DOSSIER

MAINTAINING THE BOUNDARIES:

the interpretative repertoires journalists use to differentiate themselves from the public relations industry

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ABSTRACT - Journalists make use of a number of interpretative repertoires to describe their relationship to the PR industry. Among these : they tap into the institutional discourses of both their own field and that of their PR counterparts ; they dip in and out of the deontological code of the journalistic profession ; they exploit a repertoire that we refer to here as «realist» discourse. That journalists can touch upon a range of repertoires within a single sentence points to the complexities that lie at the heart of this relationship. It also speaks to the way that journalists manage to distinguish themselves from PR professionals while at the same time, collaborating with them. These are among the findings to emerge from interviews conducted with twenty journalists working the daily beat in Montreal.
Key Words: Journalism. Public relations. Interpretative repertoires. Journalistic professionalism.

MANTENDO AS FRONTEIRAS: Os repertórios interpretativos utilizados pelos jornalistas para se diferenciarem da indústria das relações públicas

RESUMO - Os jornalistas recorrem a diversos repertórios interpretativos para descrever a sua relação com a indústria das RP. Estes incluem discursos institucionais tanto do seu campo como dos seus congéneres das RP. Os jornalistas usam ainda o código deontológico da sua profissão à medida da sua conveniência. Por fim, exploram um repertório a que aqui chamamos de discurso "realista". Os jornalistas podem mobilizar numa única frase os vários repertórios interpretativos, o que ilustra as complexidades no âmago da sua relação com a indústria das RP. A utilização destes repertórios interpretativos permite aos jornalistas manter fronteiras com os profissionais de RP enquanto trabalham em equipa com os mesmos. Estas conclusões resultam de entrevistas realizadas com vinte jornalistas que cobrem a actualidade em Montréal.
Palavras-chave: Jornalismo. Relações públicas. Repertórios interpretativos. Profissionalismo jornalístico.

REPERTÓRIOS INTERPRETATIVOS UTILIZADOS PELOS JORNALISTAS PARA SE DIFERENCIAREM DA INDÚSTRIA DAS RELAÇÕES PÚBLICAS

RESUMEN - A la vuelta de la década de 1990 a la década de 2000, un análisis de la "tabloidización" de la prensa europea tomó la investigación académica sobre el periodismo, desde el trabajo de Esser (1999) y Sparks y Tulloch (2000), que tenía por objeto conceptualizar la expresión. La literatura académica desde entonces ha tratado el tema en diferentes escenarios y contextos en todo el mundo (cf. PIONTEK, 2011; MOONEY, 2008; LIMA, 2009). En Brasil, sin embargo, hubo pocos esfuerzos para tratar de entender al género de los tabloides. El propósito de este artículo es caracterizar el fenómeno en el mercado brasileño, comparando su desempeño a lo que autores como Wasserman (2010), Ogola y Rodny-Gumede (2014) y Ranganathan y Rodrigues (2010) tienen observado en países como India y Sudáfrica.
Palabras-claves: tabloidización; periodismo popular; economía política del periodismo; BRICS.

Introduction
The era of Generalized Public Relations

Researchers investigating how work is organized in newsrooms around the world observe an increased presence of public relations content in the news (PEW RESEARCH CENTER, 2010; MITCHELSTEIN AND BOCZKOWSKI, 2009; LEWIS, et al, 2008). Reporters have less time to research their own stories. With more deadlines to meet and more platforms to feed, they are increasingly treating PR material as "ready for online" content (SULLIVAN, 2011; FRANCOEUR 2012; SISSONS, 2012). Macnamara (2014) estimates that 40 to 75 percent of journalistic information is based on content coming from the public relations industry (p. 741). Sissons (2012), for her part, puts that figure at 50 to 80 percent (p. 274).

This is problematic for journalistic professionalism. As stated in Article 9(a) of the Federation of Professional Journalists in Quebec (FPJQ) Code of Ethics (1996): "Journalists should abstain from engaging in certain communication-related activities that fall outside of the journalistic domain: among these, public relations… [for] activities of this nature serve private interests and convey partisan messages to the public" (our translation). Clearly, journalism is marking out its territory and distinguishing itself from the PR profession – assuring the public that the information they are consuming bears the journalistic stamp, which is to say that it has been produced by a reporter, conforms to the profession's Code of Ethics, and is in the public interest. All of which begs the question: What happens to this ideal when journalists seem to be not so much the initiators of their reports, as technicians responsible for formatting the content of others?

