

Making choices in public relations planning: Are we reinforcing stereotypes?

Dr. Petra Theunissen, Auckland University of Technology

Khairiah A. Rahman, Auckland University of Technology

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- Ethnic culture influences the practice of public relations:
 - how practitioners engage in conversations with their publics
 - how they plan their campaigns
 - how they construct their messages
 - which the images they select for their campaigns
- Public relations practitioners are inadvertently reinforcing racial, cultural and ethnic stereotypes by uncritically adopting images and message in their campaigns

The premise

- Interdisciplinary approach; mainly:
 - Cultural theory
 - Mainstream public relations theory
- Highlight an area that is often overlooked in Public Relations practice and theory
- No conclusive answers; rather, purpose is to open discussion and create awareness

The approach

- The contemporary challenge is to create campaigns that are persuasive yet ethical
- ‘Ethical’ = a level of honesty, transparency & the intent not to harm the targeted publics (audiences) in any way
- But practitioners are, to a degree, limited by their own lifeworlds; while the intent may be there to do no harm, constraints exist that may impact on the realisation of that intent
- Must become aware of limitations of lifeworld and practice mindfulness

The challenge in PR

Lifeworlds are “the totality of practitioners’ thought, concepts, values and assumptions about their occupation...and their occupational experiences and identities that guide their behavior”

(Hodges, 2006, p.85)

- Created by the practitioner’s education, cultural, religious & ethnic affiliations as well as gender identity and age
- Practitioners—like all other social beings—arrange their reality according to personal cultural preconceptions, and these preconceptions are deeply rooted in their culture.

Practitioner’s ‘lifeworld’

- A multitude of personal, relational, professional and social identities impact on practitioners' 'lifeworlds'.
- The most important influencer on decisions about target publics, messages and methods of communication are *social identities*.
- Social identities are:
 - The product of demographics (age, gender, ethnicity, social class and nationality), roles played, membership of formal & informal organisations and professions as well as memberships of stigmatised groups
 - Moderated by personal, relational and professional identities.

Social identity

Professional identity is impacted by ‘professionalism’, which has 5 key traits (Grunig, Grunig and Dozier, 2002):

1. **Professional values**, taught to new professionals when they embark on public relations training (*where and when practitioners obtain their qualifications have bearing on how they view public relations and its role in society*)
2. **Professional norms** such as those embodied in a Code of Ethics
3. Existence of **influential professional institutions** that socialize practitioners into the given values (and norms) of the profession
4. A **set of technical skills** gained through professional training (*these skills are not values-free; they are learned within a culture and are accompanied with beliefs about appropriate application of such skills*)
5. An **intellectual body of knowledge**.

Professional identity

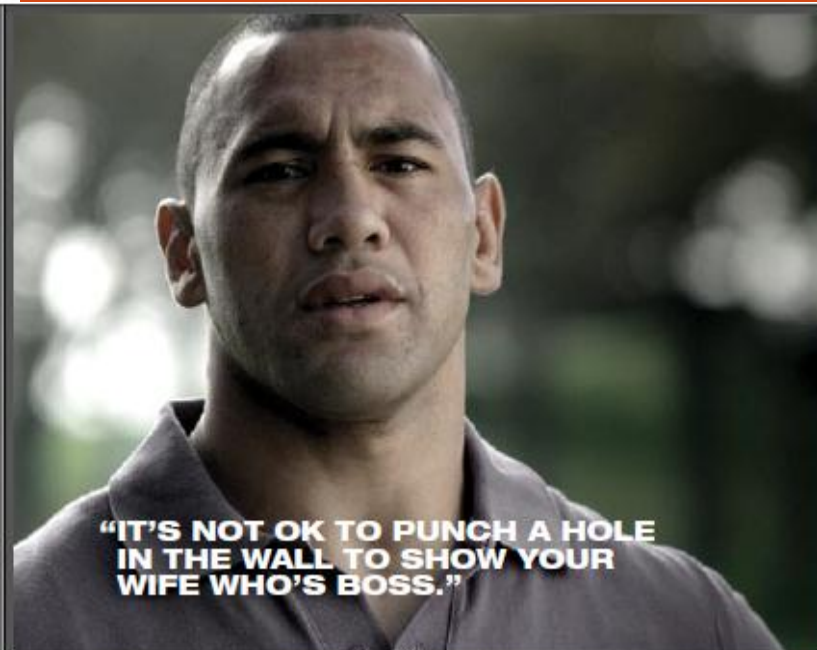
- Stereotypes are complex forms of categorisation that allow us to conceptualise experiences, and provide guidelines for behaviour towards a specific group of people (Samovar et al., 2007).
- Although stereotypes are a natural outgrowth of a need to reducing uncertainty and making sense of the world around us, societal myths about race, gender and ethnicity remain, influencing interpretation of events or actions (Conrad & Poole, 2005).

