

MEDIA MANIPULATION UNVEILED: ARE PUBLIC RELATIONS AND SPIN ANY DIFFERENT?

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Abstract

The construction of reality through media manipulation has long been a focal point for communication theorists. Noam Chomsky, in his analysis of media systems, emphasized that media outlets often serve the interests of the powerful elite through the „manufacture of consent.“ This concept underscores how information is filtered and shaped to align with dominant agendas, creating narratives that favor those in power. Public relations and spin-doctoring, two sides of the same coin, often work together to achieve this goal. Public relations professionals craft messages that are pleasant and attractive to the audience, aiming to build positive perceptions of their clients. Spin doctors manipulate facts and frame issues strategically to present them more favorably or divert attention from central matters. Their purpose is to cultivate consent or, as Chomsky would argue, to „engineer opinion“ in favor of elite objectives. In this modern media-political construct, the audience plays only an episodic role, often passively consuming narratives designed to align their views with the elite’s interests. Both public relations and spin-doctoring contribute to a multi-layered system where information is disseminated strategically through media outlets, shaping public perception while testing or diverting attention away from controversial policies.

Keywords: media manipulation, spin, public relations, propaganda

Introduction

The construction of reality through media manipulation, analyzed by theorists like Noam Chomsky and Teun A. Van Dijk, reveals a nuanced understanding of how power and control are exercised in society. Chomsky's critique of the media as a tool for „manufacturing consent“ intersects with Van Dijk's exploration of manipulation as an ideological discourse—both highlighting how elites shape perceptions to maintain dominance.

In the Balkans, where political landscapes are often turbulent, these methods of manipulation are frequently employed by politicians. Public relations and spin-doctoring in this region go beyond mere image management; they are part of a broader strategy to control public opinion and secure power. Chomsky's concept of media manipulation aligns with Van Dijk's notion of triangulation, where discourse, cognitive understanding, and societal norms are manipulated to favor a specific narrative—often simplifying complex issues into dichotomies of „us“ versus „them.“

These tactics are employed to influence the cognitive processes of the public—shaping how people perceive, process, and comprehend information. This is evident in the Balkans through the strategic dissemination of information that diverts attention from pressing issues or tests controversial policies. By manipulating cognitive dimensions, politicians are not just disseminating information; they are actively engaging in what Van Dijk calls „mental manipulation,“ (Van Dijk, 1998, 2001) where the goal is to subtly shift ideologies and knowledge in their favor.

This approach to manipulation—viewed through the lens of power, dominance, and abuse—illuminates how politicians utilize media and communication strategies to establish and maintain control. It reveals a multi-layered relationship where the public, often unaware of the manipulation, plays a passive role in a carefully constructed narrative designed to reinforce the power of the elite. Thus, in the context of politics, public relations and spinning are not just tools for crisis management but foundational elements in the ongoing struggle for political dominance.

To fully grasp and analyze manipulation, particularly in its discursive form, it's crucial to understand the social environment and the prevailing power structures within it. Scholars such as Clegg, Luke, and Van Dijk highlight the importance of recognizing how certain groups or elites dominate and use their power to influence and control public discourse. This influence extends across various platforms, including parliamentary debates, news media, educational materials, and digital content, which Van Dijk emphasizes as key avenues through which elites shape public perception and thought. In the Balkans, this understanding is particularly relevant. The region's political elites use their control over media and public discourse not just to manage day-to-day politics but to perpetuate their own power. By controlling the narrative through these channels, they manipulate public opinion, often shaping the psychological and ideological constructs of individuals. This process involves not just the dissemination of information but the strategic framing of issues in ways that maintain the status quo and suppress dissent.

Moreover, the manipulation goes beyond the mere control of media outlets; it extends into education and other societal institutions where information is conveyed. This systemic manipulation, while often presented under the guise of legal and ethical communication, in reality, often breaches ethical norms and undermines democratic principles by distorting the truth and restricting the free flow of information.

Thus, when analyzing manipulation in the context of politics, it is essential to consider the broader socio-political environment and the methods through which elites consolidate their power. These methods include not only controlling public discourse but also framing educational content and influencing cultural narratives, all aimed at maintaining their dominance and control over society. The use of these strategies highlights the inherent challenges in distinguishing between legitimate persuasive communication and unethical manipulation, underscoring the need for vigilance and critical analysis in understanding these dynamics.

