PUBLIC DIPLOMACY THROUGH AN INTEGRATED CULTURAL-ECONOMIC

MODEL AND BOURDIEU THEORETICAL LENS:

A CASE STUDY OF SISTER CITIES INTERNATIONAL

By

TUGCE ERTEM ERAY

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the School of Journalism and Communication
and the Division of Graduate Studies of the University of Oregon
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

March 2022

THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

Student: Tugce Ertem Eray

Title: Public Diplomacy through an Integrated Cultural-Economic Model and Bourdieu Theoretical Lens: A Case Study of Sister Cities International

This dissertation has been accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in the Communication and Media Studies Program by:

Patricia Curtin	Chairperson
Dean Mundy	Core Member
John Russial	Core Member
Mark Van Ryzin	Core Member
Matthew Norton	Institutional Representative

and

Krista Chronister   Vice Provost for Graduate Studies

Original approval signatures are on file with the University of Oregon Division of Graduate Studies.

Degree awarded March 2022.

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Tugce Ertem Eray

Doctor of Philosophy

School of Journalism and Communication

March 2022

Title: Public Diplomacy through an Integrated Cultural-Economic Model and Bourdieu
Theoretical Lens: A Case Study of Sister Cities International

This dissertation explores how the cultural-economic model (CEM) of public
relations practice informs public diplomacy practice by focusing on the model's three
"moments": regulation (e.g., laws, cultural norms), production (conditions surrounding
how practices are enacted), and representation (how practices are created and packaged
for campaign use). In addition, this dissertation also explores how Pierre Bourdieu's
theory of practice extends the cultural-economic model of public relations. Based on
interviews with organizational members of Sister City International, this dissertation
indicates that critical-cultural and postmodern perspectives better inform Sister Cities
International's public diplomacy efforts than do functionalist perspectives, which do not
consider larger structural factors as well as agency. Thus, this dissertation not only
contributes to the development of robust international public relations theory that informs
practice but also contributes to theory building in the public diplomacy field.

By using the CEM, the dissertation privileges the roles played by culture and
other regulatory forces and the contributions of active audiences. It also removes the
West as the dominant reference point in examining the relationships formed within the

Sister City relationships. Moreover, this dissertation extends the CEM through Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice by indicating the role of social capital and economic capital in Sister City International's public diplomacy efforts.

CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME OF AUTHOR: Tugce Ertem Eray

GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:

University of Oregon, Eugene
Istanbul University, Istanbul, Turkey
Yıldız Technical University, Istanbul, Turkey

DEGREES AWARDED:

Doctor of Philosophy, Communication and Media Studies, 2022, University of Oregon
Doctor of Philosophy, Public Relations and Publicity, 2015, Istanbul University Turkey.
Master of Science, Public Relations and Publicity, 2012, Istanbul University Turkey.
Bachelor of Arts, Political Science and International Relations, 2008, Yıldız Technical University, Turkey.

AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

Strategic Communication

GRANTS, AWARDS, AND HONORS:

Graduate Teaching Fellowship, School of Journalism and Communications, University of Oregon 2017-2022.

Lokey Scholarship, School of Journalism and Communication, University of Oregon 2020-2021.

Virtual Opps Award, The Graduate School, University of Oregon 2021.

Top Paper, Diversity and Inclusion, PRSA Educators Academy, 2019 PRSA International Conference in San Diego, CA.

Columbia Scholarship, School of Journalism and Communication, University of Oregon 2017-2021.

International Affairs Endowed Scholarship, Office of International Affairs, University of Oregon 2018-2019.
Travel Grant, School of Journalism and Communication, University of Oregon 2017-2019.

PUBLICATIONS:

Ertem-Eray, T., & Ki. E.-J. (2022). Foreign-born public relations faculty members' relationship with their universities as a soft power resource in U.S. public diplomacy. *Journal of Public Diplomacy.*

Ertem-Eray, T., & Ki, E.-J. (forthcoming). The status of diversity research in public relations: An analysis of published articles. *Prism.*

Ertem-Eray, T., & Ki. E.-J. (2021). Relational cultivation strategies and community building on Fortune 500 company corporate blogs. *Corporate Communication: An International Journal, 27*(1), 188-203.

Ertem-Eray, T. (2021). Addressing the corporate social responsibility efforts in corporations: A content analysis of Amazon's and Walmart's websites. *Corporate Communication: An International Journal, 26*(3), 461-483.

Ertem-Eray, T. (2021). U.S. students' perceptions of international teaching assistants in the public relations field. *Journal of Public Relations Education, 7*(1), 122-152.

Pompper, D., & Ertem-Eray, T. (2021). Reconstructing the PR history time machine: Missing women and people of color in introductory textbooks. *Journal of Public Relations Education, 7*(2), 142-170.

Ki, E.-J., Pasadeos, Y., & Ertem-Eray, T. (2021). The structure and evolution of global public relations: A citation and co-citation analysis 1983-2019. *Public Relations Review, 47*(1).

Ertem-Eray, T., & Ki, E.-J. (2020). Roles and functions of public relations practitioners in the resolution of conflicts in the U.S. and Turkey. *Public Relations Journal, 13*(4), 1-30.

Ki, E.-J., Pasadeos, Y., & Ertem-Eray, T. (2019). Growth of public relations research networks: A bibliometric analysis. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 31*(1,2), 5-31.

Ertem-Eray, T., & Aslan, P. (2019). Women and public relations: A study on Turkey's female PR experts. *Etkilesim, 4*, 152-166.

Aslan. P., & Ertem-Eray, T. (2019). How to analyze big data: A study on understanding what the Turkish think about Syrian refugee crisis. *Journal of Selcuk Communication, 12*(2), 763-780.

Ertem-Eray, T., & Aslan. P. (2018). Utilization of social networking sites as relationship cultivation tools by metropolitan municipalities in Turkey. *The Journal of Communication and Media Studies, 3*(1), 1-12.

Ertem-Eray, T. (2018). Storytelling in crisis communication. *Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies, 8*(2), 131-144.

Ertem-Eray, T. (2017). Rol catismasi, rol belirsizligi ve is tatmini arasindaki iliskiler: Iletisim fakultesi dekanlari uzerine bir uygulama (Relationship between role conflict, rol ambiguity and job satisfaction: Study on deans of faculty of communication). *Journal of Akdeniz University Communication Faculty, 27,* 201-214.

Ertem-Eray, T. (2016). Public relations professionals' perception of conflict management as a management function. *Journal of Media Critiques, 2*(8), 121-131.

Ertem-Eray, T. (2016). Perception of public relations students in Turkey towards work-life conflict. *Istanbul University Faculty of Communication Journal, 50*, 57-72.

Erturk, Y. D., & Ertem-Eray, T. (2016). Fenomenolojik bir kavram olarak kendilik ve sosyal aglarda kendilik sunumu ile narsistik egilimler iliskisi: Iletisim fakultesi (i.ü.i.f.) ogrencileri uzerine bir on calisma (Self entity as a phenomenological concept and the relation between self-presentation on social media and tendency of narcissism: A Study on the students of communication faculties (IUCF)). *Intermedia International e-Journal, 3*(1), 12-29.

Ertem-Eray, T., & Aslan, A. (2016). Turkiye'de siyasal partilerin web sayfalarinin diyalojik iletisim acisindan incelenmesi (A study of the examination of web pages by Turkish political parties as a dialogic communication tool). *Journal of Inonu University Communication Faculty, 1,* 112-121.

Ertem-Eray, T. (2016). Utilization of corporate websites as a dialogic public relations tool in Turkey. Global Media Journal, 5(10), 204-217.

Ertem, T. (2014). Turkiye'de halkla iliskiler ajanslarinda degerlendirmenin yeri ve onemi (Place and importance of evaluation in public relations agencies in Turkey). *Journal of Ataturk Communication, 6,* 177-188.

Onay D. B., & Ertem, T. (2013). Execution of right to information act in the context of governance applications in Turkey and critics: Obstacles to participation is confidentiality. *Journal of Akdeniz University Communication Faculty, 20*, 48-67.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To my advisor, Pat Curtin, thank you so much for everything you've done throughout the process. You are much more than an advisor to me and words cannot express how thankful I am to have you on my side. Thanks for believing in me, supporting me, responding patiently to all my questions and random emails, and pushing me through along the way. Thanks for all the virtual hugs!

To my committee members, Dean Mundy, John Russial, Mark Van Ryzin, and Matthew Norton, thank you for being a part of this process, for your support and guidance. To my participants, thank you for making this project possible.

Thank you to my partner, Erdem Eray, for hanging in with me throughout this experience. I would not be able to handle everything without you. To my son, Bora, you made this process harder but also better! To my dog, Ares, thanks for reminding me to take breaks, going for long walks, and allowing me to steal some of our park times.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Sister Cities program, which is one of the oldest public diplomacy initiatives in the U.S., links individual cities in the U.S. with cities around the world to promote citizen diplomacy. For instance, Tempe, Arizona, and Regensburg, Germany, are sister cities that inspired an annual beer fest (Oktoberfest) to raise money for student and teacher exchanges, while Charleston, South Carolina, and Spoleto, Italy, created an annual festival (Spoleto Festival USA) to bring these cities together through art, dance, and music (Ledbetter, 2017). The main objective of this public diplomacy initiative is to build relationships based on culture, education, information, and trade exchanges between communities all around the world (Sister Cities International, n.d.).

In 1965, Edmund Gullion, dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, coined the term public diplomacy (Cull, 2009b), which is defined as "efforts by the government of one nation to influence public or elite opinion in a second nation for the purpose of turning the foreign policy of the target nation to advantage" (Manheim, 1994, p. 4). The term gained significance in the 21st century because of globalization and the development of new communication technologies. After 9/11, the United States and the United Kingdom were two global leaders used public diplomacy efforts to try to earn sympathy with the Middle East's population (Snow & Taylor, 2009). U.S. and British leaders realized that they needed widespread public support for a global war on terrorism (Schneider, 2015). In addition, with the help of Web 2.0 communication technologies and social media, global publics have begun to demand to be a part of

1

relationships with governments, to participate in dialogue, and to receive feedback from governments (Snow, 2009).

Countries' public diplomacy efforts have changed "from programs that *present messages* to programs that try to use new communication technologies to *form relationships* with foreign publics" (Arsenault, 2013, p. 194; emphasis in original). Zaharna (2010) argues that traditionally, governments focused on the design and dissemination of messages to form their public diplomacy initiatives. Increasingly, however, they are focusing on relationships to strengthen their political objectives as part of their strategic vision of public diplomacy. Moreover, Zaharna, Fisher, and Arsenault (2013) state that because of today's increasingly multi-hub, multi-directional communication networks, public diplomacy strategies need to address interconnected communities around the world and must consider relational frameworks as their core element.

Several scholars have made the case for the convergence of public relations and public diplomacy theories (e.g., Golan et al, 2015; L'Etang, 1996; Signitzer & Coombs, 1992; Signitzer & Wamser, 2006). Scholars argue that both public relations and public diplomacy aim to achieve similar objectives and use similar tools (Lee & Lin, 2017, Signitzer & Coombs, 1992; Signitzer & Wamser, 2006). Public relations concepts and practices can inform public diplomacy practices (Connolly-Ahern & Ma, 2015; Fitzpatrick, Fullerton, & Kendrick, 2013), and public relations scholars have significant potential to contribute to theory building in public diplomacy (Vanc & Fitzpatrick, 2016). In addition, scholars have suggested that public relations theories could have a stimulating effect on public diplomacy, such as the situational theory of publics

(Signitzer & Wamser, 2006), relationship management theory (Fitzpatrick, 2007), and excellence theory (Macnamara, 2012).

Some scholars, however, argue that the relational framework of public diplomacy needs to move beyond normative theories of communication (e.g. Bravo, 2015; Brown, 2013; L'Etang, 2009). For example, Bravo (2015) stated that it is better to use critical cultural-economic models of public relations instead of normative excellence models because publics should not be seen as segmented audiences who can be addressed in Western-centric typologies of publics. Instead, they should be seen as diverse groups with changing identities and conditions. However, little scholarly work along these lines has been done to date. To fill this gap, this dissertation explores how critical and postmodern theoretical approaches can inform public diplomacy practice by using the cultural-economic model as a theoretical framework to analyze public diplomacy efforts. This model not only sees publics as active participants who construct their own meanings but also embraces the interrelationships of culture, identity, and power (Curtin & Gaither, 2005; Curtin & Gaither, 2007), which are significant factors that need to be considered in public diplomacy efforts. In addition, Curtin and Gaither (2005) suggest that the cultural-economic model is apt for analyzing government public relations by examining these practices in their fullness and complexity instead of privileging Western, corporate models. Therefore, this dissertation suggests that the cultural-economic model can be used to strengthen the theoretical underpinnings of the relationships mentioned in the relational framework of public diplomacy. In addition, this dissertation also contributes to theory building in the public relations field by extending the cultural-economic model through ties to Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice.

This theoretical underpinning provides a broader perspective on the history of public diplomacy, which often starts with U.S. efforts to inform and persuade publics around the world during the Cold War. Because the U.S. is one of the pioneers of public diplomacy, this dissertation takes a U.S-centric view and uses Sister Cities International as a case study. Sister Cities International was founded by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1956 as a nonprofit that unites citizen diplomats—volunteers in nearly 500 member communities with more than 2,000 partnerships in more than 140 countries—in order to build relationships across the world (Sister Cities International, n.d.). This dissertation analyzes Sister Cities International as one of the public diplomacy initiatives in the U.S. in order to understand how the organization creates meanings and shapes identities of different communities around the world and, conversely, how different communities modify and recreate the meanings and articulate their own identities. Thus, even though this dissertation takes a U.S.-centric view by using a U.S. organization as a case study, it also considers the organization's outreach to areas outside the U.S. Therefore, this dissertation empirically contributes to the international public relations literature by positioning the West as not the only reference point in these practices.

The next section provides background on U.S. public diplomacy efforts more broadly and Sister Cities International specifically as an example of those initiatives. Chapter II reviews the theoretical literature—the cultural-economic model and Bourdieu's concepts—that inform this study. Chapter III addresses the qualitative method of in-depth interviews used in order to answer the research questions. The fourth chapter presents the results, and the fifth chapter discusses these results in the context of the literature. The last chapter presents the conclusions and limitations of the study.

Background of U.S. Public Diplomacy

To understand new public diplomacy practices, it is important to understand the

historical development of U.S. public diplomacy efforts under various presidents, which

consist of three different periods: the Cold War, after 9/11, and the information age.

These periods, however, do not have rigid edges and they overlap. This section is

followed by an in-depth look at the organization that informs this research: Sister Cities

International.

Public Diplomacy

Public diplomacy is defined as "government-sponsored programs intended to

inform or influence public opinion in other countries; its chief instruments are

publications, motion pictures, cultural exchanges, radio, and television" (Waller, 2007, p.

24). Between the two world wars, governments realized the significance of the power

over opinion, in addition to military and economic power, for political purposes

(Melissen, 2005). Joseph Nye introduced the term "*soft power*" in the 1990s (Melissen,

2005), stating that sometimes governments need to employ "the second face of power,"

which is also called attractive power, to achieve strategic goals rather than use military

force or economic sanctions (Nye, 2004). He explains that soft power is "the ability to

establish preferences [and] tends to be associated with intangible assets such as an

attractive personality, culture, political values and institutions, and policies that are seen

as legitimate or having moral authority" (Nye, 2004, p. 6). Nye's soft power perspective

emphasizes the need to augment traditional diplomacy approaches with public diplomacy

ones.

The Cold War and The United States Information Agency

The term public diplomacy appeared during the Cold War because the U.S. and the Soviet Union started to seek alternatives to nuclear weapons to fight their ideological and strategic battles in order to inform and persuade publics (Yang, 2015). Even though the U.S. tried to spread its ideas for many years during the Revolutionary War, Civil War, and World Wars I and II, it tended to pull back from these activities when the crises were over. For example, during the Revolutionary War and Civil War, influential Americans played a significant role in gaining public support for their ideas. John Adams declared that the Revolutionary War needed to first be won in the minds and hearts of the colonists, and pamphleteer Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* played an important role in garnering support for the revolution. During the Civil War, Union Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton placed stories in foreign newspapers in order to win the minds and hearts of foreign publics (Fischer, 2016). During the two World Wars, government agencies, the Committee on Public Information and the Office of War Information were created to influence public opinion to support the U.S. (Fischer, 2016; Koppes & Black, 1977). By 1948, because of the Cold War, the U.S. started to spread its ideas around the world once again and to provide funding for various outreach activities (Cull, 2019). In particular, Josef Stalin forced American officials to accept that they had to do something to give America a voice to respond to the Kremlin's international propaganda effort (Cull, 2009a). The United States Information Agency (USIA), Voice of America (VOA), and Radio Liberty became the main agents of U.S. public diplomacy during the Cold War (Orlova, 2009).

Practitioners tried to make a distinction between public diplomacy and propaganda because as Gullion, who coined the public diplomacy term, emphasized, propaganda has always had a pejorative connotation in the U.S. (Cull, 2019). Cull (2019) explained the main differences between government sponsored public diplomacy and propaganda as:

> public diplomacy is based on truth but propaganda selects truth; public diplomacy is often two-way but propaganda is seldom two-way; public diplomacy listens to learn but propaganda listens to target; public diplomacy can change the sending/initiating society too but propaganda is intended only to change the target society; public diplomacy is flexible in its approach but propaganda has a tight agenda; public diplomacy tends to be respectful of others but propaganda assumes that others are ignorant and wrong; public diplomacy is open-ended but propaganda is closed; public diplomacy is ethical but propaganda's ethics cannot be taken for granted. (p. 13)

According to Snow (2012), "public diplomacy, or diplomacy to publics, puts human interaction front and center in far less manipulative ways than propaganda" (para. 6). According to L'Etang (2009), however, public diplomacy might also be defined as propaganda. Nation states' activities are hegemonic, and those who have power represent their interests through media coverage. Dutta-Bergman (2005) argued that grant programs and democracy promotion initiatives are used as persuasive strategies for the invasion of Third World nations, as witnessed in the recent invasions of Iraq. Cull (2019) observed that even though US practitioners accepted the ideal principles of public

diplomacy, the political leadership in Congress and the Department of State's expectations were still closer to propaganda during the Cold War.

Between 1947 and 1948, public diplomacy efforts took on new forms, often employing psychology as a strategic force. For example, the National Security Council (NSC) authorized the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to design covert psychological operations to confront Soviet activities (Cull, 2009a). From 1950 to 1951, a major U.S. information overseas propaganda drive--"the Campaign of Truth"--was directed by journalist Edward Ware Barret to promote "the truth" of the U.S., or its preferred image versus how Soviets pictured it (Cull, 2008a). In 1951, President Truman created the Psychological Strategy Board (PSB), which was responsible for psychological operations. Even though the board was never fully functional, it was seen as a start to counteract Moscow's activities (Cull, 2009a). President Eisenhower, who emphasized the importance of communication during the war, made the USIA the new home of U.S. public diplomacy on August 1, 1953 (Pilon, 2009). As a soldier, he knew the importance of the psychological dimension of power, which he called the P-factor (Cull, 2008a). In 1955, the USIA presented a photographic exhibition, The Family of Man, which consisted of pictures from different countries, including the Soviet Union, as a major tool of cultural diplomacy. There were various references to human life in all its diversity, such as showing different religious experiences rather than any one religion. Thus, the USIA connected the individual viewer with the rest of the planet by sponsoring the exhibition. The collection was added to UNESCO's Memory of the World Register in 2004 (Cull, 2008a). In Eisenhower's second term (1957-1961), the USIA director

increasingly had a voice in policy-making because of the USIA's accomplishments in the field.

However, when the Soviet Union launched Sputnik on October 4, 1957, during a time of political difficulties in the U.S., the USIA was not in good shape to respond to these issues (Cull, 2008a). Arthur Larson, the Republican head of the USIA, found himself and his agency under fire from the Democrats. The Senate appropriations subcommittee, chaired by Democrat John Rooney of New York, charged the USIA with wasting money, and the agency suffered budget cuts in almost every region. In the 1960s, the Kennedy administration strengthened the role of the NSC and National Security Advisor in foreign policy (Cull, 2009a) and kept the USIA independent, with an increased focus on cultural programs. Kennedy knew that he needed to rebuild the international image of the U.S. (Cull, 2008a). Because image mattered to the Kennedy administration, it appointed journalist Edward R. Murrow, who was considered one of journalism's greatest figures of the era and had a reputation of being objective and telling the truth in reporting, as the director of the USIA (Cull, 2003). The Peace Corps, which sent American youth volunteers to developing countries to fight poverty, illiteracy, and disease, was one of the public diplomacy hallmarks of the Kennedy administration (Cull, 2008a). Kennedy's presidency also brought some big challenges to the USIA, such as the decision to invade Cuba, and the USIA spent much time trying to repair the international image of the U.S. after the Bay of Pigs fiasco (Cull, 2008a).

Lyndon Johnson faced many challenges in his early years as president, including the Cold War, Vietnam, and the Civil Rights Movement. These challenges were compounded by the shock of Kennedy's assassination, which put Johnson into office.

Johnson needed to restore the international image of the U.S. by assuring the world that the U.S. was still an important ally to friends and rival to enemies. These years indicated that well-executed international information can be successful (e.g., USIA's response to Kennedy's assassination), but the USIA also had limitations (e.g., the Vietnam conflict). The Vietnam War dominated the later years of the Johnson administration, which not only fought a psychological war and tried to manage the press but also tried to justify the war to governments, the press, and publics around the world (Cull, 2008a).

Between 1969 and 1974, in Nixon's years, one of the biggest achievements of the USIA was the coverage of Apollo XI's landing on the moon. The agency assisted foreign journalists and distributed printed materials (Cull, 2008a). The USIA told the White House that the "period of doubt occasioned by Sputnik" had ended (Cull, 2008a, p. 305). Between 1974 and 1977, the USIA's main goals were to cover Nixon's resignation as a positive sign of the American democratic system and manage the transition to the Ford administration (Cull, 2008a). Jimmy Carter had more tolerance for public diplomacy in international communication (Cull, 2009a), and he was more accessible to the global media in comparison to Nixon and Ford. His main interest was in international exchanges. As a result, a new agency, the United States International Communication Agency, arose from the merger of USIA and the State Department's Bureau of Cultural and Educational Affairs, but was soon changed back to the USIA by the Reagan administration. Carter's term saw closer cultural relations with China, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East through student and art exchanges. The final years of the Carter administration were challenged by relations with Iran, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and a renewed Cold War with the Soviets. Cull (2008a) states that even

though Carter left office with some unfortunate issues, without his term's reforms it would have been much harder to deploy U.S. public diplomacy for the final phase of the Cold War. Moreover, Carter also produced a model of public diplomacy that emphasized two-way exchange and dialogue, especially with programs focused on cultural relations.

In the 1980s, Ronald Reagan reinforced the infrastructure of U.S. public diplomacy and put USIA into the core of decision making. The new infrastructure could not remain strong, however, in the face of beltway bureaucracy (Cull, 2009a). Reagan wanted to spread his message of strengthening the foundations of peace in a troubled world, while Moscow worked on its messaging around the war in Afghanistan and the conflict in Poland. But at this time anti-Americanism flourished around the world independent of Moscow. Western Europe's disagreement with American nuclear policy was one of the biggest challenges for the USIA. In the second term of Reagan's administration, the USIA managed the public relations aspects of summits, created new opportunities for cultural exchange, and continued to work against Soviet disinformation (Cull, 2008a). There was also an escalation in military activities in the Reagan years that affected political transformation in the Soviet Union, with both Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev changing their foreign policy priorities (Orlova, 2009).

Zaharna (2010) emphasized that U.S. public diplomacy during the Cold War was suitable for the political and communication dynamics of that time. Its main objective was to win the information battle against the Soviets and promote U.S. interests through persuasive messaging. At the end of the Cold War, U.S. public diplomacy helped accelerate the dissolution of the Soviet Union and of the communist world (Orlavo, 2009).

