"El cocktail profesional" cuando el papel de periodista se confunde con el de agente de relaciones públicas.

The professional cocktail on the confusion of the role of the journalist and the role of the public relations adviser.

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RESUMEN: Tomando como referencia las teorías de Keith Macdonald sobre Sociología de las Profesiones (1995) y los tradicionales conceptos de principios, valores y responsabilidades periodísticas, este artículo se centra en la creciente tendencia que existe en el campo del periodismo hacia una confusión de los roles profesionales. Apoyado en una encuesta realizada a periodistas daneses en la primavera de 2001, este trabajo procura mostrar las crecientes paradojas del contexto periodístico profesional danés, los problemas y las posibilidades que se generan cuando los periodistas llevan a cabo, paralelamente, tanto tareas profesionales propias del periodismo como aquellas propias del campo de las relaciones públicas.

ABSTRACT: On the basis of Keith M. Macdonald's theories of the sociology of the professions (1995) (including the professional characteristics of 'traditional occupations'– such as body of knowledge, education, trade unions, ethics and relations to the state and the market) and the traditional ideas of journalistic duties, principles and values, the focus of the article is the growing tendency towards mixing professional roles in the journalistic field. Supported by data from a survey carried out among Danish journalists in the spring of 2001, the article will demonstrate the extension of the trend in a Danish context and the professional paradoxes, problems and possibilities that arise when journalists carry out both traditional media-journalistic duties and duties within the field of public relations.

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« Cada profesión produce una ideología profesional, una representación más o menos ideal y mítica de sí misma, los periodistas también, como tantos otros».

« Chaque profession produit une idéologie professionelle, une représentation plus ou moins idéale et mythifiée d'elle-même, le groupe des journalistes commes tous les autres»

(Pierre Bourdieu, 1996)

Introduction[1]

According to traditional role theory, the role of a professional consists of the total sum of norms attached to the profession, that is, its formal and informal ideals, but also the expectations of employers, colleagues, professional contacts and the society as to the duties, responsibilities and principles of the profession. Thus, the role of the professional exists independently of the individual practitioner, but this individual is, in his daily work, obliged to relate to the norms and expectations of the profession and the surroundings –and ideally honour or fulfil these. Because of the individual interpretation of the professional role, the actual *practice*, however, does not necessarily and uniquely *follow* or *meet* these ideals (Aubert, 1991, 99f).

The focus of this article is journalism and public relations seen from a professional –and Danish– perspective with special emphasis on the growing tendency to mix the professional role of the media journalist with the professional role of the public relations adviser. This trend can, among other things, be interpreted as a consequence of 1) a changing of the professional boundaries of journalism, 2) a declining loyalty towards the journalistic field and maybe 3) a loss of identity. It can, however, also be interpreted as a consequence of 4) the developments in public relations which have changed the conditions of interaction between journalists and public relations practitioners. In order to elaborate on these perspectives, the article compares journalism and public relations –both fairly new professional fields– o the logic and characteristics of more traditional professions (such as medicine and law).

Even though the theoretical point of departure is the sociology of the professions (Macdonald, 1995), the aim is *not* to equate journalism and public relations with the traditional professions. A direct adaptation of the professional ideology is not *possible* on an *analytical* level in view of the complex nature of for example journalism, encompassing both vocation, craftsmanship and intellectual work (Kristensen, 2000, 178), and it could – on a *normative* level – be argued that such an adaptation is not *desirable* either in view of, among other things, the journalists' need for freedom of action (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996, 125f; Soloski, 1997, 139). Thus, the

characteristics of the traditional professions rather function as an *external* framework of these two communication areas which –when convenient– claim the respect and exceptional position of traditional professions in spite of fundamental differences from these. In addition, the application of the sociology of the professions facilitates a comparison of journalism *with* public relations on an *inter-professional* level. On the one hand, journalists and public relations practitioners have an occupational resemblance and not least a considerable professional –daily– contact, but on the other hand, their professional responsibilities and obligations are fundamentally different. The similarities facilitate a mixing of roles and tasks *in practice*, while the differences complicate this same alternation with regards to *ethics*, especially from the journalists' point of view.

The discussions of the article will be supported by empirical data from a survey, carried out among Danish journalists in the spring of 2001.[2] The results are based on the replies of 527 journalists and other editorial members of staff to a questionnaire mailed to the sample twice with an interval of two weeks, enclosing a stamped addressed envelope. This sample is approximately representative of journalists in Denmark, counting between 7.000 and 10.000 individuals.[3] The focus of the survey was the relationship between Danish journalists and their news sources –that is, the *persons* contact*ed* by and contact*ing* journalists– seen from the journalists' perspective, based on the hypothesis that sources increasingly professionalise their interaction with the journalists by intensifying their use of public relations and marketing resources in order to influence the media agenda; an effort that can challenge the journalists' professionalism, including in the selection of news sources and the views given priority. More precisely, the questions of the survey dealt with the *daily contact* between journalists and the news sources; the *resources* in the journalists' work; the tactical *interplay* with the news sources; the degree of *critical attitude* towards news sources; and finally, the *developments in public relations* as experienced by the journalists and their own *involvement* in this field.[4]

Even though the article sporadically touches on several of these subjects, as they are not easily dissociated, the main interest of the following is –as indicated– the topic of journalism and public relations. The empirical data will indicate the extension to which Danish journalists are involved in public relations –that is, their tendency to mix two *related*, but at the same time *opposing* professional roles– and will thus have a bearing on the theoretical discussions of the professional paradoxes, problems and

possibilities that arise when journalists attend to both traditional media-journalistic duties and duties within the field of public relations.[5]

The sociology of the professions: Journalism and public relations professions?

Macdonald (1995) proposes –as do the literature on professions in general (Ottestig, 2002, 154ff; Soloski, 1997, 140)– several characteristics of traditional professions from a sociological and historical point of view, including knowledge, education, trade unions, ethics and relations to the authorities, the market and the public. In the following, these characteristics will be discussed in relation to journalism and public relations, exemplified by the situation in Denmark, where different media and source related tendencies contribute to the blurring of the professional boundaries between the two fields and challenge especially the journalists professionalism.