The paradoxes at the heart of the relationship

What journalists think about the presence of PR content in the news has been well documented. Worth noting, here, is Larsson's (2009) study in which he interviewed 64 Swedish Media Relations Officers and journalists. He found that, whereas, "The former claim that they often succeed in planting their promotional ideas in newspapers and programmes, the latter mostly deny such a claim" (p. 131). Macnamara (2016), for his part, interviewed PR professionals and journalists from three countries. His findings show that whereas journalists generally see PR people in a negative light, they can still develop strong ties to those perceived to be "experts" in their field. In Quebec, surveys of journalists and PR people concluded that each profession felt at once confident in the other, at once distrustful (FOURNIER AND GOUDREAU, 2006; MAISONNEUVE et al, 2006) – reflecting the traditional "love-hate relationship" described by many researchers looking into this phenomenon (WHITE AND HOBSBAWM, 2007; HARCUP, 2009).

Taken together, the results of these various studies point to a high level of ambiguity and leave many questions unanswered. How is it, for example, that journalists continue to claim that the presence of PR material in their stories is not all that significant, when the news is clearly full of it; And why do reporters insist on distancing themselves from their primary sources, ie. PR people? As Macnamara (2016) explains, "The co-existence of empirical data showing high usage of PR material on one hand, and a discourse of denial [on the other]...present[s] a paradox at the heart of the journalism-PR nexus" (p. 130). To explore and shed new light on these dynamics in and through the context of the PR-journalist relationship in Québec, we[1] designed a research project that was driven by the following question: What discourses do Québécois journalists actually use to describe the *inescapable* relationship they have with PR people? Drawing on a theoretical framework derived from sociology of journalism (GANS, 1979-2004; ERICSON, BARANEK AND CHAN, 1989; SCHLESINGER, 1987; NEVEU, 2009), our primary focus was the journalist-source relationship and, more precisely, the journalist-PR person relationship (DAVIS, 2002;

BERNIER et al, 2008; FRANKLIN, LEWIS AND WILLIAMS, 2010; SISSONS, 2014; BROUSTAU AND CÔTÉ, 2014; MACNAMARA, 2016).

Methodology
Journalists who make front-page news

To produce a detailed analysis of the discourses used by journalists to describe their place in this conjuncture with an aim to better understanding its lived realities, we interviewed journalists whose articles had made the front page of three major newspapers in Québec (*JOURNAL DE MONTRÉAL, LA PRESSE,* AND *LE DEVOIR*) between November 2013 and February 2014, and journalists responsible for the lead story on news bulletins airing on radio and television in Montreal (*Radio-Canada*, *98,5FM* (Cogeco) and *TVA*) between September and December 2014. In the end, twenty reporters (all of them French speaking, of various ages and levels of experience, and covering a range of beats) agreed to participate in a semi-directed interview (HOLSTEIN AND GUBRIUM, 1995) of 60 to 90 minutes. As for the newspapers and radio and TV stations for which they work, these vary in terms of ownership and style. The *Journal de Montréal* and *TVA* are owned by Québécor and are the most popular newspaper and TV station in Québec. *La Presse,* owned by Power Corporation, is considered an “all-rounder” in that it provides a cross-section of news and entertainment, as well as boasting a number of celebrity journalists. *Le Devoir,* for its part, is an independent daily with a nationalist agenda (CORNELLIER, 2005). *Radio-Canada* is the national public broadcaster. *98,5FM* carries the most popular morning radio show in Montreal and is owned by Cogeco, a diversified telecommunication company.

