

# Toward a Theory of Network Gatekeeping: A Framework for Exploring Information Control

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Gatekeeping theories have been a popular heuristic for describing information control for years, but none have attained a full theoretical status in the context of networks. This article aims to propose a theory of *network gatekeeping* comprised of two components: *identification* and *salience*. *Network gatekeeping identification* lays out vocabulary and naming foundations through the identification of gatekeepers, gatekeeping, and gatekeeping mechanisms. *Network gatekeeping salience*, which is built on the bases of the network identification theory, utilizes this infrastructure to understand relationships among gatekeepers and between gatekeepers and gated, the entity subjected to a gatekeeping process. Network gatekeeping salience<sup>1</sup> proposes identifying gated and their salience to gatekeepers by four attributes: (a) their *political power* in relation to the gatekeeper, (b) their *information production ability*, (c) their *relationship* with the gatekeeper, and (d) their *alternatives* in the context of gatekeeping.

## Introducing Gatekeeping and the Need for a New Theory

The concept of *gatekeeper* was first coined by social psychologist Kurt Lewin (1947, 1951). His theory of channels and gatekeepers was developed to explain the focal points of social changes in communities. Since Lewin's use of the gatekeeper concept, it has become embedded in various fields of scholarship, including political science, sociology, information science, management, and law (Clayman & Reisner, 1998; Klobas & McGill, 1995; Putterman, 2005; Suchman & Cahill, 1996; Tushman & Katz, 1980). Additionally, it has been applied to practical domains such as journalism (e.g., understanding newspaper editors as gatekeepers), health science, operations research, and technology development (e.g., understanding consultants who provide a

second opinion or function as intermediaries between clients and services) (Beckman & Mays, 1985; Metoyer-Duran, 1993; Shoemaker, 1991; Shumsky & Pinker, 2003).

However, as popular as the term has become and as richly descriptive as it is, there is little agreement among the different fields on its meaning and a lack of full theoretical status. Moreover, attention to gatekeeping in the context of information and networks is even rarer (Birnhack & Elkin-Koren, 2003; Deuze, 2001; Dimitrova, Connolly-Ahern, Williams, Kaid, & Reid, 2003; Hargittai, 2000b; Singer & Gonzalez-Valez, 2003; Zittrain, 2006). That is, there is a lack of agreement on who *network gatekeepers* are and what *gatekeeping* is; and why should it matter? The first question, depicting who are network gatekeepers and what constitutes network gatekeeping and its mechanisms, calls for a descriptive theory of *network gatekeeping identification* to explain disputed or undefined constructs and vocabulary. The second question, understanding why these issues should matter, calls for a normative theory of *network gatekeeping salience* to explain relations among gatekeepers and between gatekeepers and gated<sup>2</sup> to better understand network gatekeeping as it occurs. These two complementary theories constitute a full theory of *network gatekeeping*, which is necessary in an information age. A theory of network gatekeeping in a networks context will reliably separate gatekeepers from non-gatekeepers in the information society, providing an analysis of the interactions between them and of gatekeeping as a whole.

The organization of the article is as follows: First, traditional gatekeeping literature from various fields including information science, communications, and management is introduced. These bodies of knowledge serve as a basis to develop new interdisciplinary vocabulary and key constructs for network gatekeeping identification. It also includes the creation of a basic classification for the following key constructs: *gatekeeping*, *gatekeeping mechanism*, and *gatekeeper*. This part answers the first question: Who are network

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<sup>1</sup>Salience refers to the degree to which gatekeepers give priority to competing gated claims.

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<sup>2</sup>A gated is an entity subjected to a gatekeeping process (see *Base Vocabulary of Network Gatekeeping Identification Theory* section for elaborations).

gatekeepers and what constitutes network gatekeeping and its mechanisms? Based on the foundations proposed in network gatekeeping identification Theory, the article develops a normative theory to understand the interactions among gatekeepers and between gatekeepers and gated (network gatekeeping salience). It is developed to explain to whom and to what gatekeepers should pay attention, and under what conditions. For that purpose, this article identifies gated and their salience to gatekeepers through four attributes: (a) their *political power* in relation to the gatekeeper, (b) their *information production ability*, (c) their *relationship* with the gatekeeper, and (d) their *alternatives* in the context of gatekeeping. A comprehensive typology of network gatekeeping salience is developed based on the normative assumption that these variables define main aspects of the field of gatekeeping. Network gatekeeping salience theory provides an opportunity for the theory of network gatekeeping identification to move forward by showing the interaction between power and information. These two complementary theories constitute a full theory of network gatekeeping.

Network gatekeeping theory suggests a dynamic and contextual interpretation of gatekeeping, referring to gatekeepers as stakeholders who change their gatekeeping roles depending on the stakeholder with whom they interact and/or the context in which they are situated. A gatekeeper can be a gated in certain circumstances and vice versa. It allows predictions to be made about gatekeepers' behavior with respect to each class of gated as well as predictions about how gated change from one class to another and what this means to gatekeepers.

### Traditional Theories and Concepts of Gatekeeping

Shoemaker (1991) provides the following definition of gatekeeping: "Simply put, gatekeeping is the process by which the billions of messages that are available in the world get cut down and transformed into the hundreds of messages that reach a given person on a given day" (p. 1). Gatekeeping in the communication literature is conceived mainly as a selection process. The literature treats the gatekeeper in a similar way to Lewin's concept where it is applied to both interpersonal and mass communication (Shoemaker, 1991; Shoemaker, Eichholz, Kim, & Wrigley, 2001). Lewin (1951) conducted experiments on group decisions and argued that group decisions depend heavily on aspects of social steering through *gatekeepers*. He described the entry to a channel and to its sections as a *gate*. Movement within the channel and between the channel and its external environment is controlled by one or more *gatekeepers* or "impartial rules" (p. 186). Accordingly, Shoemaker (1991) defined a *gate* as an "in" or "out" decision point (p. 2).

