Public Diplomacy and Social Capital: Bridging Theory and Activities

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Abstract

Public diplomacy activities can benefit from social capital theory, when its social dynamics is elucidated in the investment of complex social networks and in the establishment and management of relationships with foreign publics. Social capital theory explains that actors can produce purposive actions to mobilize resources in social structures, which thus explains the dynamics of social interactions. In response to the lack of conceptual frameworks for understanding public diplomacy activities within social capital theory, we conducted a narrative literature review that intends to identify the means through which international actors, such as governments, engage with foreign publics through the dynamics of social networks and the resources embedded in them. In addition, we explored the multidimensional characteristics of social capital to enhance the comprehension of the manner in which actors access, share, and maintain resources in target communities, institutions, or organizations through public diplomacy activities. In summary, we highlight the importance of new theoretical explorations on the application of social capital theory to public diplomacy and the need for a research agenda in the field.

Keywords: public diplomacy, social capital, soft power, networked public diplomacy, social networks

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Introduction

The first official mention of public diplomacy is attributed to Edmund Gullion in connection with the foundation of the Edward R. Murrow Center at Tufts University Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in 1965. As an alternative and positive label to *information* or *propaganda* (Cull, 2009a), public diplomacy was a fitting umbrella term that covered a range of activities that focused on communication with foreign publics. Afterward, public diplomacy has grown in relevance and adapted itself to major developments in the fields of international relations and communication. Consequently, it received increased attention from governments and academia.

During the 1990s, public diplomacy became a more strategic and prominent term due to its link with the concept of soft power, which was famously coined by Nye (2004) during the late 1980s. It is defined as the ability to obtain the intended outcomes through attraction and co-option instead of coercion using threats or inducement with payment. Nye (2004) recognized three primary sources of the soft power of a nation: (1) culture (in places where it is attractive to others), (2) political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad); and (3) foreign policies (when they are viewed as legitimate and having moral authority). Ultimately, public diplomacy can be viewed as one of the most relevant foreign policy tools available to states when promoting soft power and leveraging its resources.

Many authors understand public diplomacy differently and emphasize its relevance by basing arguments on the distinct theories of international relations. This study considers the definition provided by Gregory (2008) of public diplomacy as "the means by which states, associates of states, and non-state actors understand cultures, attitudes and behavior; build and manage relationships; and influence opinions and actions to advance their interests and values" (p. 2). In this sense, public diplomacy would exceed state policies and emphasize its relational domain; thus, it considers the importance of observing the operation, establishment, and management of interactions among actors.

Since then, a crescent approach called, "collaborative public diplomacy," was used to elucidate the importance of understanding the role of social networks in the development of foreign policies (Fisher, 2010; Zaharna et al., 2013), where building bridges between actors could lead to success in engagement in international debates. Approaches that focus on the role of social networks in public diplomacy frequently cite the term, "social capital." However, the literature on its theoretical meaning–as resources embedded in a social structure –is lacking. Specifically, the fit of its principles and concepts and its systematic enhancement of the understanding and practice of public diplomacy remain unexplored. Thus, the current study intends to draw a connection between public diplomacy and social capital theory to propose a research agenda and facilitate debates on public diplomacy activities. Toward this end, we present a narrative literature review on the main activities of public diplomacy, followed by a description of social capital theory and its primary forms to propose an integrated analysis of public diplomacy activities based on the theory.

Public Diplomacy

Main Activities Related to Public Diplomacy

Zaharna (2009) separated the different initiatives of public diplomacy into two frameworks: namely, information or relational. The information framework mainly focuses on persuasion or control with limited to no interaction between the public and the sponsor. Initiatives such as international broadcasts and nation branding campaigns fit this context. However, Zaharna suggests that the latter framework seeks "to find commonalities or mutual interests between publics and then ways to link those publics via some form of direct interpersonal communication" (p. 91). Relational initiatives focus on continuity and sustainability with increased coordination between sponsors and counterparts. Zaharna recognized that relational public diplomacy initiatives feature a broad spectrum of differences that can be segmented based on the relative sophistication of relationship-building strategies (Table 1).

