

**SOCIETIES IN TRANSITION: MULTI-CULTURAL-MAN AND STRATEGIC
PUBLIC RELATIONS (PR) CHALLENGES FOR PR PRACTITIONERS IN
SOUTH AFRICA**

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ABSTRACT

Over the past decade a number of countries have embarked upon dramatic socio-political transitions. A common denominator has always been a highly divided society filled with trauma. One such country is South Africa. A short overview is provided regarding the transition from the apartheid context to the new democratic dispensation and the huge challenges that the post 1994 South Africa has to deal with, in particular in the corporate context. The South African Reconciliation Barometer's surveys have been used to provide empirical data regarding the state of the nation with reference to particular selected areas. These statistics show a deeply divided society with high levels of mistrust. The public relations practitioner needs to negotiate these contexts in their efforts to practice integrated strategic public relations. Adler's multi-cultural-man metaphor (1985) serves as meta-theoretical framework. This article explores potential conceptual challenges for strategic public relations practitioners in their challenges to manage integrated public relations and the lessons to be learned from such traumatised societies. The extrapolation is the corporate context with the focus on integrated public relations challenges for the practitioners of public relations.

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade or more a number of countries have embarked upon dramatic socio-political transitions – mostly from an authoritarian repressive regime to a democratically-oriented society. A common denominator has always been a highly divided society filled with trauma. One such country is South Africa which had its first democratic elections in 1994 after more than 300 years of colonialism and apartheid. A society deeply divided not only along the lines of race, ethnicity and class, but also deeply divided in terms of economic prosperity and access to opportunities.

The context of this article poses that this kind of history and the new transformational challenges have profound consequences for the practice of integrated public relations in corporations situated in such societies. In particular, it poses serious challenges to the public relations practitioner as key player in the repositioning of their organisations. The public relations practitioner construct in this article deals with the strategic part of the practice of the profession and not with the technical application per se.

Furthermore, this article is focused on the analyses of some aspects of the state of the South African nation in transition as being reflected by the South African Reconciliation Barometer Report (Hofmeyr 2006) and its potential consequences for the practice of integrated public relations. The extrapolation will be contextualised in the corporate context with the focus on integrated public relations and the challenges faced by the practitioners of public relations. This will be discussed and presented in the context of the meta-theoretical framework of Adler's multi-cultural-man (1985).

In turn, this background should be linked to Rensburg and Cant's (2003: 39) reference to the evolution of public relations by identifying four trends that have been instrumental in its growth, namely the expansion of large corporations, the nature of change and conflict internationally and locally, the challenges of information technologies and the increased importance of public opinion in the 21st century for positive democratic means. See also Huang and Kleiner (2005) concerning the challenges for multi-nationals in an ever increasing globalisation context.

Having said that, strategically integrated public relations is viewed as the integration of an organisation's new and continuing relationships with stakeholders, internally and externally, through managing the total communication activity initiated or received by such an organisation with the view to protecting the brand and reputation of the organisation in an ethical way.

This context challenges the public relations practitioner profoundly. It is furthermore important to state that strategically integrated public relations in this article focuses on the conceptual challenges of relationship integration, stakeholder relationship integration, management integration, corporate structure integration and societal integration (Caywood 1997).

This article's following two aims are:

- To discuss and to extrapolate the potential of Adler's "multi-cultural-man" as metaphor (1977, 1985) and meta-theoretical framework in terms of its

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conceptual application to the corporate context and the potential conceptual challenges practitioners have to face. It is not an attempt to position the “self against the other” but to emphasise the complexity of a divided past and hence the challenges for integrated public relations practitioners to work towards sound stakeholder relationships.

- To make some suggestions regarding the conceptual and strategic challenges for integrated public relations practitioners who function in such corporate contexts, fraught with histories of division, mistrust and humiliation.

Having stated the above, it is important to indicate that this article is thus not about the application of public relations practices and techniques.

The first democratic election of 1994 has placed South Africa on a different route toward individual and collective futures. But the country cannot escape so easily from its divisive history, “the pictures in the minds” as Walter Lippman would say. Traumatic pictures, or in the Lacanian framework, a trauma located in the master discourse of a social mechanism (Lacan 1977) as manifested in the socio-political past of the country.

Against this background manifests a very complex set of communication-driven processes that are contributing to the shaping of the South African society on its way to a new and intricate identity. Some would say *sets of identities*. These communication processes are formal and informal in nature. There is a natural process of co-evolution as well as strategically-infused strategic communication processes being managed, in particular in the corporate context.

