to partner with local groups or organizations.

Relationship cultivation

Data suggested three themes related to relationship cultivation, i.e. competition, trust, and relationship needs.

Competition. Participants spoke about other similar organizations as “competitors.” Organizations had “their own agenda” and “their own flavor,” “they [wanted] their own program.” However, they had similar goals and did similar things, and thus struggled for distinction and sometimes survival.

Many participants discussed competition for financial assets. Nongovernmental organizations primarily depended on government funding. Likewise, within the government, departments competed for funding. For example, several participants mentioned the large funds available to the Department of Defense, which allowed them “to do things for security reasons” and “were beginning

to take over civilian areas.” In other words, participants suggested that financial interests and financial constraints created a competitive attitude. As a result, communication reflected “a hidden very strange way of competing with each other.”

Governments were perceived to be the gatekeepers for nongovernmental organizations in terms of opportunity and reach to the public. However, governments could not collaborate with all agencies at the same time, which created a sense of competition. For example, one participant said:

...I think that there is a sense of competition in the sense that government can really open doors for an agency, and so there is a sense that it is important to position yourself as being value add to government in a way.

Organizations also competed for credibility. Several interviewees compared their organization to other similar agencies in terms of social media presence, “Facebook fans,” adoption of new technology, to name a few.

Last, organizations competed for “who gets credit.” For international organizations working with governments often had to negotiate whose name is in the materials, and who gets credit for projects in the media. Organizations often tried to differentiate themselves from governments to get credit for their work. One participant said that “it was a little frustrating” when another organization did something similar to her organization. She said, “They always poach our best ideas.” Within the government, different field offices negotiated “who gets credit for [a project] back in Washington.”

Trust. Building trust was perceived to be “the way to build a relationship.” Participants discussed several ways that trust could be fostered in organizational-

public relationships. Trust was important for offline and online relationships. Participants suggested that trust did not depend on “cultural background,” but rather was a “basic human” quality. One participant said that when publics did not feel “secure for their well-being” they would not enter a conversation with the organization.

Data suggested that trust came with an ability to have dialogue and communicate on a regular basis. The very opportunity and openness to communicate could contribute to the trust with publics. For example, one U.S. embassy set up a public forum on Facebook where young people could ask questions about anything related to the United States, and that “itself” was perceived as “building trust and credibility.” Likewise, another participant described her interaction with an individual in another country, who worked on the same project but in another organization. She developed a feeling of trust because of promptness and ability to help with information. She said:

We have cultivated a very strong relationship based on our ability to communicate directly one-on-one, on phone conversations, if we had the capability of video conferencing, I would do that with her. And just based on our communications, [...] I have trust in her. I've never met her; she lives in [another country]. But I would say that I trust her because of her promptness, her ability to respond, her ability to provide me with information that I need.

Trust also could be cultivated by third-party endorsement. Participants spoke of ability to connect to publics through introductions of a person they trusted. For example, one participant from an international agency said that her organization

“would not be able to exist on the ground” without those local partners. Another participant said that working with local partners was like a “halal seal of approval.” Halal is an Arabic word to describe something as approved or permissible. In online spaces, organizations could use platforms to get reviews about programs and publics’ endorsement. Although none of the participants shared practical experiences in this vein, some platforms were mentioned as examples. Wikipedia, Yelp, Trip Advisor were efficient platforms to solicit individual experiences about countries and organizations. One participant said:

We want to incorporate some of those types of features into our site so people can search for that sense of trust with each other based on what their history is in collaboration with [the organization]. How that actually works, I don't know, but [we] are hoping that some of that will make up for the lack of physical relationship.

Trust was also associated with time and commitment. Participants said that the longer an organization stays in the area, the more opportunities the public had to get to know and develop trust. Data suggested that successful relationships were “not something that [could] happen overnight,” it was something that took time and trust. Also, in online spaces, online relationships that were successful were the ones “that [had] just stood the test of time,” in which employees who were communicating were “passionate people” who regularly and consistently reached out to the public. As a result, “people just [started] to trust them.” Organizations also showed commitment through consistent service projects to the populations. One participant said that doing

multiple projects, showing commitment practically, built credibility, “good faith” and trust in the organization.

Participants discussed trust as “honesty” and “sense of security.” Participants suggested that when publics trusted the organization, they used its information and perceived it to be credible. On the opposite, they suggested that publics stopped trusting organizations and governments once they saw discrepancies in communication. When organizations said one thing, but later said something else, that was perceived as dishonesty and led to little trust. For example, one participant spoke about the invasion of Iraq, which was justified by the suspicion in the U.S. government that “Saddam [had] weapons of mass destruction.” However, when U.S. forces invaded Iraq, “all of a sudden there [were not] weapons of mass destruction.” Participant said that such discrepancies badly reflected on international publics’ ability to trust the U.S. government. He said:

Then it looks like we lied, then it looks like we were in it for another reason. Well what could be the other reason? Well, then the conspiracy theorists begin [...]. So that was one of the catastrophic events in American foreign policy. It was not a public diplomacy effort, but the public diplomacy backlash. Because it was so against everything that people assumed America stood for and cost us tremendously. And we are still paying the price for it.

Online relationship cultivation strategies

Participants were skeptical about the quality of relationships online, suggesting that the ties were “weak.” However, interview data also suggested that it was “too early to tell if [one could] really hold relationships with people virtually,”

that social media was still “a bit of a wild west,” and many organizations were “still on a road to figuring out” how to engage online and cultivate relationships. In addition, participants said that it was difficult to develop a “metrics” to measure the success of digital engagement. Two online cultivation strategies emerged in the data, trust and conversational voice.

Trust. Trust emerged as a prominent theme in discussing online relationship building, and related to both external communication and internal communication. Participants suggested that organizational online engagement was different from personal use of digital media, and organizations had to develop and follow “rules of engagement.” Being consistent online and following the rules was the way to “build a sense of trust.” In terms of external communication, participants discussed the issues of anonymity, trust in partners and messages online. A more prominent theme identified internal trust towards communication officers to manage communication on digital sites. Trust to external and internal actors is discussed below.

The anonymity that the Internet offered suggested some advantages to building relationships but also challenges in building trust. Participants suggested that for some people “the purpose of engaging [online] was to be anonymous,” especially when they did not have open communication channels offline and shared views that could have negative consequences on their lives. However, anonymity online also was a challenge for relationship building, because actors could build “build a picture” that was different from reality. The “likelihood of sustaining a relationship based on dishonesty” was perceived to be “limited.” Participants suggested that there would “always be this distrust” in online spaces because of anonymity. One participant said,

“if you meet someone face-to-face, you know they exist.” That anonymity allowed also for more distance between actors, which in turn could “lower the inhibitions.” In other words, publics did not seek to be polite or understanding, but rather were rude and aggressive if they did not like something or someone online.

Participants said that online collaboration between various actors required that each trusts the other actor in providing accurate and updated information. For example, during emergency situations it could be valuable to share information about infrastructure, damages, food, etc. Because more than one agency usually worked together in emergency situations, it made sense for them to share information in an open source environment. However, it also required trusting that other agencies would “give accurate information” and that they would not “use this information for any other use.”

One of the major differences that organizations found between offline and online engagement was time and pace of communication, which influenced who engaged on digital media and how. Participants discussed the shift between controlled communication, with “six o’clock news,” to a more fluid and fast-paced interaction with a “24-hour news cycle.” Participants suggested that the pace and sense of “instant” communication was “foreign to some of the more senior people.” In fact, one participant spoke about “the whole divide between traditional media guys and online media guys.” Another participant said:

They are just like, you know, I’ve literally heard them say - wait till six o’clock news. And that’s a particularly dated answer, because of the 24-hour new cycle. And it’s even more dated when you are just like - no, no, no,

somebody is expecting me to answer this, they expect me to answer it the minute they send me the question. So it's, it is a challenge.

Digital media assumed fast-paced interaction, and did not allow opportunities to check and clear messages. Previously messages went through “clearance, after clearance, after clearance,” to be approved by “dozens of people” before releasing it to “anyone outside of the building.” The demands of digital communication forced organizations to re-think who was responsible for engaging with publics online and how. Thus, organizations and the government developed other approaches, oftentimes requiring more trust towards employees who managed digital media accounts. One participant said:

Social media has changed all that, so we've essentially said - ok, diplomat, we trust you, we are not going to put clearances, because social media does not work if you have 12 clearances. Because to get a policy paper out of a State Department it takes months, weeks at best, and dozens of clearances. That does not work in social media. You have to respond immediately. If someone asks you a question and you can't formulate your answer, send it up to your boss, wait two weeks and then respond. That does not work in social media.

One participant said that his organization still had the approval system, explaining it by the “size” or the organization, and saying that there was “a lot at stake.” He further said, “I just I think that kind of opens up maybe a Pandora's box.”

Participants talked about “loosening the reins” and trusting those in charge of external communication in the organization “to do and say the right things.”

Participant said that it required a change of “mentality” and view toward

communication. One participant recalled how previously a public affairs officer wondered, “How am I going to trust that person just to tweet something out, and without me clearing it?” Another participant said that the new approach toward employees required “trusting the people [...] hired to do their job.”

It also required a different level of responsibility from those in charge of communication in digital media spaces. One participant said that when she joined the office “there was hardly anything in social media,” because employees were afraid to put any information thinking “what if it is not official.” In the digital age, officers had to make their own decisions, quick decisions, on appropriate responses and messages that represented organizational or government views. Participants said that messages on Facebook and Twitter represented their agency as much as communication on other channels. So the repercussions were similar, and inappropriate messages had reputational risks, or could influence “bilateral relationships” between governments or organizations.

One of the side effects of trusting the employees was empowerment. One participant spoke about headquarters in an organization giving access to field offices “to be able to respond to posts, twits, etc.,” which “empowered work force to be more responsible to the [...] public.”

Trust also assumed acceptance of mistakes being made by communication staff. In some instances, “press [had] picked up” on messages and said “This was inappropriate.” Because digital engagement was new to organizations, mistakes could be made. One participant said, “We are going to make mistakes, and partially, part of my job that I see here is to kind of be the defender.” He further said that mistakes

could make a learning opportunity, and it was important to find out “the justification” for an action.

Conversational tone. Conversational tone appeared in the data as efforts to humanize the organization by adopting an informal communication style, personalizing messages, and including messages that are interesting to the audiences.

Several features attracted audiences, according to interview data. Informal communication style drew publics to “follow” an organization. Participants said that new media by definition was “much more informal, much more revealing of [oneself]” than traditional media. Thus, the style had to “fit with the medium.” One participant said:

..it is much different form the tone of the podium [...], when briefing. It is not in the bureaucratese, and official speak, that is usually used in government talking office. It is more of a, much more colloquial, and it is attuned more to the cultural environment in which they operate.

In addition, organizations and governments used “cultural tropes” and the language that help them to identify with the publics. For example, one participant said that using the word “us” created a sense of community with the audience.

