



From *Homo Economicus* to *Homo dialogicus*: Rethinking social media use in CSR communication



Michael L. Kent, Maureen Taylor*

University of Tennessee, School of Advertising and Public Relations, 476 Communications Building, Knoxville, TN 37996, United States

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ABSTRACT

This essay explores corporate social responsibility (CSR) communication through social media. Today, corporations across the world enact CSR campaigns and use social media as one tool to tell their story of social responsibility. Yet, social media's strength as a relationship-building tool is not being realized as CSR activities are often communicated unidirectionally. This essay suggests alternative ways of thinking about social media in CSR. The essay offers a framework for using social media that goes beyond the one-way, monological, *Homo Economicus* based practices that characterize current social media use in CSR. The perspective proposed, *Homo Dialogicus*, focuses on interactive communication practices, that will help organizations move forward in building ethical organization–public relationships via social media.

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1. Introduction

The last three decades have witnessed an explosion in public relations research grounded in theory and employing various research methods. An extensive body of knowledge about public relations now exists in areas such as the use of social media to build relationships (cf., Duhé, 2012; Sweetser & Metzgar, 2007; Taylor, Kent, & White, 2001; Trammell, & Keshelashvili, 2005; Wright & Hinson, 2008, 2010), and the use of corporate social responsibility (CSR) to help organizations build social capital (cf., Hall, 2006; Kim & Reber, 2008; Lovejoy, Waters, & Sexton, 2012; O'Connor & Meister, 2008; Smith, 2010; Taylor, 2013; Trench, Bowd, & Jones, 2007).

The intersection of the social media and CSR literature provides insight into the ways that public relations is used to build relationships with publics. However, we believe that current research has not reached its potential for explaining how to create ethical, empowering, and long-lasting, public relations relationships. Therefore, this essay provides a way forward to show how dialogic social media, used in CSR communication, can build understanding, trust, and social capital between organizations and their publics, and the communities they share.

To accomplish this task, the first section of the article explores the practice of CSR as a public relations activity. In particular, section one outlines the economic assumptions underlying CSR as a public relations function. We term this approach the *Homo Economicus* metaphor of conceptualizing CSR. The second section examines the potential relational uses of social media and explores the obstacles to their use as effective tools for CSR communication with organizational stakeholders. The third section offers an alternative perspective on social media use in CSR through the lens of a new metaphor: *Homo Dialogicus*. The

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: MichaelLKent@gmail.com (M.L. Kent), MaureenTaylor@utk.edu (M. Taylor).

Homo Dialogicus metaphor places relationships into a broader context and allows communication professionals to return to the relationship building approach implied by dialogue. The fourth section proposes a reflective, practice-based approach to dialogue as a framework for integrating social media into CSR communication.

2. Corporate social responsibility as a public relations activity

The phrase “corporate social responsibility” (CSR) means different things to academics and professionals from different ideological and industry perspectives (cf., [Ihlen, Bartlett, & May, 2011](#); [May, Cheney, & Roper, 2007](#)). The neoliberal camp (cf. [Friedman, 1970](#)) holds that organizations exist for the sole purpose of maximizing profits for shareholders, within the constraints of the law ([May et al., 2007, p. 3](#)). Thus, they believe when organizations practicing CSR give away products, services, or time they are actually taking away resources from shareholders. A second position, common among communication and public relations professionals, holds that organizations, as community members, have a responsibility to serve a broader array of stakeholders and stakeseekers than just stockholders (cf., [Ihlen et al. 2011, p. 7 ff.](#); [May et al., 2007 p. 3 ff.](#); [Taylor, 2013](#)).

Corporate social responsibility assumes that organizations have responsibilities to their communities. [Godfrey and Hatch \(2007\)](#) noted that CSR is based on the idea that “corporations have obligations to society that extend beyond mere profit-making activities” (p. 87). Organizational reasons for adopting a socially responsible agenda may include morality, economic sustainability, enhanced reputation, and a belief that if an organization is seen as integral to a community then it will be given more freedom to operate. [Jones and Chase \(1979\)](#), for example, alluded to the concept of CSR in the issues management literature in the ‘70s, telling communication managers, “new stakeholders (consumers, employees, and the community) want the resources and economic power of the corporation used to build a better society” (p. 8).

