

Purpose and Cultural Awareness in PD: Toward a Golden Circle of Public Diplomacy?

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Abstract

This research strives to contribute to the debates around Public Diplomacy by suggesting the potentialities of including into the equation intersectional concepts, so far used mainly in other disciplines. On the one hand, the author introduces a “sense of mission” (WHY), embedded in the so-called “Golden Circle” described by Sinek (2009) and the “Good Country Equation” introduced by Anholt (2020). On the other hand, the relevance of cultural awareness (WHERE) is highlighted, which is supported by intercultural studies theories and non-traditional cultural dimensions present in empirical research. This complementary model of analysis and strategy building could be called the Golden Circle of Public Diplomacy. A possible structure for its conceptualization could be: WHY (purpose), HOW (soft power), WHAT (PD), WHERE (culture), WHO (actors and audience), and WHEN (time).

Keywords: Public diplomacy, soft power, cultural awareness, interculturality, intersectionality, purpose

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Since the term public diplomacy (PD) was coined by Gullion in 1965 and the term soft power was introduced by Nye in 1990, there has been a long debate in academia regarding the theories, definitions, scopes, and relationship between these two terms. Some of the most popular definitions of PD define it as communication with foreign publics (Malone, 1985; Tuch, 1990; Melissen, 2005; Szondi, 2009; Zaharna, 2010; Sevin, 2016) – and domestic publics as well (Huijgh, 2013; Cooper, 2018) – with the objective of promoting the national interest (Pratkanis, 2009; Szondi, 2009; Sevin, 2017; Izadi & Nelson, 2020) by influencing public opinion (U.S. Department of State, 1987; Signitzer & Coombs, 1992; European Commission, 2007; Reinhard, 2009; Melissen, 2011; Ojo, 2016; Banks, 2020) to, consequently, influence foreign governments (Malone 1985; Frederick 1993; Gilboa, 2008) and manage the international environment (Cull, 2009; Sevin, 2016).

Soft power was first defined by Nye (1990, p.38) as the ability of “getting others to want what you want” through attraction rather than coercion. This co-optive power comes from cultural values, political values, and foreign policies (Nye, 2004). Since the concept was published, soft power has been “the most referenced term in the public diplomacy lexicon, although its prevalence does not mean that [all authors] agree on its definition and application” (Snow, 2020, p.4). Alternative concepts have challenged the initial definition of soft power, such as “country charisma” (Rana, 2016), “active” and “passive” soft power (Chitty, 2016), “soft-soft power” (Jiang, 2016) or “shared soft power” (Sevin, 2017). In relation to public diplomacy, most authors agree that there is a difference between the two terms, whether that means that PD is a tool of soft power (Nye, 2004; Hayden, 2016; Cull, 2019), that PD is a source of soft power (Nye, 2004; Chitty, 2016), that PD amplifies the impact of soft power resources (Sevin, 2017; Bjola et al., 2020), or that soft power is “the closest thing to a *theory of public diplomacy*” (Hayden, 2013, p. 2, original emphasis). However, some authors still perceive soft power and PD as interchangeable concepts (Hocking, 2008; Roselle, Miskimmon & O’Loughlin, 2014). Existing research has already established models of analysis and strategy building for a country’s public diplomacy and soft power, such as Cull’s (2019) five components of PD or Ayhan’s (2018) Taxonomy of PD Perspectives. Other authors, such as Melissen (2005), have conceptualized the “new public diplomacy.”

Needless to say, the aim of this research is not to substitute the existing tools for PD analysis. Rather, it aims to complement current PD research by introducing two intersectional concepts (sense of mission and cultural awareness) within a layered structure that could be adapted and/or integrated into existing PD models. This complementary model of analysis and strategy building could be called the Golden Circle of Public Diplomacy.

The Golden Circle of Public Diplomacy’s Framework

The framework of this potential new model of analysis and strategy building is based on Sinék’s Golden Circle and Anholt’s Good Country Equation.

Simon Sinek's Golden Circle

The Golden Circle is a leadership theory that Sinek (2009) introduced in his book *Start with WHY*, initially addressed to businesses and team leaders. It is composed of three concentric circles:

WHAT is the most superficial part of the company: the product or service e.g., Nike's WHAT are sports clothes.

HOW refers to the process of HOW they do WHAT they do e.g., Nike's HOW is the cutting-edge technology they use to create products that enhance performance.

WHY is the purpose, cause or belief the company has, the reason why it all started. The WHY is the deeper mission of the organization e.g., Nike's WHY is the empowerment of individuals to do anything they want, as their slogan says: "Just do it!"

