Theoretical Approaches in Public Relations: Article Summary

Student's Name

Institutional Affiliation

Abstract

Ihlen and Heath (2019) examine the ethical foundations for publications for Public Relations. Scholars have questioned the moral grounds of organizational rhetoric with its strategic processes of persuading the public. The discussion reveals the ethics of fairness and self-governance. The institutionalization of PR as corporate rhetoric stimulates a focus on rhetorical citizenship, advocacy, dialogue, discourse, and engagement at the individual as well as organizational levels. Current literature aligns with the assertions in the article from the standpoint of balancing dialectic interests and rhetoric being a social capital that leads to improved local governance and democratic decision-making. Group-thinking, long-term thinking, and dialogue should exist for PR to become an organizational rhetoric. On the other hand, different PR theories conceptualize the ethical grounds under which PR transitions into corporate rhetoric. The theories include excellence theory, two-way symmetry communication theory, and discourse ethics theory; there should be dialogue and discourse for PR to retain the sociopolitical influence of rhetoric in an organization.

Theoretical Approaches in Public Relations: Article Summary

Literature and Similar Articles

Different studies have articulated the ethical foundations of public relations as an organizational rhetoric. Ihlen and Heath (2019) conceptualize the subject from the perspective of fairness, self-governance, advocacy and dialogue, rhetorical citizenship, discourse, and engagement at personal or societal levels (p.1). The discussion aimed to explain and promote the institutionalization of public relations as organizational rhetoric. The views align with the perspective of another study that focused on problematizing organizational rhetoric. Boyd and Waymer (2011) examine the external organizational rhetoric as a special issue whose understanding can create a livable society (p.474). The research adopted a critical stance to identify the hidden ideographs and assumptions embedded within organizational rhetoric. The research established an importance of studying and applying external rhetoric such as public relations (PR) as tools for advancing society in entirety. According to Boyd and Waymer (2011) the dialectic of interests has to be balanced despite the challenges (p.488). The balance would lead to the institutionalization of PR as organization rhetoric as conceptualized by Ihlen and Heath (2019).

Another conceptual article by Taylor (2011) focused on the creation of social capital through rhetoric and PR (p.436). The authors aimed to understand how PR and external organizational rhetoric could meet or conflict with community interests. The research viewed PR as the enactment of the rhetoric through the perspectives of international organizations and community dialogues in Jordan. The study established that rhetors created social capital when they used PR for community advocacy. PR emerged as an enabler of external rhetoric, which improved local governance and improvement of the Jordanian communities. The findings align

with the assertion of Ihlen and Heath (2019) on using PR as rhetoric for enhancing co-democratic decision-making and self-governance (p.2). The collective decision-making in the society informs and enlightens civic decisions. On the other hand, self-governance prompts citizens to become effective orators that seek the betterment of society. PR offers the ideal foundation as organizational rhetoric and subsequent enhancement of citizenship in the community.

Kent (2011) proposed the concepts of group-thinking, long-term thinking, and dialogue as the foundation for PR rhetoric when he examined Long New Foundation's philosophy. Long Now devotes itself to long-term planning and sustainable development, which shows the close lit between dialogue and rhetoric. The concepts are the solutions to the conflicts that serve individual or societal interests, which Ihlen and Heath (2019) established as part of the ethics of rhetoric. The long-term thinking concept eliminates the myopic organizational focus so that it promotes dialogue and rhetoric that serves community needs. Additionally, Kent (2011) established from Long Now that fostering responsibility, engaging in a dialogic process, and enhancing trust was vital. The findings emphasize the adoption of a decision-making process that serves society. The enactment of long-term principles in the organization ensures PR rhetoric works and leads to a fully functioning community.

Ihlen and Heath (2019) conclude that rhetoric is a sociopolitical force, which prompts integration public and private citizenship in PR rhetoric theory. However, the incorporation of public and private citizenship occurs through dialogue and discourse, which manifests in the form of advocacy and shared meaning. Macnamara (2016) viewed discussion in the form of organizational listening to build concurrence and consensus. Listening occurs through two-way communication, relationships, and dialogue between the enterprise and its public. Additionally,

the view of PR rhetoric as a sociopolitical force aligns with the sociocultural turn that promotes the interests of the society and stakeholders of an organization.

Article and Relationship with Public Relations Theories

Ihlen and Health (2019) deliberate on citizenship as conflict as they emphasize the institutionalization of PR as organizational rhetoric. Rhetoric emerges as a tool for helping individuals participate in organizational activities. Publics need terministic and ethical conditions to empower the process of serving organizational needs. Rhetorical citizenship enhances democracy by promoting openness, transparency, and authenticity in communication. The assertions align with excellence theory, which outlines how PR enhances organizational effectiveness. Davidson (2016) describes excellence theory as an aggregative model of PR that perceives the public as organized. The public can engage in the bargaining and compromise that aligns with the rhetorical citizenship model. Excellence theory emphasizes that the public possesses the power to limit an organization to achieve its goals. The theory views two-way communication as the solution to a conflict that emerges between the management and the strategic public. Therefore, PR, as organizational rhetoric, achieves its goals when it meets the contributions of the public.