Our aim was to get these professionals reflecting on the regular workings of a newsroom, as well as on what it means to be part of that “elite” which makes the front page or produces the lead story. In pursuing this line of questioning we were working under the assumption that a daily newspaper selects for its front page those stories which make it stand out from its competitors, which reaffirm its journalistic values, and which show off its true colours: it is the place reserved for those stories deemed by each individual newspaper to be the most significant of the day, the most crucial to the public interest, the very best reflection of its newsroom. The same goes for the lead story on radio or TV. The front page or lead story can also be a site of compromise: the death of a pope, for example, constitutes one of those inescapable stories that an editorial team has no choice but to run as front page news; likewise, a slow news day can result in a compromising choice – "the best of the worst we could find"– having to be made in the editing room (see, for eg. SORMANY, 2011; MCKERCHER, THOMPSON AND CUMMING, 2011).

Analysis of discourses used by journalists

The interviews were transcribed in full[2], and we devoted a lot of time to reading and re-reading the resulting texts. Immersing ourselves in the material enabled us to get a sense of the daily working lives of these journalists, as well as see how they incorporated those professional core texts of their trade (like the *Code of Ethics for Quebec's Journalists*) and those references to journalistic culture circulating more widely (such as the journalist's obligation to serve the public interest) into their work. Some key categories and common themes emerged from the material; likewise, a number of contradictions and paradoxes. We realized that the notion of "interpretative repertoires" – a notion which recognizes that a person draws on a wide range of perspectives, states of mind, positions and motives when addressing a particular issue (POTTER AND WHETERELL, 1987; WODACK, 2008; ABELL AND MYERS, 2008; DAVIS, 2002) – provided us with the best entry point into making sense of, and reporting back on, the discourses used by journalists. That each repertoire managed to shed new and different light on the journalist-PR person relationship also made it a fitting choice. As a discourse analysis method, this recourse to "interpretative repertoires" has been popular among researchers in journalism studies (PLATON AND DEUZE, 2003; DEUZE, 2005; MATHESON, 2007; ANDÉN-PAPADOPOULOS AND PANTTI, 2013), enabling them to "reveal the dilemmas and problems the repertoires produce and to better understand the consequences for stability and changes in journalism" (BORGER et al, 2013).

Overview of research findings

Journalists draw on a number of different interpretative repertoires to describe their relationship to the world of PR. In doing so, they address every facet of it. From the outset, they are keen to distinguish public relations from journalism, insisting that whereas the primary role of the PR person is to defend the image and reputation of his or her client, the role of the journalist is to serve the public interest. Over the course of each of these interviews, the contradictions, the paradoxes, and the nuances begin to appear: a firm affirmation that one *never* uses material prepared by a PR person, for example, is qualified later with an *except when*. Some of the journalists we interviewed admit to teaming up with PR people to cover a story now and then, even if they don't entirely trust them. Journalists also have a tendency to hierarchize their relationships to those in the PR profession: some PR people are described as trustworthy; others are seen to be pernicious. What's more, these kinds of contradictions and paradoxes can be contained within the same answer. For example, a journalist who insists that direct usage of a press release in a news report happens "very, very, very rarely" adds in the same breath that it happens, "Only, let's say, in one of those situations where no cross-checking is required. Or when you only need it to relay some statistic that's relevant to the story" (I-3). Below, we provide details of the various repertoires identified. Though the vocabulary used to describe the relationship varies from one interviewee to the next, the repertoires themselves remain constant.

1) The "institutional discourse of journalists" repertoire

This repertoire revolves around references to journalistic culture – those statements that we have come to expect from journalists when they talk about their profession. For example, journalists are prone to tell people that their job is to serve the public interest (*every* one of the journalists we interviewed stressed this point), that it is their duty to question everything they hear, that they are the watchdogs of society. When journalists are drawing upon this interpretative repertoire they tend to see PR people as there to "promote the corporation they work for and ensure that their boss gets talked about in the media – hopefully in a positive way" (I-3). Even when "the cause is driven by activism or a passionate engagement, what's clear is that everyone in the profession shares this state of mind" (I-5). PR people are considered to be people who "control information" (I-4, I-11, I-13), who "filter the message" (I-1 and I-5), who "do damage control" (I-7).

Within this repertoire, PR people tend to come off badly: "It's a necessary evil but an evil none-the-less" (I-1); "They're people who, for years, have been pretending to be working on the side of journalists, when in fact it's about giving the journalist the information they want to get out there" (I-10). Many of the journalists are emphatic that they don't take anything at face value when it comes to dealing with PR people: "You never totally trust a PR person" (I-12).