Table 1. Tiers of relationship-building strategies

First Tier	Second Tier	Third Tier
Cultural and educational exchange programs and leadership visits	Cultural and language institutes; development aid projects, twin town arrangements, and non-political networking schemes	Policy networking strategy and coalition building

Source: Zaharna (2009, pp. 91-96)

Correspondingly, Cull (2009b, pp. 18-21) asserted that public diplomacy commonly aims to develop shared understanding through the following distinct means of engagement with foreign publics:

(1) listening: gathers and examines data on foreign publics to best readjust policies and public diplomacy approaches and advance international understanding at the same time (di Martino, 2020);

(2) advocacy: promotes communication activities strategically to foment a policy, idea, or a particular interest among foreign publics;

(3) cultural diplomacy: arguably one of the most well-recognized activities of public diplomacy that seeks to share cultural resources overseas and facilitate cultural transmission abroad in support of foreign policy goals or diplomacy (Mark, 2009);

(4) exchange diplomacy: promotes exchange programs not only for sending its citizens overseas but also for accepting foreign citizens for a period of study and acculturation; and

(5) news/international broadcasting: refers to a mass communication endeavor or a public diplomacy effort promoted through information communication technologies (Arceneaux and Powers, 2020), such as radio, television, and the Internet to engage with foreign audiences.

However, Cull (2019) recently added two new significant elements for new public diplomacy, namely, nation branding and partnership, which as a result of the shifting landscape of international relations, permeate other means of engagement as well. Divergences and interrelationships between these approaches can be recognized in the direction of information flow; the source of credibility; and the timescale of function (Table 2). Nonetheless, international actors should refrain from focusing only on one activity, because doing so may be detrimental to its image. Importantly, public diplomacy is also dependent on credibility. However, each type of activity requires different sources to reflect credibility, which requires the "appearance of a different relationship to the government to flourish" (Cull, 2009b, p. 25).

Table 2. Means of engagement with foreign publics

Type of public diplomacy[a]	Sample activities	Timeframe	Flow of information	Source of credibility
Listening	Targeted polling	Short and long-term	Inward	Validity of methods used
Advocacy	Embassy press relations	Short-term	Outward	Proximity to government
Cultural Diplomacy	State-funded international art tour	Long-term	Outward	Proximity to cultural authorities (instead of the government)
Exchange Diplomacy	Two-way academic exchange	Very long-term	Inward and outward	Perception of mutuality
International Broadcasting	Foreign language short-wave radio broadcast	Medium-term	Outward but from a news bureaucracy	Evidence of positive journalistic practice (distant from the government)
Nation Branding[b]	Campaigns emphasizing a specific national imagery[c]	Long-term[c]	Outward but with the approval of domestic citizens[d]	High level of coordination between public and private sector groups[c]
Partnerships[b]	Initiatives bridging a diversified range of actors around the world[e]	Medium- to long-term[e]	Inward and outward[e]	Perception of mutuality[e]

[a]Table adapted from Cull (2009b, pp. 24-26).
[b]Cull (2019).
[c]Olins (2005, pp. 169-179).
[d]Dinnie and Sevin (2020, pp. 137-144).
[e]This study.

Continuous Transformation of Public Diplomacy

Traditionally, public diplomacy refers to governments directly reaching out to foreign publics through efforts to inform and influence those publics to support national agendas and foreign policies (Snow, 2020, p. 8). Emerging during the Cold War as a tool for persuasion amid global ideological and strategic conflicts between the two superpowers (the US and the USSR), public diplomacy was mainly used in antagonistic relationships (Gilboa, 2008). Under

this paradigm, the intention to influence the attitudes and behaviors of the targeted public without being open to persuasion reflects a communication asymmetry (Fitzpatrick, 2011).

However, globalization–along with the emergence of new technology mechanisms and new media–catalyzed and diffused communication (Fitzpatrick, 2011; Cull, 2019). Moreover, the emergence of new players (e.g., NGOs), who were capable of exerting influence over foreign publics, demonstrated the need for public diplomacy studies and practice to adapt to a new and more interdependent reality. In this context, the terrorist attack of 2001 was the main event that led to the recognition of scholars regarding a new terrain for public diplomacy (Melissen, 2005; Sevin, 2017). Specifically, this terrain is one that promotes two-way communication instead of the monologic practice common during the Cold War. This statement does not intend to contradict the notion that one-way communication is pointless. On the contrary, its usefulness and strengths in particular contexts and audiences cannot be supplanted, especially with regard to countering misinformation. Increasingly, however, it has been met with limitations due to the elevated power and outspokenness of foreign publics.