Challenge: using stereotypes that “ring true” without reinforcing negative stereotypes

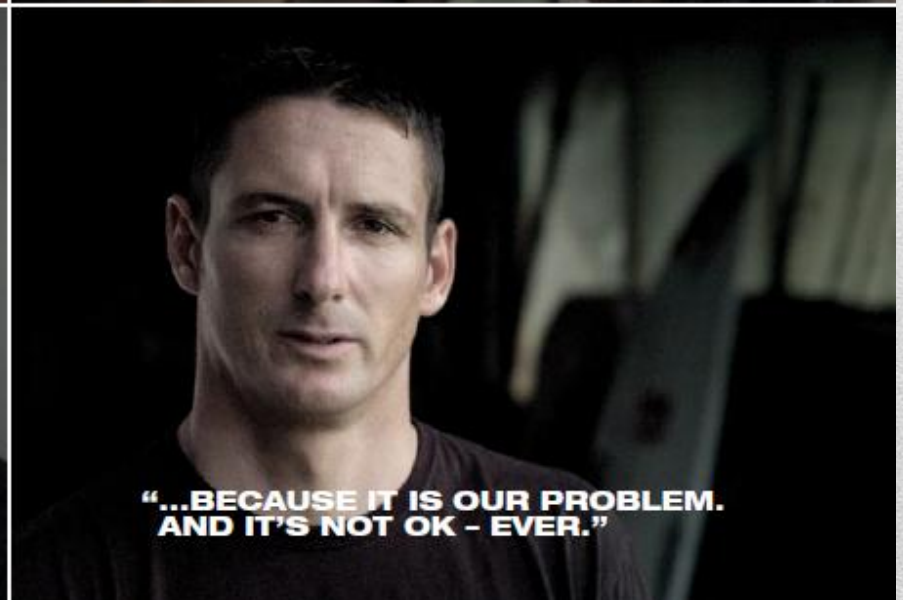
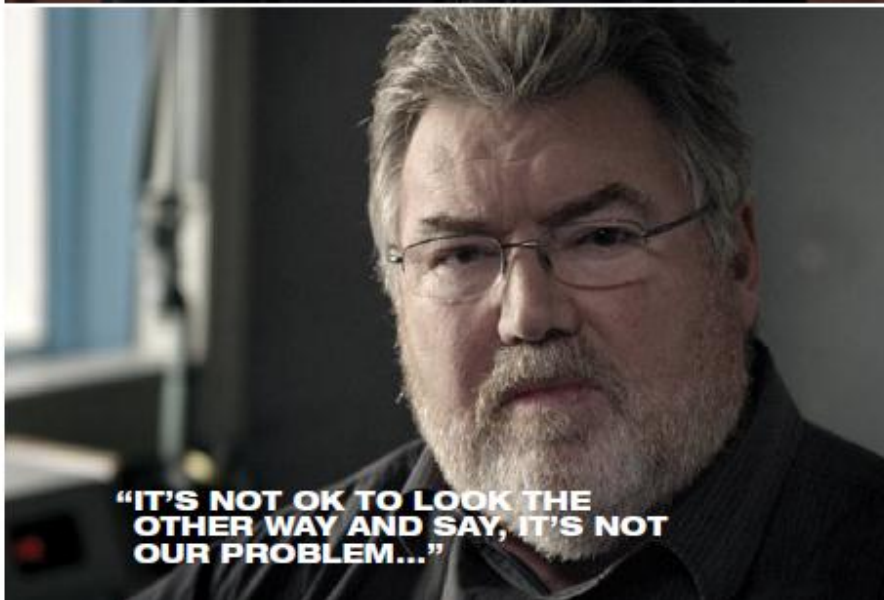
Stereotyping and society



**“FAMILY VIOLENCE: IT’S NOT
OKAY”**



15.34 x 5.83 in





“I could see she was stressed out so I offered to have the kids over to play... it led to us having a good chat.”

Kindy mum, 32

Pp.12-13 Children's booklet, 2010



CERVICAL SMEAR TEST CAMPAIGN

National Cervical Screening Programme

- › About the programme
- › What is cervical screening
- › Who should have a smear test
- › Where to have a smear test
- › Your results
- › Colposcopy
- › Frequently asked questions
- › National Cervical Screening Programme Resources
- › Personal Stories

National Cervical Screening Programme

Freephone   0800 729 729 



The National Cervical Screening Programme is available to all women in New Zealand between 20 and 70 years old.

September is Cervical Screening Awareness Month!

New Zealand women are urged to use September – Cervical Screening Awareness Month – as a reminder to have a cervical smear test, every three years.

Investing a small amount of time in having regular cervical smears can

A graphic that looks like a mobile phone screen. At the top, it shows a phone icon, the New Zealand flag, the Australia flag, and the number '0800 729 729' with a phone icon. Below this is a circular image of a smiling woman with dark hair, wearing a blue top. Underneath the image is a blue speech bubble containing the text 'Cervical screening' in white.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s_Rl4m9HmHA&feature=endscreen&NR=1

- Mindfulness is important:
 - Must 'own' cultural bias and target message fairly
 - Research and understand how targeted groups see themselves rather than how we see them
- Practitioner must reflect on their lifeworlds & must take cognisance of the effect of their decisions on broader society and specifically, on ethnic groups nationally and trans-nationally
- Not doing so may lead to unwanted publicity, misperceptions and in extreme cases prejudices and racism, validating criticism against the negative influence of public relations on society at large

Conclusion

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- Hodges, C. (2006). "PRP culture". A framework for exploring public relations practitioners are cultural intermediaries. *Journal of Communication Management*, 10(1), 80-93. DOI: 10.1108/136325406-16391.
- Samovar, L.A., Porter, R.E. & McDaniel, E.R. (2007). *Communication between cultures*. (6th Ed). Thomson Higher Learning: Belmont, CA.

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