In the context of modern online media, manipulation becomes even more pervasive and difficult to detect. The success of manipulative efforts hinges on their integration within groups, organizations, or institutions that can measure their impact on public opinion and behavior. In today's digital age, manipulation can be orchestrated by political elites, media organizations, educational institutions, businesses, or other influential entities. Digital manipulation aims to influence beliefs, ideologies, and opinions to provoke specific reactions. Online platforms provide manipulators with tools to refine their discourse by leveraging algorithms and data analytics to process information in ways that maximize recall from people's memory. These strategies often focus on words, images, sentences, and non-verbal signals that trigger cognitive biases and emotional responses.

For instance, the strategic placement of content on social media feeds or news websites, coupled with engaging headlines, provocative images, and sensational sub-headings, amplifies the prominence of certain information. When users see this content repeatedly in prominent positions, they are more likely to recall it and integrate it into their understanding of the world. This recall process influences their perceptions and judgments, shaping opinions in line with the manipulator's objectives.

Modern online media thus acts as a powerful platform for disseminating carefully curated narratives designed to resonate with specific target audiences. The algorithms that power social media platforms can also reinforce echo chambers, making it easier for manipulative content to entrench itself within communities of like-minded individuals. As people „recall“ the most recent and repeated information they've seen, they form judgments heavily influenced by this manipulative digital discourse. This underlines the importance of understanding how the online media environment shapes our perception and the need for digital literacy to critically evaluate the vast array of information we consume.

The discursive manipulation assumes how the perceiver understands the information and how processes it. For example, following the attacks on the Twin Towers in New York on September 11, 2001, and after the bombing of the Spanish trains in 2004, the conservative Prime Minister of Spain, Jose Maria Aznar, tried to convince the global public that it is not Al-Qaeda behind the attacks but the terrorist ETA (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna/ Basque Homeland and Freedom). With this approach, Aznar and his ministers wanted to change the image of ETA to suit the policies they planned to take towards this terrorist organization. Furthermore, Aznar wanted to increase his rating among voters, especially among those who are of right-wing prominence. One more modern example is the use of social media during the 2016 Brexit campaign in the UK. Pro-Brexit groups employed targeted advertisements to emphasize immigration and national sovereignty concerns. By leveraging data analytics, they carefully curated their messages to trigger emotional reactions, significantly impacting public opinion and contributing to the vote to leave the EU.

Another instance is how certain narratives around COVID-19 vaccines proliferated on social media. Some groups spread disinformation about vaccine efficacy and safety, often linking vaccination to personal freedoms being threatened. This discourse, framed through posts, videos, and selective data, shaped social beliefs and behaviors, leading to vaccine hesitancy in certain demographics. Van Dijk points out that such manipulation relies on blending personal and social beliefs. People from the same group or class might react differently to the same message because of diverse personal influences. Thus, understanding the impact of manipulative messages requires considering both internal and external factors.

The objective of this manipulative discourse is to control how a group or population is perceived socially, as these perceptions significantly influence public opinion over time. For example, by consistently framing immigration in negative terms, political figures can shape public sentiment to support stricter immigration policies. This type of ongoing discourse requires little additional input to maintain the established narrative, effectively solidifying public opinion and voting behaviors in favor of parties that promote these views.

MAIN STRATEGIES FOR MANIPULATION

In terms of importance of the social presentation in the interaction and public discourse, the manipulation always, or almost always, focuses on the social understanding of things and how it affects the general attitudes of the group or of the society. That is why there are several strategies for influencing society. One of them is generalization, which has a better impact and stays longer in the memory. The most significant example in this context is the manipulation that the USA did after the attacks of September 11, 2001, both in the country and globally as a justification for fighting terrorism. This manipulation was based on the generalization of emotions, common fear and behavior, and ideology when it is about terrorism or a similar ideology. This is a “genius” example and when there is talk about mass manipulation of a particular social representation to cause a reaction in society, that is exactly what happened. Therefore, the budgets of both the United States and its allies for military actions, weapons, and personnel were dramatically increased, thus increasing the growth of the military industry several times. Furthermore, the then Bush administration managed to pass legislation that suited the Republicans and the elites that span conservative America with much fewer immigrants. The people of the USA thought that by supporting such a policy they would be saved from terrorism, but not that they were doing a favor to the elites around George Bush (Ahmed, 2005; Chomsky, 2004; Greenberg, 2002; Halliday, 2002; Palmer, 2003).