This new form of public diplomacy, which responds to the demands of the new era, identifies dialogue as a requirement for success (Melissen, 2005; Riordan, 2005). The messaging approach to public diplomacy would slowly lead to a relational understanding, which is viewed as more effective and ethical when engaging with foreign publics (Taylor and Kent, 2014). Hence, the new public diplomacy is based on principles of dialog and mutuality through two-way communication that emphasizes the proactive and long-term focus on relationship building (Fitzpatrick, 2011). As pointed out by Cowan and Arsenault (2008), dialog can help build mutual understanding and, as a result, lessen conflicts and improve relationships. In contrast to the previous approach to public diplomacy, domestic audiences should also be contemplated in an endeavor for symmetrical communication to generate mutual compatibility with foreign audiences (Zaharna, 2010).

Eventually, authors in the field highlighted the increasingly collaborative character of public diplomacy studies and practice (Hocking, 2005; Fisher, 2010; Fitzpatrick, 2012). Cowan and Arsenault (2008) popularly introduced collaboration as the third layer of public diplomacy beyond the previously recognized monologue and dialogue of spheres. Slaughter (2008) affirmed that the world is networked, and, thus, "the measure of power is connectedness" (p. 1). Expressions, such as "partnerships," "relationship-building," and "engagement" were introduced into the majority of public diplomacy studies. This collaborative approach to public diplomacy suggested the need for active audience participation and peer-to-peer relations to overcome cultural differences (Nye, 2010). In this scenario, the government may play a relatively facilitative or mediative role amid the horizontal structure of publics that are foreign to one another and whose interaction and networking the government views as desirable (van Ham, 2013). Although the ultimate goal is to influence elite attitudes and policy choices, multidirectional flows of communication that indirectly target policy elites better reflect the current demands of the global governance agenda (Hocking, 2008).

Within a short period, the networked approach was then recognized as a new paradigm for public diplomacy (Zaharna et al., 2013). This paradigm acknowledges that the consistently complex and multifaceted agenda of all actors in the international system (state and non-state) presents a challenge to the individual achievement of goals. Thus, it views the adoption of policy networks as a solution for common policy objectives (Hocking, 2005). In addition, Cowan and Arsenault (2008) noted that although dialogue leads to mutual understanding, a collaboration that builds or accomplishes together exceeds the creation of lasting bonds between partners. Thus, Zaharna et al. (2013) proposed that the success of networked public diplomacy is dependent "on the ability of practitioners to successfully promote connections between complex and interconnected individuals and groups embedded within a network of communication networks" (p. 1).

As such, one can expand on the benefits of collaboration and on the means of creating or inserting oneself into different networks by considering social capital theory. This is an integrated approach for understanding the manner in which social networks provide social trust, an incentive to norms of reciprocity and stores of goodwill (Putnam, 2000). Thus, social capital theory can enable actors to form bonds of trust, bridges of opportunities, and links of power. In this manner, cooperation can be improved and additional benefits from partnerships can be accrued, which may lead to further joint endeavors in the future. Therefore, the current study aims to elucidate the dynamics of social capital along with its multiple dimensions to provide a comprehensive view on the mechanism through which social capital theory enhances the understanding of opportunities and paths that actors in public diplomacy can aim for collaboration.

Social Capital

Theory and Main Components of Analysis of Social Capital

Capital can be defined in many forms, such as human capital, which is described as the accumulation of skills in the form of individual resources (Goldin, 2016). However, the origin of the concept can be traced to the book entitled *Das Kapital,* where Marx (1867) conceptualized capital to describe the process of the exploitation of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie in the capitalist system. The current study focuses on social capital, which may refer to multiple definitions (Woolcock, 1998). According to James Farr (2004), the concept history of social capital can be traced to the 19th century through the studies of Alexis de Tocqueville and other intellectuals in economic sociology. However, Farr (2004) argued that Lydia Hanifan first introduced the term in 1916, which was later refined in its definition by many authors. For example, Putnam (1994), as a scholar of public affairs, defines social capital as "features of social organization, such as networks, norms, and trust, that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (pp. 6-7)

Certain scholars in communication studies, such as Surowiec (2012) and Edwards (2011) have also attributed importance to Bourdieu's view on social and other forms of capital in

their analyses on nation branding and public relations. However, they mainly focused on Bourdieu`s understanding of symbolic power as a tool that neo-liberal actors use to define the reality of their political–economical ideology (Edwards, 2011) and to "shape a legitimate vision of the social world and its division" (Surowiec, 2012, p. 343), which would exclude opportunities for analyzing collaboration between nations due to clashes of power between groups with contrasting ideologies and social classes.