In public relations, social responsibility efforts can range from issues management goals of minimizing organizational harm or risk to strategic functions, designed to benefit organizations, stakeholders, and publics ([L’Etang, 1994](#); [Porter & Kramer, 2006](#)), to genuine efforts to make society a better place. Harvard professors Porter and Kramer noted that when “looked at strategically, corporate social responsibility can become a source of tremendous social process, as the business applies its considerable resources, expertise, and insights to activities that benefit society” (p. 80). [Bhattacharya and Sen \(2004\)](#) noted simply that CSR occurs when an organization’s behaviors contribute to society. But, [L’Etang \(1995\)](#) has argued that moral frameworks that are subject to evaluation and guided by ethics should guide CSR.

[L’Etang \(1995\)](#) has argued that organizations should make decisions about moral responsibilities. According to L’Etang, “While companies are subject to legal requirements with regard to minimum standards, the law is not the limit of moral obligation” (p. 127), reminding communication professionals and managers that CSR activities should be more than responsive, self-serving activities ([L’Etang, 2011, pp. 234–235](#)).

CSR is also practiced as a means of establishing organizational legitimacy. Organizations that seek legitimacy must “balance both competence and community concerns” ([Hearit, 1995, p. 3](#)). Although some organizations value financial success over community concerns ([Hearit, 1995](#)), the public responds most favorably when organizations appear to place community interests over financial interests ([Seeger & Ulmer, 2002](#); [Sellnow, Ulmer, & Snider 1998](#); [Ulmer, 2001](#)).

2.1. CSR protects economic capital and creates social capital

Public relations entered the CSR arena in the early ‘80s, around the time that business and management strategists first concluded that CSR was necessary to appease stakeholders and publics. Fortunately, the neoliberals did not win the debate over CSR and many public relations professionals, managers, and corporate CEOs firmly believe that CSR has both a place and has value in corporations (cf. [Ryan, 1986](#); [Sriramesh, Ng, Ting, & Wanyin, 2007](#)). Indeed, as Sriramesh et al. note of the changing attitudes toward CSR in their study of nine Asia–Pacific countries: “About 65% of the stakeholders interviewed for the study felt that corporations need to be socially responsible, compared with 35% in 2003—almost doubling in just one year” (2007, p. 120).

The early CSR activities reflect what can be called a *Homo Economicus* phase of corporate social responsibility. Media and social pressure forced organizations to answer the question: “What are you doing for the community? As [Heath and Ryan \(1989\)](#) explain:

Modern corporate executives often find themselves caught in a dilemma that business titans of the past seldom faced. Corporate leaders during the 19th and early 20th centuries had one obligation: to maximize profits. Today’s managers must maximize profit, but they must act responsibly as they do so. Companies that fail to act responsibly often find special-interest group advocates and regulators ready to force compliance with demanding ethical standards. (p. 21)

Thus, public relations professionals were an obvious choice to communicate CSR messages to the public.

For public relations professionals, an important principle is that organizations secure both economic capital, as well as social capital. From a business perspective, social capital is a “certain kind of capital that can create advantages for individuals or groups pursuing their own ends” ([Chen, 2009, p. 194](#)). Social capital, like economic capital, is an investment with expected returns ([Lin, 2001](#)). Social capital can be understood as social relationships that involve the exchange of resources and benefits to individuals and societies ([Putnam, 1995, 2000](#)). Organizations can mobilize social capital and one way that social capital is created is through networks of relationships.

As Bourdieu (1986) explains, social capital is a “potential resource linked with the possession of social relationship networks of a relatively institutionalized mutual recognition and acquaintance” (p. 243). Organizations can build and maintain relationships among different publics and these relationships not only build the social capital of the organization, but they also enhance the accumulation of social capital in a society. Linking CSR to the formation of social capital begins to move CSR out of a purely *Homo Economicus* framework, focused on the right to operate, sales, profits and tangible organizational benefits. The *Homo Economicus* framework is the metaphor that drives organizations to treat people instrumentally, and make decisions based on short-term, profit driven motives, and the bottom line, rather than long-term, relational, social capital based reasons.