Lewin's gatekeeping theory has yielded various studies and models in various disciplines that have attempted to explore the forces that determine, facilitate, or constrain the process of gatekeeping; that is, the decision whether to allow information to pass through the gate. The formative years of

the development of gatekeeping theories happened mainly in the communication and journalism fields, where the focus was mainly on the effect of the subjective characteristics (e.g., personal feelings) of editors/gatekeepers on gatekeeping (Snider, 1967; White, 1950). For example, White (1950) suggested a simple model that underscores the gatekeeper as the focal point that controls the information flow. He argued that news items were rejected because of three reasons: personal feelings, insufficient space, and whether the story had already appeared.

Shoemaker (1991) classified theories and models of gatekeepers developed since Lewin into five main categories. (a) The *individual level* looks at the extent to which individuals are responsible for the gatekeeping selection, and consist of individuals' interpretations (Kahneman, Slovic, & Tversky, 1982), decision making (Gandy, 1982), personality (Lewin, 1951; White, 1950), background, values, role conceptions (Bass, 1969), and experiences. (b) The *routines level* (Gieber, 1956) refers to those "patterned, routinized, repeated practices for forms that media workers use to do their jobs" (Shoemaker, 1991, p. 48). (c) The *organizational level* includes internal factors that vary by organization and at times by a group's decision-making patterns (Bantz, 1990). (d) The *institutional level* concentrates mainly on the exogenous characteristics of organizations and their representatives that affect the gatekeeping process (e.g., market forces, political alliances) (Donohue, Olien, & Tichenor, 1989). Finally, (e) the *social system level* explores the impact of ideology and culture on gatekeeping (Gramsci, 1926–1937/1971).

In the late 1970s, many other disciplines began using the gatekeeper term and applied it to their own domain. The field of Management refers to gatekeepers mainly as intermediaries (Allen, 1977; Schultze & Boland, 2000; Taylor, 1986; Tushman & Katz, 1980) or "key individuals who are both strongly connected to internal colleagues and strongly linked to external domains" (Tushman & Katz, 1980, p. 1071). Information Science treats gatekeepers as those who guard and preserve a community's information (Agada, 1999; Metoyer-Duran, 1993) or as agents to gather and disseminate information (Klobas & McGill, 1995; Sturges, 2001). Table 1 integrates the literature of Information Science, Management, and Communication. It illustrates factors that impact gatekeeping in its traditional meanings and the relationships between gatekeepers and other factors as captured in the Communication, Information Science, and Management literatures.

Table 1 exemplifies one of the motivations to develop a theoretical framework that would better fit an information society. All traditional models of gatekeeping ignore the role of those whom gatekeeping is being exercised upon (labeled here as the "gated"). Communication inclines to address gatekeeping as a one-way direction and a top-down process (Shoemaker, 1991). While Information Science addresses mainly gatekeepers in communities or professional contexts (Metoyer-Duran, 1993), and Management science addresses gatekeepers in the context of organizations (i.e., some kind of a professional network) (Katz, Tushman,

TABLE 1. Forces that affect gatekeeping in traditional literature.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Subjective factors</b>                            |   |
| Personal judgment                                    | Gatekeepers' decisions are highly subjective (Bagdikian, 2004; Livingston & Bennet, 2003; Snider, 1967; White, 1950).   |
| Trust  | Doubtful credibility of a gatekeeper and lack of experience have a negative effect on the gatekeeper's decision of gatekeeping (Shoemaker, 1991). Trust in gatekeeper's competence to make use of information (Allen, 1977).  |
| <b>Information characteristics</b>                   |   |
| Visual   | Information content is less likely to be subjected to gatekeeping if it is visual (Abott & Brassfield, 1989).   |
| Size and number                                      | Growing volume of information and number of available items and their size serve to increase gatekeeping (Gieber, 1956).  |
| Clarity  | Positive relation with acceptance of news (Galtung & Ruge, 1965)  |
| <b>External constraints</b>                          |   |
| Cost   | An expensive process increases the likelihood of gatekeeping.   |
| Time constraints                                     | Proximity to deadline increases the tendency towards gatekeeping (Galtung & Ruge, 1965; R.L. Jones, Troidahl, & Hvistendahl, 1961; Livingston & Bennet, 2003).  |
| Mechanical production                                | A problematic effort to produce information tends to generate gatekeeping (Gieber, 1956).   |
| Unavailable technology                               | The likelihood of gatekeeping increases with decreased availability of publication technology (Livingston & Bennet, 2003).  |
| <b>Organizational characteristics and procedures</b> |   |
| Role   | The role (e.g., news gatherer, news processor, reporter, editor, community leader, linker) affects the gatekeeping decision (Allen, 1977; Bass, 1969; Dimmick, 1974; Klobas & McGill, 1995; Livingston & Bennet, 2003; Metoyer-Duran, 1993; Westley & MacLean, 1957). |
| Policy   | Routines that establish working relations between reporters and the source determine the nature of gatekeeping (Livingston & Bennet, 2003; Westley & MacLean, 1957).  |
| Threshold value                                      | Higher value of information reduces chances of gatekeeping (Galtung & Ruge, 1965).  |
| Standard   | The standards of the profession affect gatekeeping decisions (Bagdikian, 2004; Davison & Yu, 1974).   |
| <b>Institutional environment</b>                     |   |
| Opinion leaders                                      | Greater likelihood for accepting definitions of opinion leaders, which affects gatekeeping decisions (Allen, 1977; Dimmick, 1974)   |
| Group consensus                                      | Adopting a group consensus by daily professional interaction has a direct impact on gatekeeping (Bantz, 1990; Dimmick, 1974).   |
| Market pressure                                      | Maximizing profit and minimizing expenditures have an impact on gatekeeping (Donohue et al., 1989).   |
| <b>Social environment</b>                            |   |
| Newsworthiness                                       | An information item that is conceived to be newsworthy is less likely to experience gatekeeping—mainly Media Studies (Shoemaker et al., 2001).  |
| Cultural differences                                 | Information is less likely to experience gatekeeping if it is similar to the cultural preferences of society (Galtung & Ruge, 1965)   |

