



The Global Public Relations Handbook: Theory, Research, and Practice

[Sriramesh, Krishnamurthy](#) and [Verčič, Dejan](#) (Editors)

[Lawrence Erlbaum Associates](#), 2003

600 pages

Paper: US \$55.00

Reviewed by [Gordon Alley-Young](#), [Kingsborough Community College, New York](#)

With the emergence of the global economy and the collapse of national boundaries there is a growing interest in diversifying the study of public relations to include more non-western perspectives. In *The Global Public Relations Handbook: Theory, Research, and Practice* editors Krishnamurthy Sriramesh and Dejan Verčič direct their efforts towards correcting what they see to be an overemphasis on western public relations theories and a lack of empirical evidence on public relations in other regions of the world. The book compiles several culturally situated profiles of PR practice, covering all of the continents and key regions of the world while also focusing on the practice undertaken globally by transnational and international interests. The book profiles individual countries' public relations practice with extensive sections on Asia/Australasia and Europe and shorter sections on Africa and the Americas. Individual chapters adeptly link sociological factors with professional practice culminating in individual case studies. The book ends with a section on key dimensions and actors in international public relations and an inward looking epilogue on the potential future of multicultural public relations practice.

The editors note that this book seeks to fill a void that is to go beyond looking at public relations in different countries in ways that are just "merely descriptive" (p. xxv). The editors link the growth of a global consumer economy, the spread of democracy, and freedom of expression and the press with heightening the importance given to public relations around the world. As a result public relations professionals are increasingly communicating with international audiences and are requiring comprehensive knowledge of multicultural and multinational communication.

The impetus for this book is to build the available knowledge and data of public relations globally. The editors issued two challenges to their contributors. First, contributors have to describe the status of the profession in their country or region with specific attention to specific practices, ethics and standards, challenges to the profession, and the extent to which it is practiced. Secondly, contributors must also link the public relations practices that they describe to the socio-cultural environment following the model outlined in chapter one. Chapter one, authored by Sriramesh and Verčič, provides a three factor framework of infrastructure, culture, and media to link environmental variables to actual public relations practice. Each factor is further divisible into a number of relevant facets.

The editors are careful not to write solely to an American reader, though the fact that most of the studies in the book build upon Grunig's models of public relations and Broom and Dozier's public relations roles-concepts speaks to the editors' claims that American public relations theory tends to dominate internationally. In providing a framework for contributors the editors explicitly acknowledge a broad array of cultural realities. For instance, in defining the factor of media they recognize that many of the countries profiled are in various stages of technological development. In the region of Asia/Australasia media can entail budding knowledge-based economies like that of Singapore and the example of India, (India is not specifically profiled in the book), where folk media (i.e., docudramas, dances, skits, plays) can still be effective PR in rural areas.

Occasionally when trying to define a particular culture or country contributors can make some claims on the basis of culture that can seem overly simplistic or prescriptive. As an example I point to the chapter on China, where the author observes of the typical Chinese student, "They often study in the library when their American counterparts are visiting bars!" (p. 29). The point that the author is trying to make—that Chinese students emphasize structure, hard work, and perseverance—may be valid, although is less persuasive when stated in a way that negatively generalizes about its counter-subject. In other instances these statements could be reasoned to be not so much a fault of the work but indicative of any attempt to make a definitive statement about a living culture.

Krishnamurthy Sriramesh and Dejan Verčič lay a useful groundwork that will hopefully facilitate a more inclusive base of global public relations knowledge. The book excels both in the range of cultures it covers and in its ability to situate professional practice within socio-cultural contexts. I point to the succinct but detailed case studies that conclude many of the chapters to exemplify this culturally situated practice. This integration of context and practice makes the book relevant for upper-level courses in intercultural public relations and communications management while also making it a useful volume for academics and practitioners who are working transnationally.