In the early 1990s, public diplomacy efforts around the First Gulf War were seen as good examples of what well-organized public diplomacy could achieve (Cull, 2009a). In addition, Nye introduced the idea of soft power at this time. These ideas could have contributed to how the role of the USIA was envisioned in a post-Cold War world, but according to Cull (2008a), the agency was not given a chance to reinvent itself along these lines. Even though USIA experts showed their value in the early 1990s, the Clinton years destroyed the hopes of the USIA to continue to grow and develop (Cull, 2009a). The U.S. government reduced expenditures for U.S. radio broadcasting, cut academic and cultural exchanges, and dissolved the USIA in 1998 because it believed that public diplomacy was a Cold War phenomenon (Orlova, 2009) and the USIA itself a Cold War agency (Cull, 2008a). Because the Soviet threat disappeared, measuring the success of the USIA in the post-Cold War world was not as effective as before. Therefore, when Congress was looking for a budget cut, it turned to the agency that had lost its main mission, which was to combat the Soviet Union (Armistead, 2002). In addition, the USIA had always had an independent status within the U.S. government, and Armistead (2002) noted that the State Department, Foreign Service officers, and staffers on Capitol Hill saw the USIA as a "loose cannon" (p. 115), and the ambassadors felt little to no control over the agency's personnel who were working on public diplomacy issues within their embassies. This lack of accountability was also one of the reasons the State Department started a reorganization process. The Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998 strengthened the role of the State Department in U.S. public diplomacy (Armistead, 2002). Most of the USIA's functions passed to the State Department, and Cull (2008a) observes that it is hard to overestimate what was lost with this merger.

After 9/11

Public diplomacy gained more importance after hijacked planes were flown into the Twin Towers in Manhattan on September 11, 2001. After 9/11, the U.S. government prioritized security over all other factors, and showing the best of America became more difficult. Anti-Americanism had increased in much of the world, making public diplomacy more significant as a way to promote mutual understanding, peace, and stability (Anderson, 2012). Public diplomacy efforts after the 9/11 attacks also played a significant role "in the founding of public diplomacy as an academic field" (Zaharna, 2010, p. 3). Some scholars (e.g., Snow, 2012; Zaharna, 2004) suggested that after 9/11 was not the time to turn U.S. public diplomacy efforts into propaganda. For example, Snow (2012) argued that a citizen or an exchange student could be as much of a public diplomat as any Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs through the use of new communication technologies. For instance, an exchange students can transform their thoughts about a nation by direct engagement with host nationals in far less manipulative ways than propaganda and then build on the relationship through social media.

When the U.S. launched the war on terrorism, public diplomacy became "the lead instrument in the battle for hearts and minds" (Zaharna, 2010, p. 1). The public diplomacy campaign focused on the Arab and Islamic world after the 9/11 attacks was one of the most rigorous and expensive in U.S. history. It was not, however, very successful. After the war in Iraq began in 2003, the campaign ended up generating more distrust, not less, and U.S. credibility was eroded (Zaharna, 2010). For example, the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), which replaced the USIA's broadcasting

functions, launched Radio Sawa in the Middle East to reach Arab youth and to create a

dialogue with them. However, even though the station garnered a huge number of

listeners, it failed to promote democracy and pro-American attitudes (Zaharna, 2010). Al

Hurra Television, designed to represent U.S. policies and opinions to combat the rise of

anti-American feelings and to provide high-quality journalism throughout the Middle

East, also failed to achieve its aims (Powers & El Gody, 2009). Additionally, U.S.

military personnel were unsuccessful in terms of being sensitive to cultural differences in

Iraq. For instance, they used dogs, which are considered unclean, to search homes

(Zaharna, 2010). Another failed attempt was the "Shared Values" campaign, which aimed

to show Muslims that Americans shared their values and that Arab-Americans lived in

good conditions. The problem, however, was that no one was wondering about those

conditions, and the Arab world already knew American values through television, media,

and travel. Muslims were worried instead about American policy in the Middle East, such

as the U.S. presence in Iraq and U.S. Israel-Palestine policies (Amin, 2009; Cull, 2008b).

U.S. public diplomacy efforts between 2005 and 2008 were seen as unstable and

ineffective (Zaharna, 2010). For example, in 2005, Karen Hughes, who was the

Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, undertook a "listening

tour" that was seen as problematic among the Arab World. Her trip was similar to that of

American diplomats, but she did not know Arab history or culture, did not speak Arabic,

and had not spent time in the Arab World (Amin, 2009). She was criticized by the press

and public because of her efforts to promote women's rights, to explain the U.S. invasion

of Iraq, and to defend U.S. support to Israel. People got angry because they thought that

the U.S. did not understand their traditions and tried to impose its views on other

countries (Fitzpatrick, 2010). In 2007, the U.S. Department of State stated that influence was not the core function of public diplomacy strategies anymore. It was communicating America's views, values, and policies effectively to promote linkages between American people and the rest of the world (Waller, 2007). For example, Michelle Kwan, who was a public diplomacy ambassador, had her first overseas trip to China in 2007. Her parents were originally from China, and she was enthusiastic to initiate a dialogue with young Chinese people. Even though Kwan was a new face for U.S. public diplomacy, she was seen as an old story to the Chinese. China's success in the Beijing Olympics in 2008 showed that the Chinese could tell their own stories in this era and encouraged young people to believe in the opportunities provided by their own countries. The U.S. lost its attraction as a provider of dreams, and it needed to redesign the story of the American dream for its public diplomacy purposes (Shen, 2009).

According to some scholars (e.g., Powers & El Gody, 2009; Zaharna, 2010), the problem with U.S. public diplomacy efforts as they tried to catch up with the post-Cold War era was that they were still using the public diplomacy strategies of the Cold War. Following 9/11, unilateral U.S. foreign policy did not allow for dialogue and a search for middle ground (Shen, 2009). In addition, what was missing was an understanding of how the underlying communication dynamics in the international arena had shifted from traditional media to advanced information and communication technologies (Zaharna, 2010).

Information Age

Globalization and new communication technologies have played significant roles in the transition from older forms of public diplomacy to new ones. Publics now view

activities consisting of image cultivation across borders and propaganda as old-time diplomacy efforts (Melissen, 2005). According to Snow (2009), a one-way exchange of information from government to global publics within the framework of foreign policies and national objectives is no longer adequate. Thus, one-way informational diplomatic objectives have shifted to two-way interactive public exchanges (Snow, 2009). For example, the U.S. State Department (2010) has emphasized the need to enhance public diplomacy by building networks and expanding people-to-people relationships. In addition, while traditional diplomacy targets the representatives of states or other international actors, the public diplomacy approach targets the general public in foreign societies, non-official groups, and organizations (Melissen, 2005). Educational, cultural exchange programs, language training, films, exhibitions, and development programs that have existed for a long time (e.g., Fulbright scholars, International Visitors Leadership Program) have become key tools of public diplomacy to establish mutual benefit and build mutual trust (Golan, 2013; Snow, 2015).

Under this new iteration, new communication tools, such as social networking sites and blogs, have entered the international arena (Zaharna, 2010). International communication is not only about CNN or cultural centers, but any message, such as an SMS text message, a letter, or social media posts, that crosses a frontier is also an international communication (Cull, 2008b). For example, in 2008, Kenyan activists made international news by creating a website that presented a detailed view of the areas experiencing political violence in postelection Kenya (Arsenault, 2009). In 2017, French social media influencer Jerome Jarre promoted dialogue and raised money for the Love Army organization to help development projects around the world. These new

communication mechanisms have taken advantage of communication satellites and the World Wide Web, which together have accelerated communication itself and the diffusion of information (Cull, 2019).

While publics can collaborate, engage in dialogue, and disseminate information largely independent from government control through new communication technologies, some governments are trying to find ways to engage with publics through these more diffused, global communications. For example, U.S. government agencies have started to engage with bloggers to improve the circulation of their messages and the Egyptian government has initiated IslamOnline to encourage cross-cultural dialogue (Arsenault, 2009). Governments can no longer have one story for their citizens and a different one for foreigners because global technologies have removed strict communication boundaries between countries. Words spoken anywhere in the world may be heard on the other side of the world. It is also becoming more common for governments to use branding strategies and resolve international issues through the use of other international actors, such as NGOs and international companies (Cull, 2019).

A wide variety of actors have started public diplomacy initiatives in this era, and different forms of public diplomacy have gained more significance. For example, multinational cultural diplomacy actors, such as the European Union National Institutes of Culture (EUNIC), have started to foster cooperation between cultural organizations by organizing joint events around the world. Global international organizations, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) have worked on collective cultural projects, including cultural development and protection. As an example of commercial entities, BMW associated itself with an international cultural

project by sponsoring a series of short films directed by well-known directors from all around the world (Cull, 2019). In 2010, 160 Mandarin-speaking U.S. student ambassadors' language skills were one of the important distinctive features of the USA Pavilion at the Shanghai Expo. Their jokes encouraged publics to respond in a very American way, which was an example of people-to-people diplomacy (Camp, 2012). In a Youth Innovation and Entrepreneurship Program (YIEP), Turkish and American high school students had an opportunity to trade products and ideas online, linking and building relationships among American and Turkish youth (McKay, 2012).

The cultural exchange programs have also become key tools of public diplomacy efforts. For example, sport has been used as another form of public diplomacy through hosting events, codifying existing rules of any sports, or being a safe sphere for former enemies, such as the U.S. and China ping-pong exchanges (Cull, 2019). Gastrodiplomacy has brought people together by sharing their culture through food. For example, in December 2013, the Embassy of Greece started to spread Greece's healthy way of living, which is heavily linked to its culture, by providing evidence that the Greek diet is the healthiest one in the Mediterranean region (Kosmidou, 2014).

Even though these projects have encouraged people-to-people diplomacy, some have missed some important points. For example, in its initial six months, Embassy Baghdad's Facebook page was ineffective because it did not have a social media strategy to identify its audiences or establish messaging priorities (Snipe, 2012). Public diplomacy practitioners have also learned that educational exchanges can result in culture shock, making it important to provide longer exchanges because the experience tends to slowly improve over time. Countries also need to understand the value of established

relationships and continue to connect with students after they return to their home countries (Cull, 2019).

Relational Framework of Public Diplomacy

Some scholars (e.g., Arsenault, 2013; Cull, 2019, Zaharna, 2010) have argued that public diplomacy efforts should focus on relationships. For example, Arsenault (2013) suggests that countries' public diplomacy efforts are changing their focus from presenting messages to forming relationships. Zaharna (2010) addresses this change as "a shift in focus from information or *message content* to communication or *message exchange*" (p. 88), which she associates with the rise of the network (Zaharna, 2010). Messages that previously flowed downward from bureaucracies and media institutions to publics in the old world are now flowing horizontally among networks in today's world (Cull, 2019). Thus, the relational framework is viewed as another significant framework alongside the information framework to expand the vision of strategic public diplomacy (Zaharna, 2010). The information framework focuses on the design and transmission of the message, while the relational framework focuses on "relationship-building and positive maintenance of social structures to solve communication problems to advance political objectives" (Zaharna, 2010, p. 146). The relational framework

> assumes that politics is a cumulative, multilevel, open-ended process of continuous interaction among significant clusters of citizens in and out of government and the relationship they form to solve public problems in whole bodies politic across permeable boundaries either within or between groups, communities or countries. (Saunders, 2013, p. 137)

According to Zaharna et al. (2013), relational strategies have become the core element of public diplomacy approaches, and public diplomacy has started to focus on cooperation and collaboration among interconnected communities around the world. They called this shift the "connective mindshift," which "recognizes the power of connections and identifies the nature of these relationships as a key unit of analysis for public diplomacy" (Zaharna et al., 2013, p. 1). According to this viewpoint, public diplomacy strategies need to engage with and create positive connections between individuals and groups within a network. Therefore, public diplomacy has become more about "networking, creating a wider global community, and listening, than about telling, and spreading information" (van Ham, 2013, p. 23) and needs to "move from monologue to dialogue to collaboration" (Cowan & Arsenault, 2008, p. 10). Fisher (2013) believes that public diplomacy in a globalized world needs to focus on networking and collaboration with diverse publics in order to solve complex problems, whereas Arsenault (2009) stresses that public diplomacy needs to reach consensus about nations' policies and understand those diverse societies from which these policies originate. According to Fitzpatrick (2013), what is needed is a new worldview that "sees public diplomacy as a means for achieving *mutual* understanding and advancing *shared* interests among nations and peoples" (p. 30). She believes that this worldview advances the role and the function of public diplomacy in a global society.

Throughout all three time periods of U.S. public diplomacy efforts just outlined, Sister Cities International has been a U.S. public diplomacy initiative. President Eisenhower launched it during the Cold War to support person-to-person efforts. He invited Americans to work with him in order to "create worldwide understanding of U.S.

20

aims and to help build a climate for enduring peace" (Cull, 2008b, p. 118, 119). Although many initiatives lost their attractiveness after the Cold War, Sister Cities International survived and continued to serve after 9/11. Therefore, this dissertation uses Sister Cities International as an example to analyze public diplomacy efforts.

Sister Cities International

Sister Cities International (SCI) was founded by President Eisenhower at the 1956 White House Summit on Citizen Diplomacy, although communities around the world had started to build relationships even earlier. Immigrants who traveled around the world retained their culture and named towns that they built in honor of their ancestral homes or patrons, such as New York, Williamsburg, and St. Louis. These early towns are seen as the beginning of sister cities relationships and known as "nametowns" (Sister Cities International, 2006).

Today's sister city movement emerged at the end of World War II, which had destroyed many cities around the world and left thousands hungry and in need of help. The post-war environment made people open to the idea of reaching out to those communities, and U.S. citizens reached out to citizens of Japan and Germany to help them after the war. For example, in 1951, Arlington, Texas, arranged a humanitarian aid project for Konigshofen, Germany, which was the beginning of a long-term relationship between the two cities (Sister Cities International, 2006).

During World War II, General Eisenhower was the commander of the Allied Expeditionary Forces in Europe and the occupying forces in Germany. He saw the destructive consequences of the war firsthand and wanted to bring people together to plan and work toward common peace around the world. After he became president in 1953, he

encouraged communities around the U.S. to create town affiliation links with communities around the world. For example, in 1955, Hagerstown, Maryland, and Wesel, Germany, became sister cities to build relationships among their peoples. Eisenhower and the early pioneers of the Sister City Program believed that if the citizens of countries could build mutually respectful relationships it could transform diplomatic relations between those countries (Sister Cities International, 2006). When the program was first devised, relationships mainly focused on culture and education (Mascitelli & Chung, 2008).

Any city that is looking for a sister can be a part of the Sister Cities Program and have more than one sister (Sister Cities International, n.d.). Choosing a sister city is not a random process. According to Zelinski (1991), "historical connections, shared economic, cultural, recreational and ideological concerns, similar or identical place names, and, to a certain extent, the friction of distance" all play roles in choosing a sister city (p. 1). Others have suggested that sister cities should be equal sizes, larger cities should have more sister cities than smaller cities for a successful engagement process, and the financial and human resources that are dedicated to the relationships are one of the most important variables for a successful sister city relationship (e.g., Gill, 2020). Officials from both communities need to sign an official agreement to become sister cities. Sister city organizations can include volunteers, representatives from nonprofits, companies, or municipal governments.

The relationships between sister cities are independent of each other, and they can decide what projects are important to them (Sister Cities International, n.d.) and suitable for the needs and resources of both cities (Cremer et al., 2001), such as student

exchanges, sporting events, or economic exchanges. For example, Salisbury, Maryland, and Tartu, Estonia, are sister cities that have an exchange program for college students studying cybersecurity (Ledbetter, 2017). Spoleto, Italy, and Charleston, South Carolina, have an arts festival that helps Charleston's local economy (Jaffe, 2013). Although projects vary among sister cities, they all aim to build relationships. In addition, these relationships, are performed at the local level and do not depend on the support of national governments (Cremer et al., 2001).

On September 11-12, 1956, at the White House Summit on Citizen Diplomacy, 33 people-to-people communities were established. Each community was held responsible for its own funding and direction under the charge of the Civic Committee of People-to-People. In 1957, the Civic Committee decided to expand its outreach to American cities, and a joint cooperative program was formed with the American Municipal Association under the name of the Committee on International Municipal Cooperation. Members of the Civic Committee were civic leaders from different community groups, such as university presidents, women's club members, and veterans' groups (Sister Cities International, 2006). The committee's stated purpose is "to encourage American communities to join hands with overseas communities and to carry out programs of mutual interest in international friendship and understanding. Such present programs generally take the form of town affiliations, community salutes, and international friendship groups" (Sister Cities International, 2006, p. 31). In the beginning, however, there was little or no reference to international trade or economic cooperation as an organizational objective (Mascitelli & Chung, 2008).

In 1965, delegates made the first attempts to create an independent national organization to serve the Sister Cities Program in the U.S. In 1967 the Town Affiliation Association of the U.S., Inc., was incorporated as a national association to assist the increasing number of cities in the U.S. that were affiliating with foreign cities. During its second decade, however, the Town Affiliation Association started to struggle to meet increasing demands for services because of the growing number of cities that wanted to join the program (Sister Cities International, 2006). Therefore, in 1971, "the primary responsibility for U.S. government relations with the Town Affiliation Association of the United States was transferred from the United States Information Agency to the Department of State under the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs" (Sister Cities International, n.d. para. 1). In 1974, Savannah, Georgia, and sister city Patras, Greece, joined the Sister Cities Program as the 500th U.S. community (Sister Cities International, 2006).

The third decade (1976-1985) of the U.S. Sister Cities Program is defined as the golden era by the organization because of growth and expansion. In 1977, The Technical Assistance Program was established to exchange technical expertise among the communities in order to improve the quality of life in those communities (Sister Cities International, n.d.). The number of youth groups in local sister cities increased 70% in 1977. A school affiliation program was established to support global education. The George V. Allen National Tri-Media Contest was organized in 1978 to challenge youth to think about ways to save the world environment. In 1981, on its 25th anniversary, the organization changed its name to Sister Cities International (SCI). In 1982, President Regan announced a new international youth initiative to expand international youth

24

exchange as an investment for future peace. From 1987 through 2000, The Eisenhower International Scholarship program provided scholarships to international college students. The mayor of Washington, D.C., declared October 7-8 as International Sister Cities days in 1988 (Sister Cities International, 2006).

In its fifth decade (1996-2006), SCI incorporated wide cultural expansion, globalization, and development of new communication technologies into its programs and partnerships. For example, in 2001 the Global Envoy Program was initiated to represent SCI at global events. Sister city global envoys talk about citizen diplomacy at these events and help inform global publics about Sister Cities International. In 2003, the Sister Cities Network for Sustainable Development was founded to support sister city development projects that help reduce poverty and increase quality of life around the world. In 2006, the Cyber Sister Cities program partnered with Citrix Systems to support Ghanaians' technological usage. SCI also collaborated with the International Education and Resource Network to bring global learning into classrooms worldwide (Sister Cities International, 2006). In this decade, sister city relationships started to focus on economic development (Ramasamy & Cremer 1998; Cremer et al., 2001), such as creating a marketplace for economic and business activities in New Zealand. O'Toole (2001) demonstrated how Australian sister cities' relationships with other nations developed from associative (relationships based on friendship and cultural exchange) and reciprocative phases (relationships based on educational exchange) to a commercial exchange phase (relationships based on economic development).

After 9/11, SCI also started programs that focus on the Islamic world. For example, President Bush launched The Friendship Through Education consortium to help

American students expand linkages with students in Islamic countries in 2001. The U.S. Islamic Sister Cities Emergency Preparedness Exchange Program linked U.S. communities with Islamic communities to address the common need for training and knowledge in emergencies. In 2003, the Youth Exchange and Study Program was initiated to provide scholarships to students from the Islamic World to spend one academic year in the U.S. In 2004, the Islamic Peace and Friendship Initiative was founded to increase communication and cooperation between the U.S. and the Islamic world (Sister Cities International, 2006). As part of SCI's continuing focus on the Islamic World, between 2017 and 2018, SCI oversaw a program between Gainesville, Florida, and Qalqilya, Palestinian Territories, to develop a sign language video dictionary for students (Sister Cities International, n.d.).

In its sixth decade, SCI continued its cultural exchange, humanitarian assistance, youth and educational, and economic and sustainable development programs. For example, in 2012, the Sino-African Initiative was launched to support economic development in Africa (Sister Cities International, n.d.). As part of the 2013 Sister Cities International Annual Conference, a Youth Leadership Summit was designed to engage youth in sister cities around the world (Sister Cities International, n.d.). In 2014, representatives from Tamworth, Australia, came to their sister city Nashville, Tennessee, which is the "Music City," to learn how to brand Tamworth as an internationally recognized musical destination (Sister Cities International, n.d.). However, some suggest that economic benefit has now become an underlying demand in sister city relationships. If economic development becomes the primary motivator to build relationships among

cities, it may change relationship building goals to pragmatic, shorter term goals (Cross, 2010).

According to the Sister Cities International website, today, SCI serves as the national membership organization for sister cities across the U.S. and unites thousands of citizen diplomats and volunteers in almost 500 member communities in more than 140 countries who run sister city programs to promote peace and strengthen local communities. The program has created approximately 3,700 jobs in its network and provided more than $400,000 in humanitarian aid (Sister Cities International, n.d.). Sister Cities International (2006) also observes that many of the early relationships that were built under the Sister Cities program have lasted to today. Since the program has started, trade activities have increased, and the number of people and students who have traveled from the U.S. to visit a sister city has also increased, and vice versa (Sister Cities International, 2006). Hu et al. (2021) have characterized sister cities relationships as "decentralized intergovernmental relationships" that not only promote information exchange between governments, businesses, and citizens but also allow local leaders to build relationships and economic exchanges for the local community.

Scholars (e.g., Arsenault, 2009; Fisher, 2013; Zaharna et al., 2013) argue that today, countries' public diplomacy efforts need to focus on forming relationships, cooperation, and collaboration among diverse communities around the world. As one of the long-term public diplomacy initiatives, Sister Cities International has tried to adapt its public diplomacy efforts to new public diplomacy features by focusing on collaborative and relational strategies instead of simply disseminating messages. Therefore, Sister

Cities International makes a good case study for this dissertation to examine how the

organization perceives and performs public diplomacy efforts.

The next chapter reviews the theoretical literature supporting this study.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This dissertation focuses on how a public relations theoretical framework can inform public diplomacy efforts; therefore, this review examines the literature emphasizing the convergence of public diplomacy and public relations, which until this time has been studied almost exclusively from normative, functionalist perspectives. Because some scholars have found functionalist approaches lacking to date, this section addresses whether critical and postmodern theoretical approaches within public relations can better inform practice.

Public Diplomacy and Public Relations

Since the term *public diplomacy* was introduced in 1965, it has emerged as an important topic in global public relations research (Ki, Pasadeos, & Ertem-Eray, 2019). Public relations scholars (e.g., Dutta-Bergman, 2006; Fitzpatrick, 2007; L'Etang, 1996; Signitzer & Coombs, 1992; Signitzer & Wamser, 2006) have focused on the convergence of public diplomacy and public relations practice. For example, Signitzer and Coombs (1992) argued that both public relations and public diplomacy aim to affect public opinion in favor of the interests of their organizations. Both have different levels of analysis from the individual to the global level. For example, at the individual level both concern the perception, choices, and behaviors of individuals (Signitzer & Wasmer, 2006). Moreover, both diplomats and public relations practitioners fulfill similar roles, serving as liaisons between publics and their organizations (Signitzer & Wamser, 2006) and "bridging cultural gaps" (L'Etang, 1996, p. 16). Also, both public relations and public diplomacy may be seen as euphemistic terms for propaganda, even though both

public relations and public diplomacy practitioners have tried to distance themselves from that term (L'Etang, 2009).

In addition, scholars have indicated the significant potential of public relations theories and models to contribute to the advancement of public diplomacy from a theoretical perspective (Fitzpatrick et al., 2013). Scholars have proposed the relevance of public relations theories and models such as excellence theory (Macnamara, 2012; Yun, 2006, 2008), the two-way symmetrical model (Kruckeberg & Vujnovic, 2005), and situational crisis communication theory (Kim, 2015) to public diplomacy. Most of these works have tended to espouse the dominant public relations theory of the time.

Recently, scholars from the U.S., New Zealand and Australia, the UK, and Europe have suggested critical theoretical approaches to public relations, countering public relations as a functionalist discipline that focuses on two-way symmetry and Excellence theory (Edwards, 2016). Excellence theory is a general theory of public relations that resulted from a 15-year study that was tested through survey research of heads of public relations agencies, CEOs, and employees at more than 300 organizations in the U.S., U.K., and Canada. It aimed to identify best practices in communication management and the contribution of public relations to organizational effectiveness (Grunig, 1992). For many years public relations scholars used quantitative studies to demonstrate the value of two-way symmetry and Excellence as indicative of the practical application of public relations.