Ihlen and Heath (2019) perceive communication as one of the ethical conditions for decision-making and ethical solving; the ethics of persuading people by influencing their judgments, decision-making, or problem-solving necessitates communication to define stakeholder engagement. Communication questions address social and institutional norms, sense-making, dialogue, and alignment, besides facilitating reporting, guidelines, as well as goal attainment. Both internal and external communications influence the PR role in enhancing rhetorical outcomes. The arguments align with two-way symmetrical communication model for

PR. The model views the public as organized entities with a high capability of bargaining and compromising. There should be mutual interactions as opposed to one-side activity for the organization to meet its objectives. Two-way mutual communication encompasses mutual understand and respect for achieving organizational goals (Davidson, 2019). PR relies on two-way symmetry communication to enhance a dialogic turn while affirming its role as organizational rhetoric.

According to Ihlen and Heath (2019), collaborative decision-making requires PR rhetoric. The authors emphasize agonistic democracy as the source of much-needed conflict to optimize the consensus and agreements in the organizational process. Conflict promotes the achievement of the desired outcome by testing the power and privileges in vibrant public space. PR rhetoric fosters decision-making by allowing disputes to enhance productivity rather than a dysfunctional environment. The ideals align with the theory of discourse ethics in PR. Davidson (2016) perceives discourse ethics as a moral framework for organizational communication. The PR practice requires discourse ethics for dissecting the problems in an organization. The collaborative decision-making process in PR rhetoric requires discourse ethics to improve the understanding and determination of unresolved differences. The agonistic public spaces require discourse ethics to enhance open dialogue initiatives to achieve a universal consensus.

<div align="center">**Student Opinion and Recommendation**</div>

Student Opinion

The article by Ihlen and Heath (2019) addresses questions regarding the utility of PR for rhetoric. The review acknowledged the potential concerns on how PR can align with rhetorical goals and processes such as persuasive influence. The authors offer a piece that prompts deliberation on the functional ability of PR in line with organizational rhetoric. A PR as

organizational rhetoric requires the organization to pursue collective information sharing and two-side framing as well as communication of the message as emphasized by the two-way symmetry communication. PR as organizational rhetoric delivers consensus, concurrence, and participative decision-making.

Organizations should maintain organizational rhetoric for PR to deliver their maximum potential for the public. For example, Ihlen and Heath (2019) insist on ethics of fairness, agonism, self-governance, rhetorical citizenship, and advocacy, and discourse. Engagement is an imperative element in the implementation of PR for organizational rhetoric at individual and societal levels. Indeed, ethical grounding is the guiding principle that ensures PR defines the ends, tactics, and processes concerning organizational rhetoric. Consequently, an ethics-based approach of using PR to guide rhetorical missions should optimize positive results in society.

Recommendation

Ihlen and Heath (2019) recommend the involvement of different voices to enhance engagement and to build a fully functional society (p.10). Therefore, pursuing a consensus is essential for any organization seeking to use its rhetoric to drive responsiveness at individual and societal levels. Communities and individuals share interests that should be evident in the collaborative decision-making process. Additionally, organizations should develop ways of confronting the uncertainty of ethics as the in-built component of character, energy, form, purpose, outcome, and content. A multifaceted framework of maintaining ethics in the course of institutionalizing PR as organizational rhetoric could work.

In conclusion, the article explains and addresses the institutionalization of PR as organizational rhetoric. The discussion emphasizes a consensus and concurrence so that rhetoric realizes its goals and mission at an individual and organizational level. PR enacts rhetoric

citizenship at societal while ethics are necessary qualities for making the PR-based

organizational rhetoric effective. The process requires consensus and concurrence to balance the

nexus of power.

References

Boyd, J., & Waymer, D. (2011). Organizational rhetoric: A subject of Interest(s). *Management Communication Quarterly*, *25*(3), 474-493. doi:10.1177/0893318911409865

Davidson, S. (2016). Public relations theory: An agonistic critique of the turns to dialogue and symmetry. *Public Relations Inquiry*, *5*(2), 145-167. doi:10.1177/2046147x16649007

Ihlen, O., & Heath, R. L. (2019). Ethical grounds for public relations as organizational rhetoric. *Public Relations Review*, *45*(4), 101824. doi:10.1016/j.pubrev.2019.101824

Kent, M. L. (2011). Public relations rhetoric: Criticism, dialogue, and long now. *Management Communication Quarterly*, *25*(3), 550-559. doi:10.1177/0893318911409881

Macnamara, J. (2016). Organizational listening: Addressing a major gap in public relations theory and practice. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, *28*(3-4), 146-169. doi:10.1080/1062726x.2016.1228064

Taylor, M. (2011). Building social capital through rhetoric and public relations. *Management Communication Quarterly*, *25*(3), 436-454. doi:10.1177/0893318911410286