Several participants discussed the dilemma that organizations and governments face in allowing its employees to personalize their accounts. Participants said that publics connected with individuals rather than faceless organizations. One participant wondered, “if a bureaucracy does not related to any of these [family, friends], and it does not have its own identity, how do you relate to it?” Participants said that governments and organizations are not “inherently interesting,” even though

the work they did could be interesting. Thus, it was difficult to establish a specific and attractive identity, which was perceived to be important for online engagement. Several participants mentioned that specific individuals in the organization could help with establishing such identity. Having somebody “charismatic,” “capable” and “known,” such as Hilary Clinton and Colin Powell, “helped.”

Humanization of governments was also important in view of terrorism. One participant said that “terrorism at its core” was about “dehumanizing of the other.” Thus, putting human faces to a country could possibly “have a dampening affect on terrorism.”

Organizations allowed individuals in different positions to communicate directly with publics, provided that they made it clear that their views were their own and did not represent the organization. The personalization of messages was perceived to be more engaging and more interesting to the publics. For example, one participant spoke about blogging in his organization, saying:

And blog is supposed to be an opinion of one person in the [organization], that does not represent the over arching opinion. It can be more personal experience, it can be more emotional or you know just human to human, instead of corporate statement, and it is also designed to encourage engagement, and participation of readers.

At the same time, letting individuals in organizations connect with international publics was also problematic for consistency and long-term relationship building between an organization (rather than an individual) and publics. Participants said that some individuals” were “very successful” in using new media platforms, and

had “quite a following.” However, when they left their posts, their followers left with them. Both, organizations and governments, had a high turn-over rate, many employees did not stay longer than three years at a field office. Thus, it was hard to maintain the relationship between an organization and publics because employees did not stay in the organization forever.

Participants also spoke about the content of messages on social media, saying that one “cannot” and “should not” put a press release on social media, because it did not allow for a conversation. Posting public relations materials was perceived as a one-way communication, and a repetition of what publics can find elsewhere. For example, one participant said:

... some places play it very safe. And they will only post things that the Secretary or the Ambassador has said, and that's really boring. And that turns off your audience so quickly because they've heard it already.

On the opposite, individuals who included personal information, their own experiences, tended to have more ‘followers’ because people could connect to postings on a human level. One participant spoke about a diplomat in another country who posted personal messages on Twitter. She said:

People love it. People love that person, because it is not, obviously not just her all the time, and she does clearly state in her twitter profile that her views are her own. But, you know, she is also saying how she enjoys doing this thing in Thailand, and that thing, and Thai food, or whatever.

Participants said that personal qualities mattered in building a relationship online. It was important to show that the communicator was “approachable”

“generally cared” about the publics and their societies. Participants also said that “some people [were] just good online” and were “just really good communicators online.”

In addition, participants spoke of other possible topics to engage with publics. Messages about art and culture were also perceived to be popular among publics, and created a good platform for discussion. For example, one participant spoke of the Chicago “Bean,” and the discussion that followed focused on “what role arts and culture play in city life.” Another example was a posting congratulating audiences with a holiday, which led to a discussion about different ways to celebrate various holidays across the globe.

Political topics also could be a matter of discussion with a suitable approach. Participants suggested that messages about policies could be combined or “mixed in” with other non-political topics. Alternatively, communication officers could focus on “commonalities, that people [could] actually talk about, or care about.”

Likewise, culturally or politically “sensitive” topics were also avoided on social media platforms. For example, one participant working in a U.S. embassy said that she would be “hesitant to post much about LGBT stuff,” because of sensitivity of the topic in the country laws implemented against homosexuals. She said, “it is just not worth going there at this point. I think you have to know your audience and know what will resonate and won't.”

RQ 4 : How do public diplomacy actors use digital media to achieve public diplomacy goals?

Several themes emerged in the discussion of digital media use in public diplomacy, including generational gap, fragmentation, “tasting the waters” with digital media, new media broadcasting, new media reach, open source and security, and organizational digital media use. The summary of results for RQ 4 is presented in Table 4.

Generational gap

With the rise of digital media, both organizations as well as publics had to adapt to a different speed and nature of communication. Participants said that the transition had not been easy for older employees, and the generation gap was evident. Older generation struggled to adapt to all digital communication, including e-mail. For example, one participant said:

I think outlook or tools like outlook where you could send out an invite and use that on a limited bases is also a great way to connect with a number of people at one time. But learning how to use it, do it, I think even where e-mail is today and where it is going, a lot of people are not power use it, they are still trying to figure out, and I fit into that category. I consciously think about what’s the best way to do things. But I am still limited by more traditional avenues.

A generational gap often related to differences in the use of media channels. Participants spoke about a “divide between traditional media guys and online media

guys.” One participant said, “there is still this gap, I think the traditional media guys still have a very different way of looking at this stuff.”

Younger officers were perceived as “social media natives” as opposed to the older “social media immigrants.” Participants said that younger officers could better communicate on social media, despite the fact that in some cases they did not have any training to use digital media professionally, and it took “about a year to learn,” according to one participant. Participants said that “for them engaging in an online presence [was] much easier, [...], more natural, they [were] not intimidated by it.”

Organizations and governments were pressured to use digital media despite the possible lack of necessary skills. One participant said that his organization focused primarily on youth because they comprised a significant chunk of target population. Another participant said, “My theory was always - you have to go where the people are, and if our people are increasingly going to be 22 year old people who live their whole lives online, that’s where we have to be.”

A generational gap was also evident in the public. The recently born population was described as “digital natives,” people who “have used it since birth” and for whom digital media had become “part of their lives.” At the same time, pre-digital age populations still relied on traditional channels. Thus, organizations trying to reach various populations had to do both, develop digital media channels, as well as continue reaching audiences through traditional materials. For example, one participant said:

... the big challenge for our community is, we have 50 year [old] members, so we have people who literally e-mail me, [saying] can you mail this electronic

newsletter to this address. [...] Can you mail me my membership card? And people who are like, “If it is not on the screen, I don't even know about it.” [...] So yeah, if you are dealing with this large age demographic it is a challenge.

Fragmentation

Participants spoke about fragmentation in new media, both inside organizations and externally. Fragmentation related to platforms, as well as pages. Participants said that there were too many platforms, and new ones were emerging regularly. However, very few platforms withstood the test of time, and these were the ones that organizations and governments used. One participant spoke of “many vendors” that approached governments and organizations offering them new platforms. He said:

And for me, if I were that government, after you hear about 15 different sales pitches, you are going, ‘I am going to stick with the sit and spit approach, because I don't have to pay anything for it, relatively speaking, and it is time proven it is going to work.’

Moreover, platforms varied in different countries, and sometimes organizations. Participants said that they tried to use the platforms that were most common in the area. For example, in Russia publics used the equivalent of Facebook – vkontakte.ru, and other sites that were “popular in Vietnam, in China, in Korea” and Latin America. One participant said that to talk to everyone, “you got to figure out where [audiences] are.” He also described the communication space as “a very

distributed system, unfortunately,” adding that international publics “are not on one platform.”

Some organizations chose to develop their own social media platforms. One of the reasons for developing organizational platforms was security, so that information could be stored on organizational computers. However, introducing new platforms to audiences could be ineffective because of so many other platforms that audiences regularly visited. One participant said:

And I know that the State Department has set up several online portals, and things like that. Our feedback on that is that it's too difficult to use, it's one more site to check. One thing that's been effective for us is using facebook, because we are already on it.

Fragmentation was also evident in terms of organizational pages. Various departments and projects in one organization or government could have their own pages. For example, one participant said that every department or substructure in the organization had “their own Facebook page, their own Twitter, their own Google Plus page, and they [used] a lot of social media” to engage with their target publics. On the one hand, the pages for different programs reflected “the depth” and “the breadth of the work” in an organization. On the other hand, it “distracted.” Participants were concerned that different pages did not communicate the key messages about an organization. In addition, social media channels required regular updating, and many of the existing sites were not used. One participant spoke about the efforts in his organization to eliminate unused accounts:

And then what we did is we asked every department to report, self report every channel they had. And they self reported about 150. Or maybe 200, I don't remember. But still there was a gap of 100, more than 100 channels that were managed by the [organization]. And when you look at twitter feed it says [organizational name], and no one new about it. So they were like orphans. So most of these have been closed.

Data suggested that organizations and governments used digital media platforms to reach different audiences and to achieve different purposes. One participant said, "You can post the same bit of news on Twitter, Facebook, Google plus, and you will have completely different comments," because every channel reached different publics. Another participant said:

For me, Facebook is engagement, Twitter is engagement and broadcast, LinkedIn is engagement but in a different official network. So, Pinterest is your designer friends getting together having a few chats. You know, so they all have different purposes and very different audiences. So if you are smart, you would be using it in different ways. Can you do different messaging in different ways? Sure.

As the quote suggests, various platforms also helped organizations achieve different goals. Participants said that Facebook was a good tool for engagement and allowed "talking about issues," developing conversations," and building relationships. Facebook allowed participants to see photos and videos; information could easily be posted and also shared with other people. Participants said that Facebook capacities allowed messages "to go viral." Twitter was a platform for "breaking news," to

“communicate something that is happening in the world,” and it focused on fast “facts” right in the moment. Participants said that Twitter was a good way to connect to journalists, economists, academics. In other words, participants suggested that each platform addressed a specific goal. One participant said about the platforms:

Twitter, you know, [...] you've got a 140 characters to convey something that is fairly limited. And so what we've used it for is primarily - making sure that everyone knows what our policy is. [...] Seeing what our policy is, and then [...] if they are interested in carrying on the conversation about the policy, we are doing that on Facebook. So we go back and forth. [...] [On] Twitter you can't really have a conversation, it does not exist.

Testing the water with digital media

Using digital media to gather data and have meaningful discussion appeared as a major theme in the data. Before I report my findings related to the theme, it is important to note that some participants suggested that engagement on digital media was “risky business” for several reasons. First, organizations had to answer questions and continue the conversation. Participants said that communication on digital media required regularity. Second, when organizations or governments shared information, there could be “a lot of questioning about [organization’s] effectiveness” as well as its policies. Organizations had to be prepared for negative comments as well. One participant said:

I think it's quite healthy to have negative comments, but then again it's [...] whether you are prepared to take that risk. You know, if you have a conversation you might hear things you don't want to hear.

Third, participatory engagement was risky because of security and authenticity. For example, one participant spoke about a report, and organization's efforts to solicit public feedback on the findings and suggestions. The participant said:

So they decided ok, we want outside contributions to this report, how are we going to do that online. And they were like, why don't we just start a wiki. So, we were all kind of scared of this, I am not going to lie, I'll be dead serious. We were like, wow. Do you realize that you could get a lot of crap when you introduce a platform such as a wiki, just like Wikipedia has, or any other wiki platform. And we were like, assure us that it is monitored etc.. I mean, not censoring, just you know, making sure someone's checking what's contributed.

Data gathering was an important part of working with digital media. In fact, one participant said that her organization was "maybe less concerned with the presentation [of messages] than they [were] with the collection." For example, organizations could "funny incorporate Google analytics to be able to trace interests and locations of people." Participants spoke about specific departments "dedicated to finding out what people [were] thinking, feeling, saying, on what topics, in what country." Participants said that organizations could not do such thorough research for every country because of the limited resources, but they rather focused on "policy priority countries."

