The Guiding Principles of the profession

A comparative study of Ethical Codes promoted by PR associations

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Introduction

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Recent research show that citizens have little trust in business, government, public institutions and in PR practitioners (Moreno et al, 20201; Zerfass et al, 2019)

Ethics are central to the debate about what PR is, does, and how PR should be practiced in modern times.

Ethical codes are a moral reference regarding the duties and rights of a profession

Reflect on the main values that guide PR practice based on Schwartz's theory of basic human values, which measures universal values that are recognised throughout all major cultures.

We aim to ascertain which basic human values are portrayed in the codes of public relations associations worldwide and understand their similarities and discrepancies with the global code of ethics set out by the Global Alliance.

Literature review

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Debate the quest for universal values to enhance PR professionalism and ethical relationships (Gower, 2003; Taylor & Yang, 2014;Hunt & Tirpok, 1993; Kim, 2005; Kruckeberg, 1989, 1993)

Discuss universalist and relativist views on PR ethics and ethical codes (Roth et al, 1996; Place, 2010; Taylor & Yang, 2014; Kim and Ki, 2014; Sriramesh & Vercic, 2009)

Explore studies on PR codes in national contexts (Boynton, 2006; Fitzpratrick, 2002; Greenwood et al, 2002; Shin & Cha, 2000; Gonçalves et al 2019) and comparative studies within different international contexts (Ki & Kim, 2010, Wood, 2000; Taylor & Yang, 2014; Kolin-Stanic, 2019; Gonçalves & Ruiz-Mora, 2020)

Reflect about central values present in the Codes of the main international professional associations (in particular, the Global Alliance Code, 2018, that lists 16 principles deemed to be universal)

Research

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In this paper we aim to extend the research on the universality of public relations codes of ethics based on Schwartz's theory of basic human values.

The theory of basic human values allows us to identify, classify and relate the predominant values in the different codes, as well as identifying the motivations related to them.

Questions

1. What values are at the core of the ethical codes of communication and public relations associations?

2. Is there a core of fundamental values shared by these associations?

3. How do the codes of the national associations differ from that of the Global Alliance as a reference institution?

Methodology

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<mark>Exploratory study:</mark> qualitative and quantitative **content analysis of the codes of ethics** of a convenience sample, composed by national PR and communication associations (Europe and America) and of the Global Alliance's code (international institution).

Sample criteria: own code of ethics; language (PT, SP, EN); diversity (Europe and America) and representative PR association (in the development of ethical codes).

<mark>Codes analysed</mark>: **DIRCOM**, Spain; **ABERJE**, Brazil; **APCE**, Portugal; **CIPR**, the United Kingdom; **CPRPA,** Argentina; **PRSA**, United States; the **Global Alliance**.

The 7 documents were analysed according to <mark>Schwartz's "Theory of the Universal Structure of Human Values"</mark> (1999), to study:
- **the priorities of values contained** in the ethical codes analysed.
- **the motivational values** that may be present in them.

Theory of the Universal Structure of Human Values

Schwartz, 1992; 1993; 1994, 1999; 2012;
Schwartz & Boenke, 2004;
Schwartz et al, 2000
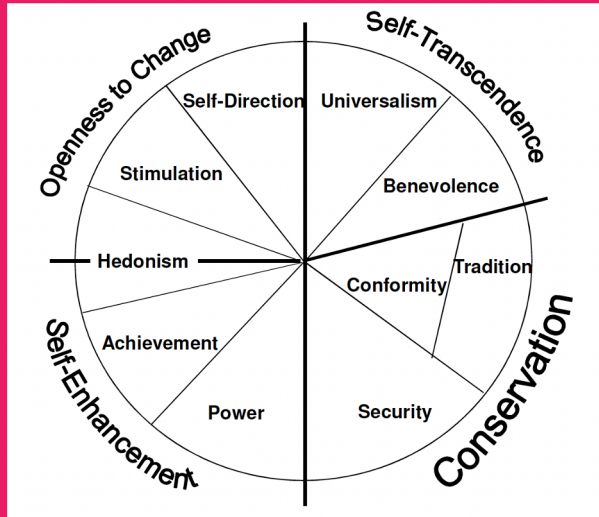
Source: Schwartz (2012, pg. 19)

Presents a set of 10 motivational types of values across all cultures

It is based on the concept that the values form a circular structure based on the motivations each value expresses, which helps articulate how some values are more similar while others are more diametrically opposed.

Recognizes that every person holds a certain set of values that could be very different from others around them.

Values are ideal goals that motivate action

Results

Results

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1. What values are at the core of the ethical codes of communication and public relations associations?