& Allen, 1995), the major focus remains on the role of the gatekeeper rather than understanding how networks (human and technological) and information affect relations between gatekeepers and gated, and their impact on gated. The simple fact that no vocabulary exists in the literature that identifies these stakeholders exemplifies the passivity or negligence in which traditional models treat the gated. Network gatekeeping precisely aims to cover this lacuna and analyzes gated and their relations with gatekeepers. Another motivation to develop a theory of network gatekeeping is that much of the literature has regarded gatekeepers as actors with power, without refining the question of what makes an actor a gatekeeper? Is anyone with power a gatekeeper? Finally, a context of information and networks makes it necessary to reexamine the vocabulary of gatekeeping, moving from processes of selection (Communication), information distribution and protection (Information Science), and information intermediary (Management Science) to a more flexible construct of information control, allowing inclusion of more types of

information handling that have occurred before and new types which occur due to networks.

### Network Gatekeeping Identification Theory

As mentioned previously, existing theories of gatekeeping misrepresent gatekeeping in a network context, a more frequently occurring type of information society. This article mainly focuses on networks created by technology (e.g., the Internet); however, the proposed theory applies to other types of networks as well, such as social networks and information networks. A new theory is necessary since hybrid interpretations of the gatekeeping and gatekeeper concepts are scarcely employed with reference to the Internet, information society, or networks (Birnhack & Elkin-Koren, 2003; Deuze, 2001; Dimitrova et al., 2003; Hargittai, 2000b; Singer & Gonzalez-Valez, 2003; Zittrain, 2006). When used, it is mostly for illustration purposes or application of the

traditional Communication, Information Science, and Management theories of gatekeeping.<sup>3</sup>

Looking at evolutionary definitions of gatekeeping helps to identify main constructs to consider under the new framework. While traditional Communication literature on gatekeeping treats the process of gatekeeping predominantly as a selection mechanism (Shoemaker, 1991, p. 1), Donohue, Tichenor, and Olien's (1972) definition takes the traditional approach further by looking at gatekeeping as a process that encompasses more than just selection, by "including all forms of information control that may arise in decisions about message encoding, such as selection, shaping, display, timing, withholding, or repetition of entire messages or message components" (p. 43). In a network context, this definition is translated to treat gatekeeping as a type of control exercised on information as it moves in and out of gates, and provides one of the broadest views of gatekeeping. It will serve as a starting point to develop the key constructs of network gatekeeping identification theory. Networks, technology, and information contexts provide a variety of ways to perform gatekeeping, some of which did not exist before. This article suggests that network gatekeeping is best conceptualized through information-control lenses, and carries three main goals: (a) a "locking-in" of gated inside the gatekeeper's network; (b) protecting norms, information, gated, and communities from unwanted entry from outside; and (c) maintaining ongoing activities within network boundaries without disturbances.

### Base Vocabulary of Network Gatekeeping Identification Theory

Next, key constructs and vocabulary to form the basis of network gatekeeping identification theory are proposed: gate (the passage point); gatekeeping (the process); gatekeeper (who performs gatekeeping); the gated (on whom gatekeeping is exercised); and gatekeeping mechanisms (the means used to carry out gatekeeping). The nomenclatures of gatekeeping mechanism and gated do not exist in the literature and are proposed here as key constructs that are important to the full understanding of network gatekeeping. Next, I will analyze each of the constructs.

*Gate*<sup>4</sup> is defined here as entrance to or exit from a network or its sections. The nomenclature of gate in network gatekeeping identification changes to reflect a greater number and type variations of gates. This mainly occurs due to the plurality of gatekeeping mechanisms options as discussed

<sup>3</sup>Although these activities might be regarded as a negative connotation due to the use of the word *control*, literature regarding the information society as well as political science in general has demonstrated that a certain level of regulation of behavior (self-regulation or state regulation) is needed to function.

<sup>4</sup>While the field of Communication considers gatekeeping as a process activated while entering from the outside, the Information Science field mainly emphasizes the preservation of homogeneity of communities and therefore looks at the information as it exits and enters gates. Management Science focuses on intermediation and looks at gatekeeping both ways.

later. The existence of a clear gate (conceptual or physical) is almost impossible under network gatekeeping due to the dynamism of networks and information technologies, and therefore the concept of gate is of less importance than the rest of the network gatekeeping components.

*Gatekeeping* is defined here as the process of controlling information as it moves through a gate. Activities include, among others, selection, addition, withholding, display, channeling, shaping, manipulation, repetition, timing, localization, integration, disregard, and deletion of information. Table 2 exhibits the bases of my definition of gatekeeping.<sup>5</sup>

The definition of gatekeeping proposed in this article relies heavily on the one proposed by Donohue et al. (1972), which conceptualizes gatekeeping as "including all form of information control" (p. 43). Nevertheless, their definition fits better to a context in which relationships between gatekeepers and gated are mostly unidirectional and dictated by the gatekeepers. Their definition also is constrained to the Communication field and therefore is focused on messages only. A literature review by Barzilai-Nahon (2004) incorporated additional basic processes of information control to Donohue et al.'s (1972) definition, such as addition, channeling, manipulation, localization, integration, disregard, and deletion. This additional layer facilitates the discussion of information control in the context of networks<sup>6</sup> (see Table 2).