From a communication, and thus for the purposes of this article, a strategic public relations perspective, the question remains: What is the role of the public relations practitioner in corporate South Africa regarding negotiating these challenges that are being posed in terms of stakeholder relationships as a key function of integrated public relations against this background of division?

The meta-theoretical discussion focuses on Adler’s multi-cultural-man metaphor (1977, 1985) which for the purposes of this article would be juxtaposed in the South African historical and thus socio-political past as well as in the context of the present stakeholder relationship challenges faced by the public relations practitioner through integrated public relations practices. Although the original concept was developed by Adler (1977) with reference to white Western males’ multicultural experiences (Sparrow 2000), in this article the focus is on the heuristic and metaphorical value of the multi-cultural-man construct in the integrated public relations context.

Given this orientation, the aims of this article will be discussed in the context of the following aspects:

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- The political context and identity formation: The apartheid and democracy eras;
- The multi-cultural-man and identity: Challenges for strategic public relations;
- Reconciliation Barometer and multi-cultural-man: Significance for strategic public relations; and
- Communication and the multi-cultural-man and the implications for strategic public relations.

THE POLITICAL CONTEXT AND IDENTITY FORMATION:

THE APARTHEID ERA

To discuss identity as a collective national phenomenon, to discuss the historical contours or artifacts that contributed to identity construction, and to restrict this discussion to the institutional apartheid era for obvious reasons will do an injustice to the debate on identity and relationship dynamics. It is important to note early on that a discussion on globalisation does not form part of the parameters of the article, though the complexity of the globalisation context should constantly be kept in mind.

Identity discourse in the South African context is inextricably linked to historical eras that stretch way beyond the geographical borders of South Africa and the African continent (Zegeye, Liebenberg & Houston 2000). Stevens (2003) is of the opinion that these roots could be found in historical materialism with the emphasis on racism and colonialism.

One of the fundamental corner stones of the apartheid era, some would say the most fundamental and devastating piece of legislation, was the legislation contained in the Population Registration Act of 1950. The South African population was classified into four racial groups, namely white, black, Indian and Coloured. Some of the categories even had sub-categories (Muthien, Khosa & Magubane 2000).

The result of the legislation was that through institutional processes a very decisive part of individual, group, community and corporate identities were determined along racial lines. The South African society was administered and managed according to this ideology. The hierarchical arrangement was white privileged people at the top, followed by the rest. The ensuing process of humiliation, the destruction of dignity and identity and the resistance ended in civil war that ensued and lasted for many decades.

THE POLITICAL CONTEXT AND IDENTITY FORMATION:

THE DEMOCRACY ERA

After 1994 the democratic state became a prime communicator of identity messages and thus of relationship and stakeholder building. Corporate South Africa has joined in this process. Simplistically stated, the South African Bill of Rights is the counter pole of the 1950 Population Registration Act. The Bill of Rights is viewed as the cornerstone of democracy and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom. These values manifest in a range of activities including freedom of

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expression, freedom of religion and belief, freedom of association and privacy, freedom of movement, access to health and education and the right to own private property, just to mention a few. All of which contribute towards the restoration of individual and collective identities in a free non-racial non-sexist democratic society.

These intricate processes manifest *inter alia* in economic transformation with the aim of promoting growth and development through the redistribution of wealth and the creation of opportunity, especially for the previously disadvantaged (Muthien 2000; Magubane 2000). Corporate South Africa is at the centre of these initiatives. A massive re-branding and stakeholder relationship process after a negotiated settlement is taking place. This process cries out for strategic public relations at every level of society.

The enormity of the transformation process and the complexities that accompany such an undertaking are evident. The transformation process is much more than a legalistic mechanistic exercise. It cuts to the proverbial bone of the very being of the South African society in all its intricacies. In the corporate context the question as public relations practitioner remains: “How does this context impact on my company’s strategic positioning, and secondly, what role must be played by the practitioner?”

Another, yet crucially important subtext to the macro framework of transformation is the need for reconciliation. Reconciliation cannot be achieved without social justice, including the redress and the material well-being of the marginalised. Redress in this context goes far beyond the material only. There is also a need to come to grips with the injustices and dehumanisation of the South African society. Social justice carries with it the roots of identity construction and deconstruction.

But a note of caution seems appropriate as Adam (1994) puts it: “The legacy of past political systems lives on in everyday racial and ethnic consciousness. Racism as the everyday false consciousness of socially constructed differences has not disappeared with the repeal of racial legislation.”