Sinek has clearly stated the need of applying his theory to nation-states for long-term success in international reputation, highlighting the lack of "values-based foreign policy decisions since the end of the Cold War" (Sinek, 2015, p.372). Although Sinek is an advisor for several renown world leaders through his work at the RAND Corporation, his theory has not been widely applied to academic literature. There are a few examples of the use of the Golden Circle concept in the management of local governments, such as Cundinamarca in Colombia (López & Velázquez, 2016), or state-owned agencies, such as the Busan Port in South Korea (Muljosumarto, Jiyoung & Haeyoon, 2013). As far as we know, however, no study has brought the Golden Circle to the strategic level of public diplomacy. That is the main goal of this article.

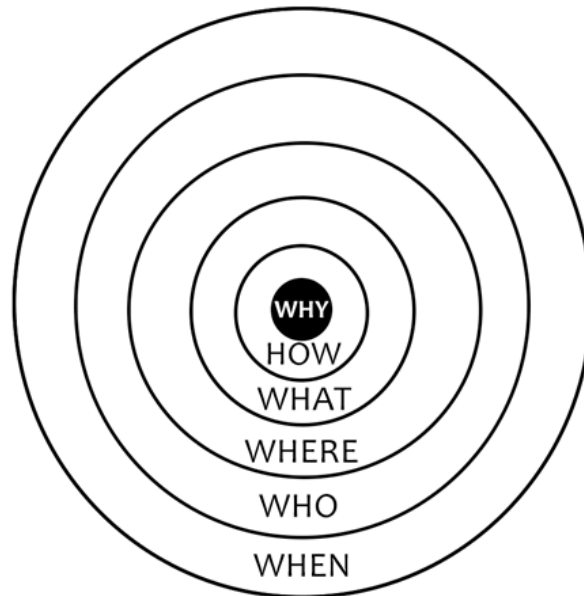
Simon Anholt's Good Country Equation

Sinek's worldview suggests that countries should behave as non-profit organizations with a clear moral purpose that contributes to the well-being and inspiration of individuals. Similarly, Anholt (2020, p.145) believes in collaboration in the international arena, not looking at each other as "enemies to be liquidated, or customers to be marketed to," but as collaborators working against common international enemies, such as climate change or poverty. Measuring countries' contributions to the well-being of global society, Anholt's Good Country Index is a reflection of this perspective of international affairs.

Both authors agree that human behavior cannot be manipulated for long-term results, people need to be inspired by admirable countries that represent a way of life and moral standards that are "in harmony with their own aspirations," as supported by other PD academics as well (among the pioneers of this reasoning, Thomson & Laves, 1963).

The Golden Circle of Public Diplomacy

To build this potential new complementary model, the classic Golden Circle dimensions and the importance of a sense of mission are applied to the PD field providing a theoretical approach and real examples. Moreover, three new dimensions are presented to integrate the second intersectional component of the model, cultural awareness. The six layers of the model would be WHY (purpose), HOW (soft power), WHAT (PD), WHERE (culture), WHO (actors & audience) and WHEN (time). Figure 1.



Source: Author

Figure 1. The Golden Circle of Public Diplomacy.

WHY

The core of the Golden Circle is the main purpose WHY countries do what they do. Some authors have mentioned the countries' will to "manage the international environment" (Cull, 2009; Sevin, 2016), whether that means world domination, economic supremacy, or regional leadership. Sinek (2009) argues that interests cannot lead a country's decisions, the values they stand for are the guidance international leaders should rely upon. It might sound contradictory to a realistic view of foreign affairs, as the famous sentence asserted by Lord Palmerston that countries have no permanent allies, "only permanent interests." However, countries also need to be "legitimate and [have] moral authority" (Nye, 2011, p.104).

In Anholt's (2020) research, five key drivers were included in their analysis of national standing: "morality, aesthetics, relevance, sophistication, and strength." According to Anholt (2020, pp.116-118), "morality made the biggest contribution of all, by a wide margin, and correlated most strongly with each country's overall NBI [Nation Brand Index] score," concluding that:

The countries that people prefer aren't necessarily the biggest, strongest, richest, or most beautiful [...] The most likely reason why somebody would admire a country is that they believe it contributes something of value to the world we live in, that it is motivated by positive values and principles. In other words, *people admire good countries*. (Original emphasis)

Other authors have also supported the view of finding a moral purpose. Vuving (2009) uses the terms benignity, inspirations, admiration, and gratitude as a foundation for soft power. Pratkanis (2009) highlights honesty and democracy as core values to conduct PD, and Amiri (2020) emphasizes the importance of having a shared mission and purpose within actors. Referring to a similar moral grand strategy, the term "humanity-centered" public diplomacy was recently introduced by Zaharna (2022).