Thus, the current study adopted the definition of Lin (2002) and considered social capital as "resources embedded in a social structure which are accessed and/or mobilized in purposive actions" (p. 29). This definition and the model proposed by Lin are a comprehensive review of the concept and are considered very suitable for the analysis of meso-level organizations and public relations (Ihlen, 2005), which is the case for public diplomacy activities. It also presents elements, such as the need for social connections that leads to opportunities for understanding collaboration in the multidimensional flow of networks. In addition, the understanding by Lin also promotes understanding among actors regarding their role in the investment of social networks to access, use, and mobilize resources through interaction with other players within a social structure or context through purposeful actions. Such actions may be implemented with the expectation of instrumental return or, alternatively, to fortify the maintenance of previously collected resources through expressive action. Following the Weberian tradition, these resources can be distinguished in the form of economic wealth, political power, or social reputation. These resources can be distinguished, but not entirely, through an understanding of measures related to soft power, such as culture, values, and the foreign policies of a nation (Nye, 2004). Such elements are instrumental tools for accruing power through attraction; in social capital theory, however, these resources are embedded in social networks and acquired through such resources.

According to Lin (2002), the dynamics of social capital facilitates the consolidation of information; influence on decision-makers; social credentials; and reinforcement of identity in a specific social network, which mobilizes information flow among agents. Consequently, information may include knowledge about market needs or demands apart from opportunities or choices for ingress in transactions or dialogs. Moreover, social ties provide actors with credentials, which grant them permission or social acceptance to access new resources from a target community or group. This process facilitates the market political or social needs of actors that require acknowledgment from the new community. Thus, access to social capital provides better information and ways of influence in society through direct or indirect interactions, which leads to the gain in or maintenance of resources (Lin, 2002). Occupying high positions in the hierarchical social structure renders actors increasingly prone to accessing and allocating better information or resources. Thus, activities with purposive actions may consider the influence, position, and prestige of the group, which leads to power. For example, actors can access resources and information in return and obtain added benefits from these dynamics over time by conducting relational public diplomacy activities and investing in target communities. The previously available prestige, power, or wealth of the intended target public of any given public diplomacy initiative also influences the access of

sponsors to more valued resources.

Finally, Lin (2002; 2008) highlighted that the stronger the ties in a social network, the better the outcome of expressive actions on social capital mobilization. Conversely, if the links are weak, then actors will seek activities with instrumental purposes when accessing social capital. In other words, expressive activities are intended for the maintenance of resources, whereas instrumental purposes are goal-oriented ones that add more valued resources to one's domain. In the first statement, individuals are willing to align between means and ends. For the second statement, however, a distinct separation exists between both processes. In this sense, the bridges between social networks reflect weak ties because individuals tend to expend more effort or interaction within their circles. Advancing this comprehension, the current study also understands that actors can share resources, which foments collaboration with other individuals and communities. However, such shared resources will be more available within their community.