It is the accepted position that social identity in the South African society is complex in nature. The complexity is not only informed by the hegemony of the past, but by the day-to-day realities of a society traumatised in very different and varied ways (Duncan 2003).

The point of departure regarding identity, multi-culturalism and communication, including the practice of strategic public relations, is not to position the “self” against the “other”. This is not an attempt to deny a racialised past, nor to argue that a clean slate approach should nullify the past (Zegeye *et al.* 2000).

A myriad of perspectives exists regarding stakeholder relationship development and the management thereof and thus identity deconstruction and identity construction, all leaning very heavily on the ubiquitous communication processes. See Gordon (1995), Berbrier (2004) and Taylor (2006: 217-237) on the emotional contradictions of identity politics, for example.

The perspective supported is that stakeholder relationships and identities, through strategic public relations practices, can be seen as open ended, fluid and constantly in a process of being deconstructed and constructed with varied timelines and outcomes. From an integrated public relations perspective, this activity remains a continually strategically managed process of which stakeholder relationships form the cornerstone of the activity.

Stevens (2003) in the post-modernist context warns however by saying there is a lot of support for the argument of varied experiences of social life with diffused sets of identities, but the point is that such an approach could perpetuate racism in the context of identity politics. Of importance here are the qualities of fluidity and context-dependence because conflicting racial, ethnic, gender, class, sexual, religious and national identities are a reality in the historical complexity of the South African society (Zegeye *et al.* 2000). This is equally true for corporate South Africa.

These complexities must be factored into strategic public relationship plans and practices in a quest to form new relationships with stakeholders internally and externally.

MULTI-CULTURAL-MAN AND IDENTITY: CHALLENGES FOR STRATEGIC PUBLIC RELATIONS

The above context provides the synergy for the complexities that confront public relations practitioners. The situation classifies itself way beyond a “crisis situation”. It is an existential and fundamental challenge of the being. The concept of “multi-cultural-man” has been described and discussed over centuries in many forms and contexts. Zeno 294 BC refers to “cosmopolitan man”. Lipton (1961) refers to “Protean Man” and Milhouse, Asante and Nwosu (2001) refer to “trans-cultural person” while McGill (2004) refers to the “global citizen”. Adler (1977: 38, in Sparrow 2000) refers to a new kind of man “embodying the attributes and characteristics that prepare him to serve as facilitator and catalyst for contacts between cultures”.

The concept has traditionally been viewed as a person that moves about in multi-cultural environments or persons who emigrate to a culturally foreign country having to deal with the challenges to transcend narrow loyalties with the view to adjust and to start the process of acculturation and assimilation. Kim (2001) says that unlike the original identity, the emerging identity is one that develops out of many challenging and often painful experiences of self-reorganisation under the demands of the new experience or conditions. Through trial and error an expanded identity that is more than the original identity or the identity of the new encounter, starts to emerge.

Again, adopting this concept to the South African public relations context seems to be important without claiming that there exists a collective approach to public relations in South Africa. The fact remains that public relations practices in South Africa are being planned, executed and evaluated in the context of a multi-cultural world within particular divisive socio-political histories.

Given the South African history of division and statutory racism and the progress that has been made over the past 13 years regarding cultural tolerance and integration, such a multi-cultural-man approach seems to be fitting to critique the development of new stakeholder relationships and thus individual and collective identities in particular with reference to the corporate world.

The South African corporate quest is an inland expedition, an exploratory journey towards one another across mostly unfamiliar and divisive terrain. This interplay poses particular challenges in order to transcend the potential impact of very complex histories as determinant of content and form of public relations practices.

In South Africa, communication and cultural exchange are the pre-eminent conditions for a prosperous and a collective existence. The focus is on the ability to transcend the own, made up of a myriad of personal, collective, social, emotional, political and educational experiences. The ideal goal is to get to a stage where the essential identity is inclusive, yet selective of life patterns different from his or her own at the deepest levels of existence (Adler 1985, in Samovar & Porter 1985).

Such an individual is grounded in both the universality and the diversity of cultural forms. Multi-cultural-man is intellectually and emotionally committed to the unity of human beings but also shows a deep awareness of the differences that need to be overcome. The focus is strongly on communalities as the fundamental orientation. In public relations terms this represents an integrated communication focus. These communalities are instrumental to creating through communication an inter-subjectivity of mutual understanding and a common future.