When the reason WHY countries conduct PD relies on moral topics like democratizing the world, fighting climate change, achieving gender equality, eradicating racial discrimination, or ending global poverty, these countries become much more attractive to the eyes of foreign publics. Passionate activists in the international arena can clearly represent the WHY of a country e.g., Greta Thunberg has impersonated Sweden's values in her fight for the climate.

The WHY of a country should be reflected and present in the HOW and WHAT of that country. When the HOW and WHAT are not supported by a strong WHY, or by a WHY that is unethical or selfish in the international arena, these efforts can be seen as propaganda - dishonest or manipulative attempts to "sell" the image of a country. When this happens "international opprobrium has an effect," also called the effect of "naming and shaming," which has been affecting Russia lately after its full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24th, 2022 (Nye, 2011; Tingley & Tomz, 2019). As Anholt argues:

There's usually only one reason why a country thinks it has, or actually has, an image problem, and that's because it has a reality problem: It hasn't found its wider role or task or purpose in the world. It doesn't really know *why* it exists for people outside its own population, and that's why nobody else knows. (Anholt, 2020, p.38, emphasis added)

For example, while China maintains an "immoral" WHY by using its hard power to manipulate and coerce publics, its PD efforts - as the Beijing Olympics - will not be seen as genuine and will not be trusted by foreign publics (Spry, 2016), because "[s]oft power depends upon credibility, and when governments are perceived as manipulative and information is seen as propaganda, credibility is destroyed" (Nye, 2011, p.103). Indeed, public diplomacy is considered the post-modern propaganda of authoritarian regimes such as China (Noya, 2008), who argues that "*soft power* must subjugate to the priorities of *hard power*" (Rodríguez-Jiménez, 2015, p. 6318). In this case, China is leaning more toward "sharp power" over "smart power" (Walker, 2018; Nye, 2012).

It would be dangerous to oversimplify the international power dynamics and changing environments where PD is designed and operationalized, by interpreting the WHY of a country as its sole purpose in terms of PD. It is important to acknowledge the complexities of the systems, wherein multiple and varied PD purposes have been present in different historical periods, and bear in mind the WHY as an overarching sense of mission embedded in “strategic public diplomacy” to be shared across actors, activities, and interactions that guide the implementation of sub-purposes and goals within the country’s PD (Manheim, 1994).

HOW

The way countries conduct their PD activities always includes a differentiating factor: their unique soft power. Nye (1990, p. 38) defined this term as the ability to get “others to want what you want” without payment or coercion but through attraction. HOW countries promote their value proposition abroad is their unique soft power, which “tends to be associated with intangible assets such as an attractive personality, culture, political values and institutions, and policies” (Nye, 1990, p. 38). Whether the soft power of a country includes the characteristics of their landscapes, traditions, gastronomy, scientific advantages, or all of them is the decision of HOW the country wants to differentiate itself from the rest. For example, Sweden has been conducting several PD programs that reflect their cultural and political values to attract foreign publics, like the @Sweden project or Curators of Sweden (Swedish Institute, 2018). Sweden’s twitter account was shared among citizens to tell the world what a real Swedish citizen was. This PD program would be one of Sweden’s WHATs in the Golden Circle of Public Diplomacy. Their soft power, their HOW, was the differentiating factor, portraying Sweden as a transparent, democratic, and technological society (Christensen, 2013).

In this model, HOW is closer to Rana’s (2016) “country charisma” concept of soft power as it represents the intangible characteristics of a country and its society. Traditional concepts of power, like Morgenthau’s (1948), might be misleading for countries that apply a moral WHY to their PD grand strategy. Nevertheless, there is an intrinsic power in being an attractive country to foreign publics, no matter the intention. Therefore, the term “soft power” could represent the HOW of the Golden Circle of Public Diplomacy but would not be limited to this definition, as soft power can be both the process and the outcome.

WHAT

Although definitions of PD vary, most PD activities could be considered products or services of a country, from tangible products as educational books to intangible services like exhibitions provided by social and cultural resources. Researchers have classified as PD all kinds of activities in the fields of information, education, and culture (U.S. Department of State, 1987; Frederick, 1993; Chitty, 2016; Cull, 2019) which, according to Cull’s (2019) PD

model, can be equated to three forms of engaging foreign publics: international broadcasting, exchange diplomacy, and cultural diplomacy.