One emergent communication tool to build relationships and build social capital is social media. As social media have risen in prominence, aided largely by steady pushes from marketing, advertising, public relations agencies, and professional communication associations (Taylor & Kent, 2010), many have suggested that CSR and social media are “a match made in heaven” (cf., Du, Bhattacharya & Sen, 2010; Etter, 2013; Snider, Hill, & Martin, 2003). Unfortunately, the thrust of most social media is not the social, or social capital, or even providing benefits to stakeholders, stakeholders, and publics. But instead, a *Homo Economicus* orientation uses social media to enact sales and marketing goals—to provide benefit to organizations, managers, stockholders, and owners. The next section explores social media.

3. Social media emerges as a public relations activity

The integration of new communication technologies continues to transform the conduct of business, and public relations has been no exception. Indeed, the ability to reach customers and stakeholders directly via the Internet, has been the driving force behind the spread of social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. Scholars have even begun breaking down social media into themes and research areas such as predictions, theories, usability, applications, perceptions and concerns (Duhé's, 2012, p. xiv; Kent, 2015).

The defining features of social media are that they are relational, involve feedback, and have the potential to take place in real time. However, as Kent (2008) suggested of blogs, there are different types of blogs: news blogs, political blogs, corporate blogs, personal blogs, but there is no single defining type of blog. The same is true of all social media. There are social media that revolve around politics, pets, news, sports, hobbies, images, various industries, etc.; and there are many kinds of social media whose membership varies by age group, educational level, cultural background, language spoken, religion, and interests. Although most public relations scholars focus on the big social media sites (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, etc.), a host of social media platforms and models exist. Common but understudied social media, some with hundreds of millions of users, include: Alwamy, CyWorld, Instagram, PengYou, Pinterest, QQ, Reddit, RenRen, Shtik, VK Youku, WeChat, Weibo, Xt3, and others.

Social media are also both media and medium: content and channel, and their features and uses vary widely. The question for public relations scholars is what makes social media so special for stakeholders and publics, and so valuable or interesting for organizations and professional communicators? The simple answer, for most organizations, is the ability to control the content, provide organizations with direct access to customers and key publics, and the use of social media as marketing and advertising tools. However, everyday citizens, stakeholders and stakeholders do not regularly use social media for political purposes or to interact or interface with organizations (cf., Rainie & Smith, 2012). The current one-way, sender-to-receiver, “public forum” use of social media engenders only the most facile interactions. Social media have enormous untapped potential as persuasive (Theunissen, 2015) and relational (Kent, 2013; Taylor & Kent, 2014) communication tools.

We believe that there is an inherent disconnect between the structure of social media and the evolving role of public relations in organizations (cf., Duhé, 2012; Kent & Saffer, 2014). The continued desire for more social media content is a concern, and we wonder whether this is the best role for public relations? Should organizations press their most well-informed and skilled communicators into the service of writing 140 character messages or using Facebook for marketing, advertising, and customer service? We believe that social media in public relations occupies a special communicative place that goes beyond marketing and advertising, and that CSR provides an obvious nexus to ethically, and efficiently, build relationships with publics that build social capital. The next section explores this relationship.

4. *Homo Dialogicus* as an alternative framework in CSR and social media

Up until now, the focus of this essay has been on explicating CSR and social media, arguing that CSR is an important and ethical activity. But current uses of social media in public relations, primarily for marketing and advertising, have prevented organizations from fully integrating social media into real CSR efforts. We have also warned that both CSR and social media should not be used simply to sell goods or ideology. For many, the basic assumption of CSR has been that organizations that do good deeds, are thought of more highly by key publics, and that by acting responsibly, an organization might improve the lives of the community around them, benefit in times of crisis, and avoid costly regulation or intense scrutiny by lawmakers or regulators (cf., McGuire, Sundgren, & Schneeweis, 1988; Sriramesh et al., 2007). Using social media to build social capital, benefits organizations, stakeholders, and publics, and creates conditions for enhanced economic capital (Taylor, 2013). Building social capital from CSR and social media makes perfect sense but it is rarely achieved.