In this context, the fluidity of stakeholder relationships and identity as well as the role of communication are central processes. This requires that the sense of belonging should assist the parties concerned to negotiate the ever new formations of reality. The process of living on the boundaries is a real and existential process (Bennett 1993: 59). Tension and uncertainty are two components that accompany this complex interactive process of moving back and forth in and between cultures/experiences, no matter where the encounters occur. In this regard it is important to indicate that history has a peculiar relationship with memory and the tension in terms of the interpretations of history. Traumatized experiences are very difficult to deal with, especially where relationship dynamics are involved, because it manifests itself with very destructive consequences (Van der Walt, Franchi & Stevens 2003).

In the South African context the meeting of people as equal entities in all contexts of society is indeed a fairly new occurrence. Adam and Adam (2000) warn however that in order to talk about collective identity and collective memory in the South African society these terms should only be used in a loose metaphorical sense.

This meeting process in itself is not a simplistic process such as the making of friends. Adler (1985) says that cultural identity is the symbol of one's essential experience of oneself as it incorporates the world view, value system, attitudes, and beliefs of a group with whom such elements are shared.

Today, in the South African corporate environment, legislation forces companies through for example the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 and the policy of affirmative action to become more representative of the South African society. This process of unity does not come automatically. The challenges facing public relations practitioners are enormous in terms of the needs for affection, acceptance, recognition, affiliation, status, belonging and interaction with other beings as focus areas of identity and identity formation.

Adler (1985) states that the multi-cultural-man is radically different from the ordinary human being:

- Such a person (public relations practitioner) is psycho-culturally adaptive;
- Such a person (public relations practitioner) does not judge one situation by the terms of another and is therefore an ever evolving new system of evaluations that are relative to the context and situation;
- Multi-cultural-man (public relations practitioner) is propelled from identity to identity through processes of cultural learning and cultural un-learning. A new identity is always being newly created;
- Multi-cultural-man (public relations practitioner) maintains indefinite boundaries of the self. The parameters of the identity are neither fixed nor predictable. Berger and Berger (1973, cited by Adler 1985) call it the homeless mind. A condition that allows for nothing permanent and unchanging; and
- Multi-cultural-man (public relations practitioner) is able to look at his/her own culture from an outsider's perspective. This allows for a critical analysis of ideologies, systems and practices.

In this process the symbolic recreation of the individual or corporation is important. This goes far beyond the experience of intercultural contact. The multi-cultural-man undergoes shifts in his/her psycho-cultural posture, religion, personality, behaviour, nationality, outlook, political persuasion and values. These aspects may be totally or in part reformulated in the context of their experiences, as the boundaries of contact move and change. Where this process of change occurs it could take years to manifest. No two experiences are the same either. It remains unique. Ting-Toomey (1999) emphasises the point of mindful or deliberate communication as a process that underpins these identity negotiations where shared meanings are achieved through active involvement.

The enormity of such a process in traumatised societies, and in particular in the South African context, speaks for itself. To idealise or romanticise this would assist in no way. The conditioning through political, cultural and educational systems over centuries lay very heavily on the collective minds of all. The stresses and strains that accompany this are enormous. In considering the extrapolation of the multi-cultural-man metaphor, the following aspects must be kept in mind:

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- The multi-cultural-man (public relations practitioner) is vulnerable. In maintaining no clear boundary and form or sense of stability, the multi-cultural-man is susceptible to confusing the profound and the insignificant, the important and the unimportant, the visionary and the reactionary. It will take time to “settle down”.
- Multi-cultural-man can become a diffused identity (Erikson 1964, cited by Adler 1985). In communication situations which are confusing, contradictory, or overwhelming, the individual is thrown back and in a subjective way must sort out what to make of situations. Messages, images and symbols which are not organised coherently cannot be translated into the individual’s sense-making world. This can have serious consequences for the individual’s stability.
- Thirdly, multi-cultural-man can suffer from a loss of sense of his/her own authenticity. The danger is that such a person can easily disintegrate into a fragmented splinter.
- The fourth challenge is that such an entity can move from identity to identity experience without any commitment to real life situations. Such experiences can be viewed as superficial fads. This is especially true in situations where instant gratification seems at the order of the day.
- In the process of challenging boundaries the individual or the corporation may hide behind a screen of apathy and cynicism which harbours insecurity.

Of importance is to understand that the concept of multi-cultural-man goes far beyond situations of cultural adoption and cultural shock. It is much more fundamental. The multi-cultural style of identity is premised on a fluid, dynamic movement of the self, an ability to move in and out of contexts, and the ability to maintain some inner coherence through varieties of situations (Adler 1985).