Data suggested that digital media offered unique possibilities and "opened doors" in terms of understanding audiences, in a way that "traditional diplomacy" could not. Organizations and governments did use digital media to gather data about

audiences and explore popular topics. One participant said that he primarily used Twitter to “see what people are saying,” rather than engage. Likewise, digital media allowed to “test the waters, see if something resonates with the audiences” or if it “has an opposite effect.” Through online engagement with audiences, one could “instantaneously get inputs from people from any different background, circumstances, location.”

Because social media sites allowed monitoring audience preferences through number of “likes” or “followers,” participants spoke about techniques to use that information for further engagement. Although organizations monitored quantifiable data, i.e. number of people who ‘liked’ or followed organizational Facebook pages, participants said that it did not “mean that they actually read the Facebook post, or engaged with it.” Participants said that it was more valuable to get comments on their pages, rather than likes, which could mean that a person just “scrolled” through the page but did not necessarily read it. Comments were perceived to be “valuable stuff.” For example, one participant said:

At first we were like - start an account, get people to follow you, like it was that straight forward. Now we've all started accounts, we've got people following us, [...] we've got millions and millions of people around the world following us. And now we are in the mode [of] - wow, what do we do with those people? And how do we make it meaningful. So we've really changed our metric into engagement rather than number of followers and fans. Cause it's not really accurate.

Several participants spoke about *meaningful engagement*. One of the participants from the U.S. government described meaningful engagement as a communication about “U.S. foreign policy.”

New media broadcasting

Data suggested that organizations and government explored possibilities of engagement on digital media; it was still often used as a “bull horn,” a tool for broadcasting and “pushing out” messages. As one participant said, communication was “uneven” at the time of the interviews. Organizations used new materials, such as multimedia, videos, and graphics, but with the same one-way approach to communication. For example, one participant said about communication practices in her organization:

... Most unfortunately, most social media activity [...] is more about broadcast, and not about engagement. Although that is changing. And I want it to change, because otherwise it's all kind of PR-y, and, “Hi, [...] we do wonderful stuff.” And then what? [...]

Participants said that several years ago, when they started Facebook and Twitter accounts for organizations, they “did not really know what it meant,” and “everyone thought that it was the 21st version of the fax machine.” In other words, they approached digital media platforms as another of information dissemination. For example, one participant said that they used the Facebook page to provide information about events, “advertise programs,” and to provide deadlines about applications for grants.

In addition to using social media, participants spoke about using websites, uploading reports to share with other audiences, and “translating press releases and posting them.” In comparing face-to-face communication with digital engagement, one participant said that face-to-face communication was two-way, i.e. allowing for interaction, and communication on “social media platforms” was “primarily one-way,” i.e. speaking without listening.

New media reach

Participants said that an advantage of digital media was that it could potentially reach “thousands of people all at one time,” “in very distant and very far locations.” Thus, digital media allowed eliminating the effect of time and space.

Digital media also allowed meeting significantly more people than face-to-face. While in offline environments, there were limits of space and time in terms of physically meeting a lot of people, digital media allowed everyone participate in meetings from their digital devices. Participants described projects, where they engaged with audience on digital media during an offline event, thus creating a “multiplier effect.” The participant said:

... we have limited people, and if you only have a 100 people at an embassy, and that's for us a medium size embassy, those 100 people can only meet with so many people, you are going to be limited. Say, you are in India, well, that's .001 percent of the population that you could ever meet person-to-person. And that's why we've added the social media dimension to our public diplomacy.

Moreover, digital media platforms allowed for a “multiplier effect” in communication. In other words, a message could be crafted by one individual, but then could travel across several networks, thus reaching a lot of people.

Last, digital media helped organizations and governments to connect to networks based on issues and interests. Whereas in the past agencies had to get databases to connect to certain individuals, digital media offered opportunities to search for people or networks with similar experiences or interests. One participant said that it was a big change when her organization “did not have to depend” on other agencies providing them with contact information.

However, participants also said that digital media did not reach everyone. First, some publics did not have access to hardware and the new digital channels. Participants said that by focusing on digital media, organizations “ignored segments of the population that [did not] have any access.” Specifically, it related to publics in countries where they could not effort technology. Second, due to the generation gap on digital media, older generations generally were not on social media sites. Participants spoke about the danger of assuming that everyone could be reached on digital media. She said:

“Oh yea, we'll just do it on Facebook, just put it on Facebook.” Like, it gets too easy, and you get a little lazy because suddenly [...] sections of populations do not have access to these - well what you going to do? Or as soon as you expect to reach a population over 30 or 40 [...], how do you do that?

As a result, participants said that it was difficult to apply one-fits-all approach in digital media. One participant said that in one country, where audiences could have access to texting, texting campaigns could work. But in other countries it could be useless.

Open source environment and security

Participants spoke about web security related to the open source environment and online engagement. Specifically, participants said that organizations were vulnerable to “hacking.” Thus, organizations had reservations when using other platforms that did not belong to an organization or a government. For example, one participant spoke about organizational use of Dropbox, saying:

And there is a lot of frustration right now for example because of the, you know, Dropbox is quite popular. And everyone would like to be able to say - yes, go ahead, please. But from a security standpoint, there is a lot of confidential information that is up there in the public cloud. If Amazon or whoever decides, well this is national security issue, then the [the organization] has no leverage there.

Thus, participants said that for internal purposes, hard copies were still used in some occasions, and shipped to an international location if necessary.

Organizational digital media use

Data suggested that engagement on digital media was desirable in their organizations. Participants said that there was a “tremendous effort” to engage in “new media and social media.” Participants also spoke about future plans of

implementing new platforms for communicating online. One participant said about using Twitter, “If you are not there, you are going to be behind.” Participants viewed digital media communication as an opportunity to engage, but also a demand from the people.

In addition, participants said that engaging on new media was a new and fast-changing process. A lot of the digital programs were implemented about five years prior to the interviews, and thus were described as “new” and as “something [...] that has not been done before.” One participant described it as “a giant leap forward.” Associated with the newness of digital media engagement was little evaluation. Participants said that it was “hard to measure whether it [was] actually having an impact on the job.”

For organizations and governments to adopt digital media, it was important to have leadership endorsement. For example, participants spoke about the U.S. government being “very focused on new media” and “social media tools.” Participants spoke about President Obama “pushing to provide information to the public” via social media. Likewise, Hillary Clinton had “indicated from the first day that social media was important” and during one of her first speeches as the Secretary of State suggested using a hash tag. In other organizations too leadership pushed for such initiatives as open data, which allowed publics to access data that traditionally had been kept within the organizational walls.

Data suggested that internal use of digital media for organizational purposes was minimal. Participants said that they primarily used e-mail for internal networks. Internal communication platforms featured articles and “lots of documents.”

Although several participants reported that there were possibilities to engage on internal platforms, very few participants actually used the site. For example, one participant said that he opened it “every half a year.” Another participant shared the experience with SharePoint in his organization. He said:

There's a sense that we need to have this power of spaces but there is not necessarily the demand for it. So SharePoint was introduced [...] a while back. But, they turned off all of the features, and all you could do is actually store documents on it. Nobody liked that. Nobody wanted that. [...] Now they are starting to turn on a bit more of the features, but now there are better tools out there than SharePoint, and they so everybody knows that there are better tools, and they are being restricted to use a tool that they don't want to use.

Some participants said that it was frustrating to use the internal platforms because they were not as convenient as platforms that were available outside the organization, which left employees wondering, “Ah, who came up with this site?” One participant suggested that organizations tried to catch up with the innovation, but “by the time [they] got something better out, there [was] something new coming out.”

Electronic mail was the most common way to interact within an organization. One participant compared his experience to a private company, which used internal messenger system “constantly.” However, when he moved to the government, which also had an internal messaging system, people did not use it.

One participant said that organizational engagement with other public diplomacy actors on digital media was unusual. The only communication on digital

media between two actors was in the form of retweets or sharing. Participants wondered “why would you use a public forum to coordinate activities.”

Participants spoke about internal organizational communication as more careful, because employees had “a lot to lose.” If messages contained inappropriate content, they could be reported, and the employee could lose his or her job. Thus, employees in charge of communication self-censored the messages and were generally careful in how they approached their colleagues.

Summary of the Findings

This section provides the summary of the findings provided in the chapter. The first research question sought to explore participants’ definitions of public diplomacy. Participants viewed public diplomacy as a long-term complex process that implied strategic, ethical, and genuine communication. The findings suggested two approaches to public diplomacy. First, it was conceptualized as government communication. From that point of view, the purpose of public diplomacy was to achieve government goals. Second, public diplomacy was conceptualized as a multilateral process, in which various actors participate and try to achieve their own goals.

One of the most discussed topics was public diplomacy issues. Findings suggested that issues created opportunities for actors to come together and communicate on topics of mutual concern. Public diplomacy goals included not only influencing and explaining, but also building relationships and educating publics within a given country about global issues.

Participants suggested several strategies for conducting public diplomacy. Cultural and educational exchanges were often mentioned as most common public diplomacy programs. Participants especially valued opportunities to engage with foreign publics interpersonally. Mass media was also mentioned as strategy.

Interviews pointed to the role of political, financial, and cultural context in public diplomacy. Participants said that the relationship between governments as well as internal politics influenced public diplomacy programs. Likewise, financial resources between countries and organizations could create limitations or opportunities for public diplomacy programs. Last, participants said that differences in languages, communication styles, and organizational cultures were always present. In addition, actors' assumptions about values and concepts, such as democracy and freedom, could either contribute or stifle public diplomacy messages.

The second research question focused on public diplomacy networks. Data reflected various actors in public diplomacy, suggesting that nongovernmental actors and government actors had different roles, advantages, and disadvantages in conducting public diplomacy. Participants suggested that governments and organizations were interested in working together; however, collaborations between governments and organizations were limited, and were often based on financial interests. Difficulties of building networks were associated with actors having different goals and different organizational structures. Bureaucracy and vertical communication were also viewed as obstacles.

At the same time, participants spoke about advantages of building public diplomacy networks. First, creating links between actors helped to avoid duplication.

Second, networks created opportunities to share tasks, skills, and expertise. Third, viewing public diplomacy as networks allowed connecting to actors in closed networks, i.e. groups that have little interaction with external actors. Participants said that actors connected to other actors or networks based on interest in specific issues or themes and commonalities in purpose, goals, and target publics. Actors used various tactics in reaching out to other actors, including snowballing, events, and engaging in digital media spaces.

In discussing links between actors, participants said that communication between agencies and publics had to include both digital media and offline engagement. Participants suggested that digital media provided platforms for interaction. It also allowed reaching certain publics that were not easily approachable, but did not allow actors to influence each other or change opinions. Participants said that digital media could serve as a tool to further offline engagement.