- **International broadcasting:** with the main goal of informing, international media provide a service to foreign audiences by spreading international news, entertainment, educational programs, etc. Although the original purpose might have been to propagate reliable information about the country it represents, most of these outlets have turned into news referents at an international level (see CNN, BBC, Voice of America, Radio Free Europe). Qatar uses international broadcasting as part of their PD strategy with its international media outlet Al Jazeera. The services that Al Jazeera provides could be the WHAT of Qatar's own Golden Circle of Public Diplomacy.
- **Exchange diplomacy:** several kinds of exchanges are part of PD programs, including educational, professional, and citizen exchanges. During these exchanges, the country offers a service by providing training, excursions, dialogues, and different experiences to selected foreign individuals. A well-known example is the Fulbright Program. This educational exchange brings foreign students the opportunity to study in a U.S. academic institution while experiencing the culture, ideologies, and policies of the country (Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, 2016). The United States uses the Fulbright Program as one of its WHATs.
- **Cultural diplomacy:** other activities included under the umbrella of PD are art exhibitions, concerts, dance performances and other cultural expressions. This is WHAT they provide e.g., the Cultural Office of the Embassy of Spain in the United States has periodical movie screenings for the American public (Spain Arts & Culture, 2021). These movies are played, written, and directed by Spanish artists and represent Spanish culture and ideals. These movies could be included in the WHAT of Spain's Golden Circle of Public Diplomacy.

These examples of PD activities are not the only possible WHATs of the model, gastrodiploamacy (Wilson, 2013), hip-hop diplomacy (Aidi, 2014), twiplomacy (Sotiriu, 2015), or sports diplomacy (Murray, 2018)—among others—could also be considered WHATs.

The Intersectionality of WHY (and the lack of it)

As mentioned earlier, the sense of mission represented in the WHY should be present across all layers in the model, meaning that the purpose of the country needs to be reflected in its HOW and WHAT to portray a credible and attractive image. When the HOW and WHAT lack the sense of mission or WHY, a phenomenon called “the split of WHY” takes place (Sinek, 2009), causing a disconnect between the country's purpose and actions. A well-known example of this split is the United States.

The United States has been conducting PD programs for decades and has strengthened its soft power thanks to its main purpose of representing and spreading democracy, freedom, and

human rights, a WHY that has been ingrained in the famous American Dream (Zaharna, 2010; Rodríguez, Delgado & Cull, 2015). These values have been reflected in HOW they address foreign publics and WHAT they provide through their PD.

However, the United States has experienced a decline in its international image when its foreign policies and international behavior have not matched the values they claimed to represent. This decline reflects the split of WHY and WHAT the United States has suffered during the last decades, and Sinek confirms that “it is actually the lack of *why* in the United States that is partially responsible for an increase in polarization” and loss of foreign admiration (Sinek, 2015, p. 371). Several studies reflect this decline in U.S. reputation, such as the NBI or the Soft Power 30. During the 2016 election, the United States lost its leadership position in the NBI becoming the last country in the top 10, advancing “a steep decline in global public sentiment toward America” (Anholt, 2020, p. 167). Similarly, the Soft Power 30 has shown the United States getting lower rankings every year since 2016 (McClory, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019). This is due to the perception that Americans “don’t practice what [they] preach” (Reinhard, 2009, p. 197), and their foreign policies are “perceived by foreign publics quite different than and distinctly at odds with American values and words” (Armstrong, 2009, p. 68) causing a “lack of credibility” (Zaharna, 2006). According to Zaharna (2010, p. 177), “the public questioned promoting American values such as democracy, freedom, and human rights when American policies appeared to contradict those values,” recommending the United States to “[reconcile] inconsistencies between U.S. foreign policy and U.S. public diplomacy.” The invasion of Iraq or Abu Ghraib are some examples of how the United States used its hard power for policies that completely undermined its WHY, promoting an image of hypocrisy, and damaging the reputation of the country (Nye, 2011; Pisarska, 2016).

During these periods, American politics and government did not practice what had been preached as the WHY of the United States, and its policies affected its HOW and WHAT to an extent that “the people are now starting to blame the American people for the country’s problems” (Cull, 2021).

WHERE

This additional dimension refers to the cultures that are intrinsic to both the public targeted and the PD actors. The purpose of adding WHERE to the model is not to promote cultural supremacy or increase the use of stereotypes or extremist cultural categorizations. As Said (1979) warns, the aim of this dimension is to avoid the unilateral Western standpoint as in “orientalism” and acknowledge the importance of cultural contexts and perspectives in international relations by integrating cultural sensitivity into the whole PD process (Gillespie & Webb, 2012; Bebawi, 2016; Anholt, 2020).