It is not a simplistic calculation or comparative choice between assimilation and integration. It is the ability to continually modify his or her frame of reference and the ability to become aware of the structures and functions of groups that need to be negotiated whilst at the same time maintaining a clear understanding of the own personal, ethnic, and cultural identifications that would enable the multi-cultural-man to function optimally in a multi-cultural context (Berry 1970, cited by Adler 1985). Tillich (1966: 111, cited by Sparrow 2000: 176) suggests that in future one should live with tension and movement. The aim is to create a third area beyond the bounded territories, an area where one can stand for a time without being enclosed in something tightly bounded.

It is clear that strategic public relations cannot be practised in isolation from the complexities of societies. Challenges that individual public relations practitioners face in situations of change and transformation are equally real in the corporate context of the South African society. Once again the belief is that communication as strategic public relations practice performs a key facilitating role in the repositioning of companies in a democratic South Africa.

RELATIONS BAROMETER AND MULTI-CULTURAL-MAN

In the context of the above discussion the following empirical evidence makes it extremely important to contextualise the integrated public relations challenges faced by public relations practitioners.

Methodology and background

The analysis in this section is based on the results of four national surveys, which were conducted since April 2003. The standard sample size of this national syndicate survey is 3 500 South Africans, aged 16 years and older, from both metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas. The results of the survey can be projected onto the South African population as a mirror image of trends in attitudes and perceptions in general. Geographical area was factored into this process, and distinct sampling procedures were employed for metro areas and non-metro areas (Hofmeyr 2006: 7-8).

All settlements with a population that exceeds 250 000 had been categorised as metro areas. Multistage area-probability sampling was used in these areas. The sampling included all persons of 16 years and older, living in multi-member households. Enumeration areas were drawn from the 2001 Population Census and sampling points were allocated to sub-places in each of the metros. Within each of the sub-places a street was randomly selected using the Geographical Information System (GIS) and four to six houses were then selected using a random walk procedure.

Non-metropolitan areas were divided into the five following sub-categories:

- Cities: 100 000 – 249 999: Large towns: 40 000 – 99 999: Small towns: 8 000 – 39 999
- Villages: 500 – 7 999: Rural: Fewer than 500 inhabitants

Multistage probability sampling was also employed in non-metropolitan areas, with all citizens of 16 years and older being targeted. Enumeration areas (EAs) were drawn from the 2001 Population Census and sampling points were allocated to sub-places in each of South Africa's nine provinces, based on community size. Within each of the sub-places a street was randomly selected using GIS and four to six houses were then selected using a random walk procedure. In areas where there were no streets in the selected EAs, interviewers were required to count the number of dwellings and work out a skip, based on the number of interviews and the size of the EA and then select every n^{th} dwelling (Hofmeyr 2006: 7-8).

All survey results are weighted back to the population figures. This is done to address sample skews that might affect the proper representation within the universe. Data are weighted back to the population. The expected margin of error is estimated at 1.66% under the worst possible scenario (Hofmeyr 2006: 7-8).

The surveys provided snapshots in terms of the state of the nation. Obviously the complexity of the South African situation should not be underestimated by focusing on these findings only, but from a strategic public relations planning perspective it remains very important. The Barometer covered a spectrum of topics dealing inter alia with:

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- Economic matters;
- Human security;
- The legitimacy of the new dispensation;
- Cross-cutting political relationships;
- Dialogue with one another as South Africans; and
- Historical confrontation and race relations.

From a strategic public relations perspective these aspects are vitally important in the process of transformation and identity formation because it deals with the very fabric of the South African society. The surveys provided a wealth of very important moments, expectations, perceptions and reality interpretations of the collective psyche of the South African society. For the purposes of this article the following categories have been selected for discussion purposes because they represent some of the most critical relationship dynamics which in turn are crucial for the practice of integrated public relations.

This is even more relevant in the corporate context:

- One united South Africa;
- Historical view on apartheid;
- Race relations;
- Cultural matters; and
- Media as instrument of bridging the gap

It must be stated that the use of racial categories and terminologies should be viewed in the context of the socio-political history of South Africa. No ideological position is attached to the terminology.