Unique knowledge and communication

The concept of professions appears with the modern, capitalistic society in which the market becomes the centre of all activities, and knowledge acquires an autonomous status, forming the basis of viable trades (Macdonald, 1995, 36, 72, 156). One of the central characteristics of traditional professions is thus the existence of a unique, formalised and preferably academic *knowledge*, differentiated from the knowledge of the general public, but also from the knowledge of other fields of activity, providing the professionals with a monopoly of their expertise and its practise. So saying, the social position and exclusivity of a profession is, among other things, determined by the specialised knowledge on which a field is based, but also by the capability of the profession to socially demarcate itself and prevent non-professionals trying to impose on its market from entering into the field –the capability of *closure* in Macdonald's terminology (1995, 1, 27ff), borrowing from Weber's idea of *social closure*.

In a media context, it could be claimed that journalists possess a wide knowledge about the society and a specific methodology to sort and communicate this knowledge to the public, including a critical attitude, an extensive curiosity, a flair for both news selection and juxtaposition of information or source material etc. –that is, fundamental qualifications in relation to the pluralistic public roles of the media as providers of information, mediators and watch dogs. Likewise, public relations advisers possess a specific, systematic and analytic knowledge of communication strategies, used, among other things, to limit or spread information to a general or specific public, for example the press, indicating an affinity of knowledge

between journalism and public relations. This affinity has been intensified during the last decades, inasmuch as one of the main interests of public relations is a thorough understanding of journalistic and editorial processes and needs. This is reflected in an increasing adaptation of press information to media journalistic priorities, angles and formats, but also in a search for useful news sources, source information and sound bites that can be made available to journalists at the right time and the right place (Somerville, 2001, 26; Palmer, 2000, 52). The public relations strategies and efforts are thus often masked as objective information subsidies –as *info-communication*[6]– which can blur the transparency of the originator and the intentions of the information. The survey mentioned above for example shows that a considerable number of the respondents –*sometimes* find it difficult to distinguish information distributed by public relations officers for a specific purpose from other types of information (table 1).

Table 1: Replies given to the question: "*Do you find it easy to distinguish information distributed by public relations officers for a specific purpose from other types of information?*

	Respondents	Percentage (n = 527)
Yes	179	34,0%
Generally, but not always	310	58,8%
No	22	4,2%

The survey furthermore indicates that this situation is intensified by recent changes in the quantity of information made available to journalists as well as editorial resources in the form of time, money and manpower. For instance, nine out of ten respondents had experienced an increase in the information placed at their disposal *in general*, but also –more specifically– by *public relations advisers* (to an either *substantial* or *moderate* degree), and half of the respondents had experienced a reduction of time and money available in their daily work –among other things because of reductions in editorial staff.[7] Thus, editorial cut-backs coincide with an intensification of the information flow to the media and the journalists –a situation that can complicate the journalists' critical editing of the source information, invite integration of information steered by specific interests in the journalistic output and thus blur the boundaries between journalism and public relations. This situation is problematic because despite an increasing affinity of knowledge, the practitioners of the two communication spheres do not share an affinity of duty and responsibility: The journalist has a professional obligation towards the truth and the public, while the obligations of the public relations officer regards efficiency and specific, private interests of for example clients, firms, political

parties, NGOs etc. –that is, agents acting by interest.

From the point of view of the sociology of the professions, it must be emphasised that neither journalism nor public relations has a unique or exclusive area of knowledge. Both are focused on communication or mediation of information, views and statements and are therefore not demarcated from the rest of society, but are rather a part of the ordinary social practice. Thus, every one can, in principle, work in public relations and especially in journalism –as expressed by Goldstein: "*You become a journalist when you declare that you are one, and you remain a journalist as long as you keep declaring that you are one*" (quoted in Delano, 2000, 264). Due to the role of the media as a forum of debate, one of the primary obligations of journalists is furthermore to give citizens access to the public word –a fundamental difference from the traditional professions to which the profane do not have access. Finally, journalism and public relations are both characterised by remarkable interior differences in level: Journalism covers serious, investigative political reflection and mediation –*as well as* tabloid information, while public relations comprise organisational development at a strategic management level *as well as* daily contact with the press.

These considerable spans, implying a lack of autonomy and professional consensus, are among other things linked to the *educational* aspect of the sociology of the professions.

University diplomas and 'gut feeling'

The standards of a profession can be controlled and surveyed by demanding that the practitioners have accomplished a specific education from a recognised –preferably academic– institution with restricted admission and specified professional ideals (Macdonald, 1995, 78ff, 161; Gregory, 2001, 35).[8] Education gives access to the specialised knowledge of the field and guarantees a certain level of expertise with all the practitioners of the profession. Accredited and standardised diplomas legitimise the profession in a commercial context and demarcate it from similar professions and from the ordinary practice. Furthermore, professional education gives social standing to those endowed with it and privileges from which only they can profit –for example the right and obligation to confidentiality between doctor and patient– emphasising the exclusivity of the profession and indicating its elevated and monopolistic position.[9]

Journalism has been taught at universities internationally since the beginning of the 20th century, but only since the late 1990s in a Danish

context.[10] This fairly recent academic, educational tradition compared to the traditional professions –both internationally and nationally– is partly due to the fact that the modern profile of journalists was not established until the appearance of the journalistic ideals of social responsibility, objectivity and novelty –with the transformation of journalism from *views* to *news* (Eide, 1992, 28) or from opinion to information– in the late 19th and early 20th century (Schudson, 2001). In addition, journalism is and has always been a craftsmanship and therefore the journalist's instinct and diversity –'gut feeling'– is just as important as the academic diploma. In trying to define this indefinable news sense, Hall for example writes:

> *"All 'true journalists' are supposed to possess it: few can or are willing to identify or define it (...) We appear to be dealing, then, with a 'deep structure' whose function as a selective device is un-transparent even to those who professionally most know how to operate it"* (Hall quoted in Schudson, 2000, 191f).