Bridging Public Diplomacy and Social Capital

Conceptual Framework

In alignment with social capital theory (Lin, 2002; 2008) and as presented in Figure 1, governments, as main actors, will promote public diplomacy initiatives through direct interactions with foreign publics, such as listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange diplomacy, broadcasting, nation branding, and partnerships. In this manner, they can participate in foreign social networks created by local civil societies and institutions. These interactions can also be indirectly mediated by non-governmental actors, such as NGOs, multinational corporations, and even entertainment industries, of the domestic or target societies through social networks, where they help develop connections through previously existing ties embedded in trust. As a result, foreign civil societies may reject or accept public diplomacy activities by providing or withholding information about opportunities and choices; influencing decision making in their community; using social credentials to access resources; and reinforcing the needs of actors. These four outcomes are conducive to governmental actors that maintain or gain economic wealth, political power, and social reputation, as described by Weber in the description of the potential forms of power (Lin, 2002). The three elements can help countries create positive images abroad, which enable them to address economic instability; international and national insecurity; and advocacy from other countries.
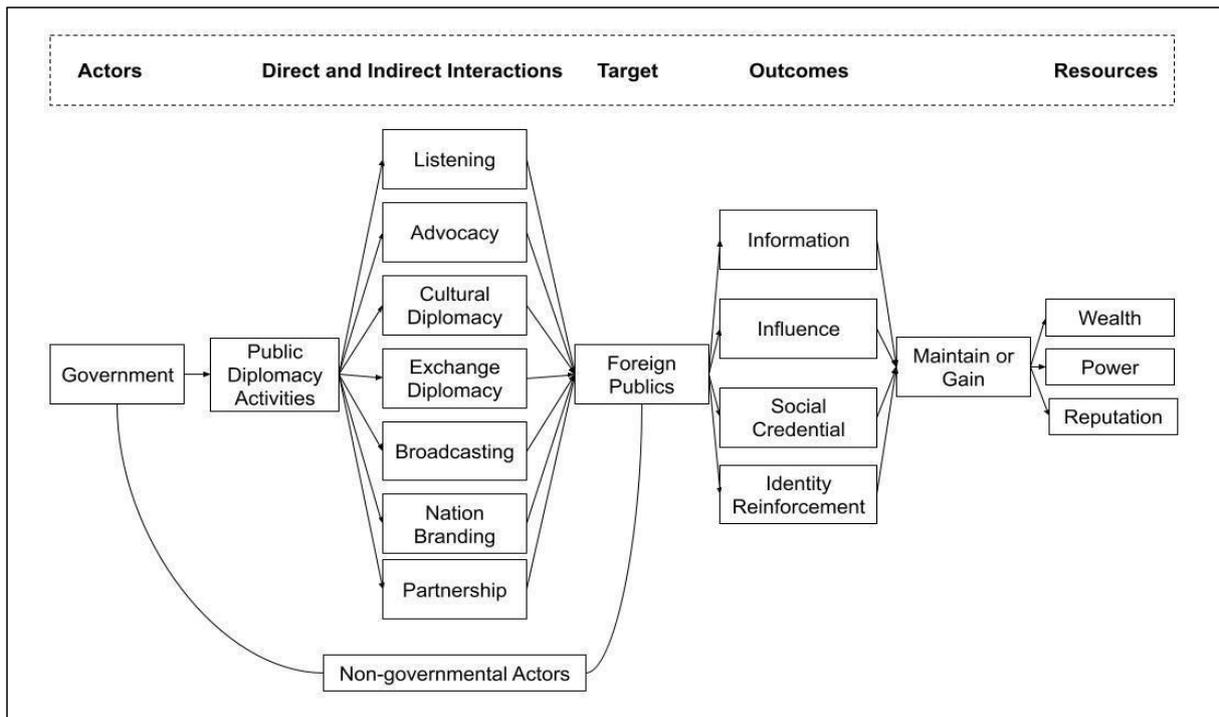
Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the dynamics of public diplomacy activities in social capital theory

This notion aligns with the understanding that the reputation of a nation also functions as an indication of its power (Wang, 2006). In other words, the international image of a nation can influence its ability to achieve its political objectives (Nye, 2004), shape perception and purchase decisions on specific products due to the effect of the country of origin (Dinnie, 2008), and attract foreign investment and tourism (Singh and MacDonald, 2017). Thus, governments should pay attention to these components and processes within a society to maximize their gains or maintain resources, which consequently provides a comprehensive outlook on the needs of public diplomacy. Notably, return of investment in social capital may be accomplished in economic terms by generating and maintaining wealth. Moreover, it can be achieved by establishing political and social influence; increasing hierarchical domain and power in the international political system; and creating a positive reputation among the international community. In addition, sharing resources may force associates to protect the other party under threat because the shared resources of the actors will also be threatened. Finally, given a truly relational public diplomacy approach, actors should reasonably promote mutual understanding and advance shared interests and resources to maintain positive and ethical relationship practices (Fitzpatrick, 2013).

Another notable aspect is that this conceptual framework incorporates the key concepts of social capital theory within the elements of public diplomacy activities. However, it should also be considered as part of a complex system. The reason behind this notion is that social capital theory highlights the need to understand social networks as a multidimensional structure, which will be exposed in the following sections. In this structure, resources embedded in

social networks are accessed or maintained through a complex flow within, between, and across vertical and horizontal networks (Aldrich, 2012). Networked approaches to public diplomacy also highlight that foreign publics influence actors; thus, they should promote connections between complex and interconnected individuals and groups (Zaharna et al., 2013). This aspect reveals that this framework should not be interpreted as unidirectional.