As discussed earlier, self-serving financial motivations are not the sole driving force for why public relations professionals believe in social responsibility. CEOs and managers often call for CSR initiatives out of personal conviction, because they

believe in a cause, or because of the acknowledgement that shareholders or stakeholders demand social responsibility. The idea of an “ethical citizen acting well” goes back to a first century Roman rhetorician Quintilian, a teacher and counselor to the emperor. Quintilian believed that the ideal person was well-educated, participated in civic life, and worked to make the world a better place. Making the world a better place is precisely what corporations practicing CSR have the ability to do. They can be “good organizations acting well” (Heath, 2001).

To be good citizens, corporations need a new cultural framework or metaphor, and need to move away from the *Homo Economicus* notion that they exist solely to make money for investors. Held (1987) proposes an alternative view to the corporate, “contractual,” business model that sees people as expendable free agents who work for money, and see corporations simply as economic entities. Held explains:

Imagine what society would look like, for both descriptive and prescriptive purposes, if we replaced the paradigm of “economic man” and substituted for it the paradigm of mother and child. . . . What would social relations look like? What would society look like if we would take the relation between mother and child as not just one relation among many, but as the primary social relation? And what sorts of aspirations might we have for such a society? (p. 114)

Although Held’s proposal can also be critiqued, what Held proposes is radical for those whose belief in the contractual system is unshakeable. But what if Held is correct? What if we could make the world a better place with a new metaphor? The stark contrast between how business managers and corporate executives currently view CSR, versus how public relations professionals view CSR is only separated by current practices, metaphors, and ideology, not by facts. The role of corporations in society is not predetermined by evolution, but by social convention, and it has evolved over time.

Homo Dialogicus, or dialogic human, would place relationships into a broader context, rescuing public relations from its evolving position as an ancillary function of marketing and advertising initiatives and calling on communication professionals to return to the relationship building approach implied by a dialogic orientation. The next section briefly outlines the assumptions of this model and highlights some implications for organizations that using social media dialogically in CSR communication.

4.1. Dialogue as a communication framework

The *Homo Dialogicus* approach assumes something different than the *Homo Economicus* approach, shifting the emphasis away from economic returns—which has never been a fundamental definition of public relations—to a relational and humanistic focus that sees people as inherently valuable and redirects our attention to the relationship building aspect of public relations.

Social media are capable of much more than we currently ask of them. The current push to use social media to aid in organizational marketing and advertising efforts is unlikely to abate. The mistake many make is using the terms “engagement,” “dialogue,” and “conversation” too cavalierly. What happens on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and other social media is simply not dialogue (cf., Taylor & Kent, 2014). Indeed, as Pieczka (2011) recently noted, “The inevitable conclusion is that public relations functions, and in some contexts presents itself, very successfully as advocacy practice and so far has paid little attention to dialogic communication either in research or pedagogy” (p. 119). The capacity of social media, however, for listening and to bring images, videos, audio, access to information, genuine relationship building potential, and a host of other possibilities to organization–public interactions has barely been scratched.

Dialogue is a skill, and an orientation toward others that acknowledges the inherent value and importance of other human beings. Effective dialogue requires empathy, patience, risk, sympathy, trust, and a willingness to be changed, or admit when one is wrong. Interlocutors engaging in dialogue do not assume that they are the only people capable of knowing or discovering truth. Dialogic communicators have firm beliefs and positions, but are willing to listen to new ideas, make changes, and admit when they are wrong.

In spite of the many studies that have studied organizational “dialogue” on Facebook and Twitter (reified as responses to questions), information posted on organizational websites or social media pages that visitors simply read (or comment on) is not dialogue. As Kent and Taylor (2002) explained, dialogue includes five features (1) *mutuality*, (2) *propinquity*, (3) *empathy* (4) *risk*, and (5) *commitment* (pp. 24–25). The concepts discussed by Kent and Taylor involve sophisticated interpersonal interactions, and not facile message exchanges, or phatic communication (Hopkins, 2014; Malinowski, 1923) oriented toward customer service goals.