Participants described their government and organizations structures as hierarchical, where decisions were made at the “top,” while officers in the field had first-hand information and understanding of the situation. Participants said that employees at the “medium” level were connected to the field, but did not have the decision making power. Interview data suggested that communication plans did not use the expertise of officers in the field.

Communication with external actors appeared to be centralized in that governments and organizations sought to control messages in the digital media space to ensure quality and consistency. At the same time participants said that often digital media required immediate responses, which pushed organizations to trust their

employees in communicating with publics. To ensure quality control, management consulted and trained internal departments to engage on social media platforms.

Participants also spoke about power in public diplomacy networks. As noted earlier, participants spoke about financial power evident in relationship between governments and nongovernmental organizations. Participants also said that convening power, i.e. a power to connect various actors in a network, was important in building networks.

The third research question asked how public diplomacy actors built relationships. Interview data reflected relationship antecedents, relationship cultivation strategies offline and online, and relationship outcomes. Antecedents included social and cultural norms, needs for resources, perceptions of uncertain environment, and needs (informational and financial).

Data revealed a limited amount of relationship cultivation strategies used by actors. Competition for recognition or financial assets was perceived as one way to relate to other actors. In addition, interview data reflected two online relationship cultivation strategies: human conversational tone and trust. Participants said that digital media allowed humanizing the organization and thus reaching publics that otherwise were unlikely to be interested in reading organizational messages. In addition, trust between the actors as well as between managers and communication officers was perceived to be important for building online relationships with target publics.

The fourth research question focused on digital media use in public diplomacy. First, participants discussed the generational gap between employees that

used traditional media. Younger employees better understood the nature of digital media and wanted to use it. Second, participants spoke about fragmentation in the digital media space. Fragmentation related to the many digital platforms and the relatively easy process of creating websites. Third, participants said that although digital media was risky (due to negative comments and security concerns), it allowed getting quick feedback from the target publics. Fourth, digital tools, such as social media platforms, allowed organizations and governments to reach large amounts of people simultaneously. Fifth, participants predominantly described digital communication as a “bull horn” in that it was used to speak but not to listen or collaborate. Thus, it was not surprising that another finding suggested minimal use of digital media for internal communication purposes.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to explore public diplomacy from a network approach. To develop a cohesive view of current public diplomacy, I focused on obtaining conceptual meaning of public diplomacy, public diplomacy networks, relationship management, and the use of technology. To answer the research questions, I conducted 32 in-depth interviews with governmental and nongovernmental employees who engaged with international publics.

The following section offers a discussion of major themes and alternative explanations. First, I discuss the two conceptualizations of public diplomacy that emerged in the data, i.e. government communication function and multilateral communication. Second, I explore the conceptualizations of publics. The findings suggested an alternative way to look at publics, conceptualizing it in terms of demographic variables (youth, women) instead of geographical location (national vs. international). I also discuss the empowerment of publics, a concept suggested in the network approach to public diplomacy. Third, I discuss findings regarding public diplomacy networks. The results suggested that a focus on global issues may provide a platform and a reason for actors to build relationships and manage problems in a collaborative spirit. I also discuss governments' and nongovernmental organizations' strengths and weaknesses in building networks. Forth, I explore the role of three contexts that emerged in the data: political, financial, and cultural. Fourth, power was defined differently from previous conceptualizations in public diplomacy. Thus, I discuss the role of convening and expert power in public diplomacy networks. Fifth, I

review the findings regarding relationship management in public diplomacy networks. Specifically, I discuss the findings related to relationship management and specifically focus on relationship management in internal and external networks. Sixth, I suggest an alternative approach to digital media use, based on the findings in the study. Last, I conclude this section with a discussion of this project's practical implications, suggestions for future research, and conclusions.

Public diplomacy

The results confirmed that public diplomacy lacks a unique definition and conceptualization. In addition, the study results found two approaches to public diplomacy: (1) traditional view of public diplomacy as government communication function, and (2) a multilateral view of public diplomacy with different actors playing a role.

One of the prominent themes related to the public diplomacy's goal to influence international audiences. In 2001, Smyth (2001) argued that public diplomacy research and practice were still following the communication patterns of the Cold War, suggesting that the goal of public diplomacy was to influence and persuade international audiences. The findings in this study confirmed that proposition.

Data suggested that public diplomacy was government communication that targeted international audience to influence people's attitudes and behaviors, as well as to influence foreign policy. This definition corresponds to the widely accepted definition of Tuch (1990), who viewed public diplomacy as "government's process of communication with foreign publics in an attempt to bring understanding for its

nation's ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as its national goals and policies" (p. 3). It is also similar to Fitzpatrick's (2009) definition of public diplomacy, i.e. communication "to help a nation establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with strategic foreign publics that can affect national interests" (p. 105). The distinguishing feature of this approach to public diplomacy is that it seeks to benefit one nation and its national interests through influencing, explaining, and building relationships.

The findings in this study suggested that the traditional approach included various strategies, even those that assumed interaction with the audiences. For example, the cultural and educational exchanges were interpersonal and assumed interaction between representatives of different cultures. However, data suggested that cultural and educational exchanges still had the end goal of influencing, rather than trying to solve problems together and to build relationships. Listening emerged as a public diplomacy strategy; however, the purpose of listening was primarily to make the audiences like the organization or a government, and again, not to build understanding. Likewise, one of the goals of educational exchanges was to influence foreign policy rather than to create an understanding of different countries and values, and to help negotiate solutions together.

In other words, the study suggested that the traditional view of public diplomacy remained to be the dominant approach to public diplomacy. The use of interactive digital tools or the use of listening as a strategy to facilitate dialogue did not necessarily mean that an actor sought collaboration with other agencies or publics. Actors used new tools to pursue the same goals of influencing publics

abroad. From that approach, publics and nongovernmental agencies had a limited role in public diplomacy. Publics were perceived by governments as passive recipients of information, i.e. someone to be influenced.

However, considering the changing role of international organizations and the new tools that publics around the world have access to, the nature of public diplomacy may be changing. Some data in this study suggested that organizations and publics may play an important role in public diplomacy, if given opportunity and power to do that. For example, local action was viewed as most efficient when conducted by local participants, i.e. public and local organizations. Likewise, women were viewed as change agents in countering terrorism. In other words, data suggested an increasing understanding of the role that publics and organizations may play in addressing global issues, but results offered little evidence that actors adapted their approaches, strategies, and tools to those realities.

Although the traditional view of public diplomacy appeared in this study as the dominant approach, another worldview also emerged in the analysis. That approach was closely related to the network view of public diplomacy. Here public diplomacy was a conversation between governments, nongovernmental organizations, corporations, and citizens, with the goal of discussing and finding solutions to the world's global issues. This definition resonated with Cull's (2009) conceptualization of public diplomacy as "an international actor's attempt to manage the international environment through engagement with a foreign public" (p. 12).

The following discussion seeks to address some of the concepts that relate to the second approach that emerged in the data, i.e. a network approach to public

diplomacy. The discussion seeks to contribute to the theoretical development of the approach.

Empowerment of Publics

The study results suggested several implications for the understanding of publics in public diplomacy. Some interview data supported previous conceptualizations of publics in public relations research. For example, public relations scholar Hallahan (1999) viewed a public as a group of people who have some sort of a relation to an organization and “demonstrate varying degrees of activity or passivity” (as cited by Aldoory & Sha, 2007, p. 340). Other public relations scholars Botan and Taylor (2004) based their understanding on Dewey’s (1927) conceptualization of public as a group of people who had common interests in relation to the organization and sought to organize themselves in order to communicate and influence. In addition, Botan and Taylor (2004) argued that publics shared common interpretations or a common understanding about issues at hand. Results in this study showed that some conceptualizations of publics were consistent with previous public relations literature. For example, one target public in this study was the people who contemplated joining terrorist groups. The members of that public either had or were developing certain beliefs and attitudes. Public diplomacy actors engaged with this public on communication channels that were used for recruitment to terrorist groups.

However, other conceptualizations of publics were different, in that they were viewed as audiences that did not necessarily connect to each other. Women and youth appeared as two broad target audiences. Countries with current or recent conflict also

emerged as target areas. Many of the examples in the data reflected a focus on the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. Although participants described areas for public diplomacy programs and some populations, they had little understanding of who in those areas or in those populations they were trying to reach and engage with. This finding suggests at least two explanations.

One explanation relates to the other results in this study, suggesting that public diplomacy actors sought to influence and to explain, rather than to listen and to collaborate. Even social media platforms, which were designed for interaction, were mainly used for broadcasting messages. It stands to reason, that predominantly public diplomacy actors viewed their target audiences as everybody they could possibly reach, without a thorough understanding of the groups they could possibly engage and collaborate with.

Another explanation relates to the nature of public diplomacy. Because public diplomacy is communication across borders, it naturally includes more diverse audiences than inside one country. Whereas national organizations deal with one set of issues, public diplomacy actors may have to deal with various issues in various countries. As a result, publics in public diplomacy may be too fragmented or too transient. Because the majority of participants in this study resided in the United States while targeting publics in other countries, they may not be familiar with target publics in each specific country at a specific time.

The findings offered several other contributions to the understanding of publics in public diplomacy. In previous literature, the definition of public diplomacy conceptualized publics as “foreign” or international. Messages were traditionally

directed to international audiences with little conceptualization of different groups. However, some of the results in this study suggested that public diplomacy may include internal publics as well. In other words, the dichotomy between internal and foreign publics may not hold.

Data suggested a more nuanced view of publics within countries as well. Specifically, public diplomacy actors focused on women and youth in the countries of strategic choice. Participants suggested that women were chosen as a public by a government or organizational leadership, explaining that women were important participants in counter-terrorism and development work. Likewise, youth emerged as target audiences due to their role in shaping the future world.

In addition, results suggested that internal publics, i.e. publics inside the country of a government, could also be a target public. In the United States, the Smith-Mundt Act, which restricted access of internal audiences to government communication directed at international audiences, was questioned in the interviews. None of the participants agreed with the provisions of the Smith-Mundt Act. Not only such restrictions were viewed as outdated in view of open source environment and the Internet, but they were also viewed as unnecessary. Results suggested that understanding of global issues was important for internal publics to understand.

Findings confirmed Fisher's (2011) conceptualization of a network approach to publics. Fisher (2011) suggested that public diplomacy programs should establish collaborations with audiences and help them achieve their goals. Findings in this study confirmed this emerging approach in current public diplomacy. Due to access to different kinds of information on the Internet and through interpersonal

communication globally, publics became critical, educated, and even difficult to be persuaded.

The previously held goals to influence and persuade were harder to achieve in the Internet and globalization age than before. Instead of influencing audiences, public diplomacy programs could empower them. As Fisher (2011) argued, such an approach moves away from seeking power over the audiences, and encourages empowerment.

Empowerment could emerge from training and education. Findings suggested that actors sought to empower audiences through training them in various skills, like communication skills. Likewise, empowerment could emerge from connecting to other similar audiences worldwide. For example, data suggested that women empowerment could emerge from connections to successful women worldwide. Actors sought to empower publics to make their own lives better, thus eliminating the need for extremism.