Multidimensional Concept of Social Capital

Social capital is composed of three dimensions, namely, (1) bonding, (2) bridging, and (3) linking. Putnam (2000) defined bonding as inward ties that reinforce the exclusive identity and homogeneity of groups and presented fraternal organizations or church-based reading groups for women as examples of bonding in American culture. The function of this form of social capital is to facilitate in-group reciprocity and solidarity, such as social or psychological support. However, it may also fortify outgroup antagonism due to in-group loyalty. Examples of the positive effects of bonding social capital are associated with mental health support against anxiety during post-disaster events (Iwasaki et al., 2017), safety of neighborhoods against crime (Sampson et al., 1997), and financial support to community members in economic need (Woolcock, 1998). Conversely, an example of an adverse effect would be hate against minorities and outgroups by radicalized regimes based on racial identity.

In sociological terms, the principle of homophily can be used to elucidate the strength of relationships, that is, people tend to interact more with others who are similar to them (McPherson et al., 2001). According to social and evolutionary psychology, liking or sharing similarities with a target audience may facilitate one's inclusion in this audience (Steg, 2017; Cialdini, 1987). As such, individuals tend to produce more altruistic actions, even in the face of death threats, toward peers that share more genetic similarities (Dovidio et al., 2017). Currently, certain communication strategies even benefit from this notion. For example, although psychological targeting remains a topic of debates among authors regarding its efficacy and ethics (Sharp, 2018; Matz et al., 2018, 2020), scientific evidence exists on its use (especially in social media). Research asserts that campaigns or advertisements that share characteristics to those of the audience positively impact interaction (Matz et al., 2017). However, this utilization can become relatively controversial and a double-edged sword if it targets the privacy of the people and compromises freedom (Hinds et al., 2020). In this sense, seeking bonds with a target community should consider genuine interest in their values, culture, and characteristics.

For the concept of bridging social capital, Putnam (2000) points out an outward-looking view, that is, this category of social capital bridges people across social borders. Putnam provides the following examples: civil rights movement that unifies groups with similar interests; online messaging that integrates people worldwide; or ecumenical religious organizations that incorporate the acceptance of a diverse set of beliefs. The function of bridging social capital is linking of external assets and diversifying communication or information channels apart from creating broad identities. As such, the lack of bridging social capital is also indicative of

fragmentation in society, such as poor inter-group networks and civic engagement (Patulny & Svendsen, 2007). Public diplomacy activities in communities that lack sufficient connectedness can require additional effort from actors in terms of target foreign publics.

As a metaphor for differentiating bonding and bridging social capital, Putnam (2000) compares bonding social capital as a sociological superglue and bridging social capital as WD-40 (an American brand of lubricant). In this metaphor, one strengthens in-group loyalty, whereas the other mobilizes outgroup contact. Putnam suggests that bonding and bridging social capital are not mutually exclusive. Instead, they are dimensions for sociological analysis. According to Patulny and Svendsen (2007), the merit of this distinction is the amplification of the understanding of openness and closure in society, because this approach provides much more helpful information on group dynamics and does not treat social capital as only a single concept. For example, two approaches can be used for public diplomacy activities, namely, (1) maintaining ties with the target public and simultaneously seeking expressive actions and (2) creating bridges with new ones for instrumental actions.

For the first approach, this study can verify that shared norms, values, and cultural similarities with foreign publics would be facilitated as a result of previously bestowed credentials of a reliable identity, such as in diaspora communities. Thus, well-integrated diaspora communities would embody many of the main objectives of public diplomacy, such as improving the image of the country of origin, securing support from the host country for policies or interventions, and facilitating material exchange between both nations (Brinkerhoff, 2019). Rana (2013) also underlines diaspora communities as potential economic actors with access and clout and as natural ambassadors of their culture for the development of soft power in the target country.

For the second approach, bridges with foreign publics can be a natural outcome of globalization and an increasingly democratic world. Nevertheless, understanding that bridges without clear bonds can be mobilized primarily only for instrumental actions is necessary, because they serve as a means for achieving generally mutual goals (e.g., communities mobilize others to change norms). However, one may infer that forming alliances with other actors to achieve common goals can naturally produce a gradual bonding process, which leads to efficient cooperation between actors from different communities (Sherif, 1988).

Interactions between citizens and authorities are essential for policymaking. In this case, linking social capital is expressed in vertical relationships across actors with different statuses or powers. For example, people with respect to norms and trust with authorities would present less or more access to certain services or resources provided or moved by these institutional agents (Szreter & Woolcock, 2004) whether in public or private spheres (Kyne & Aldrich, 2020). Groups in better social positions in the hierarchical structure of power will gain increased access and influence on valued resources (Lin, 2008). However, this tendency may lead to sharing more responsibility in important policies or measures in society.