This manipulation was partly supported not only by the media outlets in America but also by the transnational media, which shows how the manipulation works on a cognitive level. More specifically, the attack on the Twin Towers was used to emphasize the already high emotions and to develop an even greater debate about the differences between “us” (in this case Americans, but also all citizens who are good and innocent) and “them” (the representatives of evil, the culprits of the attack). Then by repeating messages such as “other terrorist attacks will also follow” as a model that is easily generalized, the foundations of anti-terrorist ideology and strategy are laid (Sidel, 2004; Zizek, 2002). The only thing groups or the public need to be convinced of is that the new policies that should be supported are for their own good, which is the opposite of the truth - it is done primarily for the good of the manipulators and their collaborators. According to Van Dijk, the manipulation of social understanding is also done by sharing knowledge. A good example of this is the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the justification of America and its allies for

such intervention. The “knowledge” of the existence of weapons of mass destruction changed the opinion of the planetary public about attacking Iraq and supported the United States and the alliance around it. Unfortunately, this “knowledge” of the existence of such weapons later turned out to be false. However, the media outlets have already “marked” the terrorists and the rulers of Iraq as radical, bad, cruel, murderers that use bombs and kill innocent victims. These attributes are generalized over time to the extent that they become everyday things when it comes to presenting such a group to the media public and putting it in the context of a certain event. When it comes to the threat of terrorists and their actions, the anti-terrorist discourse highlights values such as human rights, the value of equality, but most of it emphasizes security, which receives a higher priority compared to all other values (Doherty and McClintock, 2002).

It is crucial to point out that discourse manipulation mostly “happens” in public communication that is controlled by the dominant elites. The strategy of positive self-promotion and negative promotion of “others” can be applied at different levels, almost according to a clearly defined pattern: positive self-promotion, negative promotion of the others, justification of one’s policy or action taken, blaming others, and using attack in public discourse, highlighting the positive or negative aspects of others, accusations and localization of meaning and other small but important things relating to semantics, language, visual aspects, rhetoric, etc. The general strategy of the manipulative discourse is to focus on the cognitive and social characteristics of the perceiver that make him more vulnerable and less resistant to manipulation, to make him a willing victim who will embrace other people’s beliefs and do what it would never have done before.

The dominance and inequality of positions in society play a serious role in the success of the manipulation. According to Van Dijk, when we talk about the manipulative discourse, it is to the greatest extent semantically focused on the manipulation of the context of the text and the word. When implementing the manipulative plan, common tools are used, such as positioning a certain topic or its “concealment”, proposing “logical” explanations, manipulating explicit and implicit information, metaphors, rhetoric, expression during the transmission of the message, voice, tone, position, etc. An additional instrument in manipulation is the use of a person who has a certain authority or function that carries that authority. If the specific person has a certain credibility in the public, then the story is even more successful. The emotions of the people are used in dramatic events or when highlighting meanings that are relevant for the whole society, when discrediting opponents, and in full polarization of relations. All these factors should be taken into account when analyzing the impact of manipulation, especially discursive manipulation.

Manipulation in modern media is a sophisticated endeavor that crafts reality to serve its creators’ interests. According to Pleios (2011), we have transitioned from the „news writing age,“ where news was transmitted unaltered, to the „information age,“ characterized by the strategic construction of reality. This new era marks a significant shift from earlier times, such as the „public speech age,“ when events were interpreted through the lens of political ideology.

In today’s media landscape, information is not merely reported but manufactured within media outlets to appeal to and engage audiences. This production often prioritizes attractiveness and pleasantness over factual accuracy. The information presented to the public is selected and shaped—not necessarily reflecting the actual events or relevant facts from the social, political, or any other sphere of life. Researchers suggest that this strategy displaces the focus from core news to peripheral issues, transforming the objective dissemination of information into a commercialized content model.

As a result, the public's understanding of reality is largely molded by what media outlets choose to present. Most people only perceive the reality as delivered by these outlets, remaining unaware of the actual happenings. This leads to a predominantly passive audience that absorbs curated media realities without the practice of critically evaluating or questioning the content. In essence, today's media consumers are often spectators of a constructed narrative, rather than active participants in a dialogue about their world.