This dominant paradigm restricted the development of exploratory ideas and theories beyond Excellence. Throughout the years, as public relations scholarship has grown, an increasing number of scholars have started to critique the assumptions of

Excellence (Edwards, 2016). For example, Berger (2005) argues that a dominant coalition within an organization and its complex power relationships limit public relations practitioners from being able to do what they need to do, while Munshi (Mckie & Munshi, 2007) states that the public relations efforts of international organizations manipulate the power of representation on behalf of the dominant coalition.

Because of globalization and new communication technologies, 21st-century public diplomacy approaches have started to focus on a relational framework, and scholars (e.g., Fitzpatrick, 2007; Signitzer & Coombs, 1992, Zhong & Lu, 2013) have argued that contemporary public diplomacy has focused on building and maintaining relationships with foreign publics, emphasizing the centrality of the public relations perspective for public diplomacy. In addition, because new public diplomacy perspectives hold that public diplomacy activities can be carried out not only by governments (Rugh, 2009), public relations scholars have also started to analyze the impacts of non-state actors, such as NGOs (e.g., Yang, 2015; Zatepilina-Monacell, 2015), multinational corporations (e.g., Kochnar & Molleda, 2015), political parties (e.g., Gilmore & Waters, 2015), and diaspora communities (Bravo, 2015) on public diplomacy efforts from a relational public diplomacy perspective.

Some scholars position public diplomacy as essentially about communication management, and newer public diplomacy approaches promote cultivating relationships with foreign publics to reach their main goal: gathering international support for a nation's foreign policy (Golan & Yang, 2015). The relational level is seen as a long-term effort based on soft power programs (Golan, 2013). Recently, relationship-centered efforts have started to gain significance in the study of public diplomacy (Golan & Yang,

2015) because although foreign publics do not support U.S. government action in the world, they support U.S. values of technical expertise, entrepreneurialism, and openness (Snow, 2015). Golan (2015) emphasizes that "a variety of public relations theoretical perspectives can guide public diplomacy scholarship at the relational level" (p. 422). In addition, relationship building is the most closely integrated level of public diplomacy with public relations (Snow, 2015, p. 85). Thus, relationship management theory has become one of the public relations theories most used by scholars to relate to public diplomacy (e.g., Fitzpatrick, 2007; Ki, 2015; Lee & Jun, 2013; Tam, Kim, & Kim, 2018; Wrigley, 2015; Yang, Klyueva, & Taylor, 2012).

Ferguson (1984) emphasized that public relations should focus on relations, providing grounding for relationship management theory. Since then, relationship management theory has been the main perspective used to analyze relationships in the public relations field (e.g., Aldoory, Bellows, Boekeloo, & Randolph, 2015; Lee & Kee, 2017; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998; Levenshus, 2010). Relationship management theory emphasizes that public relations manages the relationships between organizations and publics to balance their interests (Ledingham, 2003). Therefore, public relations is seen as "the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends" (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1994, p. 2). Scholars have begun to explore the central constructs of organization-public relationships (e.g., Hon & Grunig, 1999; Huang, 1997; Ledingham, Bruning, Thomlison, & Lesko, 1997) and the link between these relationships and public perceptions, attitudes, and behavior (e.g., Ki & Hon, 2007; Pressgrove & McKeever, 2016). An organization-public relationship measurement scale

was developed based on four dimensions (control mutuality, trust, commitment, and satisfaction) derived from interpersonal relationship principles (Ledingham, 2006).

However, some scholars (e.g. Bravo, 2015; Brown, 2013; L'Etang, 2009) argue that the relational framework of public diplomacy needs to move beyond normative theories of communication. For example, Bravo (2015) argues that governments should see diaspora communities in host countries as diverse audiences in order to build relationships by focusing on changing circumstances, identities, discourses, and needs. Instead of using rigid excellence models, they can be better analyzed through cultural-economic models of public relations that consider publics as communities with changing identities. L'Etang (2009) states that the application of relationship and communitarian approaches to public diplomacy ignores the realities of hegemonism, nationalism, and aggression. Scholars need to consider that public relations can build relationships if power structures permit, which has been ignored in much of the public relations literature. Brown (2013) argues that a relational theory of public diplomacy needs to go beyond normative theories of communication because not only do the relationships matter but the context of those relationships also matters, which explains a larger part of public diplomacy activities' successes or failures. Instead of focusing on creating and delivering the message, policymakers and academics need to focus on the critical role of context in shaping the success or failure of public diplomacy initiatives.

Therefore, this dissertation addresses the concerns of critical public relations scholars' approaches to public diplomacy practices and asks:

RQ1. Are functionalist models of public relations sufficient to inform Sister Cities International's public diplomacy efforts?

33

Critical Approaches to Public Relations

Critical theory aims to explain changes in society; alter social, political and economic structures that restrict human potential; and look for strategies to challenge these structures (L'Etang, 2005). In its most fundamental meaning, it aims to articulate how these structures can be challenged so human beings can be free and produce their social lives (Pieczka, 2016). Over the years, critical approaches have grown significantly as a subset of public relations scholarship.

Critical approaches to public relations criticize the dominant theoretical framework in the public relations field because it ignores "the dynamic characteristics of relationships and discursive nature of meaning" (Curtin & Gaither, 2005, p. 91). Critical scholars emphasize that public relations needs to be studied within its social context in order to indicate the connections between the social, organizational, and individual levels in public relations activities (Edwards, 2009). Critical scholars have used a variety of perspectives, such as feminist theory (Fitch, 2016), postmodern theory (Holthauzen & Voto, 2002), cultural studies (Curtin & Gaither, 2007), political economy (Weaver & Motion, 2002), globalization (Bardhan & Weaver, 2011), and Marxist postcolonial perspectives (Dutta & Pal, 2011). Little work has been done to specifically apply these approaches to public diplomacy, although one example is Dutta-Bergman's (2006) critical analysis of U.S. public diplomacy programs in the Middle East, which emphasized the need to apply a culture-centered approach to public diplomacy practices. Additionally, L'Etang (2009) stated that linking public diplomacy to public relations needs to consider the role of power in communication, which has largely been ignored by

normative theories of public relations. To fill this gap, this dissertation explores how critical and postmodern theoretical approaches can inform public diplomacy practice.

As critical scholars have noted (e.g., Edwards, 2018; Motion & Weaver, 2005), examining the sociopolitical, socioeconomic, and sociocultural contexts in which public relations operates is valuable to understanding public relations practices. Therefore, this dissertation focuses on one such approach that embraces differences and includes fluid notions of identity, regulation, representation, production, and consumption: the cultural-economic model of public relations.

Cultural-Economic Model of Public Relations

The cultural-economic model of public relations is based on the circuit of culture model (du Gay, Hall, Janes, Mackay, & Negus, 1997), which was created by a group of scholars at Britain's Open University, including Stuart Hall (Curtin & Gaither, 2007). According to Hall (1980), culture is "threaded through all social practices, and the sum of their interrelationships" (p. 58). The circuit of culture model explains the connection of culture and power in order to create meaning (Curtin & Gaither, 2007). It provides a model to guide theoretical development that emphasizes identities, differences, and power (Curtin & Gaither, 2005). Based on the circuit of culture, the cultural-economic model sees culture as a process and a space in which meanings are created and places culture at the center of any communication efforts. In addition, power is seen as inherent, and fluid, in all relationships (Gaither & Curtin, 2007). This model has been applied to international public relations; however, it has not been much applied to public diplomacy so far. Therefore, this dissertation is one of the first attempts to apply this model to public diplomacy efforts.

The circuit of culture model has five moments in a process: regulation, production, consumption, representation, and identity, each of which contributes to creating, shaping, modifying, and re-creating meaning (Curtin & Gaither, 2007). Culture and power occur in the infinite points within these moments (Gaither & Curtin, 2007). The points at which these moments meet are called *articulations,* in which meanings are modified and recreated (Curtin & Gaither, 2005). Only if we understand how meaning is produced and reproduced in different moments of the model, then, can we understand the practice of public relations (Curtin & Gaither, 2008). Even though the model represents a whole process, Curtin and Gaither (2005) state that it is better to begin by analyzing each moment separately to understand the dimensions of each moment and to indicate whether extant research belongs to specific moments.
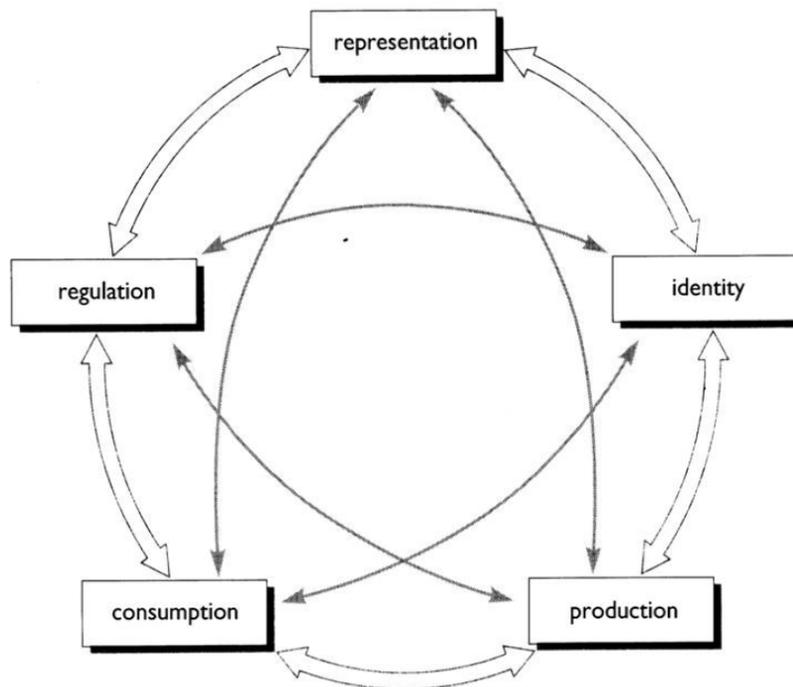

Figure 1. The Circuit of Culture (Curtin & Gaither, 2007, p. 38).

Regulation. This moment encompasses controls on cultural activity (Curtin & Gaither, 2005). Regulation comprises not only formal and legal controls, such as laws and institutionalized systems, but also informal and local controls, such as norms and expectations that form culture (Curtin & Gaither, 2007). This moment constructs social order and provides rules and constructs common sense for individuals (Curtin, Gaither, & Ciszek, 2016). In terms of public relations practices, this moment helps understand what meaning is acceptable in specific places and circumstances. In addition, constructing meaning is an ongoing process, and the narratives can be changed or challenged over time. Public relations practitioners need to realize that the meanings are not fixed and they are attached to circumstances and cultural tides in negotiating regulation (Curtin & Gaither, 2007). This moment can also help public diplomacy practitioners to understand what meaning is acceptable in the host country when planning public diplomacy programs over time. Therefore, this dissertation asks:

RQ2. How do regulatory concerns shape how SCI members plan and execute

their public diplomacy efforts?

Production. This moment refers to the process by which cultural products are imbued with meanings in their own social contexts (Curtin & Gaither, 2007). Du Gay et al. (2013) state that although they separated the moments of production and consumption for the purpose of their studies, it needs to be kept in mind that production is interrelated and overlaps with consumption in the circuit. For a cultural product to have any social meaning, production needs to be connected to consumption (du Gay et al., 2013). In terms of public relations campaigns, this moment refers to the planning and communication steps of the campaign and introduces power dynamics from creation to

implementation (Curtin & Gaither, 2007). It includes the creation of identity for a public

and messages for that public encompassing organizational goals and ideology (Curtin &

Gaither, 2008). In terms of public diplomacy programs, this moment also refers to the

planning and communication steps of the programs and includes the creation of identity

and messages for public. Therefore, this dissertation also asks:

> RQ3. How do participants characterize the process the SCI program uses to define
>
> the publics for their programs?

> RQ4. What are the SCI program's intended messages/meanings? How are these
>
> messages/meanings encoded into the programs?

Representation. Things are given meaning by how they are represented through forms

such as writing, speech, photography, and art; signs and symbols are used to represent the

existent meaningful concept, image, or ideas. The model suggests we map new things in

relationship to other things that we already know. Culture relates to the role of meanings

in society and enables us to make sense of things because meanings are created as a result

of social discourses and practices that are connected through culture. Another way to

create meanings of an object is by indicating similarities to, and differences from, other

objects, which gives the object a definite and specific position (du Gay et al., 2013).

In sum, representation refers to "the form an object takes and the meaning

encoded in that form" (Curtin & Gaither, 2007, p. 40). Therefore, meaning is socially

constructed, and this moment creates a shared cultural space through communication

channels by considering differences and power relations (Curtin & Gaither, 2005). In

terms of public relations activities, practitioners encode meaning into campaign materials

and through considerations of things such as communication channels and key messages.

Because most public relations efforts represent a cause, campaign, organization, or government, public relations practitioners encode the meaning of that entity into the content of their materials (Curtin & Gaither, 2007). In terms of public diplomacy programs, because public diplomacy practitioners represent governments, NGOs, or multinational companies, they encode those meanings in program materials. Therefore, this study also asks:

RQ5. What dominant meanings do the SCI program tools and materials convey?

Consumption. This moment encompasses how publics decode messages. Also, this moment represents a form of production in the circuit of culture model because new meanings occur when publics decode the messages within their own social contexts (Curtin & Gaither, 2007): "A focus on practices of consumption helps us to understand that meanings are not simply sent by producers and received by consumers but are always *made in usage*" (du Gay et al., 2013, p. 80). Therefore, the production moment is not fully realized until publics decode the messages (Curtin & Gaither, 2005). In terms of public relations, it is within this moment that publics interpret campaign messages and are active meaning makers (Curtin & Gaither, 2007).

Identities. Identities arise within multiple contexts, such as organizational, national, and individual. They are always in process, constructed through difference and power, and often conflicting (Curtin et al., 2016). This moment is seen as one of the most challenging in the circuit because public relations practitioners need "to create shared identities between products or issues and publics" (Curtin & Gaither, 2007, p. 167). Moreover, publics are seen as individuals who actively negotiate different identities (Curtin & Gaither, 2005). During production, public relations practitioners "encode organizational

texts with the dominant identity they want to convey, around which they attempt to structure subsequent discourse" (Curtin & Gaither, 2007, p. 41). Practitioners create different identities for their publics by segmenting them, while publics create their own multidimensional identities (Curtin & Gaither, 2007). Public diplomacy practitioners need to pay attention to multiple identities when they define their publics for public diplomacy programs.

The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with organizational members of Sister Cities International in the U.S. and managed to collect data for the production moments of the model. Therefore, no research questions are posted for the consumption or identity moments of the model because of their focus on consumers of the organization. Thus, this dissertation analyzes a piece of the model rather than focusing on the whole process.

These five moments are intertwined in an ongoing process and have the same weight on the circuit (Curtin & Gaither, 2005). In the circuit of culture model, public relations is redefined as "a culturally relativist practice" (Curtin & Gaither, 2005, p. 106), and public relations practitioners serve as cultural intermediaries (Curtin & Gaither, 2005). As such, they are "mediators between producers and consumers who actively create meanings by establishing an identification between products or issues and publics" (Curtin & Gaither, 2007, p. 41). In this model, public relations practices generate more than one meaning, and the West has become only one reference point in these practices (Gaither & Curtin, 2007).

Because the cultural-economic model is a model and not a theory but incorporates elements of both structure and agency, this dissertation considers how postmodernist

theory, specifically, Pierre Bourdieu's, can provide more explanatory power and depth to the model.

Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Practice

Bourdieu's sociological work, what he called a theory of practice, focuses on the practical logic of everyday actions of individuals (Bourdieu, 1977). His sociological concerns also include understanding relations of power and domination and developing reflexive sociology (Power, 1999). Moreover, one of his primary concerns is to dissolve the oppositions in social theory, such as micro/macro, subjectivist/objectivist, material/symbolic, and interpretation/explanation. In Bourdieu's thinking, social structures and mental structures are interlinked. The subjective representations of the agent also need to be considered because they help agents change these objective structures (Wacquant, 2006). To effect this synthesis of objectivism and subjectivism, Bourdieu talks about habitus, field, and capital.

Habitus. Bourdieu explains the regularities of behavior associated with social structures using the concept of habitus. Habitus reflects social structures, such as class, gender, and ethnicity, and shapes how agents perceive and act in the world (Power, 1999). It is impossible to have the same experiences, in the same order, for all individuals in the same class (Bourdieu, 1977). Therefore, these social structures are shared by individuals who had similar experiences, even though each of them has a unique variant of the common matrix (Wacquant, 2006). Thus, habitus relates to "the common style not only by its conformity but also by the difference" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 86). In addition, habitus is not only structured by the social forces that produced it but it also shapes and makes coherent the various activities of individuals (Wacquant, 2006). Habitus is "the product

of structure, producer of practices, and also reproducer of structures" (Power, 1999, p. 49). It is an endless capacity to produce thoughts, perceptions, actions, and expressions limited by the historically and socially situated conditions of its production (Bourdieu, 1977). But the practice involves more than habitus, which is conceptualized as the product of relationships among habitus, field, and capital (Powell, 1999).

Field. Fields are the structured social settings that habitus operates in and are organized around specific types of capital (Swartz, 1997). Society consists of many different fields, such as education, science, art, law, and business (Wolf, 2018). A field is defined as a network of objective relations between positions (dominant and subordinate) and organized around a limited amount of capital or power, which is shared unequally among the agents. In a field, agents and institutions are always in a struggle, and those who dominate the field make it function to their advantage through struggles characterized by resistance, claims, and contention (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). In addition, those who dominate the field tend to have a privileged position in other fields, for example, politics and media (Swartz, 1997). Also, a field cannot exist without capital (Powell, 1999).

Capital. Bourdieu extended the idea of capital beyond economic resources and identified four types of capital (economic, cultural, social, and symbolic) that determine status and power in a given field (Swartz, 1997). *Economic capital* refers to things that are "immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 242). Other forms of capital can be convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital; they all have economic capital as their basis (Bourdieu, 1986). *Cultural capital* is defined as things that can be "institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 242).

Cultural capital exists in three forms: in the embodied state, the objectified state, and the institutionalized state (Bourdieu, 1986). In the embodied state, cultural capital is in the form of long-lasting knowledge and expertise, while in the objectified state, it is in the form of physical objects, such as books, instruments, and dictionaries. In the institutionalized state, cultural capital is in the form of institutional recognition, such as university degrees (Bourdieu, 1986; Wolf, 2018). *Social capital* "is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively-owned capital" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 247). It is the result of networks of institutionalized relationships, such as family (Powell, 1999), and includes resources that individuals have because of being a member of a group (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). *Symbolic capital* is "the form that the various species of capital assume when they are perceived and recognized as legitimate" (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 17); for example, ascribing moral qualities to individuals because they donate time and money to charities (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Symbolic capital relies on other individuals who believe that someone has these qualities, which is why it is described as "misrecognized" capital because it is seen as an individual's natural quality instead of something that has to be gained over time (Wolf, 2018).

In Bourdieu's thought, the relation between the individual and society substitutes for the "constructed relationship between habitus and field(s)," that is, between "history incarnate in bodies" as dispositions and "history objectified in things" in the form of systems of positions (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 8). This relationship between

habitus and field(s) is significant because it determines social action. In order to understand the practice, it is crucial to understand both the social constitution of the individual and the creation of the particular social universe and conditions in which the individual operates (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). These three concepts (habitus, capital, and field) are interlinked, and together they suggest the logic of everyday actions of individuals.

A few public relations scholars (e.g., Ciszek, 2020; Edwards, 2006, 2009, 2011; Ihlen, 2005, 2007; Wolf, 2018) have applied Bourdieu's theory to public relations practice. For example, Wolf (2018) discussed Bourdieu's ideas and his understanding of activism in society as an alternative approach to activist public relations. Ihlen (2007) extended selected parts of Bourdieu's work to the study of public relations. Edwards (2006) used Bourdieu's concepts of fields, habitus, and capital to demonstrate how power operates in public relations. However, none of these studies examine public diplomacy practices. Moreover, Curtin and Gaither (2005) argued that public relations practitioners' boundary spanner role, which is discussed as a traditional concept in the functional perspective, may be reconstructed in terms of Bourdieu's (1984) cultural intermediaries concept, which applies to those in occupations such as advertising and public relations. Therefore, this dissertation also argues that Bourdieu's theory can be integrated into the cultural-economic model in order to analyze public diplomacy efforts by examining relationships between social structures, the fields, and the types of capitals relevant to the public diplomacy field.

RQ6: How does Bourdieu's theory extend the heuristic value of the cultural-economic model?

The next chapter outlines the methods used to answer these research questions.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

In the communication field, scholars use qualitative research to describe or understand communication and interaction patterns, how individuals create meaning, and how these meanings affect their actions (Davis & Lachlan, 2017). Therefore, qualitative methods are most suitable for this dissertation in order to understand how meanings are constructed, publics are defined through public diplomacy practices, and social, political, and cultural contexts influence these practices. To answer the research questions, this dissertation used in-depth interviews. The researcher also used document analysis, including websites and campaign materials, to supplement the interviews but not as the major focus of the analysis.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is interpretive, often based in social constructionism, and used to explore and understand the participants' meanings that they attribute to an issue (Creswell, 2009; Warren & Karner, 2015). Researchers use inductive reasoning to discover patterns, make inferences, and draw conclusions from the phenomena they are studying. Qualitative research is used when the researcher needs an in-depth and detailed understanding of a single concept or phenomenon within its context or settings (Creswell, 2009; Davis & Lachlan, 2017). Qualitative research is less concerned with generalizing and focuses instead on how participants understand, describe, and see the world. Researchers are also part of the process of creating meaning because they are themselves the research instrument (Davis & Lachlan, 2017). Therefore, through qualitative methods,

this dissertation explored how participants perceive their organization and their work with the organization.

Qualitative interviews contributed to the scope of the study because it gave the researcher an opportunity to understand how political, social, and cultural contexts play significant roles in participants' thoughts and actions. It also helped to describe communication and interaction patterns within and between cultural contexts (Davis & Lachlan, 2017). Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, p. 3) define the in-depth interview as

> a conversation that has a structure and a purpose. It goes beyond the
> spontaneous exchange of views as in everyday conversation and becomes
> a careful questioning and listening approach. … It is not a conversation
> between equal partners, because the researcher defines and controls the
> situation. The topic of the interview is introduced by the researcher, who
> also … follows up on the subject's answers to his or her questions.

Therefore, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with organizational members of Sister Cities International in order to find out how they perceive their organization and their public diplomacy efforts with the organization because their experience is central to this dissertation.

Reflexivity

Before outlining the procedure and participants of this study, it is important to address my positionality in relation to the study. As a qualitative researcher, I need to explain my background because that will shape my interpretation during the study. I am an international student who came to the U.S. from Turkey, which has occupied a strategic geographical position throughout its history. Turkey lies in both Asia and

47

Europe and is situated at the crossroads of the Balkans, Caucasus, Middle East, and Eastern Mediterranean. Being at the crossroads between East and West, Turkey is one of the countries in the world that has strong Eastern and Western elements in its culture. Although I am a part of a diverse and heterogeneous culture, my education mainly focused on the adoption of Western textbooks and scholarship that were not necessarily suited to the Turkish context.

Moreover, because of its strategic geographical position, Turkey often finds herself as a strategic ally in U.S. foreign policy. For example, in 1947, the Truman Doctrine financially supported Turkey, while during the Iraq War the relationship between the U.S. and Turkey became strategically more important than before. The same has been true for U.S. public diplomacy efforts. Cultural and educational exchanges, language training, films, and art are the key U.S. public diplomacy efforts in Turkey (Cevik, 2019). I have firsthand knowledge of these U.S. public diplomacy efforts, especially with English language teaching programs. However, I don't have any experience with Sister Cities International. I know that all experiences are not like mine, and it's important to be open to others' experiences.

Procedure

Sister Cities International organization. Today, Sister Cities International is governed by a 24-member Board of Directors. Twenty-one of them are drawn from the membership and the greater diplomatic and business community, while three of them represent state representatives, youth, and young professionals. In addition, there are 44 state representatives, who provide expertise and assistance to members in their respective states, and four national staff: the president and CEO, membership manager, digital

marketing consultant, and IT consultant. Sister Cities International's national office, located in Washington, D.C., is supported by citizen diplomats around the world, such as global envoys and members of the Global Awareness Team. There is also a Sister Cities International's Honorary Board Alumni that consists of individuals who have shown great leadership to Sister Cities International through the years.

