Hidden Crises and Communication:
An Interactional Analysis of Hidden Crises

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In this paper I describe the ways in which the communication discipline can make a hidden crisis transparent. For this purpose I examine the concept of crisis entrepreneurship from a communication point of view. Using discourse analysis, I analyse the discursive practices of crisis entrepreneurs in the domain of education in the Netherlands. This paper is part of my Ph.D. project in which I examine the dilemmas encountered by crisis entrepreneurs and the interactional solutions they choose in addressing a crisis. In my Ph.D. project I have analysed how crisis entrepreneurs use discursive practices: (1) to show *the factuality of the problem*. For example, the way the problem is presented is too theoretical and is not a problem in reality; (2) to present *the credibility of the messenger* as an authentic, legitimate spokesman. Crisis entrepreneurs may be accused of wanting to attract attention to their own cause; (3) to create *the accountability for the problem and the solution*. For example, crisis entrepreneurs can be accused of nursing personal grievances or of drawing attention to the issue without actively attempting to solve it. The conclusion is that a communication professional is able to recognize a problem raised by crisis entrepreneurs. Knowledge of interactional dilemmas helps communication professionals understand the potential of crisis entrepreneurs. A communication professional can therefore contribute to the recognition of crises by acknowledging that a crisis entrepreneur is someone who can have a strong hand in the public agenda, i.e., public affairs that are important to the authorities.

Keywords: hidden crisis, crisis communication, crisis entrepreneurs, discourse analyses, interaction

Introduction

In this paper I would like to examine whether the communication discipline can make a hidden crisis transparent. In which way can we create general awareness of a crisis and try to understand the dynamic nature of interactions? Until now, this issue has been partially or insufficiently addressed. Therefore, the following problem definition is at the core of my approach:

How can hidden crises be noticed and how can the communication discipline assess their relevance?

The hidden crisis is an interesting topic of study, because not much is known yet about this type of crisis in comparison with the acute crisis. Ambiguity conceals the hidden crisis, because the problem is difficult to define in view of the complexity and versatility of the different interpretations of hidden threats.

A crisis entrepreneur, i.e., a whistleblower or a social movement, throws a rock into a pond, the effect of which—creating commotion—is of particular interest in this respect. The visible effects, i.e., what is generated

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as a result, could be light ripples or a considerable splash. It requires a considerable effort on the part of crisis entrepreneurs to succeed in drawing attention to a crisis. They have to make sure that people acknowledge the fact that crisis entrepreneurs do not act with their self-interest in mind, but aim for a solution to a particular crisis. Crisis entrepreneurs may be confronted with different interactional challenges and problems in their endeavour to expose a hidden crisis; a crisis entrepreneur may sometimes be successful or may sometimes fail in "breaking through" those challenges. I am especially interested in this phenomenon, for which purpose I have formulated the following research question:

What are the interactional problems encountered by crisis entrepreneurs who intend to put forward a crisis and how do they solve these problems?

A crisis is successfully addressed when the scope of the manifestations has been extensive and when the surroundings have, indeed, picked up the signal. In this paper *scope* is, on the one hand, defined as a mediametic event during which media are taking over the signal. On the other hand, scope is defined as a social diffusion phenomenon whereby surrounding groups respond adequately to this emergency.

Domain of Education

In this paper, I take a look at how people express their concerns about certain developments in the domain of education in the Netherlands. For this purpose, I have examined a specific form of expression by a social movement: a public statement from the Association for Better Education in the Netherlands (*de Vereniging Beter Onderwijs Nederland*), hereafter referred to as *BON*. In this manifest, titled *Education Is a Sinking Ship*, Ad and Marijke Verbrugge claim that education innovations have caused a crisis in Dutch education as a whole.

I will discuss which interactional concerns the BON association demonstrates in its manifest. What are the dilemmas that have arisen and what are the solutions that this movement applies in order to handle these dilemmas? Moreover, I have included responses from the media in order to examine whether they recognize the interactional problems encountered by crisis entrepreneurs, as well as the solutions that they have constructed.

Ph.D. Project

As I already mentioned in the introduction above, this paper is part of my Ph.D. project in which I examine the ways in which a hidden crisis can be exposed from a communication point of view. Therefore, this research is also relevant to communication professionals. The study is a form of proto-research and will shed light on the dilemmas experienced by crisis entrepreneurs and the interactional solutions they apply to cope with such dilemmas.

With the help of discourse analysis, I have examined the interactional achievements of the founders of a social movement and one particular whistleblower who exposed a hidden crisis in the domain of education in the Netherland.