*Gated* is defined here as the entity subjected to gatekeeping. Being a subject to gatekeeping does not imply that the gated is lacking alternatives or that gatekeeping is forced on her or him. The gated is bounded by gatekeeping sometimes from her or his free will. Constructing a new theory of gatekeeping makes it possible to reflect upon missing components in relative theories or traditional theories of the topic. So is the case with the nomenclature of gated, which has been neglected in past gatekeeping theories. It does not claim that past theories did not analyze gated, although rarely, but asserts that the literature did not focus or gave sufficient important weight to their role. Network gatekeeping suggests conceptualizing gated role as a crucial component when analyzing gatekeeping. Later in the article, I will explore the second component of network gatekeeping, the salience component, which classifies different possible types of gated taking into account their interactions with the gatekeeper and stance in the environment.

*Gatekeeping mechanism* is defined here as a tool, technology, or methodology used to carry out the process of gatekeeping. Table 3 exhibits the bases of my definition.

The mechanism to carry out information control also dictates the interactions between gatekeepers and gated, by bounding them to a particular structure of discourse. Table 3 demonstrates different examples of types of gatekeeping mechanisms that are prominent in the context of networks

<sup>5</sup>For more information about how the bases were created, please refer to the dissertation of K. Barzilai-Nahon, 2004, *Gatekeepers and Gatekeeping Mechanisms in Networks*, Tel-Aviv University, Tel-Aviv.

<sup>6</sup>This is not an exhaustive list of all information control activities that exist but an exemplification of the major ones as reviewed through the literature.

TABLE 2. Gatekeeping bases in a network context.

| Gatekeeping bases                       | Definitions and references   |
|---|--|
| Selection                               | Making a choice or choosing from alternatives<br>(Donohue et al., 1972; Gieber, 1956; Lawrence & Giles, 1999; Lewin, 1951; Shoemaker et al., 2001; Singer & Gonzalez-Valez, 2003; Snider, 1967; Van Alstyne & Brynjolfsson, 2005; Wang & Benbasat, 2005; Westley & MacLean, 1957; White, 1950)   |
| Addition                                | Joining or uniting information<br>(Introna & Nissenbaum, 2000; Q. Jones, Ravid, & Rafaeli, 2004)   |
| Withholding                             | Refraining from granting, giving, or allowing information<br>(Bass, 1969; Donohue et al., 1972; Introna & Nissenbaum, 2000)  |
| Display                                 | Presenting information in a particular visual form designed to catch the eye<br>(Deuze, 2001; Donohue et al., 1972; Hong, Thong, & Tam, 2004)  |
| Channeling                              | Conveying or directing information into or through a channel<br>(Barabasi & Reka, 1999; Bass, 1969; Cohen, 2002; Dimitrova et al., 2003; Donohue et al., 1972; Elkin-Koren, 2001; Hargittai, 2000a, 2000b; Introna & Nissenbaum, 2000; Rogers, 2005)   |
| Shaping                                 | Forming, especially giving a particular form of information<br>(Bass, 1969; Deuze, 2001; Donohue et al., 1972; Elkin-Koren, 2001; Introna & Nissenbaum, 2000; Singer, 2006; Tuchman, 1974)   |
| Manipulation                            | Changing information by artful or unfair means to serve the gatekeeper's purpose<br>(Bagdikian, 2004; Donohue et al., 1972; Elkin-Koren, 2001; Introna & Nissenbaum, 2000; Zittrain, 2006)   |
| Repetition                              | Saying, showing, writing, restating; making; doing, or performing again<br>(Donohue et al., 1972; Shoemaker, 1991)   |
| Timing                                  | Selecting the precise moment for beginning, doing, or completing an information process<br>(Donohue et al., 1972; Morris, 2000)  |
| Localization<br>(including translation) | Process of modifying and adapting information, products, and services to distinct target audiences in specific locations in a way that takes into account their cultural characteristics<br>(Barzilai-Nahon & Barzilai, 2005; Compaine, 2000; Hansen, 2002; O'Hagan & Ashworth, 2002; Schultze & Boland, 2000; Sunstein, 2001; Van Alstyne & Brynjolfsson, 2005; Zittrain & Edelman, 2002) |
| Integration                             | Forming, coordinating, or blending into a new functioning or unified whole<br>(Bass, 1969; Compaine & Gomery, 2000; Elkin-Koren, 2001; Van Alstyne & Brynjolfsson, 2005)   |
| Disregard                               | Paying no attention to information, treating it as unworthy of regard or notice<br>(Adams, 1980; Introna & Nissenbaum, 2000; Q. Jones et al., 2004; Lawrence & Giles, 1999; Nisbett & Ross, 1980)  |
| Deletion                                | Eliminating information especially by blotting out, cutting out, or erasing<br>(Barzilai-Nahon & Neumann, 2005; Morris, 2000; Zittrain & Edelman, 2002)  |

and information technology. While this article mainly focuses on networks created by technology (e.g., the Internet), network gatekeeping also may be applicable to other networks such as social networks and information networks. Some of the mechanisms illustrated in Table 3 can be created without a specific regulation of a gatekeeper. For example, the cost-effect mechanisms can be created as a side effect to a governmental or corporation policy, without the intention to exercise information control. Such cases are out of the scope of network gatekeeping. Traditional literature generally does not differentiate between gatekeeping mechanisms and gatekeepers and defines a gatekeeper as either the individuals or the sets of routine procedures that determine whether items pass through the gates (Shoemaker et al., 2001). Shoemaker et al.'s (2001) observation is vague and should be refined by differentiating between the means of the process and its executor. Therefore, network gatekeeping suggests adding the concept of gatekeeping mechanisms.