In short, the interpretative repertoire we refer to as the "institutional discourse of journalists" might just as well be called their "professional agreed-upon discourse". In a sense, journalists have no choice but to use it: in part, to gain access to the journalistic 'club' and show their professionalism; in part, to clearly demarcate themselves from those working in the PR profession. At the heart of it all we find this critical distinction: journalists serve the public interest, whereas PR people serve private interests. It is this distinction which is central to journalistic professionalism and hence, to the institutional discourse of journalists.

2) The "institutional discourse of PR people" repertoire

This repertoire revolves around references to PR culture, including those statements that PR people make about themselves and their role in the journalistic process: that they are there to help the journalist; that they supply journalists with reliable and factually accurate information. The journalists we interviewed reproduce the "PR-speak" and incorporate it into their own discourse. In the journalists' own words: "The role of PR is to convey and share information about a client or an employer" (I-5); "When you need to confirm something official, the company's mouthpiece is usually a PR person" (I-6).

In addition, journalists accept that a certain protocol – one set by the PR person – has to be followed, as when an interview is required with a certain person: "They're the ones who set it up" (I-3); "We call up the PR person and they put us into contact with somebody" (I-4). Journalists are also able to empathize with PR people, describing the sometimes awkward demands placed upon them: "They obviously give us what they are mandated to give us, because at the end of the day they're not in charge. They have to say what the boss wants them to say" (I-3).

Journalists also use the institutional discourse of PR people tactically, in the hopes of eliciting information from them: "Often one of them will say to me, 'I'm not allowed to comment on that subject,' and

I'll remind them that it's their role to comment, to answer questions, to provide information" (I-6). Another journalist recalls his response to a situation in which he was getting nowhere with a particular PR department: "I said, 'You're here on behalf of your members and your members are counting on you to stand up for them.' I got the feeling that they didn't even understand what doing PR is all about" (I-11).

In sum, and as in the case of the interpretative repertoire discussed in the previous section, the repertoire we call the "institutional discourse of PR people" might just as well be referred to as PR's "agreed-upon discourse" – at least in terms of how it is interpreted and reproduced by journalists. Furthermore, it is adopted by journalists when a PR person is not seen to be doing his or her job properly, or when the journalist feels the need to justify why he or she has contacted a PR person in the first place.

3) The "journalistic code of ethics" repertoire

This interpretative repertoire revolves around those fundamental values that lie at the core of the journalistic profession – impartiality, fairness, etc – and that oblige the journalist to produce balanced reports in which all parties concerned are given equal voice. In the words of one of the journalists: "You always have to keep this issue of getting a balance of opinions in mind and, when necessary, you go back to get your quote [from the PR person]" (I-1). Another brings up "the right to reply" clause – as when a journalist is about to publish something negative about an elected representative: "We make 'a courtesy call' to his people to the effect of 'this is just to inform you that we're about to publish something about your client and we want to give him the chance to respond'" (I-2).

Journalists draw upon this interpretative repertoire to explain why, in certain circumstances, they resort to working with PR people when putting the finishing touches on a story. The PR person's inclusion can offer confirmation that a report has been conducted in an equitable and balanced manner: the PR person has been called up, warned about the upcoming story, given a chance to respond. PR people, in this context, are convenient: providing journalists with a quick and easy means to fulfil their ethical obligations as journalists.

Like the two interpretative repertoires discussed above, this third repertoire can be understood as an "agreed-upon discourse". It is a discourse that we have come to associate with the journalistic profession. On the other hand, there is an interpretative repertoire that journalists draw upon to describe their day-to-day exchanges with

PR people – revealing a spectrum that ranges from doing everything within one's powers to avoid them, to agreeing to team up with them. This repertoire tends to be grounded in concrete examples and lived experiences. We refer to it as the "realist" repertoire.