This observation is supported by Tuchman who writes that *"...news judgement is the sacred knowledge, the secret ability of the newsman which differentiates him from other people* (Tuchman quoted in Schudson, 2000, 192). Moreover, journalism is based on a free and independent action, founded in the constitutional principle of freedom of expression –that is, in a tradition that is ideally liberated from limitations and constraints, at least as to duties and education (Allern, 1997, 24, Delano, 2000, 268). Therefore, even now diplomas in journalism are not the exclusive or obligatory passport to a career in journalism –contrary to the traditional professions. Notwithstanding, everybody *working* in journalism –with or without a diploma– profits from a privileged position corresponding to the status of traditional professions, precisely because of the social roles of the journalist in relation to the public.

On account of the important role played by media strategies in the work of public relations, the journalistic field and methodology have been closely related to the practice of public relations for years (Schudson, 1978, 137). Bensman & Lilienfelt for example characterise the relation this way: *"...the beginnings of professional propaganda began with the beginnings of professional journalism"* (1973, 221). Thus, many practitioners working in public relations have originally been educated in journalism, though public relations have also been taught a universities since the early 1920s (Gregory, 2001, 54). In a Danish context, a specialised –and academic– education in public relations was, however, not founded until the increasing demand for advisers with *both* communication

and business qualifications at the end of the 1980s.[11]

Consequently, both journalism and public relations have experienced an educational upgrade that has encouraged their professionalism and foundation of knowledge. The development has, however, also meant an increase in the number of practitioners educated and working in journalism, professional communication and public relations[12] and, furthermore, blurred the distinctions between these spheres, because the different practitioners increasingly possess the same communication skills, though –as already indicated– aimed at very different goals and obligations. Naturally, this has contributed to an increasing confusion of professional roles. It must, though, be emphasised that practitioners of both journalism and public relations, at least in a Danish context, not only have backgrounds in media journalism and communication, but to a certain extent also in *other* professional fields –that is, in– *different* educational traditions, contradictory to the traditional professions.[13]

These different tendencies are closely related to the third professional characteristic – and thus to another professional issue: *–the trade unions and the ethical foundation of the professions.*

Trade unions, professional ethics and their (in)stability

Trade unions play an important part in the exclusion process of the traditional professions, especially as regards the maintenance and development of their social autonomy. Unions have at least two fundamental goals: 1) to improve the working conditions and salaries of the members by creating collective agreements and 2) to harmonise the professional standards, principles and actions of the practitioners by creating ethical codes for the profession and a normative consensus that all members are obliged to respect. Especially such codes of conduct, including the duties and obligations of the practitioners, contribute to the respectability and the justification of the profession from both a professional and a public point of view.[14]

As a newer thing, *The Danish Union of Journalists* (Dansk Journalistforbund) –the only one of its kind in a Danish context– today is the union not only of media journalists, but also that of practitioners of other media-related or communication fields, covering 28 different categories of occupation of which only five are traditionally and primarily journalistic.[15] This is the reason why the number of members has increased considerably in recent years (compare note 12) as well as why an identification of the population of Danish media journalists is very complicated

(compare note 3). Furthermore, more than one in ten of the association members works in public relations and not in traditional media journalism. Today, the association is therefore also named *The Media Union*, which seems more appropriate, considering the actual composition of members.

This tendency is to a certain degree recurring in public relations, because the members of the two Danish associations in this field –*Danish Association of Communication Professionals* (Dansk Kommunikationsforening) and *The Danish Association of Public Relations Agencies* (Brancheforeningen af Public Relationsvirksomheder i Danmark/BPRV, merged with *The Danish Management Board*/DMR in August 2002) –as already indicated (compare note 13), have very different educational backgrounds, among which journalism. Thus, the trade unions of journalists and public relations practitioners seem to accept members from the same professions, in the sense that the media journalists' union also has public relations advisers and professional communicators as members and vice versa. This is an interesting finding in the light of the very different professional responsibilities, duties and values of journalists and public relations advisers discussed above, not least because the attention to opposite professional principles within the same union risks blurring the identity and unification –the professionalism– of the members, including the specific occupational interests that each union has been commissioned to protect and develop.

In continuation of this, it should be emphasised that the objectives of the Danish associations of public relations practitioners is *not* to improve the working conditions and salaries of its members, but rather to promote the use of public relations, the consensus of the practitioners and the overall credibility of the profession in a Danish context. Therefore, the unions have formulated ethical guidelines or codes of conduct with the object of surrounding public relations with respect and facilitate the professionalism of the practitioners. The content of these guidelines is, however, expressed in very general terms and is very open to interpretation, because it primarily obliges the members not to distribute false information, to work in the interest of the employer and to keep informed of the essential laws of the field. Thus, the guidelines cannot easily be applied to concrete cases, they are primarily focused on the relations to and loyalty towards the employers, and they do not touch on the personal integrity of the practitioners or on the responsibility towards the public or the profession –shortcomings as to detailing and content which

according to Jarud (2002, 173) and Ottestig (2002, 159) characterise the ethics of public relations in *general*. In addition, the codes of conduct are formulated and thus enforced from within the unions –and therefore the authorities' sanctioning of any breaches does not fall within its scope, contrary to the case of the traditional professions (compare the next section).

In a media context, Danish journalists have to follow the *Press Ethical Rules*, which are instructive guidelines of good press behaviour –regarding, among other things, the accuracy and fidelity of the information distributed in the media, the protection of the sanctity of private life, the reporting of accidents, death and legal proceedings etc.– located in the *Law on the responsibility of the Media* of 1991. As opposed to the guidelines of public relations practitioners, these guidelines are not enforced by the journalists' trade union, but by the *Danish Press Council* –an independent institution, founded in accordance with the law of 1991. Though the journalists' ethical guidelines are not formulated in detail, partly because of their normative character, they seem stricter than the ethical code of public relations practitioners. The implicit sanctioning powers conferred on the authorities by the law of 1991 and the *Press Ethical Rules*, are a consequence of the fact that consideration for the personal integrity and the sphere of privacy is a precondition of the social standing of journalists and their privileges regarding, for example, protection of sources, right of access to documents and to other information etc. Thus, the instructive *Press Ethical Rules*, but also the practical –and unwritten– journalistic procedures occasioned by them, contribute to a legitimisation of the journalists' practice in the eyes of the public. It is, however, often up to the individual journalist to put the spirit of the ethical rules into practice, because in the considerable span between the authorities (the law) and the individual practitioner, there is only sporadic ethical initiatives from the media institutions and the trade union. More and more Danish media *do* have individual, media-internal or specific ethical guidelines (usually accessible to the public on the Internet) –for example the national public service channel– *Danmarks Radio* (DR), introducing a set of *Programme ethical guidelines* (*not* regulations) in November 2000, concerning especially interaction with and treatment of sources. This is, though, not a required or (yet) general media institutional practice. Certain media have employed *ombudsmen* who mediate between the public and the editorial staff on behalf of the former in case of complaints, editorial errors etc. As of January 2001, the national Danish newspaper, *Politiken*, has, for example, appointed a news

ombudsman, named the *readers' editor* with the object of signalling his loyalty to the public and his independence of the editorial decision making, and with the purpose of advancing the credibility of the paper.[16] This is, however, not a common practice either, and the ombudsman has thus also attracted considerable public –and not least journalistic– attention.