*Network gatekeeper* is defined here as an entity (people, organizations, or governments) that has the discretion to exercise gatekeeping through a gatekeeping mechanism in networks and can choose the extent to which to exercise it contingent upon the gated standing.

Table 4 suggests a classification of network gatekeepers through two dimensions: (a) an *authority dimension* that represents gatekeepers through the authority scope they have, from a micro to a macro level of authorities; and (b) a *functional dimension* that reflects gatekeepers' roles, formal and professional designations and positions in context of the gatekeeping they exercise. The classification was based on diverse literature and is mainly for demonstration purposes.<sup>7</sup> The functional and authority dimensions are not mutual exclusive; that is, a gatekeeper can be identified in multiple bases simultaneously.

Now that the vocabulary for the constructs of network gatekeeping has been explicated, the article will proceed to explain relationships among gatekeepers and between gatekeepers and gated.

#### *Defining Network Gatekeeping Attributes*

The second component of Network Gatekeeping is Network Gatekeeping Salience. It is built on the bases of the Network Identification and utilizes this infrastructure to

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

TABLE 3. Gatekeeping mechanism bases in a network context.

| Gatekeeping mechanism bases   | References   |
|---|--|
| Channeling mechanisms (e.g., search engines, directories, categorizations, hyperlinks)  | Channeling mechanisms are gateway stations designed to attract attention of <i>gated</i> and convey or direct them into or through their channels (Arasu, Choo, Garcia-Molina, Paepcke, & Raghavan, 2001; Birnhack & Elkin-Koren, 2003; Broder et al., 2000; Dimitrova et al., 2003; Elkin-Koren, 2001; Hargittai, 2000a, 2000b; Introna & Nissenbaum, 2000; Lawrence & Giles, 1999; Mowshowitz & Kawaguchi, 2002; Rogers, 2005; Zittrain & Edelman, 2002).  |
| Censorship mechanisms (e.g., filtering, blocking, zoning, and deletion of information, users)   | Censorship mechanisms are a set of means aiming towards suppressing or deleting anything considered objectionable or undesired. That is, assuring that “undesired” information does not enter or exit or circulates the <i>gatekeeper</i> network (e.g., blocking users from entering into a corporation e-mail system) (Blakeney & Macmillan, 1999; Deibert, 2002; Hunter, 2000; Lessig, 2006; Marx, 1998; A. Shapiro, 1999; Wang & Benbasat, 2005; Zuboff, 1988).  |
| Internationalization mechanisms (localization and translation)  | These mechanisms cover methodologies of localizing information, services, and products, according to characteristics of communities based for example on customs, cultures, nationalities, languages, and religions (Hansen, 2002; O’Hagan & Ashworth, 2002).  |
| Security mechanisms (e.g., authentication controls, integrity controls, access controls)  | Security mechanisms try to manage confidentiality, availability, and integrity of information flow in the <i>gatekeeper’s</i> network (Hawkins, Yen, & Chou, 2000; Oppliger, 2002; Panko, 2003; Pfeeger, Pfeeger, & Ware, 2002; Singh, 2000).  |
| Cost-effect mechanisms (e.g., cost of joining, cost of usage, and cost of and cost of exiting the network)  | Mechanisms that control the cost of <i>gated</i> to join, use, and exit a <i>gatekeeper’s</i> network. The cost of joining a network refers, among other things, to the cost of infrastructure, connecting to infrastructure, and maintaining it as controlled by the <i>gatekeeper</i> . The cost of usage includes the cost required to acquire skills to operate in the <i>gatekeeper’s</i> network and its sections. Finally, the cost to exit mainly focuses on the cost imposed by the <i>gatekeeper</i> , when a <i>gated</i> attempts exiting the <i>gatekeeper’s</i> network (Benkler, 2006; Brynjolfsson & Kahin, 2000; Compaine, 2000; Cooper, 2002; Hoffman & Novak, 2000a; Hudson, 2000; Q. Jones et al., 2004; Lessig, 2006; C. Shapiro & Varian, 1999; M.D. Smith, Bailey, & Brynjolfsson, 2000; Van Alstyne & Brynjolfsson, 2005). |
| Value-adding mechanisms (personalization, contextualization, customization, and integration of information tools)   | Controlling information through providing added-value products and services that increase the attractiveness of the <i>gatekeeper</i> network and its sections to <i>gated</i> . Value-adding mechanisms can serve as a lock-in mechanism to attract potential <i>gated</i> to the network or prevent <i>gated</i> from exiting it (Amit & Zott, 2001; Hargittai, 2000a, 2000b; Kenny & Marshall, 2000; Levin & Zahavi, 2002; Porter, 2001; C. Shapiro & Varian, 1999; M.D. Smith et al., 2000; Sung-Eui & Kwangtae, 2002).  |
| Infrastructure mechanisms (e.g., network access, technology channels, and network configuration)  | Mechanisms which utilize infrastructure components and characteristics to control information and behavior of <i>gated</i> (Brousseau, 2002; Compaine, 2000; Cooper, 2002; Hoffman & Novak, 2000; Hudson, 2000; Nuechterlein & Weiser, 2005; Panko, 2003; Stallings, 2001)   |
| User interaction mechanisms (e.g., add-on navigation tools)   | Application which act as intermediaries between the <i>gated</i> and the network. These mechanisms reside at the interface layer. In many cases, but not always, <i>gated</i> are aware of their existence and play a proactive role and consent to exercise them (e.g., setting a default homepage while installing a browser) (Cornfield & Rainie, 2003; A. Shapiro, 1999; Sorensen, Macklin, & Beaumont, 2001; Wasko, Faraj, & Teigland, 2004).   |
| Editorial mechanisms (similar to traditional gatekeeping; e.g., technical controls, content controls, and design tools of information content)  | Very similar to the Communication literature which explores in-depth mechanisms used by editors. These mechanisms refer mainly to editing mechanisms of content (Detlor, Sproule, & Gupta, 2003; Deuze, 2001; Hong et al., 2004; Q. Jones et al., 2004; Kim & Benbasat, 2003; Robbins & Stylianou, 2003; M.A. Smith, 1999).  |
| Regulation <i>meta</i> -mechanism (This mechanism is a meta-mechanism that can apply in the area of each one of the other mechanisms; e.g., state regulation of security, self-regulation of categorization of information) | This mechanism is a meta-mechanism which is applied through each one of the other mechanisms. It refers to rules, arrangements, treaties, agreements, or procedures that aim to control and direct behavior through information control (Agre, 2002; Benkler, 2000; Birnhack & Elkin-Koren, 2003; Blakeney & Macmillan, 1999; Brousseau, 2002; d’Udekem-Gevers & Pouillet, 2002; Elkin-Koren, 2001; Lessig, 2006; MacLean, 2004; Perritt, 1997; A. Shapiro, 1999; Zittrain & Edelman, 2002).   |