Relevance to Communication Professionals

It is interesting to examine the statements made by crisis entrepreneurs, because they are special players in public debates. They give signals to the authorities in charge and try to recruit supporters for their views. They seek publicity, by giving interviews or writing letters to newspaper editors; on the one hand, they try to generate attention to a potential danger and, on the other hand, they also want to warn and convince others. However, because they are often ahead of the game, their signals are often not recognized or misunderstood.

This is unfortunate because crisis entrepreneurs can make important contributions to making problems transparent. Crisis entrepreneurs can be considered positive and dynamic elements in society, because they present views from which an organization is able to learn. Taking their signals seriously enhances an organization's ability to identify a crisis at an earlier stage. In addition, this study assumes that organizations are able to see this type of crisis as an opportunity for innovation.

Prior to the analysis, I will describe the background to the case and the methodological aspects of my study.

Background to the BON Case

BON was initiated at the beginning of 2006 with the purpose "to enhance and stimulate as effectively as possible the development and opportunities of pupils and students by means of profound subject-matter and general education" (BON, 2006). In their manifest, the authors Ad and Marijke Verbrugge criticize the implementation of innovations in education since the Dutch Education Act of 1968.

The manifest was published in June 2006 in NRC Handelsblad. It is remarkably the authors of the manifest had plenty of room—a half page—in this Dutch quality newspaper for the integral print of their manifest (the original length consists of 4,565 words).

BON claims to be independent and is not involved with carrying out any political and/or ideological orientation (BON's website, 2009). According to BON, its objective is to work around existing structures. Ad and Marijke Verbrugge's manifest plays an important role in the recent public debate on education innovations and "the new learning phenomenon" as a didactic concept. That is why I interpret the manifest in this paper as a source of information that enables me to make an inventory of the opinions from within the realm of education and to gain greater knowledge in this respect.

Discourse Analysis

Research was carried out with the help of discourse analysis, a method developed by Potter and W. Wetherell (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, 1994, 1995; te Molder, 1999; Potter, 2004). Discourse analytical research has defined the different rhetorical strategies that people apply in their interactions with others. Understanding those strategies is of importance in order to expand our knowledge of everyday interactions between participants in discourse. In everyday conversation, people perform all kinds of actions with their language, such as creating and building identity, offering judgements and displaying neutrality. From a discursive point of view, the analyst examines how psychological issues are made relevant in everyday interactions. Discursive Psychology (DP) is concerned with the rhetorical and interactional features of discourse (Edwards, 1997; Edwards & Potter, 1992; Potter, 1996). Discursive psychologists analyze discourse as the social practice of everyday life, rather than treating it as a result of mental processes (for a detailed discussion on talk and cognition, see te Molder & Potter, 2005). DP explores how psychological themes such as identity, are handled and managed in discourse. People do things with language. Utterances are not explained in terms of underlying mental structures (for example, attitudes or motives), but through analyzing what people do with these utterances. The starting point for analysis is the way in which participants themselves deal with utterances.

Analytical Procedure

For the purpose of this research into the interactional achievements of crisis entrepreneurs, it is relevant to discover the dilemmas they encounter in their interactions. What is at stake for crisis entrepreneurs from an

interactional point of view? In order to provide an answer to this question, I will examine the following questions for analysis:

1. Which opposing or alternative version is undermined or contradicted by this description?

2. How do recipients handle the message, in this case the newspapers?

The first rule of thumb involves the question: "Which other plausible world or version of the world is at stake?" "One of the most important features of descriptions is their could-have-been-otherwise quality" (Edwards, 1997, p. 8). No description of anything is the only one that is possible or reasonable. People can make choices in representing reality thanks to the fact that there are always alternatives (Potter, 1996). As a consequence, the type of reality description a speaker or writer may "choose" to give depends on the purpose behind his description (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Te Molder, 1999).

In applying the second rule of thumb, I have compared the source fragments with the responses given. The response is used to check whether or not the "strategy" has been apprehended. For this purpose, I have examined the information that newspapers have collected from the statements made by the authors of the manifest.

It is important in this respect to use a combination of rhetorical analysis—rule of thumb No. 1—and the meaning given to the message by its recipients—rule of thumb No. 2. The problem that writers encounter may give me inside information on the strategy, also, if I can identify the strategy applied by them, which might be reflected again in the responses, it would prove that I have been able to identify the correct problem—what do writers gain or lose in their interactions and which problems do they encounter in this process. Eventually, it should enable me to identify the authors' dilemmas in their manifest.