In addition, findings suggested that publics played an increasing role in managing global problems. Organizations and governments needed data that was hard to access, and publics emerged as experts that understood the local problems and could help address them.

Thus, the separation between internal and external audiences, national and international, may be irrelevant in the 21st- century public diplomacy. Rather, publics can be chosen based on their role in the society or the strategic interests of an actor. Moreover, the purpose is not to influence those audiences, but rather to empower them. Empowerment can be achieved through awareness about global issues and

gaining skills necessary for communication. Empowering the audiences can help address some of the global problems, such as terrorism.

Networks in public diplomacy

The findings suggested several implications for the network approach to public diplomacy. Most importantly, participants confirmed that organizational structures could indeed be viewed as networks, although the existing government and organizational structures do not accommodate the smooth functioning of networks. As reviewed earlier, a network is a “distribution of similar objects (nodes)” (Tremayne, 2004, p. 238) with nodes being “connected to each other in the world by some type of relationship” (Contractor, Monge, & Leonardi, 2011, p. 686).

One of the most important findings is that the glue that connected actors in public diplomacy networks was global issues. Findings in this study suggested that global issues provided a platform for meaningful interaction, in which actors together looked for solutions. Focus on global issues also provided opportunities to connect to various actors and build relationships, both inside organizations and with other actors outside organizations. Actors could have different relations to global issues. Audiences could have knowledge of the local needs and grass-root understanding of the impact of global issues. Organizations and governments could have experts who had academic knowledge of global issues. Actors could also have historical connection to the issue.

The focus on global issues goes beyond the functional and self-interest-oriented understandings of public diplomacy. Indeed, the 20th-century world history was full of wars which involved military might as well as persuasion and influence to

achieve national goals. It is not surprising that public diplomacy was conceptualized as a dichotomous process that involved one government's country and another government's audience. However, such a conceptualization did not have to continue into the future. The results in this study suggested that actors sought solutions to global problems, and needed each other to find them. Although findings suggested that actors followed the old patterns, trying to use data for their own benefit and seeking to influence audiences, data also reflected other processes at hand. For example, open data initiatives offered opportunities for all participants, including public groups, to share data and think about solutions.

The examples of issues in public diplomacy included global problems, such as terrorism, global warming, and poverty, to name a few. Some previous studies suggested a similar approach. Previously, Zhang and Swartz (2009a) argued that public diplomacy should move away from image cultivation and rather focus on preserving global public good. The authors argued that public diplomacy actors should collectively turn to addressing such issues as global warming, international justice system, and influenza pandemics among other diseases. Likewise, some previous research addressed the governments' role in addressing anti-terrorism (Canel, 2012)

This study confirmed the earlier propositions, and offered an extended understanding of networks and how actors could manage global problems together. As argued earlier, the focus on global problems rather than national interests provided an avenue for collaboration and building linkages among actors.

Another contribution of this study relates to the understanding of public diplomacy structures. The findings suggested that participating organizations in public diplomacy possessed some features of hierarchical structures as well as of networks. The hierarchy was evident in communication flow: Messages had to be approved by heads of departments, or by communication departments. Participants spoke of clearances and other bureaucratic processes that required several levels of approval. At the same time, data suggested that digital media pushed organizations toward a network structure, in which every department has a communication specialist, who connects to other departments and target publics. In addition, data suggested that interagency groups may also contribute to building a network structure in an organization.

Results suggested a more nuanced understanding of actors and their roles in public diplomacy networks. Specifically, actors in governments had political power to shape policies, which influenced large populations. They also had political connections and could influence international actors. Data suggested that governments also had financial resources to conduct projects.

Nongovernmental actors had limited resources and political power, however were perceived to be closer to the publics and had a better network, meaning they were connected to more actors. In other words, interview data suggested that in public diplomacy networks, nongovernmental organizations had a higher measure of network *degree* than government agencies. Degree is one of the measures of centrality in a network and it reflects the number of links that connect one actor to

others in a network. Interview data suggested that nongovernmental actors could have better connections with other actors.

Previously, Gilboa and Shai (2001) argued that multiplicity of actors and fragmentation was not efficient, being too fragmented. The findings in this study suggested that multiplicity of actors was beneficial in that it allowed connecting to actors in different fields. Fragmentation could be inefficient, if actors were not related, had different goals, and duplicated each other's efforts. It stands to reason that multiplicity of actors is beneficial as long as the links between actors are strong and unite actors in a cohesive network.

In addition, findings from the study offered insights into the nature of links between public diplomacy actors. Previous literature suggested that links between actors were typically informal, and were influenced by internal as well as external rules. Data offered little conceptualization of internal structural rules. However, findings related to external rules, which were previously conceptualized as friendship, participation in common activities, sharing tasks with others, supervisor-subordinate relationship, spacial proximity, e-mail proximity, and peer hierarchy proximity (Whitbred, Fonti, Steglich, & Contractor, 2011).

The findings reflected the importance of personal qualities in sustaining these linkages rather than any formal relationship between organizations. In addition, the results suggested that informal relationships were difficult to sustain. One of the reasons was the high rate of employee turn-over. The findings suggest that participants found it hard to regularly use informal relationships. Although a high turn-over rate may make it hard to keep the informal friendships, it may not be the

only reason that it was hard for actors to sustain informal relationships. It stands to reason, that the hierarchical features of the organization made it hard to continually sustain the informal relationships. Participants were interested in investing extra energy in breaking the “firewalls” between departments; however, it could become too demanding to do this regularly. The other external structural rules were rarely discussed in the data, suggesting that they were weak.

In addition, the findings suggested some insights into understanding of network structures. Results suggested that organizations, governments, as well as publics tended to create closed networks. In other words, internal networks did not have many connections to external actors. Data suggested that even digital networks tended to be closed. Previous public diplomacy literature did not discuss closed networks in public diplomacy. The findings in this study suggested that although networks in public diplomacy tended to be closed, the external structural rules could help gain access to those networks. Specifically, informal relationships and friendship with some members of closed networks could grant access to the whole network.

Public diplomacy context

The findings of the study contribute to the previous literature a more nuanced view the role of context in public diplomacy. While public diplomacy literature offered conceptualizations of public diplomacy programs, strategies, and power, it largely neglected the role of context. Results suggested three contextual influences: political, financial, and cultural.

The political context in public diplomacy was evident in all interviews. Findings suggested that political interests and concerns could influence the

information flow in several ways. First, governments had control of information flow. Governments acted as gatekeepers to the local audiences and could potentially close those gates. Second, political relationships between governments could influence public diplomacy networks. Specifically, political tensions could restrain relationships. Third, internal politics within a country could also influence the country's engagement with international publics.

The financial context related to the politics of the beneficiary and limited resources for public diplomacy. Findings suggested that actor's financial interests could influence its communication with other actors. Likewise, the organization or government that granted money expected certain results, and left less freedom to the other actors in developing plans. Financial needs and opportunities emerged as an important context in understanding actors' motivations and actions.

The cultural context related to cultural assumptions and communication styles. Language differences was a consideration in public diplomacy, but results in this study confirmed that public diplomacy actors viewed cultural differences as a mere linguistic problem. Another finding offered an expanded understanding of cultural influences that were not only based on language differences, but related to values and overall worldviews, which in turn influenced public diplomacy messages. Specifically, data suggested that participants' cultural assumptions played an important role in crafting messages, which might be different than their publics' cultural assumptions.

The findings suggested that Curtin and Gaither's (2005) proposition to use the circuit of culture for international communication research deserves attention. The

model outlines five main points in the communication process, including identity, production, consumption, representation, and regulation. Identity consists of socially developed understandings and may influence all other communication steps. The findings in this study suggested that limited understanding of the role of culture among message producers may become a barrier in the communication process and influence the consumption of messages.

Public diplomacy deals with communications across different cultures, religions, ethnicities. The worldviews of people around the world have been shaped throughout centuries. When communicating with individuals from our own countries, cultural assumptions and worldviews are often shared and thus need not to be critically analyzed. However, in international communication, different cultural assumptions and values may influence reception of messages and interpretation. The understandings of freedom, democracy, free speech, religion, will vary in different regions of the world. If not addressed, messages may be misunderstood, misinterpreted, or neglected overall.

Neglected public diplomacy contexts

While several contexts emerged in the study, other issues were neglected. For example, terrorism emerged as one of the issues in public diplomacy: Actors sought to engage with people that were interested in joining terrorist groups with the purpose of persuading them not to do that. At the same time, actors did not discuss the challenges in counter-terrorism and public diplomacy work, such as the drone attacks made by the U.S. government. Drones could pose significant challenges for the U.S. public diplomacy in the areas affected by the attacks. Drones could also influence

organizations working with the U.S. government in the areas affected by drones.

Limited discussion of salient issues confronting public diplomacy may be explained in at least two ways.

First, public diplomacy actors possibly avoided topics that were not part of public diplomacy efforts. Drone programs were managed by the Central Intelligence Agency and the Department of Defense, whereas public diplomacy programs were housed in the Department of State. Thus, participants could find themselves unqualified to speak about events or issues that were managed by outside agencies.

Second, because drone programs were managed by the Department of Defense, public diplomacy actors had little, if any, impact on how these programs were managed. As a result, actors could feel helpless in addressing such challenges.

The neglected topics in public diplomacy suggested several implications. First, public diplomacy actors may escape the elephant in the room, i.e. the very issue that may significantly change the nature of communication between the countries involved. Drone attacks can be conceptualized as actions and public diplomacy messages as words of a government. If an actor seeks to build relationships, or even influence other actors, while physically hurting them, the effect of communication may be lost. In other words, when an actor uses drones to attack a population, his or her public diplomacy efforts to explain, influence, or build relationships, are not likely to be effective. Second, the avoidance of certain issues, especially those that are evident, may confirm limited collaboration between various governmental and nongovernmental organizations. Limited shared understanding of the challenges may suggest that actors did not regularly engage on public diplomacy issues and had little

influence on each other's actions. Such limited coherence could serve as another confirmation to the finding that public diplomacy networks were still weak, both internally and externally.

Power

Previous public diplomacy literature had been dominated by the discussions of soft, hard, and smart power. Initiated by Nye (2004; 2008), conceptualization of power was perhaps the main theoretical framework for public diplomacy research. Further research on relationship management and network approach to public diplomacy suggested a different theoretical framework that focused on actors and linkages between organizations. This study suggested that the differentiation between soft, hard, and smart power may not hold in public diplomacy networks. Participants did not discuss hard, soft or smart power, but rather focused on expert and convening power.

First, "convening" power discussed by participants related to the network-making power proposed by Castells (2009) as the most crucial type of power in public diplomacy networks. The overview in Chapter One provides a discussion of four types of network power, including networking, network, networked, and network-making power. The findings in the study suggested that network-making power was indeed relevant and important in networks, however findings did not relate to the other three types of power.

Castells (2009) defined network-making power as the ability to set a network structure and connect other networks to each other, to share resources and achieve common goals. This study's findings suggested that that the network-making power,

or the convening power allowed governments and organizations to bring various actors together and connect them.