4) The "realist" repertoire

Within this repertoire, journalists are upfront about their direct use of statements and figures provided to them by PR people. For example, certain kinds of data are easily justified: "The number of employees in an organization, or the number of square feet in a building – who's going to contest those kinds of figures?" (I-6); "If Hydro-Quebec tells us that 300,000 people are without power, we're not going to go and count them all" (I-2). The "realist" repertoire itself can be further broken down into four sub-categories, the first of which is the "*game*" repertoire. It is worth noting that the term *game* was used by French-speaking journalists in its original English form: an indication that the word accurately captured for them the "sporting" nature of some of their exchanges with PR people.

4a) The "game" repertoire

Gaming metaphors are common when journalists go about describing their links to the PR industry: "You have to play the *game*" (I-9); "It's better to play along with the *game*" (I-12); "That's just the name of the *game*" (I-5). The journalists' use of this particular repertoire hints at the possible tensions, misunderstandings, and feelings of resignation accompanying the unavoidable relationship they have with the PR industry.

For example, a journalist who says that it is "always" necessary to work in conjunction with PR is quick to add, "Well…not *all* the time, maybe, but let's just say very, very often, in the sense that every organization out there now has this kind of service. It's part of the *game*" (I-7). In other words, PR people are here to stay, they're just part of the journalist's working life: "If I want to talk to the minister, I've got no choice" (I-9). One journalist discusses how this reality plays itself out on the health beat: "Even when I contact the person I want to talk to directly, I'm told, 'Go through my PR person'" (anonymous). The same goes for a journalist covering the police beat: "From the get-go, one thing is certain – I've got to go through the police force's PR person" (anonymous).

Journalists also use the word "*game*" when referring to situations where the PR person sets the pace: "Good PR people really know the *game:* you hold a press conference in the morning, because that way you hit the noontime news" (I-4). Another remarks, "They'll get back to us five minutes before a deadline which means that, on the one hand, they can't be accused of having not replied to our request but, on the other, it leaves us no time to ask a follow-up question or press for more details" (I-5).

The journalists we interviewed also described how they could make good use of the *game* to take the upper hand. For example, one journalist explained his reaction when a PR person sent over an 800-page government report at 4:30 pm on a Friday, when the editing room had already cleared out for the weekend: "I called the PR person up and totally tore into him, saying, 'I can see right through your little *game*, it's completely ridiculous. And if you do want it covered even half decently in tomorrow's paper, then you'd better put me through to the minister'" (I-4). Other journalists explain: "It's always within our powers to write, 'In response to this or that question, she or he didn't respond,' and then leave it to the public to work out just what that lack of a response means" (I-7); or, "I am going to do my best to get the PR person's attitude across to the reader" (I-1).

In other cases – for example, when a PR person is dictating which questions are allowed and which ones are off limit – a journalist might refuse to play the *game* according to the PR person's rules: "So they've said, 'We only want questions pertaining to this subject.' So you let it go for a couple of questions and then you turn it to something else" (I-4); or, "We'll let the ones who are asking questions pertaining to the topic of the day go first, but straight away afterwards we'll take the microphone and ask our questions" (I-7).

Journalists also mention cases where, in their opinion, PR people cross the line: amongst these, when they go too far in dictating "protocols," when they insist on reading an article before it is published, or when they lie. Those PR people who make a big deal of insisting that journalists must go through them are also criticized: "The guy calls me up and says, 'You haven't done your job properly, you know very well that you have to go through me.' And believe it or not, he went on to lecture me about it!" (I-2).

All of the situations described above are part of the *game* that PR people and journalists are forced to play in their daily encounters with each other. Even when journalists feel that PR people have overstepped the mark, they remain in the repertoire of the *game.* It is only when the dialogue between the two professions grinds to a halt that a new interpretative repertoire kicks in – one that finds journalists contemplating the fact that nobody's getting on with doing their job because they've reached a dead end.