1.1. Values identified in the ethical codes analysed

1.2. Application in the Theoretical Model of the relationships between 10 types of motivational values (Schwartz)

1.1. Values identified in the ethical codes analysed (7)

Values (32)	Types of motivations (10)
Advocacy, loyalty, Honesty, Integrity, Fairness, Commitment to the profession, Understanding/dialogue, Responsibility and accountability	Benevolence
Diversity, Social Responsibility, Sustainability, Social Values, At the service of people, Common good/public interest	Universalism
Equal opportunities, Respect, Disclosure	Tradition
Confidence, Credibility, Accuracy, Rigour, Confidentiality, Legality, Transparency,Truthfulness	Conformity
Effectiveness	Safety
Competence/skills/training	Achievement
Reputation	Power or authority
Expertise	Hedonism
Freedom of expression and information, Independence	Self-direction/Individuality
Excellence	Stimulation

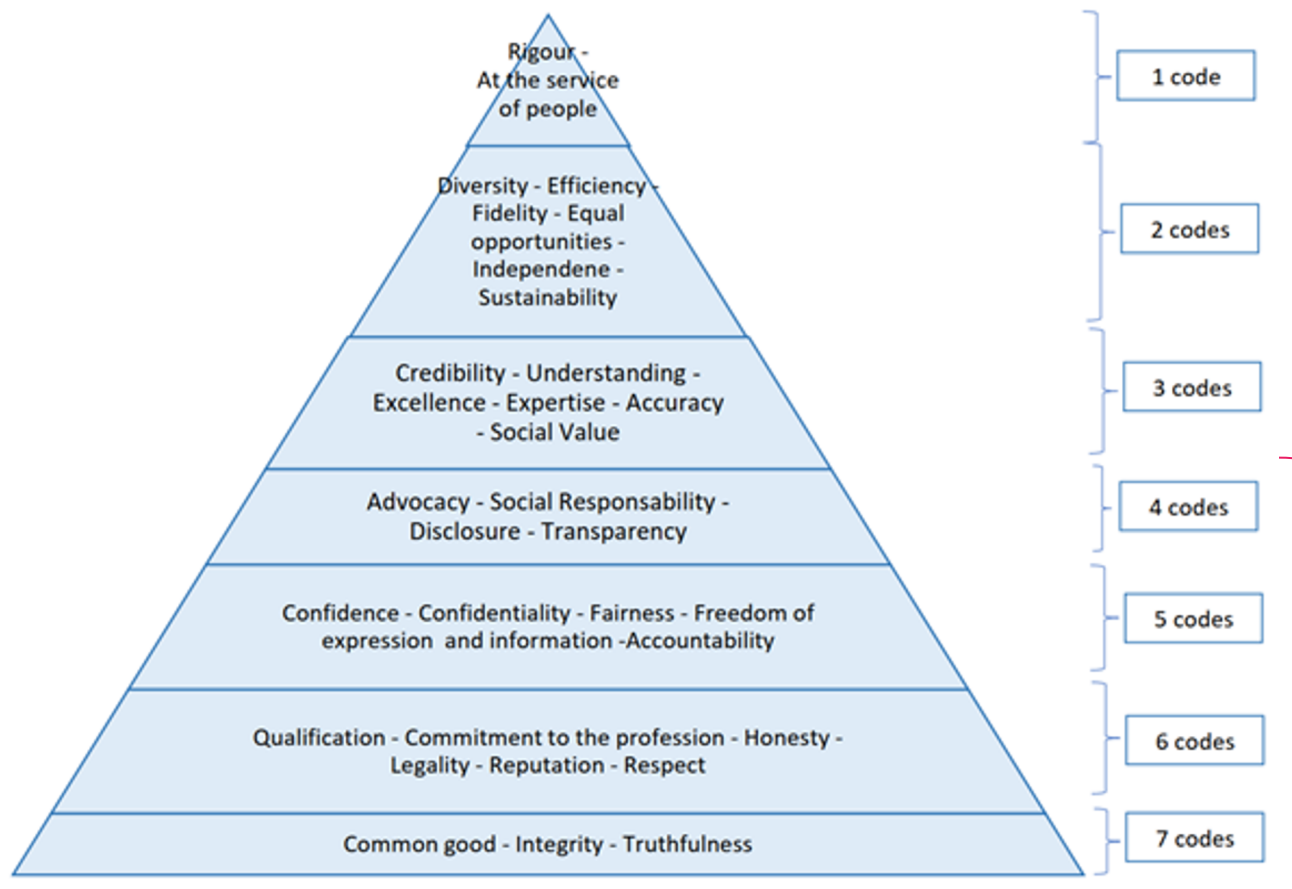| Chara cter	Higher-order types	Types of motivations (10)	Adapted from Schwartz, Sagiv and Boehnke (2000, p. 325-326)	Values (32)
Collective	Transcendence	Universalism	Understanding, appreciation, tolerance and protection of the well-being of people and nature.	Diversity / Social Responsibility / Sustainability / Social Values / At the service of people / Common good-public interest
		Benevolence	Preserving and enhancing the well-being of people with whom you have frequent personal contact.	Advocacy / Loyalty / Honesty / Integrity / Fairness / Commitment to the profession / Understanding-dialogue / Responsibility and accountability
	Conservation	Safety	Security, harmony and stability of society, relationships and oneself.	Effectiveness
		Conformity	Moderation in actions, inclinations and impulses so as not to offend or harm others and not to violate social expectations or norms.	Confidence / Confidentiality / Credibility / Loyalty / Accuracy / Rigour / Transparency / Truthfulness
		Tradition	Respect, commitment and acceptance of the customs and ideas put forward by cultural tradition or religion.	Equal opportunities / Respect / Disclosure
Individual	Personal promotion	Power or authority	Social status and prestige, control and dominance over people and resources	Reputation
		Achievement	Personal success, by demonstrating competence in accordance with social norms.	Competence-Skills-Training
		Hedonism	Obtaining pleasure for oneself.	Expertise
	Openness to change	Stimulation	Excitement, novelty, challenges in life.	Excellence
		Self-direction	Independence of thoughts and actions, choosing, creating, exploring.	Freedom of expression and information / Independence