The differences of content and of enforcement of the professional ethics of respectively journalists and public relations practitioners shows, that the raison d'être and the legitimacy of journalism is based on a conduct which is perceived by the public to be ethical, while the raison d'être and the legitimacy of public relations is based on a consideration of the interests of the employer. This contradiction confirms the ethical and professional problems that arise when the roles and obligations of the two professions are mixed up with each other, and it indicates that journalism and public relations have very different relations to *the authorities and the market –the public.*

Authorities, markets and the public

The state –and only the state– can give a profession a license to or the monopoly of its work –that is, a legal right to exercise the profession (compare for example with the certificate of the lawyer). This licence or monopoly is accompanied by a duty to work in the interests of the public, but also by a respectability and authority conferred on the profession by the state, which not only advance the professional strategy of exclusion, but also provide the profession with a considerable power in relation to the society and the social hierarchy. To maintain this public position and the thus defined relations to the authorities, the profession is obliged to present itself as a professional unity with a collective integrity and a standardised practice, not least because the professions are –despite the privileges given by the state– constantly competing with related, substituting or complementary services (Macdonald, 1995, 34f).[17] This emphasises, once again, the importance of a professional accordance and a unified understanding –especially if the profession does not only want to maintain its position, but also to further it, for example by preventing the success of competing fields.[18]

In this commercial context, the relation to the public –the market– is important as well, especially the capacity to fulfil the expectations of the society and the market. This capacity –or the absence of it– contributes to the legitimisation of the profession and to the maintenance of the social and professional status of its practitioners. This is due to the fact that the market consists of clients who interact directly with the professionals by paying for their services in confidence of their

abilities and with an expectation of their efforts, founded on the principles and values of the profession, to work in the interest of the client in return for the monetary payment. Thus, the relation to the public is based on an economic exchange, but also on respect and confidence, and that is why the public plays an important part in the professional project after all –despite the efforts of exclusion of the professionals as regards precisely this public and its knowledge.

Neither journalists nor public relations advisers are licensed to perform their duties by the state. Though the constitutional principle of freedom of expression can be interpreted as a sort of public justification of journalism, this freedom is not exclusive to journalists. Journalists do, however, defend this freedom in particular because of their role as spokesmen of the public opinion. And despite media researchers' considerable critique of the mythical role of the press as a fourth estate (for example Allern, 1997, 80-106; Boyce, 1978, 19-40), the very existence of this term indicates, at least in theory, that a central public position –and power– is assigned to journalists in accordance with the ideals of traditional professions. In continuation of this, journalists are entrusted with privileges and a social standing that involve public obligations and responsibilities, but also maintenance of a relation of trust and confidence to the public, the market –a trust or confidence that is not only decisive for the journalists' legitimacy, but also for ratings and numbers of readers. The public is, however, not the only market that journalists have to serve. They also have to meet media institutional expectations, including the interests of advertisers who contribute to the financing of the media enterprise and thus to the salary of the journalist (McManus, 1994). Moreover, journalists must collaborate with sources, for example by giving access to the public's attention in exchange for information and in order to maintain a network of information suppliers. Rather than being disciplined by the journalistic profession or the authorities, the practitioners are thus disciplined by these different markets, because –contrary to the doctor or the lawyer– journalists do not risk loosing their license or commission in case of non-fulfilment or even contempt of the journalistic standards or ethics. On the contrary, by not satisfying the different market expectations, journalists risk damaging their very fundamental relations to these parties.[19]

Certain of these relations to the public or the market recur in a public relations context, but not all of them. While a certain privileged position is, in spite of everything, implicitly assigned to the journalist by the state, no similar position is

assigned the practitioners of public relations. In principle, this means that the public relations adviser has no obligations towards the public, but only towards clients or employers. Despite this implicit lack of public legitimacy, the field of public relations does increasingly constitute a powerful factor in society alongside journalism and other professions, partly due to the growing use of public relations strategies by different public and private players. These strategies may consist of distributing and suppressing information, notably directed towards the press and thus towards the public, whose democratic rights –protected among others by the press– are partly based on the access to correct and varied information, presented with a minimum of objectivity. Having said that, the explosive development and increasing expertise in public relations can explicitly influence the information flows, which is one of the reasons why, public relations must be considered as increasingly powerful.

This tendency is implicitly confirmed by the quantitative survey, cited several times above, in that approximately two out of five respondents admit to a more or less pronounced increase in their use of information placed at their disposal by public relations officers for a specific purpose, while only one out of ten completely reject an increase of this sort.[20] Moreover, one third feel that their access to the sources and the source information is more or less *controlled* by professional communicators (table 2), indicating that the latter do occupy a prominent position in the journalists' work and thus in the distribution of information to the public.