Furthermore, Castells (2009) identified two roles in network-making power. Actors-programmers set visions, frames, define programs. Actors-switchers control the connections between networks by sharing resources. The study findings suggested that actors looked to play both roles, programming and switching. Governments primarily had the programming role. Due to financial resources and policy-making power, governments could define the nature of sponsored programs, and even the goals. Nongovernmental organizations that got funding from the government had little variation in terms of purpose and goals. Governments also played the role of switchers. However, data suggested that nongovernmental organizations, likewise, played the switching role more than governments, in that nongovernmental organizations were better connected to international audiences and could connect governments with local publics.

The second type of power that emerged in the data was expert power. Data suggested that nongovernmental organizations especially possessed expert power, which allowed them to work with governments. The expertise sprung from two sources.

First, findings suggested that the understanding of local needs, culture, audiences in target regions was a sought-after expertise. Network actors needed local data to engage with international publics and in some cases to work on their projects. For example, some nongovernmental organizations completely relied on their local partners to help them with recruitment for exchange programs.

Second, expert power related to academic knowledge of problems and issues in the world. Organizations housed renowned experts on global issues, including environmental problems, poverty, development, to name a few. Likewise, smaller nongovernmental organizations tended to focus on one issue and thus had the opportunity to develop an expertise in a specific area, such as women empowerment, youth development, and educational exchange.

To summarize, while network-making power was vital in building networks and connections between actors, expert power emerged as an important source for nongovernmental organizations to engage in public diplomacy networks. As previously discussed, the study findings suggested that public diplomacy networks could rely on issues with the goal to bring various actors and to find solutions to global problems collectively. Expert power may be particularly relevant in view of the discussion of public diplomacy issues.

Relationship management in public diplomacy

The study initially posed two subquestions that focused on relationship cultivation. The questions were subsequently dropped during data collection and analysis due to limited data. One question sought to explore the differences between relationship cultivation strategies inside the network and outside the network. Another question sought to compare offline and online relationship cultivation strategies. The lack of data to answer those questions was not surprising in view of other results, i.e. limited organizational efforts to build external networks. Likewise, the study suggested limited use of digital media to build relationships both internally and externally. Although digital media was used by public diplomacy actors, its main

purpose was to broadcast messages rather than build relationships. Thus, the limited data did not allow comparing relationship cultivation strategies online and offline. Although the study offered limited data for comparing cultivation strategies in different contexts, results suggested several implications for the understanding of relationship cultivation and the use of digital media in public diplomacy.

The findings offered several contributions to the relationship management research in public diplomacy. First, the findings suggested that several relationship antecedents were relevant for relationship building among public diplomacy actors. Antecedents are the first stage of relationship management, and previous research identified several variables that may create favorable or unfavorable environment for building relationships. As previously reviewed in the first chapter, Broome, Casey, and Ritchy (2000) suggested the following antecedents: social and cultural norms, collective perceptions and expectations, needs for resources, perceptions of uncertain environment, and legal/voluntary necessity.

The findings in this study suggested that cultural assumptions, needs for resources, and perceptions of uncertain environment were relevant in relationship building between diplomacy actors. Legal/voluntary necessity did not emerge as one of the antecedents. This can be attributed to the fact that the study looked at networks and interagency collaboration. Legal necessity could be relevant in relationship building within a department and even more specifically between a manager and a subordinate.

Second, findings suggested that actors used limited strategies to cultivate relationships with other actors. Competition and networking emerged as the main

strategies. Competition could be related to the distributive strategy, an asymmetrical strategy suggested by Hung (2007), which she described as an actor's efforts to impose his or her position without any concern for others' interest. The findings in this study reflected actors' competitive attitude towards collaboration. Participants described it as a friendly competition, but also suggested that actors sought to get credit for their efforts from their leadership. The competition among actors could prevent them from working together because their approach to the result was that it could not be shared and could not benefit all actors equally. For example, competition was evident in digital media spaces. Organizations compared their digital media success with other similar organizations or departments. Participants were concerned when other similar actors reached more people and had more "followers" than their organization/government. As for the networking cultivation strategy, participants sought to connect to actors that had similar goals, purpose, and target publics.

Interestingly, other relationship cultivation strategies did not emerge in the data, suggesting that actors paid limited attention to relationship cultivation in public diplomacy networks. Only one asymmetrical strategy, competition, and one symmetrical strategy, networking, emerged in this study. Competition was evident in a relationship between organizations, and networking was used to build relationships with other organizations and publics. Other strategies (positivity, openness, assurances, shared tasks) did not emerge in this study. This finding is not surprising in view of another result which showed there to be little effort to build external networks, i.e. links between governmental and nongovernmental organizations.

Limited use of relationship cultivation strategies suggests several theoretical implications. First, relationship cultivation strategies may differ in a network than in a dyadic relationship. Likewise, Yang, Klyueva, & Taylor (2012) also argued that public diplomacy goes beyond dyadic relationships, and suggested to study relationship building in triads. In this study, actors used networking and competition as strategies to relate to other organizations, but they did not use positivity, openness, assurances, and shared tasks. It stands to reason that relationship cultivation strategies in non-dyadic relationships may be different from those in dyadic relationships. Second, relationship cultivation strategies may differ in international communication space. While these strategies were developed in the United States, they may not apply to relationships between actors in other countries.

The outcomes, which form the third stage of relationship cultivation, are the consequences of a relationship. At the same time, outcomes serve as antecedents for continuing the relationship. Grunig and Huang (2000) suggested four outcomes, including trust, control mutuality, relational commitment, and relational satisfaction. The findings in the study suggested trust as the most prominent theme. Relationship commitment was mentioned by the participants, but was not discussed often. Trust, however, was an important theme in the data.

In view of the finding that public diplomacy networks were primarily internal rather than external, results offered a deeper understanding of relationship cultivation *within* organizations and governments rather than with external actors. Findings indicated that trust was cultivated through several strategies, including a regular dialogue and open communication channels that were sustained through long periods

of time. Trust could also be achieved through third-party endorsements. Overall, findings suggested that trust played a primary role in sustaining relationships.

Results also offered an extended understanding of relationship cultivation online. While previous studies suggested two strategies, communicated relational commitment and conversational human voice, my findings suggested that public diplomacy actors used only one of those strategies. Considering the limited strategies in building offline relationships, it is not surprising the public diplomacy actors limited themselves to one online strategy. This finding is also not surprising in view of another result of the study, which suggested that the primary purpose of using digital media was to broadcast rather than build relationships.

The findings offered an extended discussion of the conversational human voice strategy in public diplomacy. Specifically, results suggested that a conversational voice helped to humanize organizations, which in turn contributed to counter-terrorism efforts. Data suggested that conversational tone allowed organizations to connect on a human level, and thus counter terrorism strategies that attempted to de-humanize organizations and governments. To use conversational human voice, actors used a combination of topics, including arts, culture, but also political issues. Overall, participants suggested that a discussion of only political issues was not appropriate in digital media and did not sustain a conversation. The finding is not surprising considering that the goal of the strategy is to relate on a human level rather than an organizational level.

Conversational human voice related to personalities that were in charge of communication. Some public diplomacy actors, including diplomats and experts,

projected their own personality in digital spaces, and that allowed them to be successful in using the strategy. However, findings suggested that using a conversational human voice was difficult to sustain as an organization. Publics connected to personalities; however personalities did not stay in the same position for extended periods of time. In fact, data suggested a high turn-over, with employees not only changing their positions but oftentimes changing their location to a different country.

Trust was just as important in online relationship cultivation online just as it was offline. In addition to previous discussion, digital spaces provided additional challenges in sustaining trust online. Specifically, the Internet offered anonymity. On the one hand, anonymity allowed connecting to publics that otherwise could not be reached. For example, individuals who consider joining terrorism groups may not openly say so in public, but may participate anonymously in online forums. At the same time, anonymity presented a challenge for trust, because actors could not verify who they were engaging with online.

Digital Media in Public Diplomacy

Findings suggested a limited use of digital media for public diplomacy networks purposes. Interestingly, participants suggested that internal networks were more common in public diplomacy than external networks; however actors rarely used participatory media for internal purposes. One of the most common ways to communicate within a network was through e-mail. At the same time, findings suggested weak external networks in public diplomacy, but extensive use of digital media with external publics. Digital media use was similar to that of traditional

media. In other words, organizations and governments primarily used digital media to project and broadcast messages. Thus, it stands to reason that digital media was not used for network purposes.

The study suggested several explanations as to why digital media was not used as a network tool. First, results suggested that public diplomacy networks were predominantly closed. Digital media, on the opposite, encourages open communication. Many of the public networking websites, like Facebook or Twitter, allow anyone with access to the Internet to see interactions between different actors. Participants in a closed communication network are unlikely to engage on open communication platforms, because such interactions would not fit with their network structure. Second, participants suggested that internal digital platforms were not as well-developed and user-friendly as the public platforms like Facebook and Twitter. While they addressed the security concerns of organizational management, they often did not satisfy the needs of the employees. Thus, the use of internal communication platforms was limited. Third, the very existence of several digital platforms available to an actor may be a weakness. Fragmentation, which was often mentioned as a challenge for reaching target publics, could also be a challenge for reaching actors within a network or an organization. In other words, new internal digital platforms had to compete with other external networks that employees were already using for their individual purposes.

At the same time, data offered a more nuanced view of digital networks and the advantages they may offer to public diplomacy actors. Several benefits of

building digital networks included reaching actors that were otherwise difficult to access; amplifying messages, and reaching more actors than offline.

In addition, results suggested that public diplomacy messages required a balance between organizational and personal messages, formal and informal, online and offline. In addition, results suggested that public diplomacy was most effective when conducted interpersonally and offline. Digital media was viewed as a good tool to connect and as a support for offline engagement. However, this finding must be viewed in the context of other results. Specifically, in this study digital media was predominantly used as a one-way communication tool to influence target publics. While digital media may not be used for influencing and persuading, it may be a good tool for networking, sharing of information, and even discussion of global issues.

Last, findings suggested that digital engagement served as a catalyst for “flattening” organizational structure. While participants still talked about centralizing and approving messages, data suggested another approach that was developing in parallel with the previous digital media practices. The new approach placed an increasing responsibility on communication officers to use judgment in online engagement. Data indicated that the use of digital media required organizations to “loosen” the reins, i.e. let go of efforts to control messages, and accept that mistakes could be made. In other words, the use of digital media required commitment and responsibility from both – management as well as employees themselves.

Practical Implications

Results suggested several implications for governments, organizations, and publics, in their efforts to engage with international publics. The implications relate to

development of public diplomacy practices, organizational structures, building relationships in networks, and use of digital media.