According to Aldrich (2012), resilient communities tend to be built under immense political engagement and reinforced through vertical communication facilitated by authorities and

institutions. In addition, Putnam (1994) proposed that good governments detain and facilitate traditions of horizontal engagement and active community organizations to enhance democratic views instead of encouraging vertical segments. Failed governments establish a clear social separation from their publics and prohibit the engagement of citizens in policies and politics. Thus, they would be recognized as external agents that relatively influence the daily lives of people but do not participate as supportive figures.

The success of linking social capital works is firstly possible due to the facilitation of resources embedded in hierarchical social networks. In this structure, reciprocity becomes a rule for actions of civic engagement, which can then be maintained by trust, an essential component of effective policy management and adherence to top-down measures (Cvetkovich, 2013). Moreover, these networks facilitate coordination, communication, and information about social trust, which encourages community members to act in a cooperative manner to maintain social life. This process enables the economy to operate efficiently by facilitating contracts and transactions, for example. In capitalist economies, dense social networks reduce the informal flow of resources and naturally regulate such resources. In public diplomacy activities, partnering with trustworthy institutions and non-state actors to facilitate interactions with foreign publics is an effective solution. Cooperation with prestigious individuals or with political and economic powers in a target community can help actors mobilize additional resources for initiatives. Thus, understanding the role of interactions with target foreign publics and perception of the establishment of links between citizens and institutions is crucial for diplomats, especially if the focus is on building trust and managing reciprocity.

The partnership aspect has been a central feature of the internal administration of public diplomacy with actors routinely seeking to rally assets across governments or within a nation to tell a familiar story (Cull, 2019). Indeed, the emergence of international issues across borders and without specific victims (e.g., climate change) is an incentive for nations to rally diverse partnerships across countries to maximize resources and effectively address challenges. Cull (2019) also asserts that countries recognized as good team players or facilitators of collaboration will enhance the soft power of an international actor in the long term.

Partnerships can provide actors with an extension of credibility and leverage amid the advent of the concept that Nye (2010) coined the *paradox of plenty*, because the plethora of information available nowadays results in the scarcity of public attention. By collaborating with partners with authority and demonstrating similarities to the intended audience –whether through shared region, generation, or through the halo effect –the message will be strengthened and become more effective (Cull, 2019). Thus, in the current state of a highly competitive information environment, credibility (of the content or source of information) is a significant factor in the current public diplomacy practices, whereas social networks provide an even greater scope for such credibility to resonate and persuade (Zaharna, 2009). In this sense, governments should facilitate the creation of networks. At the same time, however, they should allow peer-to-peer exchange to achieve increased credibility toward and trust from the audience. Alternatively, exerting excessive control can undercut the credibility that networks are designed to instigate (Nye, 2010).

Boundaries in the Investment of Social Networks

According to Lee and Ayhan (2015), many scholars point out that dense social networks enable efficient communication between tied nodes and develop shared behavioral expectations, which facilitates diffusion within the network. This context would grant greater credibility and lower enforcement costs to the actor. Conversely, the enhanced credibility of the potential collaborator within the network can boost the management of communication and relationships to achieve additionally effective results for the public diplomacy initiative. In the same manner, the centrality of the partner within the network can help the actor reach and connect to influential elites and enter marketplaces that would otherwise pose a challenge (Lee and Ayhan, 2015). The state actor that wishes to join a foreign social network can act as a network weaver by actively creating new interactions between different clusters to achieve their goals (Krebs and Holley, 2002).

Nevertheless, the boundaries of investment in social capital and participation in networks in public diplomacy are arguable. Hoyer and Brown (1990), who replicated the study by Macdonald and Sharp (2000), verified that brand-awareness through repetition exerts a significant effect on consumer choice. Moreover, it is a major cognitive strategy for decision making in a competitive society, where individuals tend to follow the heuristics of availability (Tversky & Kahneman, 1973) for establishing preferences. Known for the mere-exposure effect, Zajonc (2001) demonstrated that repetitive exposure to a specific object increases the likelihood of a favorable preference for this object. The fact that social capital facilitates the flow of information and the constant repetition of the image of one's nation through social interactions render participation in societies with dense social networks and structures essential for a strategic means of branding. If one community is not interacting with the image of a nation through frequency of contact, it cannot create strong and positive ideas about the nation. Thus, frequent participation in the consciousness of a specific community can improve the affective view held by members about them. In this sense, this study argues that promoting activities in targeted communities or countries and being present, consistent, and, if possible, interactive with them is imperative for actors for inclusion through bonding connections. By doing so, the image of the actor would change within the targeted community and facilitate trust, flow of resources, fortification of credentials, and identification of needs.