Most dialogic scholars see dialogue as an ethical practice good for all parties involved. Social media offer a way to build organization–public relationships. Corporate social responsibility is a thoroughly dialogic public relations concept. Corporate social responsibility should be conducted for the good of organizations and publics. Pieczka (2009, 2011) argues this point convincingly:

The common concern reflected in the concepts discussed here can be defined as enacting a particular kind of social relationships, and beyond that, a particular model of governance, and a particular kind of society—a tolerant, peaceful, deliberative democracy. The way in which this goal may be achieved is through communication focused on qualities manifest through and created in communication activity. . . . such qualities—trust, openness, involvement, commitment, intelligibility, appropriateness—define dialogue as well as. . . aspects of social responsibility. (2011, p. 112)

As Cissna (2000) has observed, “Dialogue has emerged as a significant alternative perspective for thinking about human affairs. . . . This is a significant development because our society has always depended far more on debate, argument, and persuasion than on dialogue” (p. 2). A dialogic CSR approach would necessitate interaction with stakeholders and stakeholders that goes beyond a paternalistic, “organization knows best” approach. But the question still remains, how can dialogic social media make CSR more empowering to communities and society? The next section outlines a number of suggestions for enacting dialogic CSR with social media.

5. Using social media dialogically

In order to use social media in CSR more effectively, and enact dialogic social media, a number of requirements must first be met. We discuss three of the most important points: (1) engagement of stakeholders; (2) recognition of the value of others; (3) empathy with stakeholders and stakeholders.

First, and most importantly, corporations need to actually engage individuals and interact with them on a one to one basis. Genuine dialogue is not a public activity but an interpersonal or group activity. All “talk” is not dialogue. Dialogic organizations should respond to questions and comments from individual stakeholders privately, not in public venues, as is frequently the case with social media. Although most social media are used as one-way tools, they do not have to be (cf., Duhé, 2012, p. ix). As people participate in discussions and as questions emerge, *ad hoc* discussion spaces (outside of Facebook) can be created where topics of interest can be genuinely explored in smaller groups, and with stakeholders and publics who have a real interest in particular substantive issues. These small discussion groups could be guided by dialogic principles and all participants could be made aware of dialogic discussion rules that would empower the participants (cf., Pearce & Pearce, 2000; Pearson, 1989; Taylor & Kent, 2014) and facilitate dialogue.

This sort of “personalized” responsiveness would resonate with the people involved, and would also be seen as unique behavior to other visitors to a social media site. People would see themselves and their values in the messages. Many models of organizational dialogue are possible. In some, small dialogic groups might be created to protect the privacy of members. In other contexts, the alternative discussion spaces might be open for scrutiny by others, but only those people accepted into the group might have the ability to comment and direct the conversation—those members who know the dialogic “rules” and agree to follow them.

As organizational communicators move from being instrumental “sender to receiver” content creators, treating people as ends rather than means, to people who have an interest in genuine relationships with others and care about their stakeholders and publics, dialogue becomes possible. Yes, in the case of a large corporation, dialogic activities would require new social media infrastructure and perhaps dozens of people working specifically in social media. Would the ROI be worth it and more importantly, could it be calculated?

The *Homo Dialogicus* model uses a different metric than the *Homo Economicus* model. A dialogic approach to CSR would require communication professionals to redefine ROI in terms of social capital rather than just the economics of person hours and salaries. Not everything that organizations do has the same ROI, organizations are complex and many activities are undertaken for important but less economically tangible reasons. We believe there would be a dialogic and social capital return, especially when organizational spokespeople eventually come to genuinely understand the needs of communities, bloggers, journalists, and other influential stakeholders.

The second dialogic issue is to recognize the value of others. Consider Chevron, the third ranked organization on *Fortune’s* 500 list. Chevron’s website and social media, like so many other corporate sites, is maintained to benefit Chevron. A few minutes after applying the dialogic perspective to an organization’s site, one can imagine the addition of links on Chevron’s page to dozens of tidbits of information about oil: how to clean it from clothes, how to clean up spilled oil from driveways or exposed ground, how to report gas stations or other locations that might be polluting, how to obtain water testing equipment that can test for the presence of hydrocarbons, maps of the world showing oil reserves, geological primers, explanations of Hubbert’s peak, information about alternative sources of energy (wind, solar, hydro) and how to implement them etc. A dialogic Chevron social media site could serve the needs of multiple publics from regular families to academic research scientists, while still serving the needs of Chevron to maintain a public profile and communicate its activities.