Sampling of organizational members. Snowball sampling was used to collect data from organizational members and "is the method of asking study participants to make referrals to other potential participants, who in turn make referrals to other participants, and so on" (Davis & Lachlan, 2017, p. 152). The organizational members consist of those who live in the U.S. and play an active role in the organization's public diplomacy efforts both in the U.S. and around the world. The researcher asked organizational members who agreed to participate in the study to suggest additional participants. Through the organization's website, the researcher was able to connect with one of the global envoys and some of the state representatives who suggested additional participants throughout the interview process. Thus, the researcher recruited participants in two ways: by emailing interview requests to organizational members on the organization's website and by asking interview participants to recommend contacts who might be interested in participating in this study. Nine interview participants--one global envoy and eight state representatives-- were contacted through their email addresses, which were found on the organization's website, and 17 participants were contacted through the snowball technique. Thus, the interview sample consisted of 26 participants. Although McCracken (1988) indicated that eight participants are sufficient for interview studies, this study aimed to reach data

saturation, which was achieved when the researcher received no new information during the last interviews.

Ten of the interview participants were male and 16 were female; however, gender variation was not a concern for this study. To diversify the pool of participants the researcher included people with a variety of organizational titles, including a state representative, global envoy, member of the Global Awareness Team, local volunteer, and a mayor. Since the majority of the organizational members were White, the researcher also tried to reach out to African American organizational members to diversify the pool of participants. Three of the interview participants were African American. While the majority of the participants were older than 50, several participants were younger than 50. The youngest interview participant was 31 years old. Diversifying the pool of participants allows the researcher to see different ideas and perspectives of how organizational members perceive their organization and their work with the organization but is not meant to supply generalizable results.

In-depth interviews. The University of Oregon's Institutional Review Board reviewed this project and determined it was exempt. Because of travel restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic at the time of data collection, interviews were conducted over an online platform (Zoom) with participants throughout the country. Each participant verbally agreed to a consent form, indicating that they agreed to do the interview and to have the interview recorded. An interview guide (Appendix A) was used to shape the conversation (Warren & Karner, 2015). It helped the researcher cover issues in the same order for each participant and allowed the researcher to pay attention to the participant's responses (McCracken, 1988). The interview guide included grand tour questions that

Table 1. List of Sister Cities International participants

	Organizational Title
Participant 1	Global Envoy/Member of Global Awareness Team
Participant 2	State Representative
Participant 3	State Representative/Member of Global Awareness Team
Participant 4	State Representative
Participant 5	Board Member/Member of Global Awareness Team
Participant 6	State Representative/Member of Global Awareness Team
Participant 7	Board Member/Member of Global Awareness Team
Participant 8	Board Member
Participant 9	Board Member/Member of Global Awareness Team
Participant 10	State Representative
Participant 11	Local Volunteer
Participant 12	State Representative
Participant 13	Local Volunteer
Participant 14	State Representative
Participant 15	Local Volunteer
Participant 16	Local Volunteer
Participant 17	State Representative
Participant 18	State Representative
Participant 19	Local Volunteer
Participant 20	State Representative
Participant 21	State Representative
Participant 22	Local Volunteer
Participant 23	Local Volunteer
Participant 24	State Representative
Participant 25	Global Envoy/Member of Global Awareness Team
Participant 26	Global Envoy/Member of Global Awareness Team

were phrased in a nondirective manner to allow participants to tell their stories in their own terms (McCracken, 1988), such as their involvement with the organization, their role at the organization, and the biggest challenge they have faced on the job. The researcher also asked what has been changed throughout the years in the program to those who were organizational members for more than 20 years. In the end, the researcher asked the

participants what else she should have asked them about and what else the participants want to tell her in order to not miss any experiences that they wanted to share about the organization. Each grand tour question included several probes to follow up as necessary to gain more insightful information from the participants. Follow-up questions, such as 'Could you say some more about that?'; 'What do you mean by that . . .?' were also used to clarify or elaborate the participants' answers.

The interviews lasted between 40 minutes and an hour and 15 minutes and were conducted starting at the beginning of August 2020 and ending at the end of September 2020. All interviews were recorded and conducted by the researcher. A professional transcription service was used to transcribe interviews from digital recording files. The researcher compared the written transcripts with the recordings to verify the accuracy of the transcription.

The researcher has access to online materials on the organization's website and also asked participants to share documents that they find particularly relevant to their work. These documents provided added context to the interviews. Two participants shared documents such as press releases, newsletters, project information, city proclamation, and a letter template for local SCI chapters.

Interview Analysis

Warren and Karner (2015) use the term "*analytic descriptions* to refer to the development of conceptual understandings of *what* (or *how* or *why*) research questions that your data answer" (p. 212). This process involves the identification of recurrent patterns or themes and tries to construct a coherent representation of the data. It includes reading, rereading, thinking, and rereading (Warner & Karner, 2015).

During the first stage of this process, which is called open coding, the researcher identifies some similarities or themes and starts to build a code list or codebook. In the first step, the researcher needs to have some sense of the "big picture" of the data with the open coding (Warren & Karner, 2015). This stage involves close reading and naming each word, line, or segment of data. Codes are created by defining what the researcher sees in the data (Charmaz, 2006). Building codebooks is an ongoing process in which some themes turn into subthemes, some themes can be deleted, while some themes are refined or combined with other themes (Davis & Lachlan, 2017). During this stage, the researcher's goal is to be open to all possible theoretical directions (Charmaz, 2006). These recurrent patterns or themes, then, need to be connected to issues in the research literature, and the researcher starts to make analytic decisions depending on the focus of the research (Warren & Karner, 2015).

In the second stage, the researcher focuses on coding the most salient categories. Researchers decide on which initial codes make the most analytic sense to categorize their data concisely and completely. Theoretical integration begins in this stage. This is also the stage when the researcher checks her preconceptions about the topic (Charmaz, 2006). Then, the researcher develops a set of axial codes to connect categories with subcategories and asks how they are related. During axial coding, the researcher specifies properties and dimensions of a category and attempts to identify relationships and analyzes the context of the data (Charmaz, 2006; Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). These links can include conditions, actions/interactions, and consequences to answer the why, where, when, by whom and how questions, and 'what happens' because of these actions/interactions (Charmaz, 2006).

The third stage is theoretical coding, which follows the codes that the researcher has selected during the axial coding (Charmaz, 2006). In this stage, the researcher focuses on how axial codes can relate to each other to be integrated into theory. The purpose of this stage is to help the researcher theorize the data and codes. Theoretical coding is not only helping the researcher conceptualize how the axial codes relate to each other but also take the analysis in a theoretical direction (Charmaz, 2006).

The coding process just outlined is often used to construct grounded theory, but it can also be used in analytic induction approaches. An analytical induction approach applies theories generated by prior research in order to test how these theories perform in new contexts (Atkinson & Delamont, 2005). Therefore, this dissertation takes an analytical induction approach in order to test how the cultural-economic model of public relations and Bourdieu's theory perform in public diplomacy efforts.

Document analysis. Qualitative research also seeks data from the media such as visual images, magazines, videos, documents, and the Internet (Warren & Karner, 2015). Following Warren and Karner's (2015) suggestion, this study uses documents as a supplement to understand participants' meaning and experience in addition to interviewing. During the in-depth interviews participants were asked to share any relevant documents related to SCI campaign materials. Two participants shared some of the campaign materials, such as newsletters and posters, with the researcher to supplement their interviews. These materials were also thematically analyzed to understand whether they reinforce the themes that emerged during the interviews or introduced new themes to the study.

The next chapter presents the results of the open and axial coding processes.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter describes the results of the open and axial coding of the interview data collected from the 26 organizational members of Sister Cities International. Open coding resulted in 15 categories that fall into four axial codes (Table 2).

Table 2. Open and Axial Codes from Interviews with Organizational Members

Classification	Category	Description
Axial code	Uncertainty about the future	Skepticism about the organization's future
Open code	Prioritizing the local	Relationships do not last without local efforts
Property	Human capital cost	Real work is done at the local level
Property	City as central to relationships	Local cities' relations affect organization's efforts
Open code	Emphasizing volunteerism	The organization does not survive without volunteerism
Property	Labor of love	Efforts are done by volunteers
Property	Extra effort	The organization needs people who are passionate about the efforts
Open code	Encouraging youth	The organization emphasizes the need for youth to survive
Property	Aging	Old people are on the board
Property	Generational differences	The organization does not represent the generational differences
Property	Relevancy	Young people are not interested in the organization
Open code	Encouraging diversity	The organization needs diverse people to survive
Property	People of color	The organization aims to get people of color on board and exchanges
Property	Women	The organization encourages women to be a part of it
Axial code	Eliminating differences	Members emphasize that we are all the same at the end of the day
Open code	Knowing differences	Members emphasize that differences bring them together

Table 2, continued

Classification	Category	Description
Property	Language	Language barrier is not difficult because they think that most people speak English, or they can use an interpreter
Open code	Finding commonality	Cities need to find something common to build relationships
Property	Common interests	Efforts depend on what cities need and their interests
Property	Key informants	The organization needs people who know the culture, customs, and language of other nations
Open code	Adjusting technology	Technology enables people-to-people relationships
Property	Communication	Technology connects people easier than before
Property	Geopolitical issues	Technology undermines geopolitical issues
Property	Digital divide	Some people do not have access to technology
Open code	Erasing stereotypes	Both the U.S. and other countries are different from what is presented in the media
Property	Reality	People-to-people relationships make people understand the reality of countries
Property	Representation	Members are representing the real images of their countries
Axial code	Prioritizing economic gain	Economic gain is the significant reason to build relationships
Open code	Creating business relations	Members aim to create business relations
Property	Financial firms	Members reach out to financial firms for economic gain
Property	Business leaders	Members reach out to business leaders for economic gain
Open code	Focusing on economic development	The need for economic development is the underlying factor of the organization

Table 2, continued

Classification	Category	Description
Property	City tourism	Members want people to visit their cities and make an economic impact by spending money
Open code	Connecting through education	Many efforts start with schools with the intent of making money
Property	Students	Students can do internships in the companies and then they can get hired.
Property	Scholarships	Scholarships lead the economic development
Open code	Looking for funding opportunities	The organization needs funding
Property	Challenge	Money is one of the biggest challenges to build relationships
Property	Sources	The organization is looking for different money sources such as the State Department, corporate grants, churches.
Axial code	Decentralizing politics	The organization tries to decentralize politics in sister cities relationships
Open code	Creating problems	Politics are causing problems in the city relationships
Property	Issues	The main issues are getting visas, nonstable governments, leadership (mayors), political hiccups, funding
Open code	Emphasizing the importance of leadership	Leaders play significant roles in the organization to build city relationships
Property	President	Presidents are the honorary chair of the organization
Property	Mayors	Relationships must be approved by mayors
Open code	Trying to keep the politics out of the relationships	The organization identifies itself as being apolitical
Property	People-to-people	The organization emphasizes people-to-people connections
Property	Representation	Members are not representing their country's political stand

Uncertainty about the Future

The first axial code that emerged from the interview data was "Uncertainty about the future." As indicated in Table 3, four open codes led to the axial code: prioritizing the local, emphasizing volunteerism, encouraging youth, encouraging diversity.

Table 3. Uncertainty about the future

Properties	Open	Axial
Human capitalist cost	Prioritizing the local	Uncertainty about the future
City as central to relationships		
Labor of love	Emphasizing volunteerism	
Extra effort		
Aging	Encouraging youth	
Generational differences		
Relevancy		
People of color	Encouraging diversity	
Women		

Prioritizing the local. Open coding revealed that representatives of the organization emphasized the local efforts in city relationships. They believe that relationships between cities do not last without local efforts. They view Sister Cities International as an "umbrella organization," and participant 1 sees the larger organization as "highly ineffective and disorganized" in terms of relationship-building efforts. Real work is done at the local level, such as raising money, traveling across countries, programming exchanges, and finding commonalities among cities to build relationships. Participant 4 thinks that "All depends on the people involved." She considers "Sister City International, sister city programs, are grassroots programs run by individuals who are interested in those relationships." Therefore, representatives of the organization view their efforts as vital for sister city relationships. They believe that their efforts at the local level make people-to-people diplomacy possible. According to them, individuals who are

58

interested in people-to-people relationships represent public diplomacy efforts in sister city relationships, and they see these efforts as separate from any form of government diplomacy.

In addition, sister city programs can also originate from the ground up; they don't have to come from the organization. For example, a French teacher reached out to local people at the organization to arrange an exchange program for her students, and the city became "a backbone of that structure" to help facilitate the exchange program with its sister city.

Organizational members see local efforts as a significant factor for the organization. They believe that the organization won't be able to survive long term without local efforts; however, they do not have any plans for the future if local efforts don't support the city relationships.

Emphasizing volunteerism. In the second open code, several participants believe in the importance of volunteer work for the organization. Participant 22 thinks that "This is all a volunteer organization, we're not paid to be here, you know, we're doing it out of the goodness. It's a labor of love, out of the goodness of our hearts." Volunteers run sister city programs, and participants believe that the organization would not exist if there were not people with a passion to run these programs. They are the ones who have done the diplomats' job by promoting peace and strengthening local communities: "Our sister cities are all based on volunteers, and the more active your volunteers are, the more activities one has." Participant 8 thinks that "The number of exchanges depends on the number of volunteers. If you have fewer volunteers, it can take five years to do an exchange, while if you have a lot of volunteers you can do exchanges three times a year."

He believes that the program "really is up to the volunteers and the time that they can put in."

Volunteerism, however, is also one of the biggest challenges for the organization because it is difficult to keep people interested in the sister city relationships. Participant 11 thinks that people are volunteering in different organizations and spending more time on volunteer work nowadays, so it is necessary to find attractive ways to keep them interested in volunteering for the SCI. Participant 24 admits that,

> The biggest challenge, uh, at the national level is resources. Um, and it's
> challenge here at the local level, too. I mean, we have to have, in
> resources usually, I mean, that means talent, that means volunteers…The
> exchanges are being run by the members. And I think that's the key. So I
> think that's, you know ... Retention of volunteers is, is, is important and,
> and, and the numbers are big.

Participants also mentioned the importance of motives for being volunteers in sister city relationships, such as the need for personal experience with the organization and strong self-interest. They believe that many people who volunteer have had previous exchange experiences, whether they went somewhere when they were kids through sister city relationships or someone in their family had some experience with the organization. Some of them decided to become a volunteer because they perceive the sister city relationship as something that appeals to their self-interests, such as "benefiting them with their resume" or "supporting their business." For example, participant 3 assumes that when people are involved in sister city relationships they have access to companies that are doing business through the government. She said:

Because once you're in that relationship, you have access to the

government. You have access to, um, to companies that already are doing

business there through the government. You know, you can pick up the

phone and talk to a local mayor, or, you know, somebody that is heading

economic development or somebody that's in charge of infrastructure,

whatever it can help your business.

Volunteerism is seen as an important factor for the organization in order to run its

programs. Representatives of the organization believe that the organization needs

volunteers to be able to survive. Since SCI aims to build sister city relationships around

the world, it needs a large number of volunteers who are interested in cross-cultural

relationships. There is also uncertainty about volunteerism since it's also seen as one of

the biggest challenges for the organization. Therefore, because there is a strong emphasis

on self-interest to become a volunteer for the organization, many participants focused on

business relationships around the world to get people involved in the organization, which

may weaken the importance of being interested in cross-cultural relationships.

Encouraging youth. In the third open code, participants believe that the

organization needs youth to survive; however, they don't know how to get them involved

and be interested in the organization. Participant 8 believes that many sister city

organizations are going inactive, closing their operations, because they think that there is

nobody to take on the work. Participant 11 sees member participation and recruiting

younger generations as a challenge for the organization as a whole. Some state

representatives and board members think the reason younger generations do not volunteer

is that they don't have time and money to invest in the organization.

Moreover, representatives of the organization believe that one of the biggest obstacles for the organization is "enticing younger generations to see the value in the organization." For example, participant 11 said that it is important to show college students and young professionals that if they join the organization, they can become more educated about the world around them and that could serve them in their career. However, participants did not seem to take into account the fact that younger individuals can learn about the world around them through new communication technologies and globalization. Participant 19 assumes that most participants are an average age of about 65 and they've been in the organization for years. She calls this an "intergenerational type of challenge," and she believes that "They're from a different generation. Um, and if you want something to continue, it has to be relevant to what's happening… But it's also like, so then how do we pass the torch? What are we leaving? Can it even make sense?"

Several organizational members also mentioned they are trying to get more young professionals in the organization. Participant 10 believes that "We need to be more about the youth because they are our future, you know." Several participants also talked about their current project, the Bell Ringing Project, during the interviews. The U.S.-Japan Sister Cities Bell Ringing Project promoted "The simultaneous ringing of bells in sister cities across the United States and Japan to mark 75 years of peace since the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki" (Sister Cities International, 2020, para. 1). This project called for citizen diplomats and city leaders to organize ringing bells in sister cities across the United States and Japan. Bell ringing started at 4:15 pm, Wednesday, August 5 (U.S. PDT), to coincide with the actual time and date the first bomb fell on Hiroshima at 8:15 am, Thursday, August 6 (Japan time). Bell ringing took place again at

62

7:02 pm, Saturday, August 8 (U.S. PDT) to coincide with the actual time and date the second bomb fell on Nagasaki at 11:02 am, Sunday, August 9 (Japan time) (Sister Cities International, 2020). Several participants indicated that this project is so important for them because it was organized by the youngest person on the board who felt:

> … to have voices from my generation, uh, involved in this, because that is one of the key problems that sister city organizations and sister city relationships have is the volunteer problem, uh, the succession planning. It's not really, it doesn't exist in a lot of organizations and they're not looking ahead to see who else is gonna take the reins in two years, five years, 10 years.

In sum, representatives of the organizational members are uncertain about the organization's future because they believe that younger generations are not represented in the organization. They think that not only is the organization aging, but they also can't represent the values, beliefs, and opinions of different generations because of the lack of youth in the organization. Participants also think that younger generations are not involved in the organization because the organization is not attractive to youth, and they do not see the value of becoming a volunteer for the organization. They also think that younger generations do not have time and money to invest in the organization. In addition, representatives of the organizational members are not sure about how to get younger generations involved in the organization.

Encouraging diversity. In the fourth open code, a couple of organizational members believe that the organization needs diverse people to survive. Even though a few of them mentioned the need for people of color on exchanges, they did not mainly

talk about how the organization reaches out to diverse people to involve them in their efforts. Instead, they think that the organization needs to have diverse people on board to survive. Participant 5 thinks that there won't be an organization if they continue to ignore diversity:

> It's not just an older white male and older white female who are retired, who, you know, want something to do organization. It can't be that, that's not the America that we have now. The America that we have now is much more, uh, culturally diverse. There's other places in the world that people are interested. So we have to figure out how we can accommodate that, accommodate that. We're starting to ask those questions I'm talking about from a board. I'm not sure where we're going to get to the answers that we need, but if we don't, we could become a dinosaur.

She also said that she's not only talking about being racially diverse, she thinks that the organization has to be more culturally diverse through expanding in parts of the world other than Japan. Japan has many active sister city relationships with U.S. local cities compared to other countries, including more than 65 sister cities in the state of California alone. She thinks that "The organization does not want to be in parts of the world where they're not comfortable or they don't have people who reflect those parts of the world, whether it's on the board or the staff" and added, "We can't be an organization about international and not be inclusive in our own board policies and organizations." Some participants suggested that the organization does not build sister city relationships with nations that do not have any representatives in the organization, whether on the board or among the staff. This idea contradicts the organization's main objective, which

is to build relationships among people from different nations, and limits the organization's relationship building capacity to specific places, such as Japan, with which the U.S. already has connections.

Participant 7 thinks that the organization is struggling with diversity and inclusion, similar to many other organizations in the U.S. They have started to take actions related to diversity and inclusion, such as having talks on race, writing a value statement for the organization, and having a diversity and inclusion committee. She believes that "This organization cannot, in its leadership, cannot be reflective only of white Anglo men." Participant 16 emphasized the need for women in the organization because she thinks that "they [mayors] are men, they are going to be more interested in an economic development type of relationship than perhaps a cultural or educational one."

Representatives of the organizational members believe that the organization has to take action in terms of diversity, equity, and inclusion in order to keep up with movements such as Black Lives Matter and Stop Asian Hate. Representatives of the organizational members also believe that the organization won't be able to survive if they don't pay attention to racial and ethnic issues at the national level. In addition to that, they believe that the organization also needs to act in terms of gender diversity. The organization won't be able to survive if the leadership only consists of white men. Even though they believe that the organization needs to act in terms of gender, ethnic, and racial diversity, they did not articulate any concrete plan to achieve these goals.

The emphasis on being locally driven, depending on volunteers, and a felt need for more youth and diversity make representatives of the organizational members

skeptical about the organization's future. They emphasized the importance of local

efforts, local city relations, and volunteerism to be able to survive because they believe

the real work is done at the local level by volunteers. According to them, survival also

depends on youth and gender, racial, and ethnic diversity. If the organization doesn't

become an attractive entity for youth, there won't be anybody to take on the work in the

future. In addition, participants believe that SCI also needs to act in terms of diversity,

equity, and inclusion in order to survive, but concrete action plans appear to be lacking.

Eliminating Differences

The second axial code that emerged from the interview data was "Eliminating

differences." As indicated in Table 4, four open codes led to the axial code: knowing

differences, finding commonality, adjusting technology, and erasing stereotypes.

Table 4. Eliminating differences

Properties	Open	Axial
Culture	Knowing differences	Eliminating differences
Language		
Common interest	Finding commonality	
People		
Communication	Adjusting technology	
Geopolitical issues		
Digital divide		
Reality	Erasing stereotypes	
Representation		

Knowing differences. Representatives of the organizational members mentioned

the importance of knowing differences in building sister city relationships. They believe

that they bridge cultures through organizing cultural festivals, tasting other nations' food,

or listening to other nations' music that reflects the differences. Participant 22 believes

that other cultures are different, but these differences bring people from different cultures

together and they learn to appreciate them. Participant 16 talked about differing cultural rules: "I do think you have to be conscious of the differences and you have to be conscious of, um, the protocols for, you know, different countries…what is perfectly acceptable in one country is not necessarily acceptable in another."

Representatives of the organizational members consider the importance of cultural competency to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across cultures. A few of them think that U.S. citizens have a lack of understanding of cultural competency sometimes, but they also think that they are getting better. Participant 24 added, "The first thing you have to do is learn about that country. Learn about that country's, uh, history. Learn about uh, the uh, the way they do business. Learn about their customs…You know, what are they?" in order to build relationships with them. Participant 9 mentioned the importance of understanding the way they communicate and gave Japanese people as an example of high context culture, which is "very, very different from the U.S."

Several participants also think that they have to be respectful of other cultures' customs, thus they have to be careful and follow the protocol on their trips around the world. For example, participant 1 talked about not serving pork to Muslims since they do not eat pork, whereas participant 14 emphasized how they keep China and Taiwan's events separate since there have been ongoing disputes between them. Participant 20 admits that,

> We try to encourage people to be humble. And especially in the case of
> Americans because Americans can be flamboyant and boisterous and
> egotistical and loud. And the last thing we wanted was them to go over to

anywhere, be it Ghana, Mexico, Germany, England, and announce, I'm an

American, hooray for America. Now you're going over there for a reason.

So tone it down and go over there and show respect and interest in

everything that they're doing.

Even though several participants emphasized the importance of knowing

differences and defined cultural competency differently, they believe that they are similar

in several aspects. For example, participant 23 thinks "It's all at the end about people,

you know, we're all people, no matter our race, culture, etc. We're all people, and it's all

about friendships." Participant 12 added,

Uh, people are, are really the same around the world. You know, they all

want to live a, a good life and have a healthy life and, and, uh, have

freedom to do what they wish, uh, make their country better. So I don't

see a lot of difference. You know it's the customs that are different. The

foods are different…

Participant 20 believes,

At the end of the day, it's the same issues and problems that people

have… these people are getting up every day like you are, putting on their

clothes, putting breakfast on the table, going to work, going to school, but

they're just doing it in a different culture, a different language in a

different religion, but they're still doing the same thing you're doing every

day.