TABLE 1: ONE UNITED SOUTH AFRICA

	2003	2004	2005	2006
All	72.8%	76.2%	77.6%	76.2%
Black	76.3%	79.9%	80.4%	78.3%
White	57.3%	56.5%	66.4%	67.6%
Coloured	76%.3	82.9%	78.9%	76.2%
Indian	82%.8	76.5%	80.4%	79.9%

In Table 1, a marked increase in optimism from 72.8% to 76.2% since 2003 of all South Africans has been recorded. White people seem constantly to be the least optimistic, followed by Coloured and Indian people. Political power, and the loss and the gaining

of power by respectively the white and the black electorate could be at the root of differences of opinion. As far as the white group is concerned a slightly more than 10% increase since 2003 has been detected which could indicate a greater sense of optimism and acceptance for a united South Africa.

TABLE 2: HISTORICAL VIEW ON APARTHEID AS CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY: PERCENTAGE AGREEMENT

	2003	2004	2005	2006
All	86.4%	84.8%	89.9%	87.7%
Black	89.6%	88.6%	89.5%	89.4%
White	69.3%	54.3%	68.6%	76.3%
Coloured	93.4%	94.3%	88.6%	93.3%
Indian	90.0%	89.8%	89.8%	91%

An interesting observation in Table 2 is that all groups, only with marginal differences, view the apartheid system as a crime against humanity. Even white people as the rulers and beneficiaries of the old system reject apartheid as evil. It is no surprise that all the other groups view apartheid very strongly or overwhelmingly so as a crime against humanity. There seems unanimity regarding the rejection of the past political dispensation in the most convincing way across all groups.

TABLE 3: RACE RELATIONS: THE TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE OTHER GROUP

	2003	2004	2005	2006
All	38.3%	39.6%	41.5%	39.6%
Black	42.7%	47.2%	46%	44.9%
White	24.2%	28%	19.3%	22.2%
Coloured	17.4%	9.7%	36%	12.5%
Indian	20.0%	17.7%	21.6%	17.2%

In Table 3, almost 40% of the respondents indicated that they do not trust one another. Black people show the least trust in other people, almost 45% of the respondents. White, Coloured and Indian respondents show a significant decrease of their levels of trust. However, very significant percentages of uncertainty dominate the question of trust in one another. In an SABC/Markinor opinion poll (2005), the optimism about a common future among all South Africans stood at 60%. This trend was up from 56% the previous year.

TABLE 4: CULTURAL MATTERS: I FIND IT DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND THE CUSTOMS AND WAYS OF THE OTHER

	2003	2004	2005	2006
All	58.7%	59.6%	60.7%	61.8%
Black	64.9%	66.1%	63.5%	66.5%
White	39.8%	42.1%	35.7%	38.3%
Coloured	42.7%	29%	47.1%	36%
Indian	35.9%	35.4%	27.2%	42%

Not much has changed over the past three years. The Coloured, Indian and white groups have registered significant lower levels of understanding of one another's customs. The overall picture in Table 4 reveals that almost 62% of the respondents have difficulty in understanding the customs and cultural ways of the other groups. Black people in particular, almost 67%, in 2006 indicated the highest level of not being in a position to understand cultural customs and ways of other people.

TABLE 5: MEDIA AS INSTRUMENT OF BRIDGING THE GAP: USING RADIO AND TV SHOWS WHERE SOUTH AFRICANS CAN TALK TO EACH OTHER ABOUT TRANSFORMATION

	2003	2004	2005	2006
All	78.4%	81.4%	83.8%	85.6%
Black	83.6%	86.1%	87%	82.8%
White	47.8%	53.3%	59%	60.4%
Coloured	88.7%	87.8%	81.6%	86.8%
Indian	82.3%	81.4%	87%	86.2%

In Table 5, the overall opinion is rather positive, namely, that radio and TV should be used as platforms to discuss issues regarding transformation. It is rather surprising that white people seem to express very strong negative views about the use of these media as discussion forums. However, there has been a significant change since 2003. An increase of 12.6% towards openness has been recorded. All the other groups express very favourable views. More than 85% of the respondents were in support of the use of these media for transformation discussions. Adam and Adam (2000) refer to the white respondents' position as collective amnesia as a strategy for dealing with unpleasantness of the past, especially a past that is highly embarrassing.

DISCUSSION AND SYNTHESIS

The overwhelming picture that emerges from these findings is one of a deeply divided opinion and expectation of one another as South Africans. Encouraging is the almost

unanimous rejection of the past and the hope for reconciliation albeit in the context of mistrust and uncertainty.