The analytical principles adopted in discursive psychology leave room for the fact that a crisis is not something that is "out-there" but is brought to relevance in an interactional way.

Results

Analysis has demonstrated the existence of discursive strategies, which are used as a solution to the different interactional problems that writers are facing. The dilemma could only be described after the solutions had been identified. That is why this paragraph also begins with a description of the applied strategies, followed by an analysis of the responses from newspapers and, subsequently, a discussion of the corresponding problem. Analysis is therefore organized along the following steps: strategy→response→dilemma.

The analysis was carried out in the following manner: following the initial classification of the research material, which consists of the manifest as well as newspaper articles about the manifest, I first started re-reading the manifest in a profound manner. For this purpose, prominent text passages were selected in the first reading session, after which they were marked as potentially interesting. Subsequent reading sessions allowed me to continuously adjust these themes. Working in such a circular way has enabled me to examine if certain choices are indeed justifiable. Does the research material in fact support what I had found? In this way, I have assessed and specified the themes in the manifest with the help of text fragments that either confirm or contradict the themes in question. As a consequence, the selected text fragments of the manifest, which have been quoted in this paper, are no isolated pieces of information. They are examples of patterns that could be found in the entire manifest. Next, I have repeatedly read the text of the newspaper articles. I examined which larger phenomena emerged from the responses. For instance, could I see any specific recurring statements or themes throughout all the responses? If this was the case, then those fragments would be selected. Once more, these themes, which have also been derived from this research material, were subsequently assessed and

specified with the help of text fragments that either confirm or contradict the themes in question. Gradually, a pattern has emerged that continues to remain valid.

Strategy

I will first analyse the manifest's title:

1. Help! Education is a sinking ship! Teachers, students and parents must join forces to start.

2. Fighting for better education. Help, education is a sinking ship!

The title is remarkable in the sense that it appeals to a group that includes *teachers, students and parents* (1st line). The authors have created a specific group through categorization (Sacks, 1987). In discursive psychology, categorization is defined as formulating activities, performances or habits that are characteristic of a specific event, person, group or object (Potter, 1996, p. 176). In this fragment, a specific group of parties involved in education has therefore been created; a group that is directly concerned in education matters. This group must *join forces* (1st line) *to start fighting* (1st line). It does not explain against whom or for what they must start fighting. Further text analysis may possibly answer this question.

The line numbering in this fragment corresponds with the line numbering I have added to the source text.

Text fragment No. A of the manifest.

Section: Opinion & Debate

Original Length: 4,565 words

1. Public education fails to motivate, its effectiveness is too low and

2. a lot of money is spent in all the wrong places. That is why the education

3. innovations in the last years should be reversed: students

4. must study again, teachers must go back to teaching. A manifest

5. from the chairman of the Association for Better Education in the Netherlands.

6. Because a well-functioning society requires proper education.

...437 lines omitted until the end...

(Source: NRC Handelsblad, 3 June, 2006)

In the extracts above I can identify the following discursive strategies: Three-part lists; shifting accountability; creating a community with others; emotion discourse.

In the next analysis I will describe the way these strategies are used by the authors of the manifest.

It is remarkable that the elucidation opens with a list of disqualifications: Public education fails to motivate, its effectiveness is too low and a lot of money is spent in all the wrong places (1st and 2nd line). This formulation consists of three parts that jointly compose the statement. This type of formulation is known as three-part lists, a term defined by Gail Jefferson (Jefferson, 1990). Such three-part lists are often used to present matters as generally occurring events. It is an example of something that is generally true. The authors therefore do not confine themselves to a single problem definition; instead, they describe the entire abominable state of public education. It already starts in the first line of the story, in which they describe the world as it is: a dramatic state of affairs, as a result, they present a complete and actual picture of the crisis in public education.

The authors use the formulation a manifest from the chairman of the Association for Better Education in the Netherlands (5th line). The role of chairman suggests that the matter has been intensively contemplated and discussed in a formal setting. It implies that these are the words of a chairman representing the range of thoughts from an association active in this field. It conveys the image of a chairman explaining matters on

which consensus has been reached within the association and his willingness to work for better education on everyone's behalf, including the reader's.

In the next fragment, we can see the authors shifting with accountability for their utterances.

Text fragment No. B of the manifest

13. Unfortunately, social interest in these radical changes has remained very modest

14. for a long period of time, as a result of which initiatives

15. to this purpose mainly originated from a relatively small administrative

16. caste in the realm of education.