Implications for governments and organizations

First, it may be useful for organizations and governments to use the communication expertise developed in public relations research. Results suggested that employees responsible for international communications had a limited understanding of public relations, viewing it as sales and marketing rather than communication or relationship management. Public relations was conceptualized as short-term communication that sought to sell products. In addition, findings suggested that public diplomacy was viewed as more complex, ethical and genuine than public relations, focused on long-term planning and included program evaluation. Such misconceptions about public relations may restrict public diplomacy professionals from using the many tools and understanding developed in communication research. For example, public relations literature offers various strategies to build relationships between organizations, stakeholders, and publics (e.g., Ledingham & Bruning, 2000a; 2000b; Grunig & Huang, 2000; Hung, 2007) . Likewise, public relations scholars conducted research on digital media use (e.g., Hallahan, 2008; Kelleher, 2009; Kelleher & Miller, 2006) that may be valuable for public diplomacy efforts to engage with publics online.

Second, organizations and governments may find several strategies useful for building networks. Specifically, the findings in this study suggested that organizing thematic events on issues of global concern allows connecting with like-minded organizations and publics. Likewise, organizations may use the snowball method, i.e.

finding actors that have similar goals and then connecting to other actors in their networks. Last, digital media offered opportunities to build relationships with other organizations and publics. Although the findings in this research did not include any particular strategies in using digital media for building networks between organizations, they did suggest strategies of engaging with publics.

Specifically, it may be wise for organizations to set guidelines for using digital media without trying to control messages. Communication in digital spaces was different from traditional media communication in that it was more personal. Some employees may be good at projecting their own personality in digital spaces, which was perceived to be successful. Participants said that people better relate to people, and thus even organizational messages were better explained as interpersonal communication on digital platforms. However, not all communication staff may have the skill or desire to do that. Thus, setting guidelines for digital engagement that would protect organizational image but at the same time offer opportunities for employees to engage interpersonally with other publics may allow all employees to adapt well and use their strengths.

Third, the findings suggested limited use of digital media for internal communication. Participants said that although there were efforts to build internal networks on digital platforms, the efforts were not successful. The results suggested that organizations and governments developed expertise and tools to use digital platforms as “bullhorn” but not as a relationship management tool, or a tool to listen to publics, discuss issues, and find solutions. In other words, internal digital networks could lack success because governments and organizations used it as a one-way

communication strategy. Thus, organizations and governments may need to develop new skills among their employees that help engage on digital networks rather than project messages.

Fourth, to be successful in international communication, actors must develop cultural expertise. This study's results suggested that employees have limited understanding of cultural differences, oftentimes only looking at language differences. One emerging idea was that public diplomacy had not been successful due to the very fact that officials and employees did not understand the fundamental role of culture in societies. For example, concepts such as freedom and democracy could be viewed differently in other cultures. Messages could rely on assumptions that were not the same as those of target publics. As a consequence, governments and organizations could be spending their budgets on messages that did not help reach the set objectives. Thus, it may be valuable for employees that engage in public diplomacy to get training in cultural understanding and perspectives on fundamental concepts such as freedom, democracy, friendship, cooperation, etc. Engaging international experts and academics in the training for communication officers may be especially valuable.

Implications for publics

This study suggested that although a traditional view of public diplomacy still exists, there is an alternative view of public diplomacy emerging. In that view, publics are empowered participants in public diplomacy networks.

Publics played little role in public diplomacy so far, if any. However, the network approach to public diplomacy suggests that publics may participate in public

diplomacy, using similar tools as organizations and governments. Moreover, publics may have advantages in some respect. For example, publics do not have an established structure as organizations and thus may adapt better to public diplomacy networks. This may be different for organizations, because this study confirmed that that organizations tended to be hierarchical, which had a tendency to stifle communication flows. Publics did not have the same challenge.

As this study suggested that public diplomacy networks centered around issues, publics may choose avenues to participate based on the issues of concern, such as environmental issues, gender equality, human rights, to name a few. Events and digital media may offer opportunities to connect to like-minded organizations. Publics in some countries may find it hard to use social media platforms that may be prohibited in their area.

Limitations

Although this study offered valuable contributions to the understanding of public diplomacy as communication networks, it had several limitations. First, participants in the study worked in organizations that predominantly focused on publics outside the United States. It could be beneficial to include participants from organizations whose main target public is in the United States, especially considering the results in this study which suggests that it is hard to separate publics into two categories, i.e. within the country and outside the country. Moreover, there are various groups in the United States that advocate for international publics.

Second, the study had methodological limitations. Namely, some interviews may have reflected wishful thinking on behalf of the participants. I tried to mitigate

this limitation by asking participants to give examples. When participants could not provide examples, I still analyzed the data, because I did not allow myself to judge which instances were “true” and which were based on participants’ ideals rather than experiences.

Wishful thinking could also be caused by audio-recording of the interviews, especially in interviews with public affairs officers who are used to working with journalists. The discussions centered around organizational and government communication, thus participants were careful in sharing information that might harm the organization. When I explained that the purpose of audio-recording was only to accurately capture the experiences and conceptualizations, all but one participant agreed to be recorded. Yet, the presence of the recorder could somewhat influence the data.

Third, the study explored four major areas of research: public diplomacy, networks, relationship management, and technology. Each of those topics could deserve a separate dissertation project. Focusing on all of them did not allow exploring the concepts in more detail and focusing on theoretical contributions.

Suggestions for Future Research

The findings suggested several avenues for future research. First, studies of publics’ role in public diplomacy are necessary for a full understanding of public diplomacy. Lack of research on publics may be the consequence of their limited participation in public diplomacy. However, the results of this study suggest that publics may be more empowered in the future to engage in public diplomacy and may play an increasing role. Future studies may explore the antecedents for publics’

involvement in public diplomacy and the relationship cultivation strategies that they may use.

Second, to further develop the network approach to public diplomacy, studies need to further explore relationship cultivation strategies in international contexts. The results of this study suggested that actors use a limited amount of strategies in cultivating relationships with other actors. Future studies may explore other cultivation strategies that apply internationally.

Third, the study's results related to the emerging role of global issues in building public diplomacy networks suggest that issues management conceptualizations may extend the network approach to public diplomacy. Public relations literature suggested that issues emerge when one or more actors see a situation or a problem significant (Smith & Ferguson, 2001). Although some scholars viewed issues as a platform for organizing publics, it may be useful to explore how issues may organize organizations and governments as well. A rhetorical approach may be useful to explore the four functions related to issues management, suggested by Heath (2006a): strategic planning, commitment to corporate responsibility, issues identification and analysis, and voicing facts to support collaboration and joint decision making.

Fourth, it would be beneficial for future research to look at organizations or departments as the unit of analysis. In this study, I found that interviews with smaller international organizations were particularly interesting because they faced challenges in terms of funding and human resources. However, communication staff in some of those organizations was not responsive to my invitations to participate in the study,

perhaps due to the very fact that they were overloaded with work. Likewise, the different levels in organizations may play different roles in public diplomacy. As the results in this study suggested, field offices had different expertise and tasks than headquarters.

Last, results of this study call for future research of digital media use in public diplomacy. This study suggested that digital media were not effective for persuading and influencing target publics. However, the study did not look at digital media use specifically for building and maintaining public diplomacy networks. Future research could explore how organizations that have adopted the network approach to public diplomacy, use digital networks to network with other actors.

Conclusions

This study makes several contributions to the public diplomacy literature. Most importantly, it offers a nuanced discussion of public diplomacy that has not been offered previously by public diplomacy scholarship. The findings confirmed two views of public diplomacy: a traditional and a network approach. In addition, it extends the discussion of a network approach to public diplomacy with a more nuanced understanding of publics and the role of culture. It also suggests a new conceptualization of power in public diplomacy networks. Last, this study confirms the application of conversational human voice as an online relationship cultivation strategy.

Previously, Fisher and Lucas (2011) argued that the network approach would shape future public diplomacy. This study's results confirm that publics may play a participatory role in public diplomacy. Although the strategies to empower publics

may be few and rare, some of them emerged in the data. Specifically, organizations and governments may empower publics by providing trainings in specific skills, such as digital media or language. Additionally, connecting publics to each other, especially to leaders and experts, allows individuals to gain expertise and develop global vision. Findings suggested that creating connections between different people gave individuals expertise and confidence that distinguished them from others. Last, encouraging individuals to take action and help local communities also strengthened their confidence.

The conceptualization of publics as actors in public diplomacy may be one of the distinguishing features of the network approach to public diplomacy. Although political and financial power still plays a role, findings suggested that organizations took steps to empower publics and train them in skills that in the future would potentially help them become participants in public diplomacy exchange.

One such example of empowering publics is a former exchange student in the United States from Yemen. Farea al-Muslimi became a democracy activist in Yemen and testified before the Senate Committee on April 23, 2013, on the issue of drone strikes (Friedersdorf, 2013, April 23). He spoke about his efforts to explain his experiences in the United States to fellows in his Yemeni village, and his disappointment with drone strikes on that very village. Farea al-Muslimi spoke for the people in his country directly to the U.S. government.

Culture was also predominantly viewed as differences of language, food, and customs. However, one of the findings suggested a view of culture as a value system. Whether actors seek to influence, persuade, or collaboratively make decisions, they

engage on various issues. While actors may not be aware of their cultural assumptions, they rely on them as they make arguments or seek solutions. As such, discussions of democracy rely on values of freedom, which may differ in various cultures. The belief in equality may also bring various conceptualizations. As actors increasingly engage in participatory decision making, a better understanding of cultural differences may play a more important role in public diplomacy than before.

Previous public diplomacy literature was dominated by discussions of new and old public diplomacy, which related to hard, soft, and smart power (i.e., Nye, 2008; Ronfeldt & Arquilla, 2009; Wilson, 2008). This study's results suggested that these conceptualizations may not stand anymore. Rather, the study suggested that financial, expert, and convening power should be considered in public diplomacy efforts. Expert and financial power may be viewed as types of soft power because they help actors to achieve their goals. However, convening, or network-making power, is unique to the network approach to public diplomacy. It does not necessarily allow an actor to influence another actor, but rather it allows setting the direction of projects and networks, and connecting various actors.

To use the opportunities provided by technology and the Internet, public diplomacy actors must learn to engage effectively online. The findings suggested that actors primarily used conversational human voice in their efforts. Thus, it stands to reason that publics connected better to humans in organizations rather than faceless units. Because digital media is largely informal and interpersonal, actors may be more successful if they engage with audiences interpersonally.

Communicated relational commitment is another relationship cultivation strategy earlier conceptualized by public relations scholarship (Kelleher and Miller, 2006). This strategy did not emerge in the study; however, it may be because of the findings of little collaboration between actors in public diplomacy and the use of digital media as a one-way communication tool. Thus, communicated relational commitment may become a strategy, if and when public diplomacy actors engage others in a collaborative manner.

To summarize, the study offered valuable contributions to public diplomacy literature in that it explored empirically some of the concepts in the network approach to public diplomacy. It also expanded the understanding of power, role of culture, publics, and digital media use in public diplomacy. In conclusion, I propose a definition of public diplomacy in a network approach: Public diplomacy is a multilateral communication process in which governments, nongovernmental organizations, publics, and other interested actors, engage in a discourse to collaboratively manage global issues.