Being dialogic means caring about others. As Rogers, 1956/1992 suggested, having “unconditional positive regard” (p. 828) for the other. Noddings (1984), who suggests that dialogue is “one of the three great means of nurturing the ethical ideal—dialogue, practice, and confirmation” (p. 182), and many other scholars, who describe dialogue as a difficult interpersonal communication process (cf., Anderson, 1994; Friedman, 1974; Laing, 1969).

A dialogic organization needs to be more reflective and ask itself why it needs to keep secrets from its stakeholders if what it is doing is really good for people? If what an organization does is valuable to more than just stockholders and internal publics, why are so many organizations so reluctant to confront their critics? Honesty, trust, and risk, are dialogic principles. We are not suggesting this naively but earnestly. Many, probably most, corporations and organizations want to become better community members and better corporate citizens. That process starts with the dialogic concepts of trust and risk.

In keeping with the implication of the *Homo Dialogicus* metaphor, scholars and professionals should remember that dialogic theory comes from interpersonal communication theories. Dialogic partners respect and trust one another. For organizations to build dialogic relationships they should not keep secrets. Although some organizations might argue that too much organizational transparency is bad, and too much of a risk—what happens if stakeholders, stakeholders, and publics do not like what an organization has to say? Dialogic communicators and organizations need to be honest and committed

to getting their house in order and sharing or resolving the organizational secrets that they are afraid or ashamed to reveal publicly (cf., Heath & Coombs, 2006; Theunissen, 2014).

The third dialogic issue is empathy. Empathy refers to the ability to put yourself into the shoes of another person. Currently, the narrow focus we see among corporations, focused almost exclusively on shareholder return, does little to immediately impact people's lives.

Dialogic communicators are open to other people's ideas and opinions, and value what they have to say. The insular nature of most corporations often shuts them off from good ideas. Moreover, the principles of Group Think (Janis, 1982) tell us that overestimation of one's morality and power, pressures toward conformity, etc. often results in bad decisions.

As suggested above, a dialogic use of social media would both yield more committed and stronger organization–public relationships, as well as result in corporations making better decisions, acting more ethically, and in general, improving the world we all live in. The final section of this paper briefly mentions some possibilities for enacting dialogic social media that go beyond what we currently see in our social media research.

5.1. Unrealized social media possibilities

Social media have tremendous untapped potential. Perhaps the first mistake that we have made is to assume that only popular sites like Facebook are places for corporations to enact social networking and further CSR goals. Four suggestions follow below outlining how to effectively enact dialogic CSR through social media.

The first possibility is for corporations to construct their own social networking site, free of advertisements and sales pitches. “Bespoke” or unique social media have already been developed on a small scale by some corporations and software companies (cf., King, 2014, p. 84; Riemer & Richter, 2010). Organizational CSR social media sites should be organized around topics relevant to stakeholders and stakeseekers (research, information, and collaborative spaces), rather than as one-way marketing, advertising or messaging tools.

Over the last decade, hundreds of specialty social media sites have emerged including Academia.edu, LinkedIn, and others. Thousands of social networking sites already exist, devoted to special interests and coherent publics (religion, politics, sports, dating, cute cats, technology). Why then do so many corporate communicators assume that the only game in town is the popular for-profit sites like Twitter and Facebook? Why is there not a ChevronBook, or a Johnson & Johnson tool devoted to intellectual, scientific, and ethical discussions, or a Starbucks platform devoted to issues of fair trade coffee, sustainable farming practices, etc.?

The goal of corporate-run, public relations and CSR, social networking sites should not be to engage in more marketing or advertising activities. The goals should be to engage individuals and publics in organizational decision-making and issues management. Indeed, most people are unlikely to join organization-specific social media spaces if all an organization tries to do is recreate its current social media advertising presence on Facebook and Twitter.