understand relationships among gatekeepers and between gatekeepers and *gated*. Network gatekeeping salience<sup>8</sup> proposes identifying *gated* and their salience to gatekeepers by four attributes: (a) their political power in relation to the gatekeeper, (b) their information production ability, (c) their relationship with the gatekeeper, and (d) their alternatives in the context of gatekeeping. At first, these four attributes

will be explicated. Next, an analysis of *gated* classes that results from possession of none, one, two, three, or four of these attributes, giving special attention to the implications of the existence and salience of each class to gatekeepers, will be introduced. This article presents a binary possession/non-possession of these attributes. This is done for purposes of clarity in a preliminary articulation of a new theory. It is important to understand that each attribute has infinite ways of reflecting it and infinite degrees of possessing it. In this article, I will not elaborate on the gray areas of each

<sup>8</sup>Salience refers to the degree to which gatekeepers give priority to competing *gated* claims.

TABLE 4. Network gatekeepers: Authority and functional dimensions.

| Gatekeeper bases   | Clarifications and references   |
|--|---|
| <b>Authority dimension</b>   |   |
| Government level (including types of regimes: authoritarian, democratic)   | This <i>gatekeeper</i> represents governments, their institutions, and branches. This role is a necessary condition to allow basic elements of states (e.g., sovereignty and legitimacy) to function. Authoritarian and democratic regimes emphasize different <i>gatekeeping mechanisms</i> . Most non-democratic regimes exercise mainly infrastructure, cost-effect, and censorship mechanisms to restrict or channel access to the Internet while the use of these mechanisms is more latent in democratic regimes (Agre, 2002; Deibert, 2002; Kalathil & Boas, 2001; A. Shapiro, 1999; Zittrain, 2006).  |
| Industry regulator level (e.g., standard regulator, procedure and codex regulator)                                   | Industry regulators refer to public or private bodies that have the power to regulate arrangements, treaties, agreements, and procedures in a certain industry and in turn aim to control and direct behavior of <i>gated</i> . Industry regulators can act independently from the state or with government collaboration. Unlike governments, which are direct regulators, industry regulators rely mainly on self-regulation gatekeeping mechanisms, for example, through regulating technology or information architecture and code (Bagdikian, 2004; Brousseau, 2002; Compaine & Gomery, 2000; d'Udekem-Gevers & Pouillet, 2002; Lessig, 2006; C. Shapiro & Varian, 1999).  |
| Internal authority level (e.g., institutions, organizations, social networks, and communities)                       | An internal setting of information control within institutions, organizations, social networks, and communities (e.g., an organization applying information security internally (Barzilai-Nahon & Barzilai, 2005; Hartman, 2001; Q. Jones et al., 2004; Oppliger, 2002; Panko, 2003; Reid, 1999; Rheingold, 2000; Wellman & Gulia, 1999).   |
| Individual level   | This category focuses on individuals exercising their authority as <i>gatekeepers</i> (e.g., parents who prevent their children from accessing inappropriate online materials, users interested in keeping their computers clean of spam and viruses) (Sjoberg, 1999; Sunstein, 2006).  |
| <b>Functional dimension</b>  |   |
| Infrastructure provider (e.g., Network or Internet Service Providers, Carrier Service Provider)                      | Entities that provide access to infrastructure in different levels. As <i>gatekeepers</i> , they determine the information flow, its pace, and some of its characteristics (Benkler, 2000; Blake & Tiedrich, 1994; Nuechterlein & Weiser, 2005; M.A. Smith, 1999; Stallings, 2001; Sunstein, 2006).   |
| Authority site property (e.g., search providers, portal providers, content providers, virtual communities providers) | This refers to owners of authority sites. An authority site is a professional term in the data-analysis field that refers to a site that is linked to by many other sites. As the number of sites linked to a site is higher, its importance grows and its authority rank increases. Authority sites also can be viewed as high-traffic sites which control traffic and information flow that passes through them (Arasu et al., 2001; Broder et al., 2000; Cornfield & Rainie, 2003; Elkin-Koren, 2001; Hargittai, 2000a, 2000b; Introna & Nissenbaum, 2000; Q. Jones et al., 2004; Lawrence & Giles, 1999; Mowshowitz & Kawaguchi, 2002; Rheingold, 2000; Rogers, 2005; M.D. Smith et al., 2000; Wellman, Boase, & Chen, 2002; Zittrain, 2006; Zittrain & Edelman, 2002). |
| Administrator (e.g., application and content moderator, network administrator)                                       | In the virtual world, however, in addition to designated gatekeepers, individuals may decide to take the role of administrator (Berge & Collins, 2000; Morris, 2000; Rheingold, 2000; M.A. Smith, 1999).  |