... 113 lines omitted until the end

In fragment B, the authors declare that the state of affairs in public education has gone unnoticed by society social interest ... has remained very modest (13th line). The authors hold society accountable for the problems defined in the first paragraph. They also regret the limited interest in this issue, as shown by the term unfortunately (13th line). The authors therefore do not blame society, for example, for not having paid attention, nor is it actually held accountable for causing the problem. They do, however, hold accountable another group, which is accomplished through *shifting accountability.* This principle is defined as *footing* (Goffman, 1979): discuss bold assuming accountability for the statement a speaker has made. Hence, people may switch between *shifting* accountability and *keeping it nearby*. At this stage, the authors have categorized the other group: "them", which refers to the government officials who form a relatively small (15th line) group that has quietly proceeded with radical changes (13th line). In other words, it is a small club with enormous power—the "bad" elite— which also underlines the unfairness of this development.

Text Fragment No. C of the manifest.

128. It is about time to realize that our trifling with public education

129. seriously jeopardizes our welfare and that of our children.

130. Our public education is subject to a certain degree of inflation,

131. which is bound to have consequences over time,

132. also for the economy.

... 318 linces omitted until the end...

In fragment C, the authors make an ideal switch from this other group *them*, which is accountable for the cause of misery, to the undefined group *us* (Aarts & te Molder, 1998, p. 55), which is accountable for the solution, because it is our welfare, our children and our public education (128th—130th line). Through this group *us*, the authors have also associated themselves with the group of parties involved in education, which is addressed in the title. In this way, the authors show their inner moral obligations to society (van Stekelenburg, 2006, p. 21). It reveals the moral integrity of the authors themselves as a motive to stimulate collective activism. Moreover, *us* also refers to the association as we saw in fragment A (5th line), since it apparently has committed itself to a task: an obligation to help the Netherlands (5th line) with our public education. It also makes clear that these are signals from within our own group that need to be taken seriously: it is not just an—idle—notice of approaching danger from individuals. However, as is suggested, there are more of us—we do have support. The authors also reach out to engage the reader. The effect of stimulating accountability also results in a specific *sense of community with others* (Aarts & Te Molder, 1998, p. 55). It creates an opportunity to identify oneself with the authors: the state of affairs in education is a matter of public concern.

In the same fragment C, the authors have also introduced the term *emotionality* (Edwards, 1997). Derek

Edwards' research (1997) shows that *emotion words* can make a rhetorical contrast to statements. Using these words can emphasize or shift away from specific themes. (Edwards, 1999, pp. 282-283). In this text fragment, the authors explicitly put forward their grievances on trifling (128th line) with our public education. The authors are annoyed about this type of behaviour. However, they do not display unfocused anger or spontaneous outbursts—showing their emotions is the very thing that enables them to create authenticity. In expressing their annoyance they obviously suggest that they are in control of their emotions. Also, the words seriously jeopardizes (129th—130th line) and subject to a certain degree of inflation (130th line) support this explicit display of controlled anxiety about the course of affairs.

It is striking that the authors do not confine themselves to the downfall of public education; by making the statement also for the economy (132st line) they explicitly draw attention to its economic and social consequences. In this way, they address a group of politicians and opinion leaders: the social-economic realm is not only accountable for moral decay, but also for any negative tangible effects. The authors obviously plead a cause of broader interest, because the crisis goes beyond the boundaries of public education alone.

Moreover, the term *trifling* reflects the arbitrariness of the administrative caste (15th line) and its initiatives (15th line). It suggests an example of the irresponsible fashion in which this administrative caste has controlled our public education. As a consequence, the administrative caste is disqualified in this matter.

Summary.The discursive methods applied by the use of *three-part* lists, give substance to the authors' observations on the crisis in public education, whilst suggesting their comprehensiveness and general validity. Moreover, it is interesting to see the *shifts in accountability* in the text fragment. Reference is made to a society and *them,* the administrative caste, and it is up to *us* to stop this trifling with *our* public education. This is an association that rises against the elite; such is the effect created by these statements. It is crucial that in the end, the authors have not placed themselves above the situation, but also declare that "all of us" have done too little about practices gone awry. They obviously assume *accountability* for our public education. They do, however, disqualify the administrative caste in order to provide a solution to the problem, which they have caused themselves, to which end they have composed a marginal and small group that was able to continue its practices without any acceptance throughout society.

The authors rise against a small administrative caste, presented as the other group, *them*; this caste does not belong to the majority. At the same time, the Verbrugge couple also creates the *us* group; it is a problem that bothers us all. It creates the effect of commitment: we act with sincere intentions against the administrative caste.