It seems evident that South Africans try not to make too much contact across the boundaries. In a related study a total of 46% of all South Africans indicated that they have never socialised across the colourline, while 23% almost never socialise across the colourline (Willemse 2004). In total almost 70% of all South Africans do not have significant contact with one another in social situations.

Of significance in this regard is the potential role of communication and thus strategic integrated public relations in the corporate context where the different groups are interacting more and more as equals and as subordinates as the transformation of corporate South Africa is progressing. The fact that white people in particular seem not to be ready to talk openly about reconciliation/transformation in a public forum is a serious matter of concern. Is it because transformation or reconciliation could be viewed as a private matter? Is this opinion an expression of a collective guilt that should rather be dealt with in private and in one's own close-knit circle?

The same question could be extended to the corporate context that is still mainly in white hands. Less than 3% of all Johannesburg Stock Exchange listings belong to black owned companies. The white population comprises less than 10% of the total South African population (Hofmeyr 2005).

In short, there seems to be common ground about the rejection of the past, but the question is how to move forward in the new context is one of uncertainty. A lack of mutual trust and difficulties to identify with one another's way of life, are key variables that need to be carefully managed in an integrated public relationship context. People live and work in corporations with varying backgrounds, values and expectations. This is even more challenging in societies that are emerging from a history of humiliation and strife.

Is it possible to cross the boundaries of the uncertainty in such a way that a new sense of security, belonging and identity could start to develop? In this regard, the concept of a multi-cultural-man should be explored and extrapolated to the corporate context. The opinion supported is that strategic public relations can play a significant role in the shaping of the multi-cultural-man identity metaphor as well as the development and management of stakeholder relationships as an extrapolation of the multi-cultural-man metaphor.

Such a position is even more relevant when strategic integrated public relations is viewed as the integration of an organisation's new and continuing relationships with stakeholders, internally and externally, through managing the total communication activity initiated or received by such an organisation with the view of protecting the brand and reputation of the organisation in an ethical way.

Strategic integrated public relations challenges and multi-cultural-man

The public relations premise supported in this article deals with the need to converge as strangers in the context of being stakeholders, internally and externally in the

company. According to Barker and Angelopulo (2006: 40) it is the cross-functional process of creating and nourishing strategically determined relationships with stakeholders and engaging in purposeful dialogue. It is a meeting point not to transfer information and meaning, but to jointly create meaning in an interactive and ongoing context. In a different sense, the multi-cultural-man metaphor and Paulo Freire's (1970) dialogical approach to communication supplements one another. Freire (1970) refers to a dialogical context where human beings are constantly learning from one another as equals. This is in particular applicable in situations where historically speaking an unequal and dehumanising system used to be ordering society's ways and means.

In the South African corporate context, the convergence or integrated strategic role of public relations should play in significant ways the role of addressing the divisiveness of stakeholder histories. Communication, and in this context integrated public relations, play an increasingly important role in the overall integration of the organisation and in stakeholder relations (Barker & Angelopulo 2006: 43). In order to advance the argument of stakeholder relationship building, it is proposed that strategic public relations as communication process can enhance this process further by addressing these challenges in a well-planned and integrated way not only by focusing on messages and their content but in all aspects of relationship manifestation. Adler's multi-cultural-man metaphor (1985) propels a range of highly significant conditions that need to be taken into account by the public relations practitioner in the practise of integrated public relations.

These aspects are:

- The ability to transcend narrow loyalties in a changing and uncertain context, internally and externally to the organisation;
- The ability to institute a process of self-reorganisation aided by the outsider's perspective;
- The inevitable expanded identity challenges that come with such repositioning;
- The social convergence at micro and macro levels, internally and externally;
- The ability to recognise the universal and particular, and the ability to merge and diverge in the interest of all concerned;
- A nurturing of belonging and the recognition of the humanity of people;
- Not only be able to tactically reposition internally and externally, but also to integrate the ability to be adaptive at the psycho-cultural level; and
- The ability to manage in an integrated way the challenges of indefinite boundaries and the dangers of fluidity regarding corporate identity.

Considering Adler's multi-cultural-man metaphor (1985) seems to be important. Practitioners of integrated public relations should factor the following dimensions into their planning:

- Vulnerability. Situations of repositioning, the bringing into the corporation of people with such traumatic histories can leave everybody and thus the organisation and its functioning very vulnerable;
- Being extremely accommodative leaves people and the organisation diffused and at a loss in terms of purpose and identity with a serious challenge to its authenticity; and
- Such a situation can be experienced and perceived as a superficial fad underscored by apathy and a cynical view of belonging and commitment.