Table 2: Replies given to the question:'"*Do you feel that public relations officers control your access to the sources and the source information?*"

	Respondents	Percentage (n = 527)
Greatly	25	4,7%
Moderately	149	28,3%
Not distinctly	230	43,6%
Not at all	106	20,1%

Relations of confidence are also important in public relations, but –contrary to journalism– rather on the level of 'practitioner-client' than of"practitioner-public', partly because the clients often wish to keep the public unaware of their use of professional communication. Public relations practitioners do however, as indicated above, increasingly try to gain the respect of the public by professionalising the methodology and the ideals of the practitioners, but also by creating and practising ethical guidelines. According to Baskin, Aronoff & Lattimore, public relations have thus evolved from being *manipulation* by press agents,

via one-way communication or *information* by publicity agents to being two-way communication destined to create a *mutual influence and understanding* between public and private interests during the 20th century (1997, 31),[21] echoing Grunig and Hunt's four classic models of public relations –from *press agency/ publicity*, via *public information* to *two-way asymmetric* and *two-way symmetric public relations* (1984, 22). Despite these changes, the good of the public is in practice still not a primary concern to the practitioners and the ethical guidelines have, as indicated above, still a very unspecific or overall nature, as seen in the Danish context. Grunig has thus also developed a fifth model of public relations, combining the idealistic ambitions of mutual influence and adaptation in the two-way symmetric public relations model with the fact or recognition that corporate communication usually, if not always, does have specific, strategic intentions and goals (Grunig & White, 1992, 45ff; Eriksson, 2002, 56).

Summing up, the professional project is about creating a group of practitioners sharing an exclusive, defined knowledge and maintaining and demarcating this group in a view to competing for economic, social and political recompense. Consequently, all members of a profession are obliged to defend the monopoly of the profession and its position on the market and in the social hierarchy by committing themselves to its practices, values and norms. This commitment can be anticipated by educational standards and insistence on obligatory diplomas, but also by a strong union with a code of ethics that focuses on the interests of the public as well as of the clients, inasmuch as the social position of a profession is not only determined by the ideals and fixed standards of the practitioners themselves, but also on the expectations and the esteem of the society.[22]

Journalism and public relations have been professionalised considerably in recent years and therefore today has several of the professional characteristics. Among other things, this professionalisation has contributed to an expansion of the areas of the professions, but also to a blurring of their boundaries, on the one hand facilitating an exchange of roles and duties, but on the other hand challenging the self-understanding of the practitioners, especially from a journalistic point of view as to public credibility and responsibility. On the basis of results from the survey, cited several times above, the following section focuses on this tendency among Danish journalists to attempt to fulfil both traditional media journalistic duties and duties within the area of public relations, including the paradoxes, problems and possibilities of this professional cocktail.

The professional cocktail –extension and controversies

One of the goals of the survey was to get an insight into the extension of the confusion of professional roles among Danish journalists –that is, media journalists working on both sides of the line of interaction of journalists and sources, presenting themselves as both representatives of a public interest and of specific, private interests. The results show interesting, but ambiguous tendencies.

First of all, almost half of the respondents had had experiences in public relations –12,7% actually carrying out such tasks at the moment of the survey,[23] indicating that the mixing of roles is relatively widespread. Of those with past experiences in public relations, one out of five was or had been *permanently* engaged in this domain, and one out of four was or had been working *freelance*, while half of them was or had been performing *occasional tasks*,[2] indicating that the mixing of roles happens under very different contractual circumstances.

When asked about the subject of their work as a journalist and the subject of their work in public relations, again the replies suggested very varying, but also very subtle constellations (table 3).

Table 3: Replies given to the question: *"If you carry out or have carried out "tasks within public relations or professional communication: Do/did you work as a media journalist at the same time?"*

	Respondents	Percentage (n = 229)
Yes, in a permanent (media) employment, covering the same subject	46	20,1%
Yes, in a permanent (media) employment, covering different subjects	55	24,0%
Yes, freelance covering the same subject	26	11,4%
Yes, freelance covering different subjects	37	16,2%
No, I did not work as a (media) journalist at the same time	63	27,5%

Notes:

It must be emphasised that the confidence interval is rather wide because of the smaller number of respondents (n = 229). Thus, it is 95% certain that:

- the true percentage of individuals with experiences in PR and *permanent* media employment, covering the *same* subject as media journalist and professional communicator, lies within 20,1% ± 5,2% (14,9% - 25,3%)
- the true percentage of individuals with experiences in PR and *permanent* media employment, covering a *different* subject as media journalist and professional communicator lies within 24% ± 5,5% (18,5% - 29,5%
- the true percentage of

individuals with experiences in PR and *freelance* media connection, covering the *same* subject as media journalist and professional communicator lies within 11,4% ± 4,1% (7,3% - 15,5%)
- the true percentage of individuals with experiences in PR and *freelance* media connection, covering a *different* subject as media journalist and professional communicator lies within 16,2% ± 4,7% (11,5% - 20,9%)
- the true percentage of individuals with experiences in PR and *temporal separation* of the professional interests lies within 27,5% ± 5,8% (21,7% - 33,3%)

One out of three (with either permanent –20,1%– or freelance media employment –11,4%) covered the *same* subject as both media journalist and public relations adviser –that is, covered the *same* subject, but from *opposite* perspectives and defending opposite interests (meaning that, for example, a business journalist would carry out public relations tasks for businesspeople, or that a cultural journalist would carry out public relations tasks for players on the cultural scene). This constellation implies an explicit confusion of responsibilities and an evident ethical paradox, especially in a media journalistic context because the practitioner in the journalistic role risks having to deal with sources for whom he or she is also working as a public relations adviser. This paradox seems less explicit as to the 40 percent (with either permanent –24%– or freelance media employment –16,2%) carrying out tasks covering *different* subjects (for example, the business journalist carrying out tasks in the cultural field), inasmuch as the interests and the players are not identical. As regards the last almost 30 percent working *either* as a journalist *or* as a public relations adviser, the paradox seems even less pronounced because of the temporal separation of the professional interests.

Generally speaking, assuming different roles does, however, pose an ethical problem to *all* journalists –not only to those with simultaneous engagements in the two fields or those with permanent media employment, but also to freelancers and those separating their professional engagements temporarily, because the mix of traditions and goals in itself challenges the journalists' credibility and autonomy, no matter the resemblance or difference of content, players and methodology. Furthermore, as a public relations officer the journalist runs the risk of giving the sources access to the journalistic methodology, its priorities, strengths and weaknesses, and does thus indirectly help the sources to adapt to the premises of the media, and at worst, to manipulate the media.