With the emergence of digital media and social media, media outlets now have an additional obligation to be able to disseminate information on all platforms promptly and as quickly as possible. The fact that information begins to spread from the moment it is communicated and the audience begins to interact and constantly has the opportunity to engage in a dialogue is a new challenge for the media outlets today, but also for political communicators. In this way, an opportunity is created through digital media for different people from different backgrounds and different groups to find themselves in one place, even virtually, and to discuss the same things, that is, to enter into a dialogue (Jenkins, 2008: 256-257). This means that the world is in a constant information circle, which does not stop. Everyone can engage in an ongoing dialogue from anywhere on planet Earth and contribute to putting a particular issue on the public agenda. Digital media made it possible through blogs, social media, Internet portals, virtual meetings, and debate places. This really improves the initial position for implementation of human rights at the global level, primarily the freedom of speech, but at the same time, it is also a danger. According to Chomsky, the Internet is full of people who are illiterate, which influences the public discourse and the changing of general attitudes (Chomsky, 2013).

The digital media also brought something else - an opportunity for greater manipulation and a good tool for all communicators, regardless of whether it is persuasion, politics, propaganda, manipulation, public relations, or spinning, that is, twisting of information. The instruments are different, and the channels of communication with the audience are changing, but what remains completely the same is winning over the public and its opinion on your side. The trend of quick and easy information made it possible for the information to reach the audience in an easy way, but also resulted in an audience that makes quick decisions and creates attitudes that are not based on awareness, but on superficiality. Quality and analytical information become a luxury for many, but hardly anyone asks for more information due to the lack of time and their own passivity. Digital media has made it possible to win over the public, and influencing its views happens while it (the public) is sitting at home in front of their computer.

MAINTAINING INTEGRITY: THE CORNERSTONE OF PR'S SURVIVAL

Public relations, in its modern form, emerged in the United States during the late 19th century. The 20th century brought PR to an academic level, developing theoretical research that explored the processes through which professional standards and ethical principles evolved. Despite this growing academic framework, it's crucial to remember that PR is rooted in practice and should remain closely connected to the professionals who refine it in practical contexts. The profession is often defined as „the art of silently manipulating public opinion, consumer attitudes, and politicians“ (Encyclopedia of Public Relations, 2006). Public relations, popularly known as PR, is sometimes seen as spinning the truth for selfish interests, where organizations, lobbyists, or individuals seek to „sell“ a particular idea, product, or policy for their own gain.

On the other hand, PR professionals, scholars, and educators view the field as one that fosters two-way communication between organizations (industries, institutions, political parties) and the public whose opinions can influence their success. Despite varying perspectives, all agree that the profession's ethical premises, moral obligations, and professional standards must remain paramount for PR to thrive. The power of language must be wielded in alignment with professional and ethical standards, clearly distinguishing public relations from manipulative practices like propaganda.

The international associations that include practitioners and professors that increasingly single out the public relations profession as distinct and separate from all other professions agree that public relations is a set of managerial, supervisory, and technical functions that improve the ability of the organization to listen, respond and value those individuals that have some kind of relationship with the organization, but also an interest that corresponds to the interest and mission of the organization (Heath, l.: 2005). They point out that PR professionals are problem solvers and counselors who will give the best advice to those leading the organization on how to best present themselves in the environment and how to communicate in the best way possible with the use of tools of the profession for communication with citizens, the media outlets and the public as a whole.

Ive Lee, one of the founders of the contemporary PR practice, believes that the person in charge of public relations works to bridge the relationship between the organization and the people that can help or hurt its work. According to Ray Eldon Hiebert (1996), Lee worked to position the profession as central to public communication in the industrial age, because Lee understood the need to use words to explain to people certain activities or attitudes of the communicator. Public relations use many forms, instruments and strategies. Communication with media outlets and creating good relationship with them are those that are most often used, in order to place the desired information in the media outlets. Part of public relations is also informing and persuasion, and lately negotiation and joint decision-making have become extremely important in the profession as processes in which the objective of the PR professional is achieved through involvement and discussion.

One of the most famous practitioners and theorists of the profession and the best one in creating consensus in the public was Edward Bernays. He believed that the biggest challenge for the practitioners was to respond to the public: "The public demands information on a daily basis and also expects to be accepted both as judge and jury in those public affairs that are relevant for all" (1923: 34). He also emphasized that this profession must be the focus and separated from advertising because the attempt is made with public relations to place certain information in the media without paying for it.

John W. Hill provided a widely recognized definition of public relations in the 1960s. He argued that PR should thrive in environments with dynamic public opinion, where practitioners are rewarded or punished by the public's trust. Practitioners, he believed, earn the right to operate successfully by effectively „serving the needs or demands of the people“ (1958, p. viii).