attribute possession to emphasize the main types of gated. Additionally, note that although one tries to create mutually exclusive attributes, there may be cases where some multicollinearity exists due to the theoretical proximity of the concepts. Using the construct definitions, this article attempts to minimize this occurrence to the greatest extent possible.

*Political power.* A justification of why this construct is of importance to network gatekeeping salience theory is straightforward since the main core of gatekeeping is information control. Information control as a process is in many cases a reflection of the power struggle of stakeholders to achieve their political interests. One cannot do an analysis of gatekeeping without taking into account the political power of the stakeholders involved. Power is a topic that has been explored in a well-established stream of research with diverse sources (Hardy & Clegg, 2006). A more positivist perspective of it is derived from the Weberian school (Weber, 1947), which approached power as the ability to get

others to do what you want them to do, even if it is against their will. This concept was later carried on by Dahl (1957), who defined power as “A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do” (pp. 202–203). This school of thought, also known as pluralism, focuses mainly on outcomes and exposes conflict when “one can conceive of ‘power’ — ‘influence’ and ‘control’ as serviceable synonyms. . . . This can be envisaged most easily in a decision-making situation” (Polsby, 1963, pp. 3–4). This approach well reflects the way scholars address power questions. To pluralists, interests are understood as policy preferences and therefore should be investigated through decision-making outcomes.

Bachrach and Baratz (1962, 1963, 1970) claimed that the aforementioned schools of thought were just a one-dimensional view of power. Bachrach and Baratz (1970) proposed that one also should look into the “second face of power” which is exercised when “A devotes his energies to creating or reinforcing social and political values and institutional practices that limit the scope of the political process

to public consideration of only those issues which are comparatively innocuous to A" (p. 7). A satisfactory analysis of power, then, involves examining both decisions as a choice among alternative modes of action (like the pluralist school) and non-decisions as "a decision that results in suppression or thwarting of a latent or manifest challenge to the values or interests of the decision-maker" (Bachrach & Baratz, 1970, p. 44). Their theory incorporates into the analysis of power the question of control over the political agenda and the ways in which potential issues are kept out of the political process (Lukes, 2005). Both the first and the second dimensions of power have a significant feature in common: They are positivist schools that put the weight on actual, observable conflict, which may be overt or covert.

Lukes (2005) suggested incorporating a third-dimensional view of power into the analysis of power. He argued that "Decisions are choices consciously and intentionally made by individuals between alternatives, whereas the bias of the system can be mobilized, recreated and reinforced in ways that are neither consciously chosen nor the intended result of particular individuals' choices" (Lukes, 2005, p. 25). These arguments also are raised by other scholars (Foucault, 1975/1978, 1980; Gramsci, 1926–1937/1971). Moreover, Lukes suggested looking not only at individuals but also at group and communities as the source of bias to a system. For Lukes, "A exercises power over B when A affects B in a manner contrary to B's interests" (p. 37). Therefore, Lukes suggested looking at power manifestation not only through decisions and actions but also through inactions that aim at shaping and influencing one's preferences and awareness (latent or observable).

*Information production.* Traditional literatures of Information Science, Management, and Communication have emphasized mainly the ability of elites (e.g., mass media and governments) or individual gatekeepers to produce information (Bagdikian, 2004; Metoyer-Duran, 1993; Shumsky & Pinker, 2003). New conceptual frameworks emphasize changes occurring as part of the information society which enable gated to produce information (Benkler, 2006; Lessig, 2006; C. Shapiro & Varian, 1999; Sunstein, 2006). Benkler (2006) suggested that information production derives from a mixture of "(1) nonmarket sources—both state and nonstate—and (2) market actors whose business models do not depend on the regulatory framework of intellectual properties" (p. 39), and stresses the importance of this role when there is a need to assess gated salience: "The known quirky characteristics of information and knowledge as production goods have always given nonmarket production a much greater role in this production system than was common in capitalist economies for tangible goods" (p. 37).

The appearance of multiple methods and technologies that are ready-to-use and easy-to-use tools to produce and design content empower the gated with greater autonomy, and change the interplay of gatekeeper-gated. Additionally, the low cost of producing information and the easiness of its reach-out gives information production ability an important

role as an attribute in network gatekeeping salience theory. At the same time, despite new opportunities for the gated to create self-expression in online networks, the network itself is not entirely as open and democratic as it may appear. Studies have shown that the attention of Internet users is concentrated on a very small number of providers (content and infrastructure) (Barzilai-Nahon, 2004). For example, around 85% to 90% of users will use four search engines. Therefore, although content is apparently easy to produce, some political, economical, and social impediments exist for the gated to reach other users. Moreover, in many cases, the gated use platforms which are created by gatekeepers and are dependent on the gatekeepers' design and policy. This is why the availability of alternatives to gatekeeping (discussed later through the alternatives attribute) plays a very significant role alongside information production in network gatekeeping salience theory. The ability of the gated to produce information does not necessarily ensure that information will reach other people. Information production is merely a prerequisite for information transfer. Moreover, this construct (i.e., information production) is important as a disintegrator between information and power. The ability to produce information may produce power, but is not synonymous to power, and therefore a separation of these constructs (political power and information production) is important.