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Results

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2. Is there a core of fundamental values shared by these associations?
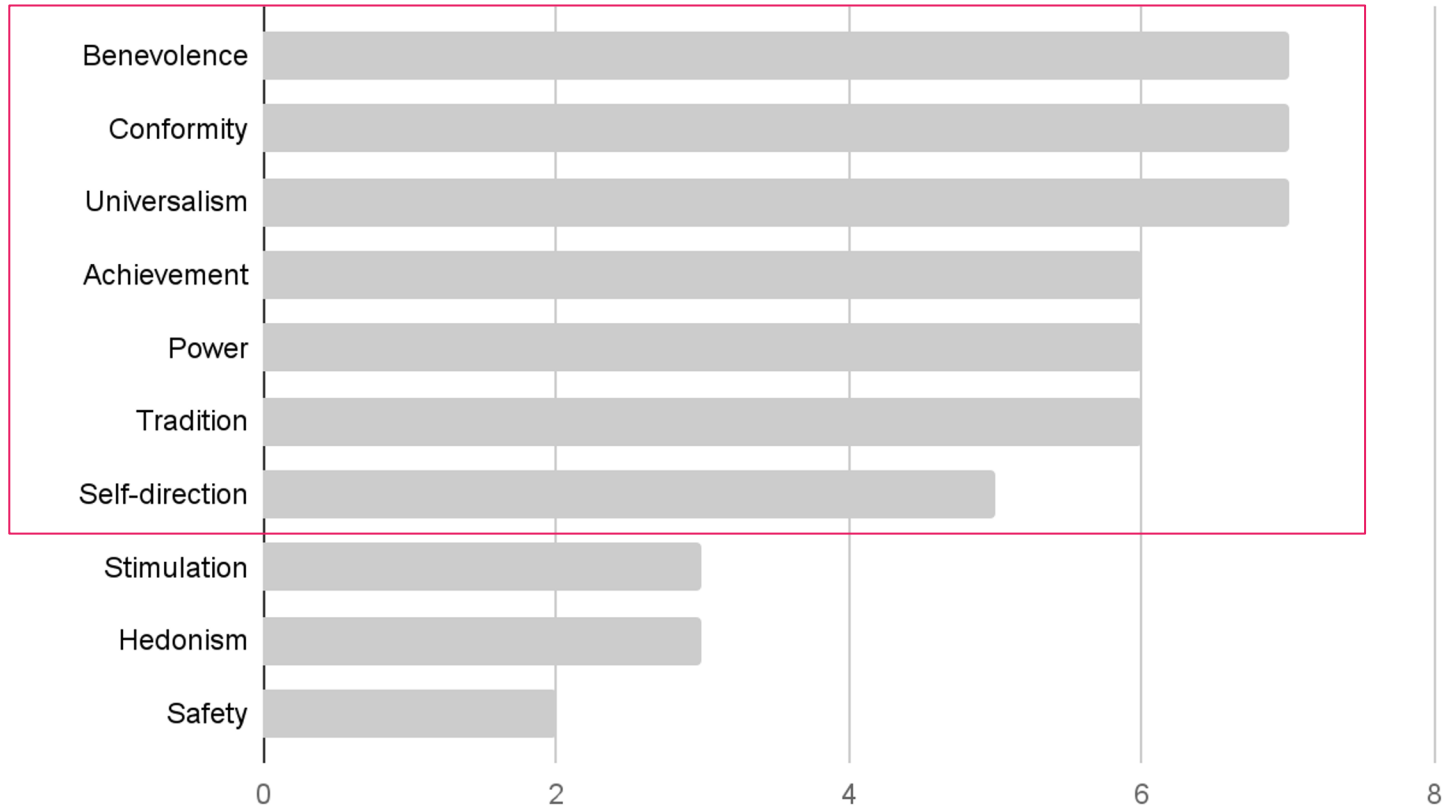
2.1. Most frequent values appearing among the codes