Representatives of the organizational members also believe that even though they

speak different languages, the language barrier is not difficult because most people

around the world speak English or they can use an interpreter. Participant 25 thinks that "Most people speak English and we, you know, we have lots of Spanish speakers and lots of people who can speak German or whatever. So the language wasn't too big of an issue," whereas participant 24 believes that "Even though English is, is kind of the universal business language it… not everyone knows English…and we also are always prepared to, you know, with interpreters and things like that." Participant 23 said that having immigrants on their board helps them to understand the culture and solve language issues and added, "It really is best to have immigrants because, you know, that way, you don't have to deal with language barriers so much." Exchange students, however, need to know English to be able to join the exchange programs. For example, participant 25 said that "There is usually about 150 young people in our program, about 100 of them from the U.S. and 50 of them from foreign countries and they all speak English and they have to get to know each other." Participant 9 added that "Japanese students were always super quiet. They're, they're shy. Their English level was always very, very, very low." So during his stay in Japan he decided to help them improve their English level before coming to the U.S.

Even though representatives of the organizational members are conscious of the cultural and language differences between people, they effectively erase these differences instead of celebrating them. They believe that everyone is the same at the end of the day. Cultural and language differences are seen as superficial, and the representatives of the organizational members do not openly recognize deeper differences. For example, most of the participants think that everyone speaks English, or if people from other nations do not speak English, they can always use interpreters. Therefore, they think that it is easy to

eliminate these differences. They, however, do not appear to recognize the nuances of language that could lead to cross-cultural misunderstandings. Representatives of the organizational members also see other nations' people in somewhat stereotypical fashion, such as the Japanese being introverted, and ignore the differences among them.

In addition, representatives of the organizational members defined cultural competency in different ways, such as knowing the protocols, knowing the nations' history or customs, or listening to other nations to learn more about their cultures. These definitions indicate different perspectives of cultural competency among participants, which could lead to operating sister city efforts differently.

Finding commonality. Several participants emphasized the importance of finding commonality between cities to build relationships. Cities do not have to be the exact same size, but they need to have common interests since programs depend on cities' needs. Participant 1 said that "What sorts of partnership would be successful and, uh so, you know, like cities with parks that do not want industry, you know, tend to partner together, those that have big industrial plants, they have a lot of things in common." She gave as an example:

> Mountain cities, you know, they have natural, uh, simpatico with each
> other. They understand search and rescue, mountain maintenance, what to
> do about snow, orthopedic surgeons, uh, are naturals for people who live
> in mountain communities… they're more strongly environmental, they
> care about the pollution of the rivers and the downflow and flooding, they
> care about forest fires.

Other examples are Utrecht and Portland, which are two cities both known as bike friendly; Washington, DC, and Paris, which are two capital cities; and Seattle and Shanghai, which are port cities.

Participant 9 added an ethnocentric perspective by stating they need to find some common ground for their exchange programs to help strengthen students' experiences: "When Japanese students go to the U.S. how they can build a relationship immediately? So, okay, the first was easy, music. Everybody listens to Beyonce around the world and Justin Bieber and all others, a lot of music is the same, right?"

Representatives of the organizational members also think that the organization needs people on board who know the culture, customs, and language of the city that they're building relationships with. Participant 1 mentioned that "Other nations also look for people who know them. Italians want to see Italians, Africans want to see Africans on the committee." Participant 25 added, "We normally have someone that has some experience in that culture." For example, participant 23 talked about how a Dutch immigrant who lived in Oregon and worked at Nike headquarters was a good connection between Portland and Utrecht. One other state representative said that they certainly have somebody related to the other culture, such as Japanese families, or have a community in their state from that nation, such as a German American society, who helps to build relationships. Participant 4 talked about one of the programs that they've started during the pandemic that includes receiving masks from China and added, "The representative we have here in Sacramento is from China, so her network is quite large and she knows where to go." Participant 1 also talked about how she realized the importance of people who know the other nation:

His wife [is] from Thailand. Never thought more about it. Well, so as we

got to meet, we had an agenda finally to discuss this and said 'talk to us

about that.' Well, he has, he's in sales, he does all kinds of sales

internationally in California and Thailand, he has obviously tons of

connections and access. And so it was like, 'Hey, would you help us

develop this relationship?' and, uh, and 'Yeah sure.' People are, uh, most

people are really eager to help. And if you use, uh, something that

someone has intuitively or innately, or it's already something they're

doing, and to be able to apply Sister Cities to it, uh, if it's turning out to be

a great partnership.

Several participants talked about the importance of finding common interests to

build relationships between cities. They think that relationships need to be built on

commonality, not on differences, in order to be long-lasting relationships. Therefore, they

believe that they need to disregard the differences and focus on the commonality between

cities.

Adjusting technology. In the third open code, several participants emphasized

how using technology enables people-to-people relationships during the Covid-19

pandemic. The Covid-19 pandemic has affected most of the programs that SCI has. For

example, participant 4 said that since they could not have students from different parts of

the world, they had to delay their exchange programs. Participant 19 talked about how

hard it has been to make connections with developing countries since a lot of industries

went into recession and people lost their jobs in those countries. Thus, the organization

has adjusted its technology usage and has started to make connections through social

media and video conferencing software such as Zoom, Google, or Skype. For example, participant 3 said,

> This pandemic has really, um, I think facilitated us being able to do what we're doing today, which proves that you don't have to go there. And the experience can be almost the same in conversation 'cause we look like we're sitting together, um, with the kids and, and teachers and, and, you know, split screens, everybody can see each other. And, and I think that is where we're, we're- we're heading with this, I think, and it's cost effective.

Participant 2 added,

> The most recent thing for the Italian Sister City ended up being canceled because of COVID. So they ended up, it was supposed to be a violinist from, um, Potenza, Italy, coming to the US to perform in a couple of different venues. Everything was arranged and then it was all canceled. So the, um, uh, the concert was held as a Facebook live event.

> Another example is an SCI program that has connected the medical community in Afghanistan with doctors in San Diego. The Afghan medical community shares slides with the San Diego doctors, who then help them with diagnosis.

> Moreover, an SCI annual conference was planned to be in Santa Fe this year; however, it was organized as a virtual conference. Participant 7 said,

> Got the board's agreement that we should plan a virtual conference, which turned out to be an amazing blessing. Our average conference, if we were lucky, we had 300 registrants, down from a time when Sister Cities would attract a thousand people. But that was also the time where all conferences

attracted so many people. But then with the advent of the internet, people

didn't need to travel to places to share ideas. All of a sudden at your

fingertips, you can engage with anybody… So this opportunity to do the

COVID conference, we had, uh, over 1,700 unique emails attend our

virtual conference. It was amazing the number of people that we

connected with. Now, we're strategizing on how do we, how do we keep

those people involved? Many of them had never been to a Sister City

conference, could never afford to go to a Sister City conference. So we

made our organization accessible to so many people that were not able to

share. So it was, it was really an amazing, uh, event and how well it turned

out… And today we had a meeting and decided that we will do our

conference next year as a virtual conference... much like this conference.

The feeling is it's not ... COVID, of course, is a big driver, but it's the fact

that wealth is not going to be available, um, funding is not going to be

available.

Participant 20 also believes technology erases the distance between people, "and

then you can get on a Zoom call and you can have a Zoom call. Like you could be in

Turkey right now and we could still be having the Zoom call. Right. I mean, yeah. So,

um, you know, the, the connections that you can have are instantaneous and, and

amazing."

Even though these video conferencing software programs make communication

faster and easier between sister cities, a few participants also mentioned how it could also

be a challenge for some areas because of the Internet connection and time difference.

Some participants thought it could also be a challenge for anyone older because they are

not as used to integrating technology into as many aspects of their lives. For example,

participant 18 said,

> It is very hard to speak to the other committee head in Oshogbo because
>
> the connection is bad. It's very frustrating because we'll be in the middle of
>
> a conversation and we have to wait for WhatsApp to reconnect it. So it's
>
> like, can we... let's just email. Um, that is a challenge. Um, COVID is the
>
> big challenge right now. Um, it's also a challenge because like I said, most
>
> of the people are in their mid to late '60s. They don't have a culture of
>
> online stuff, like they had to learn the conference call. We had to do
>
> conference calls because people didn't really want to get on Zoom, we're
>
> still working on that. So the intergenerational issues with online systems
>
> and platforms is a big issue, even with our website.

Representatives of the organizational members believe that adjusting technology

usage in their efforts because of the pandemic enables people-to-people relationships.

They believe that technology usage helps the organization reach out to more people,

connect people easier than before, and eliminate geopolitical issues. However, when they

were talking about how they adjust technology usage in their efforts, they often ignored

the differences between cities in terms of accessibility and time differences.

Erasing stereotypes. Several organizational members think that the U.S. and other

countries are different from what is presented in the media. For instance, participant 14

stated,

Your opinion of me as an American could be tainted from what you see on

the news. But, if you talk to me and get to meet me, then you'll see,

hopefully see that I'm probably a little different than the news... So, I think

it's just getting to know people.

In addition, participant 3 believes people-to-people relationships make them understand the reality of countries and gave a Japanese citizen as an example:

He always said, he goes, what we saw on TV is not the America I saw. So

I think that's what Sister Cities brings to the table is that the more

exchanges we have on both sides… those people have come here and we

have gone there and we see the same issues and family life…I mean, we

see certain things of other countries until you go there, you really don't,

you don't know.

Participant 17 also thinks that people-to-people relationships make people see the reality about the countries:

Well, um, you know, I think probably a- you know, most people see the

United States as a, um, you know, as a successful country that they would

like to know more about, be involved with. Um, and I think too there's

probably some negative, uh, feelings about the United S- States that

sometimes uh occur in other countries where perhaps the people don't

really know what the United States is like and, you know, consequently

they have a negative impression of it. But I- I do believe whole point of

Sister Cities International is people to people. You know. No matter how

many wars have gone on, a one-on-one relationship with someone in

another country can go a long way to dispelling myths of, um, misperceptions about people. So you know, I think you just have to take it one day at a time. One person at a time, you know. To make those, uh, relationships develop over the years.

Several organizational members also believe that they are the ones who are representing the real images of their country. Participant 9 said that they are the "cultural ambassadors" and they represent the U.S., and according to him it is very important because "Isn't it interesting how you can form your whole opinion about millions of people based on a person you meet because they're from that country?" Participant 12 added: "It's the relationships between people and cities in our, in our country that, that help the image of the United States." Participant 26 also mentioned:

I think we represent, um, we say-we represent the- the image of the typical American. Not the Trumpian world, okay? And the typical American is lovable. Uh, we're outgoing. We're inquisitive…not only are we outgoing, but we are friendly. And respectful.

Participant 7 believes that,

So many other countries get their, uh, image of the United States through music, through, uh, TV, through movies, et cetera, et cetera. We put the face on and actually have the interaction. And, you know, people meet, go to each other's countries… And- and with our delegations people say, 'I had no idea Americans were so generous, and that they were this way.'

Participant 14 emphasized how they are different from the U.S. that was represented in the media:

Um, I was in Italy right after 9/11 and after President Bush had sent the

troops into Iraq and um, the weapons of mass destruction, so there were

lots of posters with President Bush… it said, 'Wanted George Bush for

crimes against the universe.' So then, but people would talk to me and

they would see that it was different than I was, I was not, what they, what

the perception was. That what they had seen on the news was not who I

am.

Representatives of the organizational members try to eliminate differences among

nations by erasing cultural and language differences, finding commonality to build

relationships between cities, and ignoring technological differences among cities.

Although representatives of the organizational members mentioned the importance of

knowing cultural and language differences, they also believe they need to find

commonality and not focus on differences among cities to be able to build relationships.

Moreover, while they emphasized how technology helps the organization build

relationships between cities, they ignored technological differences between those cities.

Representatives of the organizational members believe that sister city relationships make

people see the reality about countries, beyond the mediated images.

Prioritizing Economic Gain

The third axial code that emerged from the interview data was "Prioritizing

economic gain." As indicated in Table 5, four open codes led to the axial code: creating

business relations, focusing on economic development, connecting through education,

and looking for funding opportunities.

Table 5. Prioritizing economic gain

Properties	Open	Axial
Financial firms	Creating business relations	Prioritizing economic gain
Business leaders		
Economic relations	Focusing on economic development	
City tourism		
Students	Connecting through education	
Scholarships		
Challenge	Looking for funding opportunities	
Sources		

Creating business relations. Representatives of the organizational members indicated that they are reaching out to financial firms and business leaders to create business relations for economic gain. Participant 15 said, "We took business leaders to begin looking at how do we, how do we begin to diversify this relationship into potential commerce opportunities?" and gave an example,

A good example is taking business leaders. We took, uh, business leaders from, uh, SeaQuake Brewing Company, uh, which now produces a Kamome Ale. A, a, a beer that is specifically was R&D was done with, with Japanese guests here, premiered there. That's being brewed now that features this story. Uh, the Kamome, uh, specialized Dry Jack that, that Rumiano Cheese, um, just has, has just released after it being aged. Um, they did 2,000 pounds of this cheese that's built out of this relationship.

Participant 12 also said, "When we form our board of directors, we use representation from all the major companies in our state… So when we need their help, they're very willing to give us help."

Participant 17 added, "You need to talk to some business leaders in your community into agreeing to work with these other cities whether it's allowing some people to come here to look at their businesses and industry or send some people over there, you know, to work with their business and industry." Participant 3 said,

I'm an entrepreneur at heart… And so I, um, a lot of it started with the, uh, with the entrepreneurial concept first, you know, because I thought that was a good way, uh, coming sliding out of cultural and education. Let's kind of look at how we can do, um, how the startups can benefit working with startups of other countries. Okay. So that was just like a little pilot test I did on my own here and it worked okay. So I think when that worked and it was easier to go to a local government and talk to them about it.

Participant 18 said that "the idea that countries that trade with one another don't go to war. Why would you go to war with your customers?"

Several organizational members talked about the importance of reaching out to financial firms and business leaders. They think that businesses support building relationships between cities for economic gain. They also believe that the economic power that they gain from the business relationships they have created can help them focus on cultural and educational efforts.

Focusing on economic development. In the second open code, a few organizational members emphasized that the need for economic development is the prime factor of the organization. Participant 1 believes that "The need for economic

80

development caused cities to think differently about those relationships" and emphasized how they've become "More and more responsible for economic development." She said,

> Well, and you go, 'How does that, how, how would that translate?' Well, um, for instance, so, uh, a major corporation, uh, wants to move into your town... And, uh, one of the things that corporations look at when they're bringing in a lot of people into a new area, one of the indicators are, do they have Sister City programs? So that already tells them that the municipal leaders and the corporate leaders are supporting a concept of internationalism… And one of the things they talk about is, uh, how cities who have been so rigid, allow the little Pakistani guy with his grill to cook for lunch for the workers over here in this plant. You know, they just had to kind of look the other way, and then the guy made enough money that he could get a shop and paid rent. And that began, you know, it was, it was an evolution in thinking and driven by the need to pay more attention to, uh, economic development. How do we get businesses to come in and how do we, um, keep them here? So, uh, businesses bring in, uh, internationals of all sorts. And so they want to know if, uh, some of our, uh, uh, people are wearing different head gear, how will that be received? Or if they, uh, have different religions, how will that be understood?

Participant 22 believes that "They wanted to be sure that any relationships they had with other cities were more, um, focused on economic and business, and not so much on the softer side such as culture and charities." Participant 26 gave an example for a sister city relationship that only focuses on economic relations:

We were at our 25th year of our twinning between Dublin and San Jose. And for the first 25 years, we concentrated on economic development. We had fabulous tech companies. They had incredible engineers. They had no jobs. We needed different think. So, what we would do in those first 25 years when we did our exchanges, we would always take a fresh crop of new CEOs, we'd take them to Dublin, introduce them to engineers. Typically, those guys would hire the engineers, bring them back to their R&D department, and they would have better think in whatever their product development was. By the same token as Ireland in those years was very- was very poor, these engineers now would come back, uh, to, um, Ireland and open the European headquarters of the company that they had grown up in. So that raised the economic, um, quality of life for Ireland.

A few organizational members also said that they want people to visit their cities and make an economic impact by spending money in their cities, and vice versa. Participant 23 stated, "When we are going to another country, we are going to spend money in that city. We're spending money in hotels. We're spending money on food. We're spending money on transportation. So it typically has a, an economic impact that is local, which is good."

A few organizational members think that cultural and educational relationships between cities need to focus on economic development, otherwise, companies do not support these relationships since they do not have any economic gain. Likewise, if businesses do not support these relationships it is also hard for the organization to continue cultural and educational relationships among cities.

Connecting through education. In the third open code, representatives of the organizational members talked about the importance of the exchange programs for the organization. Participant 22 believes that "The SCI is all about bringing people together through education." Many efforts start with high schools and universities with the intent of making money. Participant 21 emphasized how they were interested in educating women in the Middle East, and they built a women's dorm and a school there with the help of architects, donor money, and business contacts in the Middle East. Participant 26 talked about the "postgraduate degree exchange scholarship program" where they selected one student in Dublin from the nine universities of Ireland to come to San Jose and either go to Stanford University, Santa Clara University, or San Jose State University, and added:

> Reciprocally we pick one postgraduate degree student, uh, to go to Trinity or Dublin City University for- for a year. At the end of the year, oh, while they're there, they do their coursework, but they also intern in their field either with a company or public sector entity or an NGO or- or an academic institution. Whatever their thing is so that on their last day in the morning, they get their diploma for either their Master's degree or their Ph.D., okay? And in the afternoon, if it goes perfectly, they get a job offer at the institution that they had interned at while they were going through this- this thing in the- in either Dublin or-or San Jose.

He also thinks that "Scholarship leads to economic development" and added "We would say and it's a job creator. Uh, so the companies liked it because here they are getting a fully vetted and trained student that they had a year to work with to get that

student culturally acclimated within their company before they actually had to hire them." Participant 12 added,

> These relationships, they're started at, at usually the college, the college
> level, it's a student exchange. That's, that's how a lot of these come about
> is, you know, the students in here go to college in those countries and with
> our sister cities and they meet somebody. And, uh, and they, uh, you
> know, they'll, they'll be there at college, in college for a year or so. And
> some of them have other experiences. Some of our board members have,
> uh, had, um, were employees of a business that worked in Japan and
> worked there.

Several organizational members talked about educational exchange as one of the most significant efforts of the organization. Many efforts start with high schools or universities to build relationships between cities. Businesses support these educational efforts with the intent of economic gain.

Looking for funding opportunities. In the fourth open code, several organizational members think that the organization needs funding, and they are looking for funding opportunities from different sources. Many organizational members believe funding is the biggest challenge that they have faced on the job. "I think for this non-profit work everyone will say the biggest challenge is funding…You've to get out and, uh, convince, you know, the community leaders and individuals that we're doing important work." Participant 22 added, "Biggest challenge is always money, always money, because we deal with volunteers and because I have not been so skilled in getting, uh, the business community." Participant 3 thinks,

One of the big issues, with Sister Cities is there are, there's no money for

no, there's no budget pretty much in anybody's budget or city budget. And

so sister city relationships around the world are, um, are some of them are

funded by governments, but others are just local where people are able to,

um, to- to raise money either through programs that they, you know, put

out there and people pay to attend them, but it's very hard to- to run this

organization without proper funding for it.

The Covid-19 pandemic also has affected the funding opportunities. For example,

participant 10 believes that "The way the federal funds and local funds are go-going with

COVID-19 now, now, right now. A lot of the cities are not willing to commit to this to…

They see Sister Cities International as something extra."

Several organizational members also mentioned that since the organization

always needs extra funding, they are looking for different money sources. The State

Department is the main funding source for the organization through its grants; however, it

is not enough to maintain the programs. For example, participant 21 believes that "One

source of some funding important is the State Department annual grant, but that's not

large enough to maintain, um, a productive staff in Washington that needs to, um, travel

and do outreach." Therefore, organizational members have applied to major foundations

to get grants and have been looking for business leaders or local people who can support

the organization and the programs. Participant 25 emphasized that

You can't do some of the stuff without money. Uh, and so, uh, that's been

my biggest push at Sister Cities International is we've got to get resources

and there are, there are people that, there are foundations and

organizations like the Gates Foundation that, that would promote cultural understanding.

Representatives of the organizational members prioritize the economic gain by indicating funding as one of the biggest challenges that the organization has. They believe that the organization needs money to build and maintain relationships between cities and they are looking for different money sources to make these relationships happen. They are also aware that these different money sources need to have economic gain to support these relationships. For example, local people provide funding for the organization with the intent of economic gain for their businesses, suggesting that they believe it takes money to make money.

The organization prioritizes economic gain through focusing on creating business relations, economic development, connecting through education with the intent of making money, and looking for funding opportunities. Representatives of the organizational members mentioned that they reach out to financial firms and business leaders for economic gain and talked about the need for economic development as the prime factor of the organization. Many efforts start with education with the intent of making money, and the organization needs funding to be able to build relationships between cities.

Decentralizing Politics

The last axial code that emerged from the interview data was "Decentralizing politics." As indicated in Table 6, three open codes led to the axial code: creating problems, emphasizing the importance of leadership, and trying to keep the politics out of the relationships.

Table 6. Decentralizing politics

Properties	Open	Axial
Issues	Creating problems	Decentralizing politics
President	Emphasizing the importance of leadership	
Mayors		
People-to-people	Trying to keep the politics out of the relationships	
Representation		

Creating problems. Several organizational members think that politics are

causing problems in the city relationships. For example, participant 2 believes that it is

difficult to deal with nonstable governments and leadership:

> The only difficulty you have in places like Ethiopia, for instance, is the
>
> lack of consistent government. I mean, in developing countries, um
>
> government can be spotty…Um, leadership is oftentimes transient and
>
> transitional constantly. So yeah, dealing with governments in developing
>
> countries can be very, very difficult. Dealing with governments in places
>
> like Japan is very, very simple, or, or France, um, very, very simple
>
> because there's a long history and there's continuity...If you talk about
>
> Ethiopia, sometimes the mayor of Aksum changes every few months, so
>
> there's no continuity…Um, other places, Potenza, Italy, the mayor
>
> changes every other year. Um, you meet a new mayor, you, you make a
>
> relationship and about the time that you've made a relationship, he's gone.

Participant 3 added,

> For example, here out of, uh, Miami out of Coral Gables, we flew Brazil
>
> to go do a sister city with a Fortaleza. Uh, everything was yay, yay, we
>
> want it, we want it, we took business people with us, the university was-

was represented. And, you know, we did university exchanges down there. We did everything. And then, um, you know, two weeks later after the election, the new government said no. They were not interested.

A few representatives talked about visa issues: "We had occasional visa issues like if, um, and a lot of it was political, so like, you know, depending on whoever was in power." Participant 26 added:

So, the problem with our visa system here because of course, uh, in the Trumpian world of paranoia, when students finish the course work at the end of the semester, that visa ends. So technically, that student has to go back to Ireland, apply for a work visa, and come back. So we had to figure out a way with the immigration system.

Participant 9 said: "When our president and our government bans travel from Muslim countries, the Indonesian students could not come to the summer program. They couldn't, they couldn't get a visa."

A few of the organizational members talked about the political hiccups between countries and how those political hiccups could affect the city relationships. Participant 25 said: "We try to go around politics. We just try to go around politics. And, uh, China's probably the hardest one maybe to avoid, but, we, we'll keep trying. We have Russian Sister Cities and we've had ups and downs with them." Participant 20 added:

For all the problems with Russia, if you can imagine Putin and Trump and all those people at that level, okay, leave them there. You know, do we just tolerate that or do we maybe try to make relationships between

Russians and Americans that are going to be long-lasting and are gonna

last, last longer than Trump or Putin, you know.

Participant 9 thinks that "I'm sure some people just didn't like me because I was

American. Because their experience with America, whether it's maybe a visa or

paperwork or something, did not go well."

Representatives of the organizational members think that politics are causing

problems in the city relationships such as political hiccups, visa issues, and unstable

governments. Therefore, they believe that they need to decenter politics in sister city

relationships in order to build and maintain those relationships.

Emphasizing the importance of leadership. In the second open code, several

organizational members emphasized the importance of leadership, especially the

president and the mayors, in building city relationships. For example, participant 1 says

"So we've had some presidents that completely understood it, that completely understand

the power of diplomacy, absolutely, then… just like mayors. And then you have some

that are clueless (laughs)." Participant 9 added: "Our president right now [Trump] is

making our life very hard when we go to another country." Participant 21 indicated that

"The sister city agreements, um, although they are initiated by citizens and the program

is, uh, directed by citizens, it is a mayoral agreement." Participant 24 added: "The mayor

has to sign that agreement. So making sure that-that you have those people involved. Uh,

you know, citizens can sometimes create these relationships and not have the cities

involved. Uh, then it cannot be official."