The authors do not adopt a complaining or accusing tone. Nor do they take on the victim's role. Instead, they show genuine indignation by using *emotion words*. Edwards (1999) uses a discursive approach to explain that *emotional language* can create a rhetorical advantage. Emotions therefore suggest not only spontaneity and authenticity, but may also create understanding of a specific reaction to a particular situation. "The point is that this is a way of talking, and that it can (but need not) be constructed and used on occasions" (Edwards, 1999, p. 278). It also applies to this case; the authors take action because the course of affairs in public education is unjustified. They give reasons for their annoyance: the administrative caste is the cause of their agitation. For this reason, their annoyance can also be explained and understood.

Creating a sense of community also helps them in their endeavour. In communicating their moral protests, the authors try to incite support from within their own circle. This movement's right of existence should therefore not be called into question.

I will now examine the degree to which the response focuses on the image that the authors have invoked: *we speak for a weary majority*. Since the manifest was published in the opinion section of a newspaper and propagates a specific opinion, I particularly wanted to examine these information sources to assess their responses to this publication. In this case, the selected text fragments originate from columns, education and science sections, press releases and interviews in the examined newspapers.

Responses

Are the authors successful in their endeavour to shift accountability? Do the media acknowledge this shift in accountability? Do newspapers respond to the emotional language and do they consider the authors' observations to be a signal that needs to be taken seriously?

The first response that I will discuss is a text fragment from "De Telegraaf", a national daily newspaper, in which its editor explains "The New Learning Phenomenon" (in this fragment referred to as HNL) as an event that has become apparent in education since several years, and for which reason the Association for Better Education in the Netherlands has been established. The editor had placed this article in the *Day After Tomorrow* section, which contains opinions on education and science. The article appeared four days after the Manifest had been described in NRC Handelsblad.

Text Fragment No. 1.

Author: the editor

Category: newspaper section

Length: 323 words

... 6 lines of the introduction were omitted...

1. In the meantime, parents and teachers have founded the Association for Better Education in

2. the Netherlands (VBON) in response to HNL. The organization opposes HNL

3. and is concerned about the fact that according to the education plan, knowledge acquisition is considered a downside.

4. As a result, public education has impoverished, causing harm among students.

... 6 lines omitted...

5. In addition to Ad Verbrugge, a philosopher of culture and also chairman, Arnold

6. Heertje, Ayaan Hirsi Ali and Ursie Lambrechts are in the committee of

7. recommendation. VBON is not your average club of campaigners.

8. It is a group of people who are seriously concerned about the quality

9. of public education, and their commitment to the future of children extends to such a

10. degree, that they want to turn the tide. The deterioration in public education

11. justifies counteraction.

... 2 lines omitted until the end...

(Source: De Telegraaf, 10 June, 2006)

In this fragment, the journalist defines the Association for Better Education as an organization (1st and 2nd line), which has been founded (1st line) and which includes parents and teachers (1st line). In the meantime (1st line) shows that meanwhile, this club apparently is already taking action. It is remarkable, because this response was given four days after the manifest itself was published. In other words, the response focuses on the suggestion that the association, which had just been founded, is already active.

It is also striking that in the 1st line, the abbreviation *HNL* is used for the new learning phenomenon. As such, it has been standardized as an already existing phenomenon; it suggests a phenomenon assumed to be known and therefore gives legitimacy to the objective of the association.

The text fragment refers to *Ad Verbrugge, a philosopher of culture* in addition to Arnold Heertje, Ayaan Hirsi Ali and Ursie Lambrechts (5th—6th line). They are scholars and politicians also known for their contributions to public debate. It brings to mind that these are the names of well-known people who possibly form the core of the association.

The statement VBON is not your average club of campaigners (7th line) seems to suggest the involvement of "important" people, but subsequently fails to complete the message. Apparently, the newspaper does not dare to substantiate its statement in full. However, it is subsequently presented as a group of people (8th line) who feel committed to tackle serious public issues, which is revealed by the following formulation: *who are seriously concerned about the quality of public education and their commitment to the future of children extends to such a degree...* In other words, this is a "movement" seriously concerned about public education.

Consequently, the newspaper qualifies the authors' opposition as commitment. In this way, the newspaper introduces BON's involvement as a motive to turn the tide. It is not just plain and simple action that they are after; this drive is also a result from their commitment to the future of children (9th line). They obviously do not fight for their own interests, as is usually the case with associations. The response therefore provides an answer to the solution proposed by the speakers to show their grievances about our public education. In short, the newspaper legitimizes the association's right of existence through categorizing a committed social movement.