2.2. Results as a function of the type of value motivation (Schwartz)

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2.1. Most frequent values appearing among the codes

Rigour - At the service of people — 1 code

Diversity - Efficiency - Fidelity - Equal opportunities - Independene - Sustainability — 2 codes

Credibility - Understanding - Excellence - Expertise - Accuracy - Social Value — 3 codes

Advocacy - Social Responsability - Disclosure - Transparency — 4 codes

Confidence - Confidentiality - Fairness - Freedom of expression and information -Accountability — 5 codes

Qualification - Commitment to the profession - Honesty - Legality - Reputation - Respect — 6 codes

Common good - Integrity - Truthfulness — 7 codes

2.2. Results as a function of the type of value motivation (Schwartz)

Results

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3. How do the codes of the national associations differ from that of the Global Alliance as a reference institution?

    3.1. Values identified in the Global Alliance code integrated into the Schwartz model

    3.2. Presence of values in the codes as a function of the type of motivation in the Schwartz model

3.1. Values identified in the Global Alliance code integrated into the Schwartz model

Motivations	Values (24)
Universalism	Common good / Public interest / Social responsibility
Benevolence	Advocacy / Commitment to the profession / Honesty / Integrity / Fairness / Responsibility
Safety	Efficiency
Conformity	Confidence / Confidentiality / Credibility / Loyalty / Accuracy / Transparency / Truthfulness
Tradition	Equal opportunities / Respect / Disclosure
Power	Reputation
Achievement	Competence-Skills
Hedonism	Expertise
Stimulation	Excellence
Self-direction	Freedom of expression and information

3.2. Presence of values in the codes as a function of the type of motivation in the Schwartz model

Types of motivations	Global Alliance	USA	Argentina	Brazil	UK	Spain	Portugal	Total values
	8	*9*	*10*	*9*	*5*	*9*	*7*	*14*
Universalism	2	1	3	4	1	5	3	6
Benevolence	6	8	7	5	4	4	4	8
	11	*8*	*2*	*8*	*8*	*7*	*4*	*12*
Safety	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Conformity	7	6	1	5	6	5	4	8
Tradition	3	2	1	3	2	1	0	3
	3	*3*	*2*	*2*	*3*	*0*	*2*	*3*
Power	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1
Achievement	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1
Hedonism	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1
	3	*4*	*1*	*0*	*2*	*2*	*1*	*4*
Stimulation	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1
Self-direction	1	2	1	0	0	2	1	2
Hedonism	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1
Values	**24**	**23**	**15**	**19**	**17**	**18**	**14**	**32**

Conclusions

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- The values contained in the codes of ethics of communication and public relations associations are **based on a system of 32 human values,** most of which are of a collective nature.

- The **common good, integrity and truthfulness** are the only values identified in all the codes; motivational values relating to universalism, benevolence and conformity are also covered in varying degrees in all the texts.

- **The code of the international association Global Alliance** is the only text that deals with values of all the motivations described by Schwartz, bringing together a total of 24 human values.

- On one hand, it has been confirmed that this code, although it deals with principles based on universal values of society, **does not go into them in depth,** despite the fact that it comes from a transnational association that is a reference for those at national level.

Conclusions

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- The research has also corroborated that the range of values included in the codes is uneven, from the 14 identified in the Portuguese text to the 23 in the North American one.

- Likewise, while **some regulations are basically limited to the essence** of the reference code (as in the British case), other texts are more autochthonous (as in the Spanish case) and incorporate more universal ethical values.

The codes of ethics of communication and public relations associations are based on a list of common ethical values of a collective nature that are mostly included by the Global Alliance, the main difference at national level being that Latin countries include more principles of ethical universalism in their texts.

Questions?

Thanks!

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