Participant 11 also believes that "If the mayor chooses not to focus on

international relations, then that relationship suffers because, um, the staff that's being

paid to handle that is, is, you know, that's their mandate." Participant 9 added: "Some mayors understand the value of citizen diplomacy and some mayors don't care."

Even though leadership plays a significant role in the organization to build official sister city relationships, several participants think that leadership can also create issues to maintain these relationships. Therefore, they believe it is essential for the organization to decentralize the leaders' role in these relationships to avoid their negative influences on the efforts.

Trying to keep the politics out of the relationships. In the third open code, the organization identifies itself as being apolitical, and the representatives of the organizational members emphasize people-to-people connections. For example, participant 24 stated that:

> You are not to talk about politics. We are apolitical. We are creating friendship for the United States. And I think most of the-the countries at least, I've probably visited 50 or 60 countries, um, our image is changing if you get to meet people. We do not have a good image on the media side, especially not our politics. I think that -that i-is very disturbing to a lot of people. But when they meet us in person I think they find us to be very friendly and open, uh, people.

Participant 1 added:

> We don't get involved in politics…like any good family dinner, no politics…So but we have had many scenarios, you know, during George Bush time, you know, and he's invading Afghanistan and Iraq, and it was difficult. As soon as they heard, people would hear you're from Texas,

'Oh, George Bush' you know, and we go, 'Okay, this is true, this, uh, he is

also from Texas, and, uh, but, uh, we're here on another mission.

She also said: "Like the president we have now who, you know, you're just like, uh,

every day is, uh, a diplomatic potential crisis happening. And we, uh, uh, we have to just

move that aside because our goal is people to people."

They also think that the organization needs to isolate itself from the State

Department. For example, participant 26 said: "State Department just stay out of the

way…Get out of the way because this is not government. This is people to people. And if

many people on the other side of the relationship get the sense that it's government

driven, they-they will not interact with this." Participant 9 believes that

> The State Department knows that diplomacy, that citizen diplomacy, we
>
> can reach people that the State Department will never reach. We can have
>
> dinner at people's houses in small towns that the State Department will
>
> never reach or never hear from. So we are like the front line of defense for
>
> the State Department.

Participant 20 also thinks:

> That was, that was like citizen diplomacy at its finest because, you know,
>
> if we send a student overseas for three, or three or four months, and then
>
> we receive students, they're representing their country. But they're not, it's
>
> not like they're going to meet the president. They, they're going to meet
>
> average people who are living and working in towns, the, the average
>
> people. And that, and that's honestly what Sister Cities is really designed
>
> for anyway, you know, we're not official diplomacy because we have the

State Department for that, we're citizen diplomacy. So we're people to

people, you know, and we're, and so while everything's going on at the

government level and all the craziness that goes along with that, and, you

know, your leader and my leader, and do we get along and all that, you

know, if you just set it all aside for a while.

A few organizational members also believe that they are not representing their

country's political stand. Participant 25 indicated:

We don't talk…we're apolitical, we don't, we don't talk about politics.

Uh, we talk about America and Americ-what America stands for, but we

don't talk about, 'Is Trump a bad guy or is, was, was Obama a bad guy?'

You know, we don't, we, that's not topics of discussion…we're not

representing the president. We're representing America over here.

Participant 20 said,

I mean, literally any country 'cause we've... the United States has officially

pissed off just about everybody in the world right now. So, I mean, I don't

know, do we have a friend? I, it's exasperating for me and I'm, I'm just so

upset about it at all, but, um, yeah. So, um, right now I think more

important, it's more important to maintain citizen and citizen relationships

and ties to reassure people that we're not all Trump.

Representatives of the organizational members believe in the importance of

people-to-people connection and its effects on people's thoughts about them and their

countries. They think that politics can have negative effects on sister city relationships,

whereas people-to-people connection alters these effects in favor of their countries and

people. Therefore, they try to decenter politics in people-to-people connections and differentiate themselves from the State Department by identifying the organization as apolitical.

Summary

In sum, there is skepticism about the organization's future among the representatives of the organizational members. They believe that local efforts, local city relations, volunteerism, and having youth and diverse voices at the organization are important elements for the organization to be able to survive. They, however, do not articulate any concrete plan in terms of how the organization can have incorporate these elements to be able to survive. They are also aware of the differences among nations but essentially erase those differences by bringing people together through SCI programs and viewing everyone as the same to be able to get along with each other. Participants believe economic gain has become the primary reason to build relationships between cities because everyone has a desire to make money and the program needs money to continue to run; however, politics can get in the way of that. Therefore, the organization tries to decenter politics in sister cities relationships while knowing that some government involvement is necessary to be able to survive.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The results indicate the overlapping and conflicting viewpoints held by the representatives of the Sister Cities International members. The following section explores in more depth how Sister Cities International, as a public diplomacy effort in the U.S., creates meaning and shapes identities of different communities around the world and answers each research question guiding this study.

Answering the Research Questions

This dissertation focuses on how a public relations theoretical framework can inform public diplomacy efforts and addresses the concerns of critical public relations scholars' approaches to public diplomacy practices within the Sister Cities relationships. Since examining the sociopolitical, socioeconomic, and sociocultural contexts in which public diplomacy operates is valuable to understanding public diplomacy efforts, this dissertation focuses on the cultural-economic model of public relations, which comprises five moments: representation, production, consumption, identity, and regulation. Central to the model are underlying power flows, identities, and the interplay of structural forces with agency. Even though each moment of the model is interlinked, this dissertation examines three moments —regulation, production, and representation— separately at first to better understand the component parts.

Regulation

One research question asked: How do regulatory concerns shape how SCI members plan and execute their public diplomacy efforts? Different aspects of regulation arose during the interviews in understanding what meaning is acceptable in specific

places and circumstances in terms of the organization's public diplomacy efforts. The moment of regulation examines power flows as enacted in politics, technological infrastructures, culture, and stereotypes as regulatory forces on the organization's public diplomacy efforts.

Politics. Regulation indicates how "any government attempt to regulate a behavior becomes an exercise in legitimizing power and exerting it, a process that both alienates and provides structure" (Curtin & Gaither, 2007, p. 57). In Sister City relationships, these governmental attempts, such as travel bans, mayoral approvals, presidents, and political hiccups between countries, help define these relationships and their meanings. Participants are aware of the government's power to regulate and organize public diplomacy practices in these sister city relationships. They recognize the government as a necessary actor in these Sister City relationships since the organization cannot perform public diplomacy practices without governmental support. They try, however, to identify the organization as apolitical. Sister City relationships, however, cannot be apolitical because these relationships depend on governmental support and, as a part of a country's public diplomacy efforts, Sister City relationships cannot operate separately from their political leaders on the world stage.

Participants believe that they are the ones who represent people-to-people public diplomacy efforts and not the government. Since public diplomacy efforts are sponsored and supported by governments, it is self-contradictory to identify the organization as a public diplomacy initiative by isolating it from the government. The State Department is the main funding source of the organization, and as public diplomacy initiatives, SCI's programs are mainly government-sponsored programs with the intent of building

relationships between cities around the world that can help governments to inform or influence public opinion in other countries.

Participants, however, see themselves as separate from the government while expecting government support for their programs. The organization, however, needs the government to be able to survive in the long term, and the government continues to provide funding to these programs in order to inform and influence public opinion in these cities. Therefore, the government actually owns the Sister City relationships and has primacy over the agency in shaping the organizations' public diplomacy efforts. If these people-to-people connections isolate themselves from government efforts and find different funding resources, then the Sister City relationships may survive, but they may no longer be a part of recognized public diplomacy efforts in the future.

Technology. The organization has recognized technology's key role to empower public diplomacy programs. Technology has become one of the significant communication tools for the participants because it is cost-effective and efficient for the programs. Using these communication technologies as a means of cultural production (Curtin & Gaither, 2005) empowers the organization's public diplomacy efforts through undermining geopolitical issues between countries and connecting cultures easier and faster than before. For some nations, however, technology usage created some challenges because of age, internet connection, or time differences. Therefore, the organization's public diplomacy efforts have not equally performed among different nations, and citizens of different nations do not have the same experience within the Sister City relationships.

In addition, a new report, *Socially Distanced Diplomacy: The Future of Soft Power and Public Diplomacy in a Fragile World*, published through a collaboration

between Sanctuary Counsel, an advisory firm that provides strategic communication advice to companies, governments, and individuals, and the USC Center of Public Diplomacy (McClory, 2021), indicates that the tech industry is one of the winners of the COVID-19 pandemic. The report, however, also indicates that "years of underinvestment in digital resources and capabilities is an ongoing challenge" for public diplomacy efforts (p. 24). While the participants have recognized technology's key role to empower public diplomacy programs, they have also ignored the inequalities that technology usage imposes among nations. This ethnocentric view erases the very real differences among nations in terms of countries' investment in digital infrastructure or being open to embracing new communication tools. Therefore, the organization's public diplomacy efforts do not take place equally for all nations around the world.

Technology will also be discussed in the production moment in terms of how it contributes to meaning making in the organization's public diplomacy efforts.

Culture. Participants understand culture differently in the more anthropological sense, which means that different Sister City efforts may not be operating on the same page and with the same plan in mind. Participants ignore culture as a major regulatory factor when they execute or plan a public diplomacy program in a given country with the belief that we are all the same at the end of the day. What they are also doing when operating with the belief that we are all the same is imposing a U.S. centric view on the other nations, which could undermine Sister City relationships.

Thinking that everyone is fluent in English and making other nations' citizens just like American citizens, who tend to be less shy and quiet, is an underlying ethnocentrism that guides the organization's public diplomacy efforts. Ignoring these differences among

nations and imposing U.S.-centric values on them suggest that they are trying to Americanize cities around the world and not build truly Sister City relationships among nations. The relations are built on U.S. cities as the norm, always overshadowing the other cities around the world. Even though the organization implies an equality in the Sister City relationships, participants are using American culture and language as the norm, creating a form of global imperialism. SCI emerged from the post-war environment with the idea of bringing people together to work toward common peace around the world, not a common image. The organization, however, essentially eliminates differences among people and remakes everyone in the U.S. image.

Culture, however, is also working as a regulatory force within the organization because participants think that the organization is aging and they need young people to be able to survive. Therefore, the older generation is trying to impose their culture on younger people, who come from a different cultural reference point. The main problem here is that the organization ignores individuals' values and beliefs and tries to get them together into fixed common values and beliefs that belong to an older generation. For example, becoming more educated about the world through face-to-face interaction may not be attractive for some young people since they can use new communication technologies to learn about the world. Thus, the organization fails to identify some alternative discourses, which constrains its efforts.

Another regulatory force within the organization are the current movements at the national level, such as Black Lives Matters and Stop Asian Hate. Participants have started to pay attention to diversity issues within the organization because these movements add pressure on the organization to be more diverse, both at the leadership level but also

among the volunteers. The participants, however, pay attention to race, ethnicity, and culture and miss other dimensions of diversity, such as disability, class, education, and income.

Stereotypes. Stereotypes –a form of regulation– can form characteristic features for nations (Curtin & Gaither, 2007), which also indicate the differences among nations. The participants in this study try to erase differences among nations because they believe that stereotypes limit our understanding of other nations and are not helpful to understanding both the U.S. and other countries. Therefore, they believe that having stereotypes restrains building relationships between nations because stereotypes regulate our thoughts about other nations negatively. They believe, however, that they need to make everyone the same at the end of the day to build better Sister City relationships among nations.

In sum, politics, technology, culture, and stereotypes are major regulatory forces in Sister City relationships that shape what kind of meaning is acceptable in SCI's public diplomacy efforts.

Production

Another research question asked how participants characterize the process the SCI program uses to define the publics for their programs, which falls under the moment of production. One of the key publics for the organization is local efforts/volunteers because, as the participants believe, they are the ones who do the real work. These internal publics need to approve the organizations' public diplomacy efforts before these efforts start to run in other countries. Therefore, they have more power on the public diplomacy efforts than those who consume the efforts. This creates, as Gladwell (1998) says, an internal audience problem that privileges those who hold more power than the

targeted publics. An internal audience problem "occurs when agencies become preoccupied with pleasing powerful internal audiences, not the external audiences who actually consume the product" (Gladwell, 1998, p. 69). Privileging internal publics in Sister City relationships also indicates the underlying ethnocentrism noted in the moment of regulation. In Sister City relationships, Americans impose their values by privileging American culture and language over those of other nations.

When the program started, building cultural and educational relationships was the main objectives of the organization (Mascitelli & Chung, 2008); however, in its fifth decade (1996-2006), sister city relationships started to focus on economic aspects (Ramasamy & Cremer 1998; Cremer et al., 2001). As several participants indicated, the organization now focuses on business relationships around the world to satisfy volunteers' self-interests. Therefore, the organization creates what Anderson (1991) calls an imagined community that shares common values and beliefs: financial firms and business leaders. The organization needs financial firms and business leaders to be able to survive because the organization needs money to build cultural and educational relationships. Therefore, these publics also need to approve the organization's cultural and educational efforts in order to provide funding to the organization. Thus, economic gain has become an underlying demand in sister city relationships, which can change public diplomacy programs into short-term relationships and can weaken the importance of being interested in cross-cultural relationships.

The fourth question asked what the SCI program's intended messages/meanings are and how these messages/meanings are encoded into the programs.

100

The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the use of new communication technologies for the organization since the public diplomacy effort has become so dependent on technology-mediated communication because of travel restrictions. Participants have connected with other nations through social media and video conferencing software. For example, they organized meetings and an international virtual conference on Zoom and live events on Facebook. Using these technologies strengthens the West's power of representing itself because they are typical Western communication tools. These technologies are run and owned by U.S.-based companies. Therefore, they are readily available in the U.S. and maybe more easily accessed by U.S.-based individuals than by those outside the U.S. These new communication technologies, especially social media platforms and video conferencing software, however, allow participants to engage and interact with each other. These platforms facilitate participation and interaction among users by allowing them to produce content in a participatory manner. Users can create and upload content for, and share messages with, other users to interact with them (Seargeant & Tagg, 2014). For example, SCI allows its members to create content and interact with other members on its official Facebook page (https://facebook.com/SisterCitiesInternational). Therefore, they also offer a different discourse from dominant Western discourse and give some relative power to those who are actively engaged in these platforms.

Even though the organization has started to use new communication technologies during the Covid-19 pandemic, the external communication materials that two participants shared with the researcher were print materials, such as brochures, newsletters, posters, and photos. The SCI programs tend to use these legacy print-based

materials as the program tools to convey messages to their key publics. These materials

may not be as attractive to younger audiences, who tend to seek information online

(Common Sense, 2019).

The organization tries to find commonality between nations to be able to build a

successful, long-lasting Sister City relationship. Although the participants organize

cultural festivals, tasting events, or concerts that reflect the differences among cultures,

the first thing they do is to find commonality to bring these differences together. When

the participants were talking about finding commonality, they mainly gave priority to the

American city in the relationship. The participants assume that other nations' already

have knowledge about Western values, so they easily find common ground by

emphasizing those values, such as Western music or English. This ethnocentric view

assumes that everyone in the world is motivated by the same needs (Banks, 2000) and

tries to make the SCI program's messages/meanings the same for everyone by erasing

differences. This discourse also reflects the power advantage that the U.S. has in the SCI

program.

In addition, to understand the differences and find common interests among

nations, the organization uses key informants who know the culture, customs, and

language of other nations. They are the ones who know both sister cities, so they work to

find commonality between these cities to build relationships. Therefore, these key

informants offer a different discourse from the dominant Western discourse and give

some relative power to the other nation in the Sister City relationship. Therefore, Sister

Cities relationships are not one-way relationships; both sides have some power to

maintain these relationships. U.S. cities, however, tend to have the power advantage in

these SCI programs because they are the ones who have relatively more economic and technological power in Sister City relationships.

Representation

The fifth research question asked what dominant meanings the SCI program tools and materials convey.

Meaning is constantly shaped by regulatory forces, such as politics and stereotypes, and affected by the moment of production, such as technology and economy, in the Sister City's program tools and materials. Participants try to convey their own truths by indicating that they are not representing their country's political stand and they are the real images of their countries. Participants are trying to improve the U.S. image because they think that the Trump administration ruined the U.S. image in the eyes of the international community. Therefore, even though the organization needs money and approval from governmental organizations and leaders for most of its programs, the participants are trying to isolate the organization's messages from politics through its communication materials. For example, one of the posters that Asheville Sister City International used to invite the Asheville community to an event (Figure 1) states that they will feature stories about diplomacy "but not politics!."
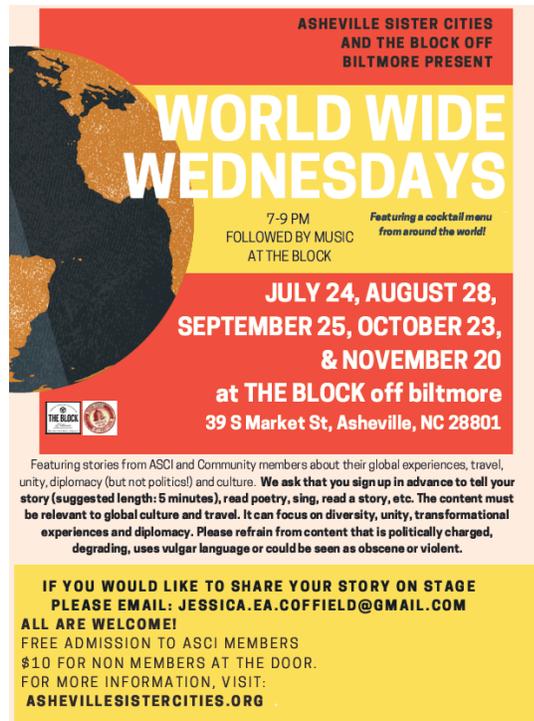
Figure 2. Poster of Worldwide Wednesdays Event

This event is typical of how local people have organized events to celebrate other cultures in their cities, such as cooking events and concerts. The main goal is to raise funding for the organization, and they do so through celebrating other cultures with fun activities. To promote these events, the organization uses cultural images in its program materials. For example, the organization uses food pictures specific to a nation to promote a cooking event. Although the participants state that they try to erase cultural stereotypes, some of the images used in these materials are employing stereotypes. These materials are created by the participants who are in the U.S., so the meaning represents these members' thoughts about other cultures. Figure 2 is an example of how Asheville SCI used cultural images, pictures, and words that demonstrate their depiction of Mexican culture.
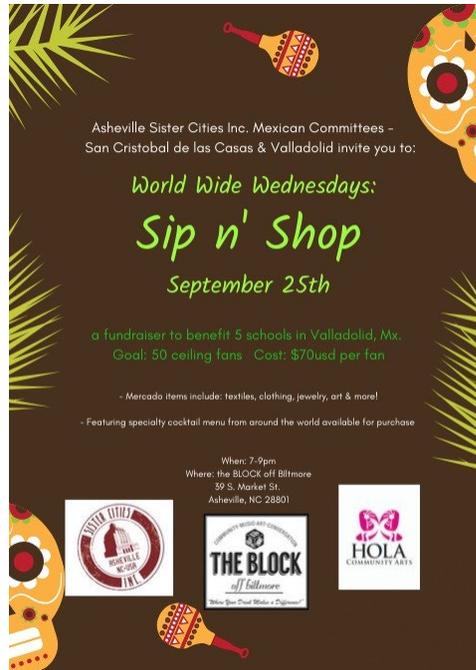
Figure 3. Poster of Worldwide Wednesdays Sip n' Shop Event

The organization has also started to discuss issues of diversity in its materials. For example, the president of the Asheville SCI mentioned in one of the newsletters that,

> While the pandemic consumed our attention this spring, I am sure none of us could have imagined that an even bigger issue, one that has been festering among us for centuries, would explode both in the streets of Asheville and around the globe: systemic racism. Our eyes have been opened by the truly horrific actions we have witnessed, and while we struggle to comprehend all the images we see on our televisions we know that the issues are real, and that we cannot turn away. (ASCI Newsletter, July 2020, p. 2)

Although the organization is discussing diversity, there is little evidence that the organizational members are actively doing anything related to diversity issues within the organization.

105

Moreover, the participants believe that news media and television shows do not represent the reality of countries; therefore, they are trying to represent their own truth by using new communication technologies, without relying on news media. Because the organization's membership primarily consists of older white people, the reality that they represent is that of that demographic in the organization. For example, one of the participants, an older white woman, talked about how Italians perceived her to be quite different from how Americans were usually portrayed on Italian media, particularly at a time when President Bush was viewed as a criminal, and by association the American people as well, for declaring war on Iraq. She said, "They would see that it was different … I was not, what they, what the perception was. That what they had seen on the news was not who I am." She thinks she is the one who represents the reality of the U.S. population, not the image portrayed by U.S. politicians and Italian media.

Cultural-Economic Model of Public Relations for SCI's Public Diplomacy Efforts

The first research question asked whether functionalist models of public relations are sufficient to inform Sister Cities International's public diplomacy efforts. The functionalist models of public relations focus on two-way symmetry and Excellence theory, which identify best practices in communication management and how public relations contributes to organizational effectiveness (Grunig, 1992) by ignoring larger structural factors as well as agency. This study indicates that it is important to pay attention to the dynamic characteristics of relationships and the discursive meanings that were built into Sister Cities International programs to be able to fully understand SCI's public diplomacy efforts. Following L'Etang's (2009) argument, this dissertation indicates the application of relationship and communitarian approaches to SCI's public

106

diplomacy efforts ignores the realities of hegemonism and nationalism. Since normative theories based on functionalist models of public relations do not capture these characteristics, this study indicates that critical-cultural and postmodern perspectives better explicate Sister Cities International's public diplomacy efforts through examining the sociopolitical, socioeconomic, and sociocultural contexts in which these efforts operate.

When the 21st-century public diplomacy approaches have started to focus on a relational framework (Arsenault, 2013; Cull, 2019, Zaharna, 2010), public relations scholars (e.g., Tam, Kim, & Kim, 2018; Wrigley, 2015) have started to use relationship management theory more frequently to relate public diplomacy to public relations. Relationship management theory argues that public relations manages the relationships between organizations and publics (Ledingham, 2003). This theoretical approach, however, ignores the power structures, different identities and discourses within the relationships. As Brown (2013) argued, not only do the relationships matter, but the context of those relationships also matters. Context explains much of public diplomacy efforts' successes or failures, such as having sufficient technological infrastructure, dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic, or having stronger ties among some countries, such as Japan and the U.S. Thus, this dissertation provides better explanatory power of Sister Cities International's public diplomacy efforts in its wide range of contexts and applications through positioning the West as not the only reference point in these practices. These public diplomacy efforts take place in multiple cities and varied regulatory environments. Since the model does not privilege one type of practice in one type of regulatory environment and embraces differences among identities, regulatory

environments, modes of production and consumption, and forms of representation (Curtin & Gaither, 2005), it recognizes the fullness and complexity of Sister Cities International's public diplomacy efforts in practice. In addition, the model explicates the role of technological and economic power in Sister City relationships as L'Etang (2009) suggested that linking public diplomacy to public relations needs to consider the role of power in communication, which has largely been ignored by normative theories of public relations. Moreover, the model supplies alternative meanings and explains how SCI's public diplomacy efforts are enacted rather than identifying a normative model of how the organization should behave.

Pierre Bourdieu's Contribution to Cultural-Economic Model of Public Relations

The last question asked how Bourdieu's theory extends the heuristic value of the cultural-economic model. The cultural-economic model aligns well with Bourdieu's theory of everyday practices. The CEM and Bourdieu use different language, however. For example, in Bourdieu's thinking, language is one of the main tools that organizes our understanding of the world by normalizing social structures and actualizing power relations (Bourdieu, 1991). The cultural economic model also believes that language constitutes reality. In the cultural-economic model, meanings are also created on account of discourses, and we understand the world through these discourses. Moreover, in Bourdieu's thinking, social structures and mental structures are interlinked. Bourdieu can help us understand everyday practices in public diplomacy through the relationship between the structure and the agent, rather than just focusing on governments in public diplomacy. To effect this synthesis of objectivism and subjectivism, Bourdieu talks about habitus, field, and capital.