Organizational transparency and a willingness to actually engage publics in dialogue would build solid organization–public relationships grounded in trust, and bolster organizational CSR activities (cf., Waddock & Googins, 2011, p. 27), is what a *Homo Dialogicus* dialogic approach seeks. As Ivy Lee suggested over a century ago, presaging modern CSR: (1) business and industry should align themselves with the public interest and not vice versa. (2) No program should be carried out without the active support and personal contributions of top management and executives. (3) Organizations should maintain open communication with the media. (4) Organizations should help humanize business and bring it down to the community level of employees, customers, and neighbors (Wilcox, Cameron, Ault, & Agee, 2003, p. 40).

Second, social media sites do not have to be for “everyone in the world.” On Facebook, we decide who becomes a “Friend,” how much of our life they will see, and other people decide if they will have us as friends. Nothing prevents a corporation from creating actual “social,” social media web sites where organizational and CSR issues are explored, and where membership is limited to experts and eager, participation minded stakeholders. We are not suggesting some sort of elitist social media corporate space or club, but a space populated by intelligent, thoughtful, well-informed people from across the spectrum—academics, intellectuals, activists, scientists, etc. Dialogic social media sites do not have to be open to everyone in the world in order to be “social.”

Relationships are built in real time, and require real knowledge about other people, not interchangeable social media “friends” (cf., Kent, 2008, 2010). Successful organizations and organizational communicators need access to more voices and a greater depth of knowledge. Socially responsible organizations should not fear dialogic social media.

Third, as suggested above, if a corporation's intent is to use a social media site, then it should use it dialogically by acknowledging the value and worth of the members. Dialogue is no magic potion for curing the ills of corporate capitalism or instilling ethical beliefs in people who have none. However, neither are “social media” sites with tens of thousands (or millions) of members in any way “social.” We suggest that organizations provide something to the people who join besides pushing out one-sided corporate branding and marketing messages. Individuals cannot have a meaningful relationship with a brand; people have meaningful relationships with other people. More importantly, the sheer number of people on the existing marketing and advertising oriented social media sites prevents genuine dialogue from actually happening. The time has come to fulfill the dialogic promise (McAllister-Spooner, 2009) and use social media for more than one way marketing and advertising.

Fourth, train organizational members and managers to be dialogic. Having dialogically trained professionals would allow communicators to build relationships, trust, and more effectively interact with stakeholders and publics. CSR is about giving back to one's community, and doing what is ethical and morally right. More than that, both CSR and dialogue are ethical

orientations toward others. For this to happen, organizational leaders need to be trained in dialogue, better informed about actual stakeholders and publics, willing to listen to the actual voices of stakeholders and publics, and be willing to be changed. Taylor and Kent (2014) identified several organizations that train others in how to interact dialogically (MIT dialogue project, Cupertino Project).

6. Conclusions and ways forward

The public relations scholarship, after extensive research, has concluded that social media (defined usually as Twitter and Facebook) are not dialogic. This is not surprising, since the infrastructure of the current social media sites does not facilitate relationship building or CSR activities. This essay offers an alternative framework that goes beyond the one-way, *Homo Economicus* model that characterizes current social media use. The new model, *Homo Dialogicus*, helps public relations move forward in building ethical CSR relationships via social media. The *Homo Dialogicus* approach moves public relations away from advertising, marketing, and brand promotion, and focuses on the social and humane aspects of communication.

Dialogue is no panacea. Every communication approach has pluses and minuses for sharing information and creating meaning (cf., Daft & Lengel, 1986). The dialogic use of social media will yield more committed and stronger organization–public relationships, and shift the focus of public relations back to communication and relationships rather than marketing and advertising. The real benefit emerges when corporations make better decisions, act more ethically, and in general, improve the world they share with all of us.

CSR also provides an opportunity for organizations to contribute to the social capital of their communities. CSR builds social capital for the organization and for the community. CSR is about more than doing good deeds; CSR is about situating the organization in a broader social system of relationships that may involve risk, uncertainty, and ambiguity. Social media can help organizations navigate new terrains, build new relationships, learn from the organization's followers and experts, participate in the public sphere, and adjust organizational activities to better meet public expectations. Dialogic social media use in CSR has great potential and we hope this essay identifies new ways forward.

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