4b) The "dead end" repertoire

Journalists resort to this repertoire when they find themselves up against a wall – when all exchanges have ceased and negotiating their way out of the deadlock seems impossible. It is a repertoire that is often used when journalists recount their dealings with the federal government[3]: "You send in ten questions, they only reply to one of them, which is as good as replying to nothing at all" (I-1); "We're not even talking opaque any more, we're talking iron curtain" (I-9). In fact, for many of these journalists the federal government has become the standard by which to measure the unacceptable. Speaking about the provincial government, one journalist comments: "More and more, they make us go through the Access to Information Act rather than just sending us the documents. Or, like the federal government, they send us the same three sentences over and over again – always by email, never by phone" (I-6). Another journalist describes a typical exchange with a private company: "They'll say, 'Send us all your questions, we'll submit them to our technical committee and after they've met, we'll get back to you on it.' It takes them two weeks to get back to me, and what I get from them is two or three lines of jargon" (I-11).

At the end of the day, journalists use the "dead end" repertoire to capture that moment that they can no longer do their work. Take, for example, the journalist who has been trying to contact a person –or his or her PR representative – only to end up with material that is unusable: unusable because the journalist cannot say that the person never answered his request; unusable because describing what the person said isn't possible given that, in verbal terms, it was a non-response; and unusable because explaining to the reader the situation that resulted in the person being inadequately cited or not cited at all is just too much to get into in a report of limited space.

Thus far, a key feature of all the repertoires discussed is that the two professions are strictly demarcated: a journalist is not a PR person and a PR person is not a journalist. There are cases, however, where the line between the two professions becomes blurred. Journalists use another interpretative repertoire – one we refer to as "strategic" – when addressing this reality.

4c) The "strategic" repertoire

This is the interpretative repertoire used by journalists when talking about those occasions where they have no qualms about using material provided to them by a PR person or teaming up with a PR person to produce a news story. Using a press release is entirely justifiable when, for example, "We're working with an organization or person that's right at the centre of what is happening, and they've issued a press release that's addressed to the media as a whole" (I-5). Another journalist says: "Okay, so let's say the Premier of Québec dies, and suddenly all these tributes from important people start pouring in, and it's the PR people who've sent them. Chances are I'll use them" (I-6).

Journalists also invoke the "strategic" repertoire when they've been given access to a specific group or to confidential information. For example, teaming up with a PR person to do a report on teenagers living in an institutional setting, one journalist commented: "It only worked because a spokesperson agreed to set up some contacts" (anonymous). Another, talking about an organization providing help in disaster situations, explained: "The PR person was not without his own interests, you see. He's like, 'We're going to show that we're helping the victims.' So yes, he had a personal interest in the story, but we teamed up because both of us had a vested interest in making the story happen" (anonymous). A journalist who used this route to obtain an exclusive interview with a police investigator who was trying to get the victims of an attacker to come forward commented: "In a way you could say we made a good team" (anonymous).

Journalists insist that even when they do team up with a PR person, they don't entirely let down their guard: "I wouldn't describe the relationship as one of blind confidence" (I-2); "To say that we "team up" is going too far. I'd call it more of a collaboration" (I-8).

In short, what the "strategic" interpretative repertoire reveals is that journalists are willing to set up temporary alliances with PR people if and when it serves the public interest. What it also reveals is that these alliances are formed on a "case-by-case" basis. If this suggests that journalists categorize their exchanges with PR people according to the possibilities each exchange offers, it follows that PR people themselves are categorized into different types. How journalists nuance these various distinctions falls into an interpretative repertoire we refer to here as "hierarchical."

4d) The "hierarchical" repertoire

Journalists use this repertoire to add nuance to their categorization of PR people. For example, a number of journalists draw a distinction between those spokespersons who work for public organizations and those who work in the private sector. In addition, every journalist has their own personal system for evaluating PR people: "It's always case-by-case – what I've learned through experience, and based on their approach too" (I-5). Another journalist draws a distinction between those who represent a "not-for-profit" and those who represent private interests: "When you're a not-for-profit organization, you're more likely to be standing up for something. And often you're at the mercy of the system. So when those guys call up the media it's usually because they're destitute and need help" (I-11).