Hill emphasized that public relations professionals should ensure the public is well-informed; otherwise, people may withdraw their support for an organization or initiative. According to Hill, the primary role of PR professionals is to connect different interest groups and provide accurate information. When challenges arise, they can use persuasive skills to represent a particular side, interpret the facts, and take actions to achieve success. However, Hill insisted that

integrity is crucial for PR professionals, even more important than common sense (Hill, 1963: 6). The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) reinforces this commitment in its official documents:

“Public relations help our complex and pluralistic society reach consensus and function more effectively, contributing to better mutual understanding between different groups and institutions. Public relations serve to achieve harmony between private and public policies. To achieve these objectives, institutions must develop adequate relationships with many different audiences, such as their employees, members, users and consumers, local authorities, interest groups, those associated with the institution, as well as all other institutions, and with the whole society”.

James Grunig and Todd Hunt (1984) defined public relations as managing communication between an organization and its audiences. Some definitions view PR positively, highlighting its potential to improve society, while others see it as superficial, manipulative, and deceptive. Critics fail to recognize PR as a broader practice that benefits various stakeholders by strategically positioning information. As a result, the debate increasingly centers on the integrity of PR professionals and the need to restore trust in the profession. Without this trust, public relations will continue to be seen as a manipulative spin, and spin doctors will overshadow genuine PR practitioners (Theaker, 2002).

GOVERNMENT PR: BALANCING TRANSPARENT COMMUNICATION AND SPIN

In democratic societies, constant communication with citizens is crucial. Governments strive to inform the public about their work and convince voters to support them in the next election. To achieve this, they often attempt to control and direct information flow to sway specific groups or influence public opinion. One key method governments use to manage and shape information is through lobbying and close ties with media outlets. As Margaret Thatcher's former press secretary, Bernard Ingham, remarked, this relationship is „primarily cannibalistic, because they feed on each other, and no one knows who is next on the menu“ (Ingham, quoted in Franklin 1994: 14). The mutual dependency creates a complex web of influence among governments, media owners, and political interests. This results in media outlets becoming less independent, increasingly influenced by political and economic interests, and constrained by regulations related to freedom of expression and the legislative process (Negrine 1994).

As a result, governments can effectively influence media agendas, creating tension between political elites and media outlets. Every statement can be scrutinized, perceived as a twist or spin. To counter this, many democracies emphasize public relations grounded in openness, transparency, and accountability to rebuild trust. Grunig and Jaatinen (1999) argue that the American model of public information offers a pluralistic perspective on government, but for optimal public relations, government institutions must adopt the same principles as large corporations.

Modern media manipulation strategies often rely on social media and digital tools to amplify messages and control the narrative. This allows governments to manage public perception more directly, strategically influencing political discourse and guiding public sentiment, sometimes blurring the line between legitimate public information and manipulative tactics.

According to Kevin Moloney, public relations is the profession of the decade, and the spin and the soundbite are the most important words of our era. Ewen points out that corporate PR is so widespread that “we live in a society in which at any moment human attention is influenced by games and plans of spin doctors, image creation specialists, communication consultants, people in charge of informing the public and for public relations, making it pointless to set any boundaries between them...” (Ewen, 1996: 19).

The manipulative root of PR is most noticeable in America, where modern public relations were born, to defend the business interests of big companies (McElreath, 1997:8). Habermas believes that the relationship between the government and public relations is negative towards the public sphere and there is a direct intervention in it with a specific objective. He emphasizes that the community that is composed of business and the government that should take care of the society as a whole, not only reduces the meaning and importance of the public sphere but it is again “refeudalizing it”. Irwin Lee said back in 1921 that publicity is mostly a question of mass psychology because, according to him, people are mostly guided by sentiment and emotion, and not by reason. In a public relations lecture at Columbia University, he invited journalism students to visit the library and see the vast number of titles on psychology and how it creates a psychological effect on a mass of people. He added that the one who wants to deal with public relations should learn and understand the emotions and factors that influence people and what it is that convinces a person to take a certain action. According to him, psychology was one of the main factors in the success of the public relations (Ewen, 1996).