Culture has been defined by academics in the intercultural field as the collective beliefs, values, symbols, habits, traditions, and life concerns that a society shares and that are learned and passed down from generation to generation (Hall, 1959; Soedjatmoko, 1979; Hofstede,

1980; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998; Varner & Beamer, 2005; Jameson, 2007). Since the former American diplomat Edward Hall introduced cultural differences to the academic world in 1959, there have been several breakthroughs in intercultural research. In 1980, Hofstede conducted the largest study ever on cultural differences, which resulted in the first intercultural model with five cultural dimensions. The research of Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998) and the GLOBE study expanded the cultural research including new dimensions in their respective models (House et al, 2004). More recently, Meyer (2014) built on these intercultural studies by adding new cultural dimensions to her own leadership model.

While there is an ongoing conversation on the relationship between culture and public diplomacy (Huntington, 1993; Zurovchak, 1995; Bolewski, 2008; Yun, 2008; Zaharna, 2012), there is a lack of research in the further application of cultural dimensions to “understand the underlying value systems” where public diplomacy efforts take place (Anagondahalli & Zhu, 2016 p. 77). Morgenthau (1985) recognized the importance of culture as a complex variable but simply classified it as “unknowable.” Other authors have also acknowledged the importance of cultural contexts (Gass & Seiter, 2009; Brown, 2012) and some have included the concept of culture in their theories “in an unreflected way” (Jahn, 2004, p. 27). Many academics have integrated culture in PD studies when related to cultural diplomacy (Bu, 1999; Finn, 2003; Brown, 2012; Cull, 2019) and, contrarily, some authors have directly disregarded culture as a key aspect of PD (Rhoads, 2009, 2020). Only a few academics have applied the aforementioned cultural studies to their empirical research, analyzing the national cultural influence on foreign policy decisions, international relations behavior and excellence in public diplomacy (Sampson & Walker, 1987; Zurovchak, 1995; Bolewski, 2008; Yun, 2008; Anogondahalli & Zhu, 2015; Sevin, 2017). However, there is still a lack of systemic integration of cultural dimensions within public diplomacy models and theories, such as Zaharna’s (2020) theory of communication that explicitly incorporates collectivist and individualist perspectives to a PD communications model universally applicable.

Most of the mentioned studies that apply cultural dimensions to their research, do so from an analytical perspective. These studies are valuable for performance evaluation, as well as to further understand behaviors of the international parties involved in the case studies. Although the findings of these research are not universally applicable as other PD models, their methodology can serve as a tool to create a “cultural feasibility assessment” of the desired countries to compare the cultural profiles of the host country and the publics targeted (Zaharna, 2010). Subtracting the methodology from the case studies for universal application would shift the analytical perspective to a strategy building approach, where proactive research on the cultural influence on PD actors and audiences would play a key role in determining the development and implementation of PD strategies.

Using Zurovchak’s (1995) cultural comparison between Czech Republic and Slovakia foreign policy decision making as an example, a preliminary cultural feasibility assessment for PD strategy building is presented in the next section.

Cultural Feasibility Assessment

The purpose of this section is to state the premises for a preliminary cultural feasibility assessment (between host and target country), using an existing case study analyzing the influence of cultural dimensions on foreign policy decision making. The aim of this exercise is not to highlight cultural differences, but to emphasize cultural similarities and be aware of possible discrepancies that can be a challenge for PD.

Zurovchak's (1995) research starts off with an analysis of the history of each country, including their shared history and the evolution of their international relations, to be used in the cultural feasibility assessment as background information. Then, he applies Hofstede's (1980) four original cultural dimensions—individualism vs. collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, gender differentiation²)—to analyze the cultural profiles of the countries, first comparing them to one another and then comparing them to all the other countries along the whole spectrum. Even though Zurovchak (1995) conducts quantitative surveys to obtain the results on the different cultural dimensions, not all PD agencies will have the resources to do so with every single audience they target. Therefore, my suggestion is to use the available resources of existing studies through Hofstede Insights to obtain the values for Hofstede's cultural dimensions (Hofstede et al., 2021), but also to include the values of additional cultural dimensions from Trompenaars, GLOBE and Meyer's models, always bearing in mind cultural relativity, as “what matters is not the absolute position of either culture on the scale but rather the relative position of the two cultures” (Meyer, 2014). Once the countries have been placed in the spectrum of each cultural dimension, it is worth noting the categories where the countries stand the closest and the furthest away from each other, to pay attention to the challenges that can emerge from those cultural aspects.

After this first cultural screening, Zurovchak's (1995) introduced qualitative research through interviews to prove the actual foreign policy behavior matches the expectations created by the cultural dimension comparison. Whereas the qualitative research is conducted via interviews or in collaboration with local entities and experts, it is essential to add a local point of view to check the veracity of the cultural differences stated, to avoid stereotyping in those dimensions further away from the host culture, and to discover unique cultural features of the audience that are not included or cannot be measured within the existing cultural dimensions.