All things considered, it can be observed that the author of text fragment No. 1 shifts accountability in the form of embedded footing to assume indirect accountability for statements made (Goffman, 1997). The author does not only represent the opinion of *a group of people*, he also represents the newspaper's opinion. The statement the deterioration in public education justifies counteraction (10th—11th line) is therefore not entirely attributed to BON, because the newspaper also assumes indirect accountability. This news source apparently supports BON's statement, and BON's emotionality—who are seriously concerned (8th line)—has therefore been validated as well.

With the exception of columns, newspapers are characterized by their role as *animators* (Goffman, 1979) who only pass on the opinions and views from others (Clayman, 1992). However, in this text fragment, the newspaper does indeed assume accountability**,** for public education has impoverished, causing harm among students (4th line).

In the next text fragment no. 2, the newspaper is not yet familiar with the proper abbreviation for the association, calling it instead *VBON* (2nd and 7th line). In the following responses examined, I could no longer find this abbreviation and most of the time, the abbreviation BON was used as an independent name. The same is shown by the next and third fragment, which refers to the BON (text fragment No. 2, 2nd line). This fragment originates from *NRC Handelsblad* two years after the Manifest was published by the same newspaper. The article is a weekly column on education in the Saturday edition by Leo Prick: a commentator in the areas of education and education politics in the Netherlands.

Text Fragment No. 2.

Author:　Leo Prick

Section: Education

Length: 604 words

... 25 lines of the introduction were omitted...

1. In the meantime, we have in fact come to know a club, which nature is somewhat similar

2. to that of a professional association of teachers: the BON, the club for Better Education in

3. the Netherlands, presided by Ad Verbrugge. Politicians and administrators turn so

4. fiercely against this club and put its members in a bad light,

5. because it here concerns an apolitical association that does not attach any value whatsoever

6. to the political barter that has been going on in the realm of education since the beginning of

7. time. Indeed: stop nagging, start organizing yourself.

(Source: NRC Handelsblad, 20 June, 2008).

The association appears to have succeeded in establishing itself as an organization: in the meantime (1st line), the BON has existed for two years, also taking into account the date of the source, which is 20 June, 2008. It suggests a long-lasting movement. The same line refers to in fact, club and somewhat (1st line), which can be interpreted as a casual recognition of the activist nature of the movement. In this fragment, BON is depicted, albeit in a cautious way, as an alternative union of educational personnel: It is a club, which nature is somewhat similar to that of a professional association of teachers (2nd line). Besides, the concept of a club (4th line) implies that it involves a specific group of affiliated members, i.e., a group that shares a common purpose: it points to a mutual bond. At the same time, a *professional association* suggests openness. In other words, it is implied that this is not a common club, but a movement with which one may become affiliated or involved as a member, a movement which has a low thresh-hold. The newspaper obviously acknowledges the sense of community, which the authors, together with others, have created in the manifest.

At the same time, the paper suggests that it involves an informal group: it is for example not a foundation. In this respect, it is also presented as an apolitical association (5th line), because the author ascribes an important property to BON: does not attach any value whatsoever to the political barter that has been going on in the realm of education since the beginning of time (5th—6th line). This description is presented as an explanation for the fierce opposition by politicians and administrators. What we see here is a contrast between the predictability and standardization in politics and the innovative and activist nature of the association.

The columnist's attempt to inspire the reader in the final line: *Indeed: stop nagging, start organizing yourself* implies that BON is already doing this. They do not nag, but are doing something about it. Indeed (7th line) also implies the columnist's assent to BON. In other words, don't sit down in despair, take action. This column shows that the newspaper has consequently adopted BON's objective of mobilization.

At this point in my argument I would like to take stock on the basis of the analysis of the first text fragment and the analysis of the responses. What are mine findings?

Summary. The response has extended the small, elitist caste to a broad political establishment, as against a majority that has already been aware for a long time of the substantial damages caused. Consequently, BON is defined as a movement that is truly concerned with public education and therefore serious in its endeavours to look after the interests of teachers and students. In this respect, many text fragments show that a response is given to the grievances set forth in the manifest, but it is not interpreted as complaining or negative thinking.

In addition to the attention given to the association, there is, above all, a lot of attention for the chairman.

The newspapers have created the image of a prominent chairman, who is a successful advocate for students and teachers, willing and able to initiate public debate on their behalf. The media has created a contrast between standardized and predictable politics and a surprising and refreshing chairman.