Discussion

The first interpretative repertoire used by the journalists in our study – the "institutional discourse of journalists" – indicates the degree to which journalists insist on the difference between journalism and the PR industry. Ensuring that the two professions remain distinct is crucial to maintaining their identity and professional credibility. The other interpretative repertoires speak to the reality of their professional practice: journalism and PR are inextricably linked; it's just part of the "game," as the "realist" repertoire illustrates. PR is integral to journalism because PR people are ever-present and inescapable. Moreover, the kind of working conditions and production deadlines imposed on journalists makes turning their backs on PR people a major challenge. Evidence of this "reality" is to be found in the "journalistic code of ethics" repertoire – notably when journalists speak of their obligation to produce stories that are balanced and representative. It is also to be found in the "institutional discourse of PR people" repertoire.

This latter repertoire attests to the many ways that journalists have incorporated the professional discourse of PR people into their own. According to this repertoire, PR people are there to back journalists up: to deliver information that is accurate, contextual, and timely. Through this repertoire, journalists even manage to formulate arguments obliging PR people to play their role – to carry out their part of the deal. Within this repertoire, PR people have no choice *but* to be responsive to a journalist's needs, and respectful of the practical and ethical constraints facing that journalist. For to do otherwise, as the "dead end" repertoire illustrates, is to land all parties in a stalemate situation.

As for the "strategic" repertoire, it sheds important light on how journalists and PR people go about creating spaces of collaboration. This repertoire brings the "institutional discourse of journalists" and the "realist" repertoires into dialogue: journalists work in conjunction with PR people but their skepticism remains intact – they uphold the "systematic doubt" that is part and parcel of their profession (FPJQ, 1996) throughout these dealings. The « hierarchical » repertoire, for its part, reflects the diversity inherent in the actual exchanges between the two professions.

Conclusion

Interviews with twenty journalists responsible for the front page or lead story across a wide range of mainstream Québécois media give us on important insight into what the custodians of "prestige" (LEGAVRE, 2014) journalism think and believe. These findings need to be followed up with interviews that categorize journalists according to the beat they cover, the medium for which they primarily work, and their seniority within the profession. Taking factors such as type of beat, nature and style of employer, and degree of experience into account will no doubt add nuance to what we have learned here. We also need to interview PR people in order to see how their perception of the relationship between the two professions, and the roles assumed by the various players, compares to that of journalists.

During the course of this research we discovered that journalists draw on numerous perspectives and motives when discussing their exchanges with PR people. They juggle different positions with seeming ease, and two or more interpretative repertoires can be found in a response to a single question. In their totality, the various interpretative repertoires paint a multi-faceted picture of the lived realities that constitute the relationship between PR people and those journalists who "make" the front page" or "get" the lead story. They provide a rich and subtle description of a relationship which was, until now, summed up by terms such as "love-hate" or "lukewarm" (FOURNIER AND GOUDREAU, 2006; MAISONNEUVE et al, 2006).

What is remarkable here is that when journalists are asked to talk about the journalist-PR person relationship, their standard go-to discourse centres around the crucial distinction they draw between the two professions: PR people are there to serve *private* interests, whereas journalists are there to serve the *public* interest (LLOYD AND TOOGOOD, 2014; MILLER AND DINAN, 2007; SALLOT AND JOHNSON, 2006). Our study brings to the fore the degree to which journalists truly do see themselves as the watchdogs of society – there to keep the powers-that-be in check, and this even and especially when dealing with their primary sources and main interlocutors, the PR people. What this means is that even in this age of "generalized public relations" (MIÈGE 2007), of "public communication" (BERNIER et al, 2005), of the "PR-isation" of the newsroom (JACKSON AND MOLONEY, 2016) – even with their working lives inescapably bound to the PR profession – journalists are not prepared to relinquish their role as the keepers of the public interest. Differentiating the two professions in this way is the last line of defence used by journalists in their ongoing power struggle with the PR industry. It is at the very core of this particular discourse that we find the nuanced complexities that go hand in hand with both the power relationship as lived by journalists, and the positioning they assign themselves within it. Therein, too, lies the importance, for journalists, of keeping the two professions distinct.

NOTES

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2 The interviews were conducted in French. Every quotation that has been taken from those interview transcripts was translated for the purposes of this article. In cases where the interviewee used an English word or phrase, we have italicized it. All participants were promised anonymity. This research project has been approved by the Ethics Committee of l'Université du Québec à Montréal.

3 At the time these interviews took place, Stephen Harper's Conservative government had been in power for eight years.

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