This is a preliminary exploration of how this model could be developed when implementing the WHERE of a country's Golden Circle of Public Diplomacy. Further research should be conducted to prove the applicability of Zurovchak's (1995) methodology to conduct cultural feasibility assessments between PD actors and audiences, a tool to be used by both practitioners and researchers.

2) Originally, Hofstede (1980) named this dimension “masculinity vs. femininity.” Zurovchak (1995) decided to change the name to “gender differentiation” to avoid stereotyping gender roles. At present, in the same line as Zurovchak's thoughts, many authors call this cultural dimension “competition vs. collaboration.”

WHO

This section includes both the actors and the audience of public diplomacy, the sender, and the receiver of the WHAT of a country that wants to appeal with its HOW and WHY. However, the aim of this section is not to provide a summary of the existing wide range of actors and audiences involved in PD, but rather to integrate a sense of mission and cultural awareness into the fifth layer of the model: WHO.

The Intersectionality of WHY

The sense of mission concerns primarily PD actors. Government-to-government (G2G) relations through official representatives where states are both the actors and the audience, have been classified as traditional diplomacy (Snow, 2009). Early definitions of PD - also called “traditional *public* diplomacy” - refer to government-to-people (G2P) relations where the state is the only actor that conducts or sponsors PD programs addressed to citizens and non-state actors (U.S. Department of State, 1987; Tuch, 1990; Snow, 2009, emphasis in the original; Murrow Center, 2009). However, the information revolution and globalization has led to a “new diplomacy” or “new public diplomacy” where non-state actors have the power to conduct PD, referring to people-to-people (P2P) relations (Keohane & Nye, 1977; Melissen, 2005; Cull & Sadlier, 2009; Snow, 2009; Kelley, 2010). Since the inevitable transmission of state control to non-state actors in PD, many authors have integrated in their PD definitions both state and non-state actors either explicitly or referring to them as “international actors” (Melissen, 2005; Cull & Sadlier, 2009; Cull, 2009; Kelley, 2010; Ojo, 2016; Banks, 2020).

Nowadays, non-state actors can be as relevant as state actors or even have a greater impact in certain occasions - although there are still disparities on some aspects such as credibility or effectiveness. In the context of the Golden Circle of Public Diplomacy, the WHY of the country should be strong and widely accepted by the current multi-actor PD system, so they feel truly connected to it and end up advocating for that same purpose on their own accord. Martin Luther King Jr. is an example of a representation of the values of the United States (Sinek, 2015). The importance of WHO conducts PD relies on their knowledge and representation of the WHY of the country.

The Intersectionality of WHERE

Regarding PD audiences, academics initially agreed that they consisted mainly of foreign publics (Malone, 1985; Tuch, 1990); however the technological revolution has made it impossible to distinguish between foreign and domestic publics as everyone has access to public information anywhere in the world (Hocking, 1999; Cull & Sadlier, 2009; Santos, 2021). In general, most authors have acknowledged the existence of multiple diverse audiences (Jönsson & Aggestam, 1999), but only a few have integrated these audiences into their PD strategies, as Zaharna (2020) shows in her approaches to PD communication.

Nevertheless, nationality or country of residence are not the only aspects by which PD actors should differentiate their audiences. Although foreign audiences have been traditionally classified geographically by national cultures, there are unexplored intersectional dimensions that would better classify audiences to build relationships and address PD successfully. The previously cited cultural studies classify cultures by country; however, they acknowledge the existence of subcultures within national borders that might be shared with other subcultures in other countries (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998). Moreover, certain interculturalists have urged the need to “look beyond nations” and conduct more research on demographic and social factors of transnational subcultures (Makoni, 2022). Some studies on specific PD programs have already analyzed audiences more in detail, including demographic factors as age, gender, and ethnicity (Shim et al, 2015; Crilley et al., 2021).

The purpose of this section is to add the following intersectional dimensions to the cultural feasibility assessment proposed in the section WHERE to classify audiences more accurately—and actors to some extent—to build culturally aware PD strategies.