On the other hand, it must be emphasised that the mixing can also encourage the mutual understanding and dialogue between journalists and sources as regards the goals, interests, needs and working conditions of the 'opponent'. This reciprocal understanding is especially important in a media context, because it can strengthen the ability of the journalists to 'read' or decipher the intentions behind the increasing quantity of information placed at their disposal by public relations advisers. In addition, it can lead to a better adjustment of the information subsidies to the journalists' needs which does not necessarily pose a menace to the integrity of the journalists, but can be a support, depending of its use. Thus, the mixing of roles does not only give rise to professional paradoxes, but also to possible benefits, which is precisely what creates the ambivalence of the relation between journalists and public relations officers. That is why, this article does not purport to judge or to hold neither the journalists nor the public relations practitioners responsible for the situation, but rather to draw attention to exactly the two-sided and equivocal character of their professional cocktail.

Notwithstanding, it must be stressed that there is an indication of a decreasing'*loyalty* towards the journalistic profession, inasmuch as less than half of the respondents, when asked directly, outright reject the mixing of professional roles, while the rest of them are open to different combinations of duties, even though these attitudes are not unanimous either (table 4).

Table 4: Different *attitudes* towards the mixing of journalistic tasks and public relations tasks

	Respondents	Percentage (n = 527)
A journalist can carry out media tasks and PR-tasks covering the samesubject at the same time	31	5,9%
A journalist can carry out media tasks and PR-tasks at the same time as long as they differ in subject	56	10,6%
A journalist can carry out media tasks and PR-tasks covering the same subject, but not at the same time	82	15,6%
A journalist can carry out media tasks and PR-tasks, but covering different subjects and not at the same time	111	21,1%
A journalist should in no circumstances or at any time carry out PR-duties	227	43,1%

Almost one out of five has a positive attitude towards carrying out tasks involving a mixing of duties and roles *at the same time* (concerning either the same subject –5,9%– or a subject differing from the that of the media journalistic duties –10,6%), while two out of five reject this *temporal* mix of professional interests (no matter the subject –15,6% plus 21,1%). This last fact indicate a certain awareness of the contradictory interests, but also shows an acceptance of the dual

role, as long as it is separated in time. This acceptance can be interpreted as a result of the present job situation for journalists in Denmark, marked by a considerable increase in the number of educated journalists during recent years, not matching the decreasing number of *media* occupations which is a consequence of, among other things, reductions in editorial staff. This development might be forcing journalists to attend to opposing duties, no matter their actual opinion of this professional mix –that is, might contribute to a decreased loyalty towards the profession and its ideals, especially because of an at least prior increase in job opportunities for journalists in professional communication.[25]

From an institutional perspective, a critical attitude towards the mix of professional roles can to a certain extent be found among Danish *media enterprises*, though their policies are not unequivocal or harmonised either (table 5).

Table 5: Replies given to the question: *"Does your employer have a policy as to the employees' sideline occupations?"*

	Respondents	Percentage (n = 527)
The employer does not object to journalists working for others at the same time	53	10, 1%
The employer objects to journalists working for others at the same time	220	41,7%
The employer does not have a policy on the subject	107	20,3%
Don't know	113	21,4%

Almost half of the respondents state that their employer does *not* allow that the employees carry out other employment, while the other half state either 1) the exact *opposite* point of view or policy, 2) that the employer do *not have* a policy at all or 3) *ignorance* as to the policy of their employer.[26] These different tendencies imply that there are no collective agreement or mandatory rules at neither an institutional nor an organisational level as to the dual role of journalists, but that there is no dialogue on the subject either. Therefore, it is often up to (the ethics of) the individual journalist to decide whether to mix the professional roles or not –that is, an individual decision to be taken rather than a collective professional decision, indicating precisely the complexity of the situation and of establishing a general consensus and more permanent guidelines, rules or control mechanisms for the profession.

Conclusion

This article has demonstrated considerable similarities between the traditional professions on the one side and journalism and public relations on the other side, but also a number of facts complicating the professional project of public relations officers and especially journalists –not least the incompatibility of the professional 'absolutism' of traditional professions with the journalistic ideals of independence and

diversity. Despite these circumstances, a continuous professionalisation is, however, productive and useful in both contexts, first of all to counteract the rather poor public images and lack of respectability of the two areas of the occupations, but also to counteract the approximation'–or (con)fusion– of the two.

For a long time, public relations practitioners have fought a negative image caused by their dubious past, but also by their fundamental ideology of working in the (commercial and private) interests of clients rather than in the interests of the public. It seems that the profession ought to apply the efforts it makes to protect images (typically of clients) in the media and with the public to its own practitioners –that is, to the public relations advisers themselves– in an attempt to improve their own professional image and reputation. This could for example be accomplished by further professionalisation, including 1) the creation of collective (national), detailed and practical ethical guidelines or codes of conduct that all practitioners are obliged to respect, 2) the elaboration of preventive sanctions enforced by external parties or 3) the integration of considerations of public interest and the social obligations of the practitioners –that is, considerations reflecting the public role of journalists as to providing information and furthering the public good.

Journalism is not only undergoing a sort of image crisis as to, for example, credibility (Kramhøft, 2000, 10, http://people-press.org),[27] but is furthermore competing with related – professionalised – communication disciplines which are 1) growing in number, 2) encroaching on the journalists' domain by adapting to the needs of the media and 3) increasingly considered as indispensable instruments by different players of the society in their struggle to reach the public attention. The research cited above indicates that these factors challenge the journalistic ideologies, especially by leading to an approximation of content and methodologies of different media disciplines –and thereby to a blurring of the distinction between objective and subjective information subsidies– but also by leading to an increasing accept of journalists having other occupations and thus to a decreasing journalistic fidelity or loyalty, which again contribute to a confusion of professional boundaries. By exceeding the boundaries, obligations and interests of the different fields, the journalist plays on *the one hand* the role of a representative of a media enterprise, of a public spokesman and of an interpreter of the traditional journalistic values and ideals, but on *the other hand* the role of a source or spokesman of sources by representing specific interests with entirely different goals to those of journalism. This duplicity defies the