Appendix A: Interview Invitation Script

Dear (participant name),

My name is Leysan Khakimova and I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Communication at the University of Maryland. I have received your information from (name's person), because I am conducting my dissertation research project on public diplomacy. I am interviewing public diplomacy professionals in the government sector as well as in nongovernmental organizations.

Your experience with public diplomacy is very valuable and I would like to hear about it. Your views will contribute to a better understanding of modern public diplomacy. Ideally, the interview will last about 45 minutes, but I would appreciate any amount of time that you set aside. Examples of questions include: "Do you work with other organizations on public diplomacy?" and "In your experience, is it possible to build a relationship using new media?" Your participation is completely voluntary and you can withdraw at any time.

Will you be willing to participate in the study and share with me your experiences? I would be happy to meet you at a time and place convenient for you. I live in the D.C. area and can conduct the interview at a public space, your organization, or my office. My email is leisank@gmail.com and my cell phone number is 785-727-0686. Please feel free to contact me either way.

Look forward to hearing from you,

Leysan Khakimova
Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Communication
University of Maryland
Tel. (785) 727 0686

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this study, which explores the nature of public diplomacy and the use of new media. As I mentioned, this interview is part of my dissertation research project at the Department of Communication at the University of Maryland. I am interested in how governments and nongovernmental agencies use new media (such as blogging platforms and social networking sites) in communicating with international audiences. The project is conducted with the supervision of my adviser, Dr. Elizabeth Toth. There are no direct benefits to participants. However, possible benefits include a contribution to research on public diplomacy and new media. Your participation is voluntary and you can terminate your participation at any time.

The interview will last about 45 minutes and will focus on public diplomacy, your experience of communicating with agencies inside and outside your organization, and the use of new media. For example, one question asks “Are there publics outside the United States that you engage with?” Another example of a question is “If you were to choose between offline and online communication in your work, what would you prefer?”

Any potential loss of confidentiality will be minimized by storing data in a secure location, i.e. investigators’ computers. In addition, your name will not be identified or linked to the data at any time unless you give your express consent to reveal these identities. The data you provide through your responses will not be shared with your employer. Only the principal and student investigators will have access to the participants’ names. If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you

have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the principle investigator, Dr. Elizabeth Toth, by telephone (301-405-8077) or e-mail (eltoth@umd.edu). If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact the Institutional Review Board Office at the University of Maryland, by e-mail (irb@umd.edu) or telephone (301-405-0678). This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.

Do you agree to participate? [If yes, continue. If no, stop.]

The interview will last about 45 minutes, and I would like to ask your permission to record this interview for accuracy. The recording will be available only to me, and your identity will be kept confidential. Your identity will not be revealed in any report. If your words are included in the results, any identifying information will be removed.

Do you agree for me to record this interview? [If yes, turn on the recorder.]

Let us start with the questions.

[RQ1: How do public diplomacy actors define public diplomacy?]

- 1) What is public diplomacy for you?
- 2) Please, tell me about typical public diplomacy activities that you have experienced.
- 3) What are your responsibilities related to public diplomacy?
- 4) How is public diplomacy similar or different from public relations?

[RQ2: How do public diplomacy actors make meaning of public diplomacy as communication networks (if at all)?]

1) Some scholars suggest that public diplomacy happens within and between networks. What do you think about this idea?

- When you hear the word “networks” in the context of public diplomacy, what comes to your mind?
- How would you describe public diplomacy network?
- What makes it a network?

2) How often do organizations conduct joint projects in public diplomacy, if at all?

- For example, does the government work with other government organizations in conducting public diplomacy?
- What about collaborations between governmental and nongovernmental organizations?
- If there is cooperation, please tell me about the projects that you worked on.
- Could you talk about government communication vs. non-government communication in public diplomacy?

[RQ3: How do public diplomacy actors make meaning of relationship management/cultivation?]

1) Based on your experiences, does public diplomacy involve relationship building?

- Do you have any advantages in building such relationships in comparison with other organizations and agencies?
- How do such relationships emerge?
- Could you talk about difficulties in building such relationships? Please give an example.

2) Do you see culture playing a role in relationship management?

[RQ3a: How do public diplomacy actors approach relationship management online versus offline?]

- 1) Do you communicate with other agencies or publics online?
 - How does that relationship differ or similar from offline engagement?
- 2) If you were to choose between offline and online communication in your work, what would you prefer?

[RQ3b: How do public diplomacy actors build relationships (if at all) within their network (organization) versus outside their network (organization)?]

- 1) How does the relationship within your organization compare with the relationships with outside agencies?
- 2) How does online engagement similar or different with others within your organization versus outside your organization?
- 3) Do you use new media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, or another internal organizational network, to communicate with other departments within your organization?

- 4) Do you use digital media platforms to communicate with organizations and groups outside your organization?

Conclusion

- 1) These are all of my questions. Is there anything else you would like to add about public diplomacy, relationship management, or new media?
- 2) Last, if I have questions regarding your answers, could I contact you in the future?

Thank you very much for your time and for sharing your experiences, I very much appreciate it.

Appendix C: Results

Table 1: Results for Research Question 1

Theme	Subtheme	Description of the theme
Definition	Government communication	- governments play a primary role; - collaborations to achieve government goals;
	Network approach	- multilateral process;
	Public diplomacy issues	- platform for discussion; - platform for relationship building; - platform for interdepartmental/interagency work;
Relation with PR	Similarities	- strategic communication; - strategies and tactics; - similar goals;
	Differences	- PR is marketing; - PD is complex; - PD is ethical and genuine; - PD is long-term; - program evaluation;
Publics	Foreign publics	- focus exclusively on publics outside the country;
	All publics	- focus on publics inside and outside the country; - all publics had access to same information on the Internet;
	Youth	- large part of the world population; - leaders of tomorrow;
	Women	- change agents in countering terrorism;
Goals	To influence	- to change opinions; - to change actions/behavior; - to shape foreign policy;
	To explain	- culture; - values; - policies;
	To counter terrorism	- use of digital media to reduce recruitment;
	To bring international perspectives to U.S. publics	- American public has the right to know; - Americans advocate for other countries; - awareness to raise cognizant citizens;

	To build relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - between government and citizens; - between citizens;
	To empower publics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - providing trainings for publics; - connecting to experts; - encouraging to take local action;
Strategies	Cultural and educational exchange	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sponsored by governments and privately; - influenced students and receivers; - included women, musicians, journalists, students;
	Broadcasting/Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to push public diplomacy messages; - to tell an interesting story;
	Interpersonal communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - relationships between citizens; - government and citizens; - important in counter-terrorism;
	Local research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to understand the public needs; - to listen;
Context	Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - control of information flow; - sovereignty concerns; - political tensions between governments; - internal politics;
	Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - politics of the beneficiary;
	Limited resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - overworked and overloaded communication officers; - declining budget;
	Cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - language differences; - cultural assumptions about values; - communication styles; - organizational culture/structures;

Table 2: Results for Research Question 2

Theme	Subtheme	Description of the theme
Nature of networks	Issues	- platform for networks; - benefits to all actors;
	Collaboration	- externally to gather information; - to make decisions together;
Actors	Nongovernment actors	- had limited resources; - lacked political power; - were more ethical; - advocated for all parties; - had a good understanding of the publics; - had a good network;
	Government actors	- gave “weight” to communication; - had control of policies; - had political and financial interests; - limited credibility;
Networks	Internal	- departmental and organizational; - differing goals;
	External	- part of ecosystems; - public and private partnerships; - unusual and weak; - based on financial needs;
Network purposes	Economy in resources	- eliminated duplication; - allowed to share tasks; - share skills and expertise;
	Gathering and sharing of data	- access to local data; - access to experts on issues;
	Connection to closed networks	- introductions by local actors; - value in sharing messages;
	Building credibility	- validated by local partners;
Network links	Communication tango	- integral role of offline communication; - weak digital media links; - digital media as a tool leading to offline interaction; - digital media: less resources, greater reach - the role of frequent communication;
	Digital media purposes	- reaching publics with little established connections; - amplifying messages;

	Formal and informal connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - formal relationships between governments, departments; - informal relationships between people; - informal relationships challenging to sustain; - informal relationships depended on personal qualities;
	Financial links	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - prominent in relationships between governments and NGOs
Building networks	Themes and issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - expertise or historical connection to an issue
	Commonalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - purpose; - goals; - target publics;
	Digital platforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - provided space; - neutral platform;
	Government's role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - hard to engage; - political affiliations;
	Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - long-term commitment
Network building strategies	Snowballing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - finding the right partners through other actors;
	Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - connected individuals with similar expertise or experience;
	Digital media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - limited use in internal networks; - social media connected public groups; - used to project messages to publics; - easy to analyze;
Obstacles in building networks	Different goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - hard to collaborate on a regular basis; - may slow down the work;
	Different organizational cultures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - structure; - language terms;
	Bureaucracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "firewalls" slow down communication flow; - messages got lost/distorted; - communication with technology did not fit well;
Network structure	Hierarchical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "vertical" communication; - three levels: field, middle, high; - decisions made in headquarters (high level); - limited engagement on the middle level;

	Closed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - within government; - between experts; - closed digital communities;
Network communication	Centralized	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - hub for external communication; - assured quality control; - facilitated consistency in branding; - provided pre-packaged material;
	Distributed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - social media less controlled than traditional media; - communication staff provided training;
Power	Financial and expert	- evident in relationships between NGOs and governments
	Convening	- bring various actors together

Table 3: Results for Research Question 3

Theme	Subtheme	Descriptions of the theme
Relationship antecedents	social and cultural norms	- collective assumptions about other cultures; - understanding of values;
	Needs for resources	- financial resources; - expert knowledge;
	Perceptions of uncertain environment	- terrorism threats;
	Needs	- gaining from a relationship; - information, financial assets, services, access to local publics;
Relationship cultivation strategies	Competition	- competition for financial assets; - competition for collaboration with government; - competition for “credit”;
Relationship outcomes	Trust	- ability to have regular dialogue; - third-party endorsement; - time and commitment; - honesty and sense of security;
Online relationship cultivation	Conversational tone	- humanized organizations; - depended on personalities; - worked against terrorist tactics; - showed organizations as “approachable” and caring; - used culture and art, political issues as topics;
	Trust	- important in internal and external networks; - anonymity advantages and disadvantages; - providing accurate information; - loosening the reins in new media; - new level of responsibility among communication officers; - acceptance of mistakes;

Table 4: Results for Research Question 4

Theme	Descriptions of the theme
Generational gap	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - pressure to use digital media; - digital media natives vs. digital media immigrants; - in organizations and among public groups;
Fragmentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - too many platforms within one country; - country-specific platforms; - organizational web sites/social networks; - many organizational websites; - platforms reached different publics; - platforms facilitated different goals;
Testing the water with digital media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - digital media engagement as risky; - digital media allowed data gathering; - digital media provided rich qualitative data;
New media broadcasting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - digital media as a “bull horn”;
New media reach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a lot of people in a short time;
Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - organizations vulnerable to “hacking”;
Organizational use of digital media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - minimal use for internal networks; - frustrating to use internal platforms;

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