- **Race and ethnicity:** The global activist movements of the last years have proven the shared underprivileged situation of certain racial and ethnic groups in the world. The most important transnational movement was Black Lives Matter, whose demonstrations took place all over North America - becoming the “largest movement in U.S. history,” - as well as in several countries in Europe, Latin America, Africa, East and Southeast Asia, the Caribbean, the Middle East, and Oceania (Kirby, 2020; Westerman, Benk & Greene, 2020). The shared history of slavery and colonialism has defined the long time struggles of racial minorities worldwide, fostering international understanding among these communities (The Washington Post, 2020).
- **Generation:** World’s history has affected generations in different ways and people from different nationalities might share similar cultural traits because of the experiences lived during their uprising. A global event, as the coronavirus pandemic or the 9/11 terrorist attacks, are good examples of what can unify audiences by age who have experienced it in similar ways. Other fields of study have already conducted research about Generation Z and their consumer trends, their citizenship values, or their perception of work (Wood, 2013; Iorgulescu, 2016; Broadbent et al., 2017). As an example, the Generation Z Global Citizenship Survey shows shared beliefs and values among Generation Z worldwide as their faith in technology (84% of respondents), gender equality (89%) and the classification of extremism and terrorism as “the greatest threat” (83%) (Broadbent et al., 2017).
- **Religion:** Religious beliefs, traditions and values can play a very important role in the personality and lifestyle of groups and individuals. Global databases show how religion is connected to “social, political, economic, and international processes” (Maoz & Henderson, 2013). Some academics in different fields have studied the role of religion in international relations (Fox & Sandler, 2004; Haynes, 2013). In the PD field, certain practitioners have utilized religion as a factor to appeal to audiences, not always having

the expected success e.g., the U.S. PD campaign led by former Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, Charlotte Beers, addressed to the Arab and Muslim Middle Eastern countries after 9/11 with the purpose of “build[ing] bridges with the Arab and Muslim world by highlighting America’s religious tolerance and “shared values” with them” (Zaharna, 2010, p. 33). Unfortunately, the campaign proved to be unsuccessful because the strategy disregarded all other cultural factors involved in the context of the testimonies, using religion as the only connector between populations without bearing in mind other cultural and contextual characteristics.

- **Language:** As well as the previous dimensions, languages know no political borders. There are many more languages in the world than countries. Most of these languages are subnational or local, mainly spoken in specific regions; however, some of these languages are shared among countries e.g., English and Arabic are the official languages of 59 and 27 countries, respectively (CIA, 2021). Unofficially, these languages are spoken in more states, English in 101 countries and Arabic in 60 (Noak & Gamio, 2015). Further research on language’s impact on thought has proven these similarities in perceptions among the speakers of a same language, concluding that “the way we think influences the way we speak” and vice versa (Borodistky, 2011).
- **Regional typology:** Around the world, urban and rural areas coexist in every country. The OECD Regional Typology (2011) study shows the diversity in typology within its member countries, from predominantly urban areas, intermediate, and predominantly rural areas. There is existing research on Urban Diplomacy (Acuto, 2013; Manfredi-Sánchez, 2021), and some authors have already studied the cultural differences between urban and rural populations, highlighting the diversity of issues, traditions, challenges, and behaviors (Slama, 2004; Petkovic, 2007). If the urban-rural differences are transnational to some extent, regional typology could define specific target groups that citizens across countries can identify with.

These are tentative new intersectional cultural dimensions that could be applied across countries to conduct more culture-specific PD when approaching the country’s target audiences. Other dimensions that could be included are, for example, income level, education level, or gender. The challenge relies on the lack of research on the intersection of original cultural dimensions and the proposed ones. As a preliminary exploration of what an intersectional cultural feasibility assessment would look like, Table 1 shows the results of Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner’s (1998) cultural dimensions in the United States among ethnicities within the country. As mentioned, the interpretation of the results should consider cultural relativity, as “they have no value beyond positioning the various cultures in relation to one another” (Zurovchak, 1995). It doesn’t provide very valuable information just knowing that Asian/Pacific Islanders score 71 in universalism; however, when compared with the score of other groups, the conclusion is much more significant: Asian/Pacific Islanders are relatively less universalist than Black/African Americans, Native Americans, and White/Caucasian Americans. At the same time, these scores should be compared with the host or target country under the lens of

cultural relativity.

Table 1. Preliminary intersectional cultural feasibility assessment of the United States.

		United States				
		Universalism (vs. Particularism)	Neutral (vs. Affective)	Specific (vs. Diffuse)	Achievement (vs. Ascription)	Internal (vs. External)
Ethnicity	Asian/Pacific Islander	71	32	83	42	33
	Black/African	88	59	67	42	50
	Hispanic	70	61	17	31	69
	Native American	92	21	43	38	53
	White/ Caucasian	92	49	51	56	68

Source: Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (1998)

This intersectional study might be applied not only to audiences, but also to PD actors that will be engaging in conversations with those audiences. This section has shown the high level of interconnectedness and interdependence within and across layers of the Golden Circle of Public Diplomacy, highlighting the presence of a shared purpose and cultural awareness.