These contrasts paint a picture of an activist group with a remarkable chairman and honourable motives, up in arms against a failing establishment. Ad Verbrugge possesses qualities that are missing in politics. A political body cannot be personified, but it can be done for an association with a chairman: he is giving this club panache. Moreover, and already at an early stage, BON's range of thoughts is being acknowledged, also by the authorities. In its description of the association, the media have created the image of a collective that looks after the interests of a silent majority.

In the foregoing paragraphs, I have discussed the discursive strategies applied by writers and the media and I am also able to follow-up on the discursive methods that helped or hindered them in their endeavours. Because the authors have applied strategies to this purpose, I may assume that writers apparently do have dilemmas in this respect.

Dilemma: We Must Project Our Personal Identity, but We Also Want to Initiate a Movement

The newspapers do confirm BON's points of view, but they also add something to their story, namely a remarkable chairman. It is something that the authors themselves cannot do. Because they could have been blamed for initiating a movement to extend their influence and enhance their own prestige. They might have been confronted with their abuse of such a delicate matter for their own sakes and to attract attention for their own cause. However, people also need to be able to identify themselves with a movement in order to be motivated to join (van Stekelenburg, 2006). So, how do the authors inspire readers to identify themselves with this movement? The foregoing analysis shows that they accomplish this by:

(1) making three-part lists: the authors do not confine themselves to a single problem definition; instead they describe the entire abominable state of public education;

(2) shifting accountability for the cause of a problem as well as its solution. They shift the cause to the administrative caste, but assume accountability for the solution of the problem. They are seriously concerned about our material and moral ruin. And they are not alone; many (well-known) others share the same concerns;

(3) creating a sense of community with others: the authors invite readers to join their campaign against the authorities and to assume co-accountability. They raise their voices to draw attention, and they do it on behalf of a majority that has been dispirited by the unstoppable urge for reform from a small establishment;

(4) using emotion words: the authors show collective indignation in the manifest. It is crucial that the authors are able to maintain a sense of emotional balance and that personal anger has not tipped the scales in favour of pure rage and frustration; instead it is channelled into a targeted, collective indignation. The anger is aimed at the elite. It is the administrative caste, or the political body, which has seriously dropped the ball.

Their actions are legitimate, which I will discuss in the next analysis, because the authors position themselves also as a group with official status. Both the manifest, the association and the chairman are necessary, because these elements represent the collective that is now taking action. In the process, the authors label the administrative caste as a small upper class—an isolated group that needs to be tackled. They do not represent us and we as an association do. That is why they initiate a movement and give voice to a situation that has been going on for a long time: BON is the solution to turn the tide. In this way, we can and will change our common destiny.

Conclusions

This analysis shows how writers who are expressing their opinions in national newspapers present themselves as a social movement that uses its best endeavours for better education in the Netherlands. The analysis had to provide an answer to the question: *What are the interactional problems that crisis entrepreneurs encounter in their attempt to draw attention to a crisis and how do they solve them?*

For this purpose, I have discussed the interactional issues that the BON association has denounced in its manifest.

I am now able to postulate that the media confirm the image of a social movement. Analyses show that responses are targeted, in a positive or negative manner, to the solutions suggested by the authors. News sources have picked up the matter of the children's future being at stake, to which the writers have called attention. The newspapers specifically address the deterioration in public education; however, they do not discuss the tangible consequences of this crisis, as suggested by the authors. The media do not just refer to a common association; instead they have created the image of a club of important people, whilst putting the spotlight on Ad Verbrugge. He is a social gadfly, a person of high standing, and therefore a shining example. In this respect, the newspapers have also been struggling whether to mention the important names of the people involved or to the group's aim, which is the collective interest. Furthermore, the newspapers have emphasized the concept of a movement with specific ideas and honourable motives that is up in arms against a failing establishment. The political parties responsible have been unable to place this issue on the agenda, because they themselves are accountable for this problem. However, this particular chairman who is leading this collective does apparently succeed in drawing attention to this crisis. He can solve the problem because of his special background.

News sources have even adopted BON's point of view that a small group was able to cause so much havoc for years on end. Right from the beginning, the media have offered the Verbrugge couple plenty of scope and have provided a broad platform for their range of ideas. The newspapers formulate a particular point of view, they choose a position and therefore also acknowledge—both implicitly and explicitly—the movement's impact.

In this conclusion I also want to connect some important insights from the complete Ph.D. project with the results I described in this article. Analysis has demonstrated that people show accountability and a desire to protect others from impending doom. However, they have to make the necessary interactional efforts in order to be recognized and understood. On the basis of my research, I am now able to confirm that it is possible to follow-up on a hidden crisis in process. The interactional approach enables us to explain in faster and better ways the communication processes and dynamics within an organization's environment. Because of that, we are able to gain a better understanding of what is going on: We are in touch with the environment from an early stage.