Having stated the above, Newson, Turk and Kruckberg (2007: 218) emphasise that the premise of relationship construction is underpinned inter alia by the degree to which parties have the right to exert influence over others; trust in the sense of being willing to be open; satisfaction with what they do and experience; commitment, emotionally and as well as in terms of tasks; and lastly, communal relationships, meaning the authentic concern for the welfare of one another. In deeply divisive societies these are serious challenges to be overcome and to be strategically managed.

Communication is expected to be an integrating catalyst in all of these activities (Caywood 1997; Gonring 1997; Gronstedt 1997). The metaphorical extrapolation of multi-cultural-man's qualities as discussed above in the context of corporate South African's repositioning must be integrated with the following challenges faced by public relations practitioners as identified by Caywood (1997: xi-xiv):

Relationship integration: Broadly speaking two levels of integration can be identified, namely the internal processes of management philosophies, policies, practices, structures and stakeholders – all focusing on the integration of relationships – and secondly, the external processes of society integration. However, these levels are intertwined and should be regarded as mutually supported processes.

As far as stakeholder relationship integration is concerned the focus is broader than marketing target groups because the wider context of micro and macro implications regarding the successes and failures of the corporation have much wider consequences for societies and communities in which these corporations operate. To retrench workers in other words has wider societal and corporate implications than solely for the specific stakeholder group.

The management integration function recognises the premise that communication represents a total package in terms of the whole spectrum of management functions such as it manifests in human resources, financing, accounting, general management, etc. The successes and failures of these managers have profound consequences for all concerned, internally and externally, to the corporation. Integrated communication is essential for total alignment in terms of the mission, vision and values of the corporation. It becomes more than a management practice. It becomes a way of life, a corporate management lifestyle built on the premise of sound professional relationships.

Equally important is a firm understanding for the need of corporate structure integration. Managerial practices are supported by well integrated systems and structures throughout the corporation. Environmental practices as well as internal decisions have consequences for structural arrangements. Pressure to become more transparent or democratic in terms of managerial processes, as well as to react to technological developments such as electronic communication systems result in flatter managerial structures with a greater sense of executive powers and functions. An investment in trust underpins the viability of a diverse set of business units operating in an integrated way.

As discussed in earlier sections, one of the most challenging aspects of public relations as integrated practice is to succeed with societal integration. Corporate values that underpin and reflect the values promoted throughout societies are key aspects to the continuous process of relationship integration. No longer do corporations exist as employers only. Partnerships – quite often beyond the technical definition of publics and stakeholders – transcend the parochial definitions of these entities. The philosophy of integration militates against technical definitions of stakeholders as a short term interest group. The dynamics of society are far too complex for such an approach. This is even more so in the globalisation context of the world.

CONCLUSION

The limited snapshot provided in this article is testimony to a very complex society in transition. The changing environment has contributed profoundly towards integrated public relations challenges.

Meta-level dynamics which play a central role in the rethink of integrated public relations practices could be viewed as lessons to be learned. These include the following:

- Extrapolating the multi-cultural-man metaphor to the corporate context might be seen as stretching the limits of its application beyond the intended context of Adler's premise. This might be the case, but in terms of its heuristic value it does offer interesting conceptual and research possibilities for practitioners.
- The meta and micro levels of democracy in South Africa provide the parameters for communication convergence and interconnectivity in all spheres of society. The potential in spite of the legacy of the past to explore the multi-cultural-man metaphor forms part of the intricacies of the South African society. This may also be the case for other traumatised societies as well.
- The significance of the dialogical approach in building trust and commitment, also at the emotional levels, seems to be a key aspect in integrated public relations.
- Stakeholder relations construction and de-construction without inter alia trust, commitment and a sense of belonging can only lead to polarisation and power struggles which would render authentic stakeholder relations impossible.

- The manifestation of stakeholder relations and the construction of new identities through strategic integrated public relations could be a life-long process – more so in the South African case with a history which hardly has any shared symbols and common destiny among the different groups. In this case, corporations have to operate on and across boundaries to work towards new identities; they find themselves under enormous pressure to establish and maintain a brand that is stable.
- South Africans need to share a vision where the multi-cultural-man metaphor acts as the driving energy for the prosperity and dignity of everybody in a non-racial, non-sexist democratic society. The application of integrated strategic public relations in the corporate context can play a very significant role in transforming large sections of the life worlds of ordinary South Africans.

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