WHEN

The last circle of the Golden Circle of Public Diplomacy is WHEN. This dimension refers to the timing of PD, WHEN these activities should be conducted. There are three aspects of WHEN to bear in mind:

- **Proactive vs. Reactive.** Most authors recognize the need for both proactive and reactive PD in their research (Gilboa, 2008; Kelley, 2009; Armstrong, 2020). Although some of the well-known examples of PD are reactive - as U.S. PD during the Cold War or after 9/11 (Zaharna, 2010) - a combination of proactive and reactive PD is necessary. Proactive PD builds a long-term foundation and provides “more control of agenda setting” (Leonard, 2002; Kelley, 2009; Armstrong, 2020). Proactive PD has the opportunity to align strongly with the WHY of the country and be thoroughly analyzed for cultural compatibility as there is more time for preparation and coordination among PD actors. Some PD programs that belong to the proactive category can be corporate diplomacy or diaspora PD (Gilboa, 2008). On top of the steady commitment that proactive PD requires, PD actors need to react to international and local events or crises that impact the WHO of the Golden Circle of Public Diplomacy, either the actors or the audience. Reactive PD is closely related to crisis communication and, therefore, to short-term PD programs, as can be seen in international broadcasting and cyber PD

(Leonard, 2002; Gilboa, 2008; Kelley, 2009). Considering the WHY and WHERE in reactive PD can be challenging because of the time constraints and pressure; however, a consistent and culturally sensitive response could strengthen the country's reaction.

- **Short-Term vs. Long-Term.** Another aspect of WHEN is the duration of PD programs and communication. “Traditional public diplomacy” as exchange programs, cultural diplomacy, branding, building relationships and international broadcasting are classified as long-term PD, although some of these programs might be reactive or short-term in special occasions (Zaharna, 2004; Gilboa, 2008; Nye, 2010; Cull, 2019). However, realistically PD is generally short-term due to the nature of its main actors, who have limited time frames for PD activities and prefer time-limited projects that show short-term results (Nye, 2010; Kelley, 2009). Other “time dimensions” have also been added to the debate adding intermediate or medium-term PD (Gilboa, 2008). Another aspect to bear in mind is connected to WHERE, the time orientation of the targeted country might set a preference over more short-term or long-term PD as is explained in Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimension short-term vs. long-term orientation.
- **Isolated vs. Periodical.** Isolated PD refers to one-time PD activities as could be crisis communication or a reactive PD program to a specific issue or situation e.g., the one-year German PD program in the United States “Wunderbar Together” conducted during 2018-2019, which reacted to the weakening of German-U.S. relationship in the previous years (Wunderbar Together, 2021). Periodical PD refers to programs that are being conducted continually like the Fulbright Program has done since 1946 (Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, 2016). Cull (2019) also categorizes listening and advocacy as periodical PD activities, as they represent a “continuous process” and a long-term “short cycle,” respectively.

These three categories of WHEN are not mutually exclusive and are intrinsically connected to each other. At the same time, the three categories should be consistent with the general sense of mission introduced in WHY and should bear in mind cultural sensitivity and awareness in all kinds of international interactions.

Conclusion

In the potential model of Golden Circle of Public Diplomacy, the WHY is represented in the mission of the PD activity. The cultural and political values are transmitted in HOW they conduct their PD, which is WHAT they do. These programs are contextualized depending on WHERE they are being conducted, bearing in mind WHO are the main actors and WHO is the audience. The last question integrated in the strategy is WHEN to conduct these PD activities, how often, and for how long. Thus, the Golden Circle of Public Diplomacy could provide a theoretical framework to effectively build culturally sensitive PD with a sense of mission. The purpose of this model is to conduct more successful and collaborative PD strategies that bear in mind political convergences over economic interests, contribute to the future and well-being of the global society and, at the same time, improve the image of the

benefactor.

Further research on the practical application of the model should be conducted. This paper main goal is to start exploring the ins and outs, potentialities, and pitfalls of that academic path. When analyzing the WHY of a country, it can present a challenge if the researcher oversees the foreign policy objectives related to its hard power, overemphasizing an unrealistic and universalist importance of WHY. It is necessary, and difficult at the same time, to find a balance between the underlying WHY of the PD grand strategy and the several purposes across PD goals and areas of implementation. In sum, more research is needed to expand and prove the practical application of the introduced cultural feasibility assessment in PD strategies using both the cultural studies guidelines and the proposed intersectional cultural dimensions. That complementary approach might yield enriching benefits for both PD practitioners and scholars, and ultimately pave the way to establish a culturally sensitive tool for PD strategy building.

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