In addition, other cognitive and social psychological models point out that repetition and frequency of exposure may aid recipients in better processing messages (Cacioppo & Petty, 1989) and significantly enhance familiarity even in the face of poor arguments to form attitudes (Claypool et al., 2004). Brands, such as Coca-Cola or McDonald's, refrain from using good-quality argumentation to convince audiences why their products are the best in the market. Such companies benefit mainly from universal availability, awareness, and trademark protection (Farquhar, 1994). In this sense, if the objective of public diplomacy goal is to change beliefs about one's nation, then investment in social networks and participation in them can gradually help.

However, Woolcock (1998) warns that forming bonds with determined communities may also present costs, where access to other social networks beyond their original or related group may be challenging according to intragroup obligation. For example, Portes (1996) argues that community membership can fortify the obligation to exclude outgroups to access their resources. In international relationships, a necessary consideration is that amplifying social ties by accessing bridges between communities would be highly interesting for instrumental actions. In addition, establishing loyal partnerships with certain groups may create expectations for corresponding to their beliefs apart from reducing interactions with other competitors or groups under conflict. The principle that "my friend's enemy is my enemy" would be applicable to certain terms in this context (Maoz et al., 2007). For example, Turkey generated a negative image in its region, by recognizing Israel in 1949 and especially by reducing influence in the Middle East. Nevertheless, this initiative helped to improve its western relationships (Altunişik, 2008). Thus, boundaries may exist in investment in social capital through public diplomacy, which should be analyzed in terms of their capacity to achieve foreign policy goals.

Conclusion and Future Directions

By providing an overview of the main aspects of social capital theory, verifying the fit of public diplomacy activities in its explanatory concepts and models is possible. The study concludes that public diplomacy activities can build and collaborate with existing networks of contact (i.e., through policymakers, decision-making bodies, other actors, institutions, and communities) to access, share, and maintain specific resources (e.g., reputation and wealth). These networks are multidimensional and can link actors across and within groups in horizontal or vertical relations in the social structure of each target nation. This concept advances the understanding of soft power and public diplomacy regarding the quality and characteristics of networks in which actors participate and produce direct and indirect relationships. Moreover, it presents new elements that future studies can investigate and discuss in terms of networked public diplomacy and collaborative approaches based on social capital theory.

Moreover, creating a research agenda is essential for new empirical and theoretical studies to fill the gap of this approach and preserve a coherent scientific-based system at the same time. In this sense, future studies can verify the relationships among the indicators of social capital, public diplomacy, and objectives of foreign policy. Using the framework described in this paper, the evaluation of individual public diplomacy activities, such as cultural diplomacy, broadcasting, or advocacy, should include the manner in which they lead to the desired outcomes of the actor, such as information, influence, and credibility. In addition, the effectiveness of these activities in helping the actor maintain or access new resources, such as wealth, power, or reputation, should be examined. Moreover, future studies should evaluate the multi dimensions of social capital to explore the effectiveness of public diplomacy activities in achieving their objectives through the types and quality of networks accessed. For example, studies can focus on whether certain activities are more suitable in certain communities due to access to specific resources for collaboration.

This study recommends the use of interviews, bibliographic analysis, documentary research, focus group discussions, and surveys for empirical studies in this area. Lochner et al. (1999) provide a guide for assessing social capital through surveys or questionnaires. Alternatively, Kyne and Aldrich (2020) propose 19 indicators that are publicly available in the United States to capture the dimensions of bonding, bridging, and linking social capital, such as voter turnout, race similarity, political linkage, civic organizations, attendance in a political rally, speech, and organized protest. Other studies point to many other indexes that serve as examples for data analysis. Future studies can explore the dynamics of the social capital of a region and analyze its effectiveness in changing public opinion in a positive manner. Case studies are also required to explore individual activities related to public diplomacy and their success or failure in their actions to establish social networks and mobilize embedded resources. In addition, social media is an essential means for shaping public opinion through social capital (Lin, 2008).

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