journalist's integrity, credibility and legitimacy –that is, his or her most important professional characteristics. Though the traditional concept of professions is not absolutely suitable as regards journalism, and though the media structures do not always offer optimal working conditions because of economical and production constraints, the professional reflections especially as to journalistic obligations can thus further the legitimacy and the attributes of journalism in a public context. This is why journalists must always be aware of what interests they are serving, not least because of the professionalisation of and increase in public relations, explicitly indicated by the survey in this article. These circumstances intensify the demands on the journalists as regards traditional journalistic efforts, especially in the interaction with the sources.
It should be emphasised that the specific mix of professional roles discussed in this article is not the only one occurring in journalism. Media journalists can, for example, also act as politicians –or vice versa– and thus confuse the role of the public watchdog with the role of the elected representative of the people. Or journalists can host game or talk shows and thus confuse the role of the serious news reporter with the role of the amusing host of light entertainment programmes. These mixes of professional roles involve other interesting journalistic schisms and challenges, which are, however, beyond the reach of this article. A central point is, though, that in order to meet the external menaces and increasing demands and in order to maintain the legitimacy of journalism as a powerful, conscientious and serious mediator, a continual progress and a persistent improvement of the journalists' professionalism is of vital importance. The journalists' most important professional resource is not just time and money or methodology, curiosity and gut feeling, but also an awareness of the fundamental interests of the field and a vigilance towards the dangers of the professional cocktail'–no matter its ingredients.

FOOTNOTES

1 © 2002 Parts of this article is currently under publication in French in the Belgian scientific journal *Recherche en Communication*, Département de Communication, l'Université Catholique de Louvain, Belgium.

2 This study is part of the author's PhD-project, carried out at the Department of Film and Media Studies, University of Copenhagen, 2000-2003.

3 The actual figure is difficult to determine more precisely because of the fluid demarcations and definitions of the journalistic field, but also because of divergent figures from the Danish journalist's trade union (Dansk Journalistforbund) and the official Danish statistics.

4 The questionnaire contained eleven introductory questions (on demography, geography and occupation) and eighty six questions on news sources.

5 The percentages presented in the article relate for the most part to the totality of respondents (527 individuals) –that is, represent the response rates in percentage (the data were processed by SPSS– Statistical Programme for the Social Sciences). Since the sample is (approximately) representative of the population, a confidence interval of 95% has –when relevant, that is, in case of close or almost identical response rates to the same question– been calculated in order to estimate the confidence and reliability that can be ascribed to the observations. The formula used is the following: $\pm 1{,}96^{*}\sqrt{p^{*}(100\text{-}p)/n}\%$ (p = response rate in percentage, n = total number of respondents) (Hjarvard, 2001, 129f; Hansen and Hjorth Andersen, 2000, 188; Rowntree 1981, 94ff).

6 The hybrid *info-communication*, introduced by De Muizon, refers to the fact that media communication is increasingly penetrated by strategic communication. The hybrid is *neither* information *nor* communication, but is *represented* as information, though the content is more affiliated with communication (2000, 33). Though De Muizon's metaphor might be new, the existence of strategic efforts to influence the media agenda and media communication is not'–public relations have existed for more than a century (Grunig and Hunt 1984, 25). The strategic tools, their range and use do, however, change and increase rapidly, among other things in response to media institutional changes, including commercialisation, increasing media independence and professionalisation, as seen, for example, in a Danish context where the party press has been replaced by an independent, non-party press.

7 To the question "*Has there been a change in the quantity of information placed at your disposal during the last ten years?*" 0,8% of the respondents replied that the quantity of information had decreased; 3% that there had been no change; 2,7% that they did not know; and 92% that the quantity had increased. To the question "*Do you feel that there has been an increase in the quantity of information distributed to journalists by public relations officers during the last ten years?*" 62,4% of the respondents replied greatly; 28,5% moderately; 2,5% not distinctly; 0,2% not at all; and 4,2% that they did not know. To the question "*Have you experienced a change in the resources allocated to the daily work as regards time and money during the last ten years?*" 16,7% of the respondents replied that the resources had"increased; 20,5% that there had been no change; 10,1% that they did not know, and, as already cited, 49,7% that the resources had been reduced.

8 Macdonald emphasises that this professional characteristic especially became important with the appearance of modern technical expertise, skills and conception of knowledge at the end of the 18th century (1995, 183). Formerly, the focus was rather honour, respectability and gentlemen's codes.

9 Compare also with Bourdieu's discussions of the importance of education and the educational system in relation to the distribution of cultural capital (for example Bourdieu, 1993; Bourdieu, 1997).

10 Journalism has been taught in Denmark as an academic discipline since 1998 (at the University of Odense and the University of Roskilde). Until the beginning of the 1970s, where a *school* of journalism was founded (at Aarhus), the educational basis of Danish journalism was apprenticeship, though shorter journalistic seminars were held from 1908, but only sporadically (Thorsen, 1951, 100).

11 More precisely, an academic education in public relations was founded in 1986 (at the University of Roskilde), while communication studies have been offered since the 1970s (for example at the University of Roskilde and the University of Aalborg).

12 *The Danish Union of Journalists* had approximately 1000 members in 1961, approximately 5000 in 1990 and approximately 12000 in 2001 (Meilby, 1999, 26; www.journalistforbundet.dk). The trade union magazine of Danish public relations advisers and professional communicators, *Kommunikatøren*, estimates that approximately 2600 persons are working in communication in Denmark today (2002) – of these 2100 in the private sector and 500 in the public sector (media journalists not included) – compared to approximately 1300 persons in 1992. Furthermore, the trade union magazine estimates that the number of graduates in communication will have increased by 50% in 2002 compared to five years ago– – figures indicating a potential abundance of professional communicators (Pedersen, 2002).

13 The survey introduced at the beginning of this article shows that 66,2% of the respondents have an education as journalist (from the Danish School of Journalism, Aarhus); 16,3% have learned the journalistic methodology by apprenticeship; 8,4% have a different education (either academic or non-academic); and 8,2% have no education/are autodidactic. These figures indicate both an homogeneity in the educational backgrounds, albeit with certain variations – trends supported by figures from the trade union of Danish journalists, organising approximately 95-97% of all Danish journalists, indicating that at least half of the members have an education as journalist, while the rest have either a different education or no education (Dansk Journalistforbund, 2000). A survey carried out among the members of the *Danish*

Association of Communication Professionals (Dansk Kommunikationsforening), one of the two Danish associations in public relations and professional communication, in February 2000 shows that the educational variations are even more evident in this field: 23% of the respondents are Masters of Arts (MA), 17% are educated in communication, 14% in journalism, 13% in public relations, 18% have a different academic education (business studies, law etc.) and 12% have a different non-academic education (www.kommunikationsforeningen.dk).