Today, if it counts to have a future, PR must neither be defined by nor in any way related to, propaganda and manipulation. Habermas, on the other hand, claims that PR and propaganda cannot be separated or viewed separately (Habermas, 1962:193–6). In his historical analysis of the development of liberal public opinion and the public sphere concept, he points out that public relations use publicity to maintain and represent their own market interests. Habermas argued that Bernays and other creators of modern public relations are drawing a line of equality between PR and the management of people’s opinions by emphasizing certain public interests and reducing the importance of their own private interests, and very often concealing it. According to him, pro-business PR was an American production that came to Europe after 1945. On the other hand, Herman and Chomsky (1988) present the “propaganda model” as a way to explain the behavior of the American mass media that serve social and political elites to “construct consent”. In doing so, they start from Lipman’s explanation that propaganda is a permanent structure in popular governments.

While public relations research and theory primarily draw from social sciences and rhetoric, limiting the study of this profession to these fields would be restrictive. PR significantly impacts culture, shaping the choices made and the image of power presented to the public. This influence extends to human emancipation. Cultural studies investigate PR’s political significance because every message reflects a specific articulation of power.

Cultural policy theorists believe that understanding PR can drive social action, policy change, and democratization. Turow (1995) argues that PR research should expand its theoretical support into political science, sociology, and cultural studies. This interdisciplinary approach reveals that PR influences various aspects of social life and contributes to shifts across many segments of society. By understanding PR’s multifaceted role, we can better grasp how this profession helps shape cultural norms and public perceptions.

SMOKE AND GLASS STRATEGY

Public relations professionals are often labeled as manipulators, spin doctors, and propaganda machines, resulting in a generally negative public perception. This contradicts the theoretical view that PR should function at a managerial level, relying on interdisciplinary knowledge and professional integrity. Consequently, PR is often reduced to media relations, and everything else is dismissed as communication manipulation.

Media outlets have reinforced this perception by broadly using the term „spin doctor“ to describe anyone working in communication and public information. Whether strategically planned communication or the „smoke and mirrors“ approach intended to blur and twist reality for acceptance, both fall under this label. These manipulative strategies have shifted information dissemination from an objective model to a commercial one (Robert L. Heath ed., 2006), leading people to unquestioningly accept media reality as the truth. The passive attitude of audiences has made these tactics more prevalent and successful, turning perception into reality.

The debate among practitioners as to whether there are differences between public relations and the spin or whether they are actually the same profession is the reason for the negative image about this profession. Those saying that no one should be ashamed of the spin and that it should be practiced in the daily work, claim that they represent the interests of the client, and thus of all stakeholders. For them, truth is relative. The users of spin strategies are mostly concerned with the use of framing as a model of communication and agenda-setting, and they derive the foundations of these models from the theory of communication sciences. An additional reason for these claims is that spinning was used even before its popularization, and, according to Grüning's theory, it is the press agency model or, according to Edward Bernays, it is the construction of public opinion. The supporters of spinning also make the absolutist claim about the moral decision, that is, that the spin actions are moral insofar as they contribute to positive change in society. In contrast, the opponents of equating public relations and spinning say that spinning is unethical and misinterprets and twists the truth. They claim that spin doctors are not concerned with creating a mutually beneficial relationship between the organization and its audiences and that, ultimately, they are not interested in that. Since spinners do not have socially responsible behavior on their agenda, the practitioners say that spin doctors are journalists that are only temporary visiting that profession and that their task is only to earn their salary by writing (Robert L. Heath ed., 2006).

Public relations are often perceived as a „black profession“ due to differing definitions and practices that can blur ethical boundaries. Some theorists believe PR should encourage positive behavior change and social progress through strategic management, while others argue that its primary role is to bolster an organization's image and reputation. This debate leads to spin doctors being labeled as manipulators who distort media reality.

National PR associations like the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA)¹. and the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) condemn spinning as manipulative propaganda that intentionally misrepresents information. They distinguish it from ethical PR practices,

¹ www.prsa.org ; www.cipr.uk

which emphasize truthful, realistic, and strategically managed communication. Nevertheless, the manipulation of media and politics continues to cloud the profession's image. PR strategies often influence public perception through curated narratives, creating an illusion of truth that can sway opinions and policies. This influence, combined with the rhetoric of power and politics, underscores the need for interdisciplinary research. As Turow (1995) notes, expanding PR research into political science, sociology, and cultural studies will help unravel the profession's complex impact on culture, politics, and societal change. By understanding PR's multifaceted nature and emphasizing ethical communication, the field can reclaim its role as a tool for positive social progress.

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