Bourdieu (1990) discussed that everyday practices, as reflections of habitus, operate in the context of fields. Individuals are in a struggle to dominate the field through the control of field-relevant capital (Bourdieu, 1990). Habitus is structured through past influences and present stimuli with the patterned social forces that give form and coherence to the everyday practices of agents which reproduce the structure (Wacquant, 2006). Therefore, both producers' (organizational members) and consumers' (those from other nations) everyday practices within the Sister City relationships operate as reflections of habitus in the public diplomacy field. Habitus also reflects both continuity through transporting social forces stored in the individual organism across time and space and discontinuity through the acquisition of new dispositions (Wacquant, 2006). In Bourdieu's thinking, the public diplomacy field is a network of relationships between positions occupied by agents. In Sister City relationships, these agents are individuals who are involved in sister cities as volunteers, consumers, state representatives, or mayors. In Sister City relationships, these agents have unequally shared power or capital. Their positions depend on the types and amounts of capital that they have in the public diplomacy field. Because a field is an arena of struggle among agents and institutions to maintain or overturn the existing distribution of capital (Wacquant, 2006), the public diplomacy field is also a battlefield wherein power and capital are endlessly disputed. The CEM also considers power flows, identities, and the interplay of structural forces with agency to understand public diplomacy practices.

One contribution of Bourdieu's theory to the CEM is social capital because the model does not clearly deal with the networks of institutionalized relationships, such as family or resources, that individuals have because of being a member of a group. Another

contribution is cultural capital because even though the CEM explains the connection between culture and power in order to create meaning, in Bourdieu's thinking cultural capital specifically focuses on education, which is one of the most significant areas of public diplomacy. Therefore, the term cultural capital can provide additional insight into the model to explain public diplomacy efforts.

Both the cultural-economic model of public relations and Bourdieu share some Marxist roots. The cultural-economic model of public relations is based on Britain's Open University's circuit of culture (du Gay, Hall, Janes, Mackay, & Negus, 1997). The model grew out of an inherently Marxist's circuit of capitalism and Hall's encoding-decoding model, drawing on the Frankfurt School's neo-Marxism (Curtin et al., 2016). Moreover, the model encompasses some elements of postmodernism by connecting culture with power as inherent and fluid in all relationships, which provides for agency within the constraints of structure (Curtin & Gaither, 2007; Gaither & Curtin, 2007). Even though Bourdieu did not consider himself a Marxist theorist, the theories of Karl Marx also influenced Bourdieu's thinking (Swartz, 1997). For example, Fowler (2013) indicated that Bourdieu not only used Marxist concepts and methodological frameworks but also recognized that it is important to study power relations within the transformation of social relations. Some scholars (e.g., Beasley-Murray, 2000; Brubaker, 1985; Desan, 2014) have noted the differences between the two theorists. For example, Beasley-Murray (2000) indicated that Bourdieu's economic capital is closely related to wealth and fails to enable an account of the accumulation of surplus. Bourdieu, however, describes how power relations operate and endure in everyday practices through the relationship between the structure and the agent, which is similar to the cultural-economic model.

110

Both the cultural-economic model and Bourdieu are concerned with the dynamics of power, but Bourdieu is less flexible in his understanding of the fluidity of power. The cultural economic model tends to be a bit more nuanced and allows competing discourses by balancing the tension between agency and structure that informs practices. According to the model, meanings are created in producers' and consumers' daily lives, with the recognition of the role of historicity in shaping those meanings. The cultural-economic model provides more room for agency because of its understanding of the fluidity of power than Bourdieu's thought does.

Bourdieu also connected social capital to status and power, while the cultural-economic model doesn't explicitly deal with social capital. Sister City International is one of the oldest public diplomacy initiatives in the U.S., with a large network around the world with more than 140 countries. The organization also has powerful connections with presidents of the U.S. as honorary chairs of the organization, the State Department as the main funding source for the organization, and business leaders and financial firms for economic gain. Thus, these networks and powerful connections provide social capital to the organization. In Sister City relationships, organizational members representing internal publics are also other forms of social capital. Social capital includes the resources that these individuals have because of being a member of the organization (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). These individuals possess social capital to legitimize their power and influence on behalf of the organization. These individuals have more status and power than those who consume the efforts since they are the ones who need to approve the organizations' public diplomacy efforts. The organizational members serve as cultural intermediaries since they are the mediators between producers and consumers (Curtin &

111

Gaither, 2007) who create an identification between the organization and those other nations. They are the ones who formulate and disseminate information to affect values and attitudes about social and cultural roles, identities, practices which indicates that they are performing cultural intermediary work (Edwards, 2012). Their cultural intermediation involves imposing American values over external audiences those of other nations by privileging American culture and language. They use various strategies and tactics such as posters, newsletters, and organizing events to legitimate the organization's public diplomacy efforts through what Bourdieu calls symbolic imposition (Ciszek, 2020). They legitimize both their organization's narratives and the cultural forms these narratives take. Thus, they dominate the field and make it function to their advantage by eliminating differences and imposing their values over those other nations. They only generate one meaning, which represents the West.

Bourdieu's social capital contributes to the CEM's production moment by providing resources to organizational members who represent internal publics. The resources that organizational members have because of being a member of the organization allow them to legitimize their power and influence on behalf of the organization. These individuals have more status and power than those who consume the efforts because they play significant roles in planning the organization's public diplomacy programs and communicating with consumers on behalf of the organization within the Sister City relationships. Therefore, organizational members also legitimize their power through encoding the SCI's program's intended messages into the programs.

Bourdieu (1986) defines cultural capital as things that can be "institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications" (p.242). Cultural capital exists in the

institutionalized state in Sister City relationships, which indicates the form of institutional

recognition, such as university degrees, because many organizational efforts start with

education. Almost all participants talked about the importance of the student exchange

programs for the organization. Education also has a significant place in Bourdieu's

thinking. Bourdieu sees the educational system as one of the main institutions that

contributes to the distribution of power in societies. Universities, colleges, and schools

are the institutions that produce, transmit, and accumulate the various forms of cultural

capital (Swartz, 1997). They serve to reinforce social differences and transmit the culture

of the dominant class and legitimize it as naturally superior to others (Johnson, 1993).

The U.S. has always been an attractive country for international students with high

quality education and foreign language improvement (Yildirim, 2021). The organization

also attracts many college and high school students through its exchange programs, and

these programs are built on U.S. cities as the norm, with an overrepresentation of

American culture and language that creates an inequality in the Sister City relationships.

Therefore, these programs also contribute to the power distribution in Sister City

relationships by maintaining inegalitarian relationships among cities. Moreover, Bourdieu

believes that the educational system is the most responsible institution for keeping

inequalities of privilege and power intergenerationally (Swartz, 1997). These programs

have a long history in the organization that allows the U.S. to sustain its position of

privilege and power through the reproduction of power relationships among sister cities.

Bourdieu's cultural capital in the institutionalized state contributes to the CEM's

regulation moment. According to the CEM, regulation indicates "any government attempt

to regulate a behavior becomes an exercise in legitimizing power and exerting it that both

alienates and provides structure" (Curtin & Gaither, 2007, p. 57). These educational exchanges represent one of the organization's attempts to regulate behavior to legitimize the organization's power and allow the U.S. to maintain its position in these relationships.

Cultural capital also considers producers' work in terms of their strategies and trajectories, based on their individual and class habitus (Johnson, 1993) which indicates embodied state in which cultural capital is in the form of long-lasting knowledge and expertise (Bourdieu, 1986). Producers' actions are consciously or unconsciously defined by a habitus and structures that reflect the dominant relations in the field. Participants who mainly consist of older white people play a significant role in the organizations' public diplomacy efforts. When they organize a public diplomacy program they give priority to the American city in the relationship when trying to find commonality among cities and try to impose their culture on young people and those from different nations. The positions they occupied in the organization not only reflect the structure of the field but also the power relations in the field, which is the dominancy of old white American culture. Embodied state of cultural capital contributes to the CEM's production moment. In Sister City relationships, this moment refers to the planning and communication steps of the organization's public diplomacy efforts and introduces power dynamics from creation to implementation. Participants create identity and messages for young people and those from other nations, reflecting the structure of and the power relations in the public diplomacy field within the Sister City relationships.

Many similarities, then, are apparent between the two theoretical approaches. The cultural-economic model does not privilege institutions and inform the organization's public diplomacy efforts as a cultural practice of meaning surrounded by different

114

identities, relational characteristics of difference, and the role of power (Curtin &
Gaither, 2005). Bourdieu (1990) also helps us understand everyday practices in public
diplomacy through the relationship between the structure and the agent, rather than just
focusing on governments or organizations in the public diplomacy field. Both the CEM
and Bourdieu were influenced by Marxist theory and were concerned with the dynamics
of power. Bourdieu also connected social capital and cultural capital to status and power,
while the cultural-economic model doesn't explicitly deal with social capital and does not
focus on specifically educational qualifications. Therefore, these two concepts of
Bourdieu extend the heuristic value of the CEM to explain public diplomacy practices.

Summary

In sum, this dissertation focuses on how the cultural-economic model of public
relations can inform public diplomacy efforts and addresses the concerns of critical
public relations scholars' approaches to public diplomacy practices within the Sister City
relationships. To do this, this dissertation examines three moments –regulation,
production, and representation– of the model separately. Different regulatory forces –
politics, technology, culture, and stereotypes– arose during the interviews in
understanding what meaning is acceptable in specific places and circumstances in Sister
City relationships. In addition, two key publics –local efforts/volunteers and financial
firms/business leaders– need to approve the organization's cultural and educational
efforts before these efforts start to run in other countries. Although the Covid-19
pandemic has accelerated the use of new communication technologies such as social
media and video conferencing software for the organization, the SCI programs tend to
use print materials, such as newsletters and posters, to convey their messages to their

audiences. The organization tries to find commonality between nations and uses key informants who know the culture, customs, and language of other nations to be able to build a successful, long-lasting Sister City relationship. Overall, U.S. cities tend to have the power advantage in these SCI programs because they are the ones who have relatively more economic and technological power in Sister City relationships. In terms of the moment of representation, meaning is constantly shaped by regulatory forces, such as politics and stereotypes, and affected by the moment of production, such as technology and economy, in the Sister City program's tools and materials. For example, the organization tries to isolate its messages from politics through its communication materials, promotes events using cultural images that employ stereotypes, discusses diversity issues in its materials, and tries to represent its perspective by using new communication technologies, which participants believe is different from the representations of the U.S. in the foreign news media and on television shows. By doing this, the organization tends to represent the thoughts and the reality of older white people, who are the main demographic in the organization.

Moreover, this dissertation extends the cultural-economic model of public relations within the context of Sister City relationships through Bourdieu's theory of practice by incorporating two concepts: social capital and cultural capital. With its networks, powerful connections, and local efforts/volunteers, the organization possesses social capital to legitimize its power and imposes American values on the other nations in Sister City relationships. Moreover, with its educational institutions and producers, who consist of mainly older white people, the organization produces, transmits, and

116

accumulates cultural capital and legitimizes the power of U.S. cities with an

overrepresentation of American culture and language in the Sister City relationships.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Because of time differences and travel restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this dissertation was limited to one organization and organizational members who lived in the U.S. Therefore, they are not generalizable to all public diplomacy organizations and all citizen diplomats around the world. Moreover, because of travel restrictions, the researcher was only able to conduct in-depth interviews with SCI organizational members on Zoom. The researcher could miss out on some non-verbal cues such as body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice on Zoom. In addition, building rapport is harder on Zoom compared to face-to-face interviews. Scholars may consider applying this dissertation's framework to other citizen diplomats who live in countries other than the U.S. Moreover, this dissertation focused on the moments of production, regulation, and representation. Therefore, further research is needed to examine the consumption and identity moments of the model to see how external audiences use and make sense of public diplomacy materials. Scholars may consider traveling to SCI sites and conducting interviews with audiences of SCI for the consumption moment of the model, thus providing a more complete understanding of the production-consumption cycle. I also wanted to note that as an international student who came to the U.S. from Turkey, my personal and educational background has shaped my interpretation during the dissertation. However, I argue that these results have the potential to inform public diplomacy practices and make a theoretical contribution to both public relations and public diplomacy scholarship.

The results of this dissertation indicate that public relations theories have contributed to the theoretical and practical development of public diplomacy scholarship and also help further advance the conceptual and practical convergence of the two scholarships. In addition, these results indicate that the relational framework of public diplomacy needs to move beyond normative theories of public relations. From interviews with the organizational members of a non-profit organization, the Sister City International, these results contribute to theory building in the area of public diplomacy by indicating how critical and postmodern theoretical approaches inform public diplomacy practice by using the cultural-economic model of public relations as a theoretical framework to analyze public diplomacy efforts. Doing this helps us consider publics as active participants who construct their own meanings and the importance of the interrelationships of culture, identity, and power in public diplomacy efforts. Therefore, using this model overcomes the limitations of dominant normative theories of public relations that do not pay attention to the dynamic characteristics of relationships. The case study demonstrates the role of regulation (e.g., politics), production (e.g., technology), and representation (e.g., program tools and materials) in the organization's public diplomacy efforts. The case study also touched on identity (e.g., how producers create and reproduce their representations of self) because that moment touches so much on all the other moments; however, because of its close connection with the moment of consumption, which was not part of this study, the identity moment was not explored in as much depth as the other three moments. Therefore, the model provides a basis for theory building in public diplomacy scholarship with the capability of informing and explaining public diplomacy practices in its wide range of contexts and applications.

Some scholars (e.g., Arsenault, 2013; Cull, 2019, Zaharna, 2010) have argued that the relational framework of public diplomacy has become a significant approach, indicative of the importance of building relationships among public diplomacy actors. The relational framework argues that public diplomacy efforts should focus on forming relationships rather than presenting messages (Arsenault, 2013; Zaharna, 2010). Messages flow horizontally among networks in the relational framework (Cull, 2019), and there is a continuous interaction among the public diplomacy actors (Saunders, 2013). The results of this study, however, do not support the notion that the relationship framework should become the norm, at least in this instance of public diplomacy. The results of this study suggest that public diplomacy efforts do not equally perform among the cities in terms of building relationships because of differences in technological usage and the privilege of American culture and language in Sister City relationships. Therefore, citizens of different cities do not have the same voice and experiences in Sister City relationships. Moreover, given that the economy has become an important motivator for building relationships among cities and U.S. cities have relatively more economic power in Sister City relationships, they tend to have the power advantage in these SCI programs. As Cross (2010) indicated, having economic benefit as an underlying demand in Sister City relationships may create short-term and pragmatic goals in building relationships among cities as opposed to long-term cultural exchange and youth and educational programs. This can weaken the importance of being interested in cross-cultural relationships. Furthermore, having technological and economic power also gives the U.S. the privilege of messaging in Sister City relationships, which indicates that messages flowed from a U.S. city to the others with the representation of the U.S. cities'

values and interests, not horizontally among networks as indicated in the relational framework.

Moreover, according to Zaharna et al. (2013), this relational approach focuses on cooperation and collaboration among interconnected communities through technological networks. They argue that the success of public diplomacy strategies is based on the successful connections among public diplomacy practitioners and individuals or groups embedded within a network of communication networks. The SCI, however, has been slower to adopt its programs to technology. The organization has recognized the importance of technology because of the Covid-19 pandemic. For some nations, however, technology usage created some challenges because of digital investments, age, or time differences, which also caused the organization's public diplomacy efforts not to take place equally for all nations around the world. In addition, the organization's programs tend to use print materials such as brochures, newsletters, and posters as the program tools to convey their messages to their key publics. This can cause the organization to become more of a Cold War relic itself and can be the reason why the organization is not attractive to younger audiences, who tend to seek information online (Common Sense, 2019). Thus, this technologically driven view that focuses on network society creates uncertainty about the organization's future.

I also argue that these results advance the theoretical understanding of critical approaches in public relations scholarship by examining the cultural-economic model of public relations in a different context other than corporate settings operating within democracies. Following Curtin and Gaither's (2005) suggestion, this dissertation used the cultural economic model of public relations as a theoretical framework to examine public

diplomacy practices in their fullness and complexity instead of privileging Western, corporate models. Therefore, it also contributes to the public relations literature that has largely concentrated on corporate practice by considering the fact that public relations practices can take place in multiple arenas and different regulatory environments.

Furthermore, the results of this dissertation also extend the cultural-economic model through ties to Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice. The concept of social capital can provide much insight into the cultural-economic model with an emphasis on networks of relationships and resources that individuals have because of being a member of a group. Bourdieu connects social capital to power and status; therefore, the term provides better explanatory power to the CEM because it allows the model to explain public diplomacy practices as a cultural practice of meaning, which is also surrounded by social capital. In addition, in Bourdieu's thinking, the term cultural capital is also connected to power and status and helps us understand the importance of educational institutions and producers who play significant roles in these institutions. The CEM does not specifically focus on education, but because education is one of the most significant areas of public diplomacy, this dissertation argues that it is necessary to provide a better explanation of the role of education in the public diplomacy field.

In conclusion, this dissertation argues that the CEM informs public diplomacy practices better than dominant normative theories of public relations. In addition, Bourdieu's concepts of social and cultural capital provide more explanatory power to the model to explain the interrelationships of culture, power, and constructed meanings, particularly in the public diplomacy field.

APPENDIX: INTERVIEW GUIDE

[After reviewing consent forms proceed with interview]

1. Please tell me about yourself and your involvement with SCI.

   - When was the first time you heard about SCI?
   - How did you get involved in Sister Cities?
   - How long have you been a member of SCI?
   - Why did you choose SCI?
   - How do you see yourself in terms of the larger operation?

2. Describe for me the role you play at SCI and tell me about a particular campaign or initiative that is meaningful to you.

   - Tell me about a SCI program that's special to you
   - How did you establish an SCI effort? Who did you reach out to and why?
   - Did you run into issues with the governments or legal issues? What type of issues?
   - How did you bridge the cultures?
   - Did you target specific people for the program? How did you define those people?
   - What messaging was most effective to help bring the program to fruition? How did you arrive at that messaging?

3. Tell me about the picture of the U.S. that someone in another culture would receive from SCI materials.

   - How do you represent the image of the U.S. in program materials?
   - Does the picture of the U.S. change depending on another culture?
   - How did you decide what kind of program tools and materials do you use in another culture?

4. Tell me about the biggest challenge that you have faced on the job.

   - How did you handle it?
   - What did you learn?

5. What has been changed throughout the years in the program?

6. What is the role of the State Department in sister city relationships?

7. What else should I have asked you about I didn't? What else do you want to tell me?

Thank you for doing the interview. May I contact you again in the future if I have other questions or wish to clarify something?

REFERENCES CITED

Aldoory, L., Bellows, D., Boekeloo, B. O., & Randolph, S. M. (2015). Exploring use of relationship management theory for cross-border relationships to build capacity in HIV prevention. *Journal of Community Psychology, 43*(6), 687–700. https://doi.org/10.1002/JCOP.21755

Amin, H. (2009). The view from Egypt. In P. Seib (Ed.), *Toward a new public diplomacy. Redirecting U.S. foreign policy* (pp. 111–132). Palgrave Macmillan.

Anderson, B. R. (1991). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso.

Anderson, M. H. (2012). The story of "@America." In W. P. Kiehl (Ed.), *The last three feet. Case studies in public diplomacy* (pp. 54-72). The Public Diplomacy Council.

Armistead, L. (2002). Fall from glory: The demise of the United States Information Agency during the Clinton administration. *Journal of Information Warfare, 1*(3), 107–119. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26504108

Arsenault, A. (2009). Public diplomacy 2.0. In P. Seib (Ed.), *Toward a new public diplomacy. Redirecting U.S. foreign policy* (pp. 135–154). Palgrave Macmillan.

Arsenault, A. (2013). Networks of freedom, networks of control. Internet policy as a platform for and an impediment to relational public diplomacy. In R. S. Zaharna, A. Arsenault, & A. Fisher (Eds.), *Relational, networked, and collaborative approaches to public diplomacy. The connective mindshift* (pp. 192–208). Routledge.

Atkinson, P., & Delamont, S. (2005). Analytic perspective. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 821–840). Sage.

Banks, S. P. (2000). *Multicultural public relations: A social-interpretive approach.* Iowa State University Press.

Bardhan, N., & Weaver, C. K. (2011). *Public relations in global cultural contexts: Multi-paradigmatic perspectives*. Routledge.

Beasley-Murray, J. (2000). Values and capital in Bourdieu and Marx. In N. Brown & I. Szeman (Eds.), *Pierre Bourdieu: Fieldwork in culture* (pp. 100–120). Rowman & Littlefield.

Berger, B. K. (2005). Power over, power with, and power to relations: Critical reflections on public relations, the dominant coalition, and activism. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 17*(1), 5–28. https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532754xjprr1701_3

Bourdieu. P. (1977). *Outline of a theory of practice*. Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgment of taste*. Cambridge.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241–258). Greenwood.

Bourdieu, P. (1989). Social space and symbolic power. *Sociological Theory, 7*(1), 14–25. https://doi.org/10.2307/202060

Bourdieu, P. (1990). *The logic of practice*. Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language & symbolic power*. Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. J. D. (1992). *An invitation to reflexive sociology*. University of Chicago Press.

Bravo, V. (2015). The importance of diaspora communities as key publics for national governments around the world. In G. J. Golan, S. Yang, & D. F. Kinsey (Eds.), *International public relations and public diplomacy: Communication and engagement* (pp. 279–296). Peter Lang.

Brown, R. (2013). The politics of relational public diplomacy. In R. S. Zaharna, A. Arsenault, & A. Fisher (Eds.), *Relational, networked, and collaborative approaches to public diplomacy. The connective mindshift* (pp. 44–55). Routledge.

Brubaker, R. (1985). Rethinking classical theory: The sociological vision of Pierre Bourdieu. *Theory of Society, 14*(6), 745–775. https://www.jstor.org/stable/657374

Camp, B. (2012). How I came to love the Shanghai Expo. In W. P. Kiehl (Ed.), *The last three feet. Case studies in public diplomacy* (pp. 8–18). The Public Diplomacy Council.

Cevik, S. B. (2019, September 9). *Past due: Time to reinvest in U.S.-Turkey public diplomacy*. The Pacific Council. https://www.pacificcouncil.org/newsroom/past-due-time-reinvest-us-turkey-public-diplomacy

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis.* Sage.

Chua, A. A., & Pang, A. (2012). US government efforts to repair its image after the 2008 financial crisis. *Public Relations Review, 38*(1), 150–152. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2011.11.003

Ciszek, E. (2020). The man behind the woman: Publicity, celebrity public relations, and cultural intermediation. *Public Relations Inquiry, 9*(2), 135–154. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F2046147X20920821

Common Sense. (2019, August 13). *New survey reveals teens get their news from social media and YouTube.* [Press Release]. Retrieved from https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/new-survey-reveals-teens-get-their-news-from-social-media-and-youtube-300900557.html

Connolly-Ahern, C., & Ma, L. (2015). The evolving use of VNRs as a public diplomacy tool. In G. J. Golan, S. Yang, & D. F. Kinsey (Eds.), *International public relations and public diplomacy: Communication and engagement* (pp. 229–244). Peter Lang.

Cowan, G., & Arsenault, A. (2008). Moving from monologue to dialogue to collaboration. *The ANNALS of the American of Political and Social Science, 616*, 10–22. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0002716207311863

Cremer, R. D., De Bruin, A., & Dupuis, A. (2001). International sister-cities: Bridging the global-local divide. *American Journal of Economics and Sociology, 60*(1), 377–401. https://doi.org/10.1111/1536-7150.00066

Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches.* Sage.

Cross, B. (2010). Sister cities and economic development: A New Zealand perspective. *Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences, 30E*, 104–117. https://www.rtsa.ro/tras/index.php/tras/article/view/171/167

Cull, N. J. (2003). 'The man who invented truth': The tenure of Edward R. Murrow as director of the United States Information Agency during the Kennedy years. *Cold War History, 4*(1), 23–48. https://doi.org/10.1080/14682740312331391724

Cull, N. J. (2008a). *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency. American propaganda and public diplomacy, 1945-1989.* Cambridge.

Cull, N. J. (2008b). Public diplomacy: Taxonomies and histories. *The Annals of the American Academy, 616*, 31–54. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0002716207311952

Cull, N. J. (2009a). How we got here. In P. Seib (Ed.), *Toward a new public diplomacy. Redirecting U.S. foreign policy* (pp. 23-47). Palgrave Macmillan.

Cull, N. J. (2009b). Public diplomacy before Gullion: The evolution of a phrase. In N. Snow & P. Taylor (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy* (pp. 19–23). Routledge.