The study demonstrates the importance of a crisis entrepreneur. They can contribute to making problems transparent because:

(1) They are an important link between the environment and the organisation, they can see what is going on inside and outside;

(2) They are a special actor in public debates;

(3) The interactional process between crisis entrepreneurs and the environment can give government organisations the opportunity to provide insights into the deliberations the environment makes by defining risks

and crises;

(4)They give signals which, when taken seriously by the government organisation, give the occasion to recognise a hidden crisis in a early stage and to handle this before it becomes manifest.

We can see all kinds of different crisis entrepreneurs communicating to the public. The effectiveness of their actions may, however, vary strongly. Particularly for the sake of this selection, it is wise to acquire an understanding of their interactional challenges and solutions and hence a deeper understanding of the potential in crisis entrepreneurs.

My analysis demonstrates that successful crisis entrepreneurs are shifting accountability for the cause of a problem as well for its solution. Successful crisis entrepreneurs represent themselves, not as individuals, but as a collective with an official status. They are tapping into slumbering concerns. The spokesman is capable of enunciating a problematic situation that has been going on for a long time.

Three Interactional Aspects

In my Ph.D. project I have analysed how crisis entrepreneurs use discursive practices:

(1) to show the factuality of the problem. For example, the way the problem is presented is too theoretical and is not a problem in reality;

(2) to present the credibility of the messenger as an authentic, legitimate spokesman. Crisis entrepreneurs may be accused of wanting to attract attention to their own cause;

(3) the accountability for the problem and the solution. For example, crisis entrepreneurs can be accused of nursing personal grievances or of drawing attention to the issue without actively attempting to solve it.

In short, the idea presented in this study entails that a communication professional is able to recognize a problem raised by crisis entrepreneurs. Knowledge of interactional dilemmas helps communication professionals understand the potential of crisis entrepreneurs.

A communication professional can therefore contribute to the recognition of crises by acknowledging that a crisis entrepreneur is someone who can have a strong hand in the public agenda, i.e., public affairs that are important to the authorities. In fact, I could consider the recognition of the crisis entrepreneur to be part of the "early warning system": something is possibly going to happen in the dynamics of public opinion. It would enable the authorities to anticipate events and possibly also to establish contact with crisis entrepreneurs in order to gain a better understanding of their dilemmas, which would make their responses more effective.

The problems of the definition of a crisis are not only about the content (Is the crisis real?), but also interactional (How will I get people to accept the urgency of the problem?). The latter aspect helps determine the course of the crisis. For example, by presenting the urgency of a problem you can be accused of being too emotional or having an image problem. And so the attention is going out to you as a crisis entrepreneur and not to the problem. The signal can be lost and the crisis can go on. The communication professional can learn by trying to understand these interactional dilemmas, help by picking up crisis signals earlier and help by assessing their relevance and urgency.

This study has provided insights into three characteristic interactional aspects which are playing an active role for crisis entrepreneurs. The communication professional can be a creative ally of the crisis entrepreneur and should be rewarded for discovering a hidden crisis.

This research shows that crisis entrepreneurs can be considered as dynamic elements in society. They give differing opinions and develop new initiatives, from which the organization can learn. By taking these signals

seriously, the organization can come in contact with sources of renewal.

A discursive approach is valuable in this respect because it shows how certain themes in communication can deal with policy development. This approach can lead to a better hold on these themes in practice and can provide another perspective to widespread failure of interaction between government and citizens. The government is often unable to understand what the citizen means, because their interactional dilemmas are not recognized. Knowledge of their doubts on an issue, can help the organization to acquire a better understanding of objections—from inside and out—against a particular policy. A discourse analysis of the interactional contributions of crisis entrepreneurs may give a rich and structured insight into hidden crisis supply, including the strategies, dilemmas and reactions of the actors involved and how they are able to recognize a potential crisis.

The analysis has shown that people show responsibility and want to prevent impending doom. They must provide the necessary interactional efforts in order to be recognized and understood. Based on my research, I wish to conclude that an interactional approach to the dynamics in the environment of the organization based on crisis entrepreneurs enables us to analyze crises. That is how organizations can adequately respond to turbulence in their environment. The interactional approach enables us to better explain the communication processes and dynamics within an organization's environment. Because of this approach, we are able to gain a better understanding of what is going on: We are in touch with the environment from an early stage.

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