14 Macdonald emphasises that the ethics of traditional professions are founded on either scientific or normative principles. The natural sciences are for example based on scientific principles, while the clergy is based on a normative tradition – though *all* professions possess a certain normative aspect (1995, 168).

15 The five categories are 1) journalist/reporter, 2) sub-editor, 3) local editor, 4) editor and 5) editor-in-chief (Dansk Journalistforbund 2002, http://www.journalistforbundet.dk/data/285841/285841.pdf).

16 The Danish concept of the reader's editor is based on the British model, introduced by the *Guardian* in 1997 (Bredal, 2001, 7).

17 Compare for example the professional conflict between the medical science and the naturopathic method: Medical science fights to exclude healers who fight to acquire the respectability and power of the traditional physicians.

18 It is necessary to emphasise the difficulty –or impossibility– of a total prevention of internal conflicts in a profession as regards professional boundaries, extension of exclusion strategies etc., because the individual economic and social interests of the professionals can –despite the need for harmony– not be completely suppressed.

19 Several of these circumstances are discussed by Bourdieu (1994), focusing especially on 1) the concentration of the press and the number of potential jobs at the journalists' disposal, 2) the position of the media in the media hierarchy, 3) the status of the journalist as to, whether permanent employment with a fixed salary or freelance work, and 4) the journalist's autonomy independence/dependence on for example source information.

20 To the question "*Has your use of information from public relations officers increased during the last decade?*" 7,6% of the respondents replied"greatly; 33,6% moderately; 40% not distinctly; 10,6% not at all; and 5,1% that they did not know.

21 Baskin, Aronoff & Lattimore furthermore sum up this transformation with the following key-words which seem adequate from an ideal point of view, while their practice can be questioned: 1) from manipulation to adaptation, 2) from external counsellor to internal team member, 3) from marketing to management, 4) from program to process, 5) from craftsperson to manager, 6) from items to issues, 7) from output to input, 8) from fire-fighter to fire preventer, 9) from illegitimacy to legitimacy, 10) from U.S. profession to global profession (1997, 45).

22 Several sources present similar points of view as regards the characteristics of professions. Bourdieu emphasises for example that the idea of professions "*... takes into account not only the nature of the job and the income, but those secondary characteristics which are often the basis of their social value (prestige or discredit) and which, though absent from the official job description, function as tacit requirements, such as age, sex, social or ethic origin, overtly or implicitly guiding co-option choices, from entry into the profession and right through a career, so that members of the corps who lack these traits are excluded or marginalised*" (1984, 102f). Tunstall cites Ernest Greenwood's five factors: 1) a systematic theory, 2) authority, 3) recognition from the society, 4) an ethical code and 5) a culture (1971, 69), which are explicitly related to those of Macdonald and which are more or less repeated by Baskin, Aronoff & Lattimore, putting forward four criteria: 1) expertise, 2) autonomy, 3) commitment and 4) responsibility (1997, 98) and furthermore by Grunig & Hunt, emphasising 1) a set of professional values, 2) membership in strong professional organisations, 3) adherence to professional norms, 4) an intellectual tradition and an established body of knowledge, and 5) technical skills acquired through professional training (1984, 66).

23 To the question "*Have you at one time attended to work in public relations?*" 55,2% of the respondents replied No; 30,7% Yes, but not any more; and 12,7% Yes, and does it continuously. Thus, 229 respondents had experiences in public relations.

24 To the question "*If you carry out or have carried out public relations tasks: On what basis were or are you employed (in public relations)?*"18,8% (corresponding to 8,2% of the total sample) replied Permanent employment; 27,1% (corresponding to 11,8% of the total sample) Freelance; and 45% (corresponding to 19,5% of the total sample) contract for a single task –from a totality of 229 respondents. Because of the smaller number of respondents to this question, the confidence interval is wider. Thus, it is 95% certain

that:
- the true percentage of individuals who were/had been *permanently* engaged in public relations lies within 18,8% ± 5,1% (13,7% – 23,9%)

- the true percentage of individuals with a *freelance* connection to public relations lies within 27,1% ± 5,8% (21,3% – 32,9%), and
- the true percentage of individuals who were/had been performing *occasional public relations tasks* lies within 45% ± 6,4% (38,6% – 51,4%).

25 In February 2002 *Kommunikatøren* indicated a stagnation in public relations employment in Denmark (and internationally) as a consequence of September 11th, emphasising that professional communication is especially sensitive to economical changes since communication budgets are among the first to be reduced in a time of crisis (Basland, 2002)

26 The national public service channel, *Danmarks Radio*, is among the Danish media with an ethical policy prohibiting the employees (specifically news reporters) to carry out, for example, media training or similar duties in their spare time – that is, to attend to both media (public) interests and source interests. This policy was tightened in April 2002 as a result of a number of disclosures of anchormen's and other prominent news reporters' extracurricular activities as well paid media trainers for politicians, business men and other traditional news sources (http://presse.dr.dk/presse/Article.asp?articleID=7378, http://presse.dr.dk/presse/Article.asp?articleID=7377).

27 Kramhøft cites a Danish survey from 1999 with a representative sample of 600 Danes as to the credibility of different occupations, indicating that less than one percentage of the respondents finds the credibility of Danish journalists to be of a very high standard, while 14 percentage find it to be of a very low standard (Kramhøft, 2000, 10, http://www.ifka.dk/artikler/tillidetik-uge36.html). A survey with a representative sample of 552 members of the editorial staff of American national and local media, carried out by *The Pew Research Centre for the People and the Press* in the Spring of 1999, indicates that even the media professionals themselves admit to an increasing loss of credibility –though the respondents only rank this problem third among the three top problems facing journalism (exceed by credibility-related problems concerning 1. the quality and standards of reporting and 2. business and financial factors such as audience/readerships and competition) (The Pew Research Centre for the People and the Press, 1999, 11/ http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=67

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