Cull, N. J. (2019). *Public diplomacy. Foundations for global engagement in the digital age.* Polity Press.

Curtin, P., & Gaither, K. T. (2005). Privileging identity, difference, and power: The circuit of culture as a basis for public relations theory. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 17*(2), 91–115. https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532754xjprr1702_3

Curtin, P., & Gaither, K. (2007). *International public relations. Negotiating culture, identity, and power.* Sage.

Curtin, P., & Gaither, K. (2008). International public relations. Toward an integrated theoretical base. In T. L. Hansen-Horn & B. D. Neff (Eds.), *Public relations from theory and practice* (pp. 281–299). Pearson Education.

Curtin, P., Gaither, K., & Ciszek, E. (2016). Articulating public relations practice and critical/cultural theory through a cultural-economic lens. In J. L'Etang, D. McKie, N. Snow, & J. Xifra (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of critical public relations* (pp. 41–52). Routledge.

Cutlip, S. M., Center, A. H., & Broom, G. M. (1994). *Effective public relations*. Prentice-Hall.

Davis, C. S., & Lachlan, K. A. (2017). *Straight talk about communication research methods*. KendallHunt.

Desan, M. H. (2013). Bourdieu, Marx, and capital: A critique of the extension model. *Sociological Theory, 31*(4), 318–342. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0735275113513265

Douglas, W. (2012). The last three feet: Understanding what Pakistanis are saying. In W. P. Kiehl (Ed.), *The last three feet. Case studies in public diplomacy* (pp. 108–116). The Public Diplomacy Council.

du Gay, P., Hall, S., Janes, L., Mackay, H., & Negus, K. (1997). *Doing cultural studies: The story of the Sony Walkman*. Sage.

du Gay, P., Hall, S., Janes, L., Mackay, H., & Negus, K. (2013). *Doing cultural studies: The story of the Sony Walkman*. Sage.

Dutta-Bergman, M. J. (2005). Civil society and public relations: Not so civil after all. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 17*(3), 267–289. https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532754xjprr1703_3

Dutta-Bergman, M. J. (2006). U.S. public diplomacy in the Middle East: A critical cultural approach. *Journal of Communication Inquiry, 30*(2), 102–124. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0196859905285286

Dutta, M. J., & Pal, M. (2011). Public relations and marginalization in a global context: A postcolonial critique. In N. Bardhan & C. K. Weaver (Eds), *Public relations in global cultural context multi-paradigmatic perspective* (pp. 195–225). Routledge.

128

Edwards, L. (2006). Rethinking power in public relations. *Public Relations Review, 32*(3), 229–231. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2006.05.013

Edwards, L. (2009). Symbolic power and public relations practice: Locating individual practitioners in their social context. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 21*(3), 251–272. https://doi.org/10.1080/10627260802640674

Edwards, L. (2011). Critical perspectives in global public relations: Theorising power. In N. Bardhan & C. K. Weaver (Eds.). *Public relations in global contexts: Multiparadigmatic perspectives* (pp. 29–49). Routledge.

Edwards, L. (2012). Exploring the role of public relations as a cultural intermediary occupation. *Cultural Sociology, 6*(4), 438–454. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1749975512445428

Edwards, L. (2016). An historical overview of the emergence of critical thinking in PR. In J. L'Etang, D. McKie, N. Snow, & J. Xifra (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of critical public relations* (pp. 16–27). Routledge.

Edwards, L. (2018). *Understanding public relations theory, culture and society*. Sage.

Ferguson, M. A. (1984, August 5–8). *Building theory in public relations: Interorganizational relationships* [Paper presentation]. Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication Conference, Gainesville, FL.

Fisher, A. (2013). Standing on the shoulders of giants. Building blocks for a collaborative approach to public diplomacy. In R. S. Zaharna, A. Arsenault, & A. Fisher (Eds.), *Relational, networked, and collaborative approaches to public diplomacy. The connective mindshift* (pp. 209–226). Routledge.

Fisher, N. (2016). The Committee on Public Information and the birth of US state propaganda. *Australasian Journal of American Studies, 35*(1), 51–78.

Fitch, K. (2016). Feminism and PR. In J. L'Etang, D. McKie, N. Snow, & J. Xifra (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of critical public relations* (pp. 54-64). Routledge.

Fitzpatrick, K. R. (2007). Advancing the new public diplomacy: A public relations perspective. *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy, 2*(3), 187–211. http://doi.org/10.1163/187119007X240497

Fitzpatrick, K. R. (2010). *The future of U.S. diplomacy: An uncertain fate*. Brill.

Fitzpatrick, K. R. (2013). Public diplomacy and ethics. From soft power to social conscience. In R. S. Zaharna, A. Arsenault, & A. Fisher (Eds.), *Relational, networked, and collaborative approaches to public diplomacy. The connective mindshift* (pp. 29–43). Routledge.

Fitzpatrick, K. R., Fullerton, J., & Kendrick, A. (2013). Public relations and public diplomacy: conceptual and practical connections. *Public Relations Journal, 7*(4), 1–21. https://prjournal.instituteforpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2013FitzpatrickFullertonKendrick.pdf

Fowler, B. (1997). *Pierre Bourdieu and cultural theory*. Sage.

Fowler, B. (2013). Pierre Bourdieu: Unortodox Marxist? In S. Susen & B. S. Turner (Eds.), *The legacy of Pierre Bourdieu: Critical essays* (pp. 33–57). Anthem.

Gaither, K., & Curtin, P. (2007). Examining the heuristic values of models of international public relations practice: A case study of the Arla Foods crisis. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 20*(1), 115–137. https://doi.org/10.1080/10627260701727051

Gil, C. (2020). The sister cities program and tourism. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management, 45*, 182–191. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2020.08.012

Gilmore, K. S., & Waters, R. D. (2015). Stewardship and the political process: Improving the political party-constituent relationship through public relations. In G. J. Golan, S. Yang, & D. F. Kinsey (Eds.), *International public relations and public diplomacy: Communication and engagement* (pp. 147–166). Peter Lang.

Gladwell, M. (1998, July 6). The spin myth. *New Yorker*, 66–73.

Golan, G. J. (2015). An integrated approach to public diplomacy. In G. J. Golan, S. Yang, & D. F. Kinsey (Eds.), *International public relations and public diplomacy: Communication and engagement* (pp. 417–441). Peter Lang.

Golan, G. J., & Yang, S. (2015). Introduction: The integrated public diplomacy perspective. In G. J. Golan, S. Yang, & D. F. Kinsey (Eds.), *International public relations and public diplomacy: Communication and engagement* (pp. 1–14). Peter Lang.

Golan, G. J. (2013). An integrated approach to public diplomacy. *American Behavioral Scientist, 57*(9), 1251–1255. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0002764213487711

Grunig, L. A. (1992.) How public relations/communication departments should adapt to the structure and environment of an organization…and what they actually do. In J. E. Grunig (Ed.), *Excellence in public relations and communication management* (pp. 467–482). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Grunig, L. A., Grunig, J. E., & Dozier, D. M. (2002). *Excellent public relations and effective organizations: A study of communication management in three countries*. Erlbaum.

Hall, S. (1980). Cultural studies: Two paradigms. *Media, Culture and Society, 2*(1), 57–72. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F016344378000200106

Holtzhausen, D. R., & Voto, R. (2002). Resistance from the margins: The postmodern public relations practitioner as organizational activist. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 14*(1), 57–84. https://doi.org/10.1207/S1532754XJPRR1401_3

Hon, L. C., & Grunig, J. E. (1999). *Guidelines for measuring relationships in public relations*. Institute for Public Relations, Gainesville, FL. https://www.instituteforpr.org/wp-content/uploads/Guidelines_Measuring_Relationships.pdf

Hu, T., Natarajan, S. & Delios, A. (2021). Sister cities, cross-national FDI, and the subnational FDI location decision. *Journal of International Business Studies.* https://doi.org/10.1057/s41267-021-00409-2

Huang, Y.-H. (1997). *Public relations strategies, relational outcomes, and conflict management strategies.* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Maryland, College Park.

Ihlen, Ø. (2005). The power of social capital: Adapting Bourdieu to the study of public relations. *Public Relations Review, 31*(4), 492–496. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2005.08.007

Ihlen, Ø. (2007). Building on Bourdieu: A sociological grasp of public relations. *Public Relations Review, 33*(3), 269–274. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2007.05.005

Jaffe, E. (2013, May 30). *Does being 'Sister Cities' really mean anything?* CityLab. https://www.citylab.com/equity/2013/05/does-being-sister-cities-really-mean-anything/5744/

Johnson, R. (1993) (Ed.). Editor's introduction. In Bourdieu, P. *The field of cultural production* (pp. 1-25). Columbia University Press.

Kochhar, S. K., & Molleda, J.-C. (2015). International public relations and corporate diplomacy. In G. J. Golan, S. Yang, & D. F. Kinsey (Eds.), *International public relations and public diplomacy: Communication and engagement* (pp. 51–71). Peter Lang.

Ki, E.-J. (2015). Application of relationship management to public diplomacy. In G. J. Golan, S. Yang, & D. F. Kinsey (Eds.), *International public relations and public diplomacy: Communication and engagement* (pp. 93–108). Peter Lang.

Ki, E.-J., & Hon, L. (2007). Testing the linkages among the organization-public relationship and attitude and behavioral intentions. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 19*(1), 1–23. https://doi.org/10.1080/10627260709336593

131

Ki, E.-J., Pasadeos, Y., & Ertem-Eray, T. (2019, August 7–10). *A bibliometric analysis of global public relations as a scholarly field* [Poster presentation]. Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication Conference, Toronto, Canada.

Kim, J. R. (2015). Application of issues and crisis management to public diplomacy. In G. J. Golan, S. Yang, & D. F. Kinsey (Eds.), *International public relations and public diplomacy: Communication and engagement* (pp. 109–130). Peter Lang.

Koppes, C. R., & Black, G. D. (1977). What to show the world: The Office of War Information and Hollywood, 1942-1945. *The Journal of American History, 64*(1), 87–105. https://doi.org/10.2307/1888275

Kosmidou, Z. (2014, Winter). Gastrodiplomacy: The case of the embassy of Greece. *Public Diplomacy Magazine, 11*, 63–65.

Kruckeberg, D., & Vujnovic, M. (2005). Public relations, not propaganda, for U.S. public diplomacy in a post-9/11 world: Challenges and opportunities. *Journal of Communication Management, 9*(4), 296–304. https://doi.org/10.1108/13632540510621641

Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *InterViews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing.* Sage.

L'Etang, J. (1996). Public relations as diplomacy. In J. L'Etang & M. Pieczka (Eds.), *Critical perspectives in public relations* (pp. 14–34). International Thompson Business Press.

L'Etang, J. (2005). Critical public relations: Some reflections. *Public Relations Review, 31*, 521–526. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2005.08.011

L'Etang, J. (2009). Public relations and diplomacy in a globalized world: An issue of public communication. *American Behavioral Scientist, 53*(4), 607–626. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0002764209347633

Ledingham, J. A. (2003). Explicating relationship management as a general theory of public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 15*(2), 181–198. https://doi.org/10.1207/S1532754XJPRR1502_4

Ledingham, J. A. (2006). Relationship management: A general theory of public relations. In C. H. Botan & V. Hazleton (Eds.), *Public relations theory II* (pp. 465–484). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Ledingham, J. A., & Bruning, S. D. (1998). Relationship management in public relations: Dimensions of an organization–public relationship. *Public Relations Review, 24*(1), 55–65. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0363-8111(98)80020-9

Ledingham, J. A., Bruning, S. D., Thomlison, T. D., & Lesko, C. (1997). The transferability of interpersonal relationship dimensions into an organizational setting. *Academy of Managerial Communications Journal, 1,* 23–43.

Lee, H. M., & Jun, J. W. (2013). Explicating public diplomacy as organization-public relationship (OPR): An empirical investigation of OPRs between the US Embassy in Seoul and South Korean college students. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 25*(5), 411–425. https://doi.org/10.1080/1062726X.2013.795863

Lee, S. T., & Kee, A. (2017). Testing an environmental framework for understanding public relations practitioners' orientation toward relationship management. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 29*(6), 259–276. https://doi.org/10.1080/1062726X.2017.1408465

Lee, S. T., & Lin, J. (2017) An integrated approach to public diplomacy and public relations: A five-year analysis of the information subsidies of the United States, China, and Singapore. *International Journal of Strategic Communication, 11*(1), 1–17. http://doi.org/10.1080/1553118X.2016.1226173

Ledbetter, C. (2017, December 6). *What the heck is a 'sister city' anyway?* Huffington Post. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/what-are-sister-cities-anyway_n_5851650

Levenshus, A. (2010). Online relationship management in a presidential campaign: A case study of the Obama campaign's management of its internet-integrated grassroots effort. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 22*(3), 313–335. http://doi.org/10.1080/10627261003614419

Lindlof, T. R., & Taylor, B. C. (2011). *Qualitative communication research methods*. Sage.

Macnamara, J. (2012). Corporate and organizational diplomacy: An alternative paradigm to PR. *Journal of Communication Management, 16*(3), 312–325. https://doi.org/10.1108/13632541211245794

Manheim, J. B. (1994). *Strategic public diplomacy and American foreign policy: The evolution of influence.* Oxford University Press.

Mascitelli, B., & Cung, M. (2008). Using Sister City relationships to access the Chinese market. New avenues for SMEs in regional Australia. *Journal of International Trade Law and Policy, 7*(2), 203–215. https://doi.org/10.1108/14770020810927363

McClory, J. (2021, May). *Socially distanced diplomacy: The future of soft power and public diplomacy in a fragile world.* https://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/sites/default/files/Sanctuary%2BCounsel%2Bx%2BC PD_Socially%2BDistanced%2BDiplomacy%2BReport_May%2B2021.pdf

McCracken, G. (1988). *The long interview*. Sage.

McKay, E. (2012). Recapturing the narrative in Turkey. In W. P. Kiehl (Ed.), *The last three feet. Case studies in public diplomacy* (pp. 40–53). The Public Diplomacy Council.

McKie, D., & Munshi, D. (2007). *Reconfiguring public relations ecology, equity, and enterprise*. Routledge.

Melissen, J. (2005). *The new public diplomacy: Soft power in international relations*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Motion, J., & Weaver, C. K. (2005). A discourse perspective for critical public relations research: Life Sciences Network and the battle for truth. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 17*(1), 49–67. https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532754xjprr1701_5

Nye, J. (2004). *Soft power: The means to success in world politics*. PublicAffairs.

O'Toole, K. (2001). Kokusaika and internationalisation: Australian and Japanese Sister City type relationships. *Australian Journal of International Affairs, 55*(3), 403–419. http://doi.org/10.1080/10357710120095243

Orlavo, V. V. (2009). The view from Russia. In P. Seib (Ed.), *Toward a new public diplomacy. Redirecting U.S. foreign policy* (pp. 69–93). Palgrave Macmillan.

Pieczka, M. (2016). Dialogue and critical public relations. In J. L'Etang, D. McKie, N. Snow, & J. Xifra (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of critical public relations* (pp. 76–89). Routledge.

Pilon, J. G. (2009). Synchronizing rhetoric, policy and action. In J. M. Waller (Ed.), *Strategic influence: Public diplomacy, counterpropaganda and political warfare* (pp. 348–367). Crossbow Press.

Power, E. M. (1999). An introduction to Pierre Bourdieu's key theoretical concepts. *Journal for the Study of Food and Society, 3*(1), 48–52. http://doi.org/10.2752/152897999786690753

Powers, S., & El Gody, A. (2009). The lessons of Al Hurra Television. In P. Seib (Ed.), *Toward a new public diplomacy. Redirecting U.S. foreign policy* (pp. 49–66). Palgrave Macmillan.

Pressgrove, G. N., & McKeever, B. W. (2016). Nonprofit relationship management: Extending the organization-public relationship to loyalty and behaviors. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 28*(3–4), 19–-211. https://doi.org/10.1080/1062726X.2016.1233106

Ramasamy, B., & Cremer, R. D. (1998). Cities, commerce and culture: The economic role of international sister-city relationships between New Zealand and Asia. *Journal of the Asia Pacific Economy, 3*(3), 446–461. https://doi.org/10.1080/13547869808724662

Rugh, W. A. (2009). The case of soft power. In P. Seib (Ed.), *Toward a new public diplomacy. Redirecting U.S. foreign policy* (pp. 3–21). Palgrave Macmillan.

Saunders, H. H. (2013). The relational paradigm and sustained dialogue. In R. S. Zaharna, A. Arsenault, & A. Fisher (Eds.), *Relational, networked, and collaborative approaches to public diplomacy. The connective mindshift* (pp. 132–143). Routledge.

Schneider, M. D. (2015). U.S. Public diplomacy since 9-11: The challenge of integration. In G. J. Golan, S. Yang, & D. F. Kinsey (Eds.), *International public relations and public diplomacy: Communication and engagement* (pp. 15–36). Peter Lang.

Seargeant, P., & Tagg, C. (2014). *The language of social media: Identity and community on the Internet.* Palgrave Macmillan.

Shen, G. (2009). The view from China. In P. Seib (Ed.), *Toward a new public diplomacy. Redirecting U.S. foreign policy* (pp. 95–110). Palgrave Macmillan.

Signitzer, B. H., & Coombs, T. (1992). Public relations and public diplomacy: Conceptual convergence. *Public Relations Review, 18*(2), 137–147. https://doi.org/10.1016/0363-8111(92)90005-J

Signitzer, B., & Wamser, C. (2006). Public diplomacy: A specific governmental public relations function. In C. H. Botan & V. Hazleton (Eds.), *Public relations theory II* (pp. 435–464). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Sister Cities International. (n.d.). *About us*. https://sistercities.org/about-us/

Sister Cities International. (n.d.). *SCI at a glance.* https://sistercities.org/about-us/sci-at-a-glance/

Sister Cities International. (n.d.). *What is a sister city?* https://sistercities.org/about-us/what-is-a-sister-city-3/

Sister Cities International. (n.d.). *Growing the national associa*tion. https://sistercities.org/1971/01/19/growing-national-association/

Sister Cities International. (n.d.). *Technical exchange in developing countries: The technical assistance program (TAP)*. https://sistercities.org/1977/07/17/technical-exchange-developing-countries-technical-assistance-program-tap/

Sister Cities International. (n.d.). *Our impact*. https://sistercities.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/SCI-Our-Impact.pdf

Sister Cities International. (n.d.). *Stevens Initiative*. https://sistercities.org/what-we-do/programs/stevens-initiative/

Sister Cities International. (n.d.). *2013 Youth Leadership Summit*. https://sistercities.org/2013/07/29/2013-youth-leadership-summit/

Sister Cities International. (n.d.). *Sino-African Initiative*. https://sistercities.org/sino-african-initiative/

Sister Cities International. (n.d.). *Country music capitals unite!* https://sistercities.org/2014/10/29/country-music-capitals-unite/

Sister Cities International. (n.d.). *Home* [Facebook page]. Facebook. https://www.facebook.com/SisterCitiesInternational

Sister Cities International. (2006). *Peace through people. 50 years of global citizenship.* Butler Books.

Sister Cities International. (2020, July 15). *U.S.-Japan Sister Cities Bell Ringing: 75 Years of Peace Since Hiroshima & Nagasaki.* https://sistercities.org/2020/07/15/u-s-japan-sister-cities-bell-ringing-75-years-of-peace-since-hiroshima-nagasaki/

Snow, N. (2009). Rethinking public diplomacy. In N. Snow & P. Taylor (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of public diplomacy* (pp. 3–11). Routledge.

Snow, N. (2012). Public diplomacy and propaganda: Rethinking diplomacy in the age of persuasion. *E-International Relations*. https://www.e-ir.info/2012/12/04/public-diplomacy-and-propaganda-rethinking-diplomacy-in-the-age-of-persuasion/

Snow, N. (2015). Public diplomacy and public relations: Will the twain ever met?. In G. J. Golan, S. Yang, & D. F. Kinsey (Eds.), *International public relations and public diplomacy: Communication and engagement* (pp. 73–90). Peter Lang.

Snow, N., & Taylor, P. (2009). *Routledge handbook of public diplomacy*. New York: Routledge.

Swartz, D. L. (1997). *Culture & power: The sociology of Pierre Bourdieu*. University of Chicago Press.

Tam, L., Kim, J., & Kim J.-N. (2018). The origins of distant voicing: Examining relational dimensions in public diplomacy and their effects on megaphoning. *Public Relations Review, 44*(3), 407–418. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2018.04.005

U.S. Department of State. (2010). *Leading through civilian power. The first quadrennial diplomacy and development review.* Washington, DC. Retrieved from https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/153108.pdf

van Ham, P. (2013). Social power in public diplomacy. In R. S. Zaharna, A. Arsenault, & A. Fisher (Eds.), *Relational, networked, and collaborative approaches to public diplomacy. The connective mindshift* (pp. 17–28). Routledge.

Vanc, A. M., & Fitzpatrick, K. R. (2016). Scope and status of public diplomacy research by public relations scholars, 1990–2014. *Public Relations Review, 42*, 432–440. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2015.07.012

Wacquant, L. (2006). Pierre Bourdieu. In R. Stones (Ed.), *Key contemporary thinkers* (pp. 1–17). Macmillan.

Waller, J. M. (2007). *The public diplomacy reader.* The Institute of World Politics Press.

Warren, C. A. B., & Karner, T. X. (2015). *Discovering qualitative methods. Ethnography, interviews, documents, and images.* Oxford University Press.

Weaver, C. K., & Motion, J. (2002). Sabotage and subterfuge: Public relations, democracy and genetic engineering in New Zealand. *Media, Culture & Society, 24*, 325–343. http://doi.org/10.1177/016344370202400303

Wolf, K. (2018). Power struggles: A sociological approach to activist communication. *Public Relations Review, 44*, 308–316. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2018.03.004

Wrigley, B. (2015). Tenets of diversity: Building a strategy for social justice in public diplomacy. In G. J. Golan, S. Yang, & D. F. Kinsey (Eds.), *International public relations and public diplomacy: Communication and engagement* (pp. 379–396). Peter Lang.

Yang, A. (2015). Soft power, NGOs and virtual communication networks: New strategies and directions for public diplomacy. In G. J. Golan, S. Yang, & D. F. Kinsey (Eds.), *International public relations and public diplomacy: Communication and engagement* (pp. 297–314). Peter Lang.

Yang, A., Klyueva, A., & Taylor, M. (2012). Beyond a dyadic approach to public diplomacy: understanding relationships in multipolar world. *Public Relations Review, 38*(5), 652–664. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2012.07.005

Yildirim, O. (2012). International graduate students' perceptions of American culture. *Journal of Education and Future, 2012*(1), 79-89. https://www.proquest.com/openview/a2a118f287260338adfd8a5b351d8b7b/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=2030900

Yun, S.-H. (2006). Toward public relations theory-based study of public diplomacy: Testing the applicability of the excellence study. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 18*, 287–312. http://doi.org/10.1207/s1532754xjprr1804_1

Yun, S.-H. (2008). Cultural consequences on excellence in public diplomacy. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 20*(2), 207–230. https://doi.org/10.1080/10627260801894330

Zaharna, R. S. (2004). From propaganda to public diplomacy in the information age. In Y. R. Kamalipour & N. Snow (Eds.), *War, media, and propaganda: A global perspective* (pp. 219–225). Rowman & Littlefield.

Zaharna, R. S. (2010). *Battles to bridges. U.S. strategic communication and public diplomacy after 9/11.* Palgrave Macmillan.

Zaharna, R. S., Fisher, A., & Arsenault, A. (2013). Introduction. The connective mindshift. In R. S. Zaharna, A. Arsenault, & A. Fisher (Eds.), *Relational, networked, and collaborative approaches to public diplomacy. The connective mindshift* (pp. 1– 14). Routledge.

Zatepilina-Monacell, O. (2015). Public diplomacy in NGOs. In G. J. Golan, S. Yang, & D. F. Kinsey (Eds.), *International public relations and public diplomacy: Communication and engagement* (pp. 37–50). Peter Lang.

Zelinski, W. (1991). The twinning of the world: Sister cities in geographic and historical perspective. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 81*(1), 1–31. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2563668

Zhong, X., & Lu, J. (2013). Public diplomacy meets social media: A study of the U.S.Embassy's blogs and micro-blogs. *Public Relations Review, 39*(5), 542–548. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2013.07.002