*Relationship.* Viewing political power as an independent variable in gated–gatekeeper relationships promotes us further toward a theory of network gatekeeping salience, but it does not capture the dynamics of gated–gatekeeper interactions. Therefore, I propose looking at another variable: relationship. Scholars refer to relationships in various contexts, such as reciprocity (Plickert, Wellman, & Cote, 2005), exchange (C. Jones, Hesterly, & Borgatti, 1997; Markovsky, Willer, & Patton, 1988), communication metaphors (Putnam, Phillips, & Chapman, 1996), or stakeholder analysis of ties (Rowley, 1997). Relationships can be researched in various directions. Plickert et al. (2005) argued that reciprocity varies in content, specificity, immediacy, directionality and tie or network focus. C. Jones et al. (1997) focused on frequency, which concerns how often specific parties exchange with one another. Inkpen and Tsang (2005) argued for the importance of repeated and enduring exchange of relationships. While most of the literature has emphasized positive relations as a foundation for creating social capital or alliances (Inkpen & Tsang, 2005; C. Jones et al., 1997; Podoiny & Baron, 1997), Labianca and Brass (2006) analyzed the meaning of negative relationships.

Putnam et al. (1996) analyzed seven metaphors of communication: conduit, lens, linkage, performance, symbol, voice, and discourse. For purposes of the theory of network gatekeeping salience, I will focus mainly on the "linkage metaphor" proposed by Putnam et al., projecting on the direct connection between the gated and the gatekeeper and emphasizing the *enduring* relational facet. The existence of a *direct* connection and its endurance plays a major role by creating a venue for negotiation of stances between the gated

TABLE 5. Key constructs and attributes to develop *Network Gatekeeping Salience*.

| Construct              | Definition (attribute)   | Sources  |
|------------------------|--|--|
| Political power        | <p><i>First Dimension:</i> A relationship among social actors in which one social actor, A, can get another social actor, B, to do something that B would not have otherwise done.</p> <p><i>Second Dimension:</i> Incorporating decisions that result in suppression or thwarting of a latent or manifest challenge to the values or interests of the decision maker (e.g., through control of agenda)</p> <p><i>Third Dimension:</i> Incorporating inactions that aim at shaping and influencing one's preferences and awareness</p> | (Bachrach & Baratz, 1962; Dahl, 1957; Lukes, 2005)             |
| Information production | The act or process of producing content in any multimedia mode within a network  | (Benkler, 2006)  |
| Relationship           | The degree and effect of a direct, reciprocal, and enduring connection between the <i>gated</i> and the <i>gatekeeper</i>  | (Plickert et al., 2005; Putnam et al., 1996)                   |
| Alternatives           | An opportunity for deciding between two or more courses or propositions  | Definition taken from <i>Merriam-Webster Dictionary</i> , 2008 |

and the gatekeeper. This variable changes dynamically as response to events. Having a direct exchange enables the gated to change their political power, or the nature of relations with the gatekeeper, and respectively requires attention from gatekeepers. Finally, note a connection between information production and relationship. The given ability of the gated to produce information creates a circulatory affect between gated–gatekeeper. The gated produce information taking into consideration reactions and feedback from gatekeepers and other stakeholders. At the same time, gatekeepers are affected by the information produced and, in effect, change their stances. This may happen over and over again, creating an interesting circulatory exchange of information between the gated and the gatekeeper.

*Alternatives.* Benkler (2006) claimed that the emergence of the networked information economy increased individual autonomy by increasing “the range and diversity of things that individuals can do for and by themselves” and by providing “nonproprietary alternative sources of communication capacity and information, alongside the proprietary platforms of mediated communications” (p. 133). Nevertheless, this growing autonomy in many cases is not translated into more freedoms or power due to users self-regulation of themselves (Sunstein, 2001), or strong control by the gatekeepers that makes the transformation from one gatekeeper to another an impossible mission. Therefore, I suggest differentiating between the legal or social rights that one has in choosing, and between the de facto limited with non-alternatives one has. The fourth attribute, *alternatives*, is suggested to allow for a more comprehensive look at gated–gatekeeper relations. One cannot fully understand this relationship and analyze control of information without understanding the practical alternatives available to the gated at a certain point, if any. As emphasized earlier, the ability of the gated to produce information does not necessarily ensure that information

will reach other people. Gated autonomy in many cases is contingent upon the gatekeeper rules and technologies provided.

The constructs as discussed earlier reflect the concept, but to be able to suggest relationships, there is a need to offer operationalized definitions to these constructs (i.e., attributes) that can later be tested empirically. Table 5 summarizes the previous discussion of the four key constructs, and offers suggestions for how to reflect on each construct in a more tangible way.

## Network Gatekeeping Salience Theory

### *Gated Classes*

To this point, I have put forward the foundation of a network gatekeeping theory. I claim that gated may be identified based on the possession of attributes for one, two, three, or all four of the constructs: political power, information production, relationship, and alternatives. Next, I identify types of gated that result from the various combinations of these attributes, as shown in Table 6. Network gatekeeping supports a dynamic theory of gatekeeping, and therefore one needs to consider the following: First, each attribute is a variable, not a steady state, and can change for any particular relationship among gatekeepers or during gatekeeper–gated relationships. Second, the existence of each attribute and its degree of presence is a matter of a constructed reality rather than an “objective” one. As Table 6 illustrates, Tier 0 represents gated who do not possess any attribute, identified as “Traditional Gated.” All others types of gated will reflect different stances of network gatekeeping. Dormant Gated (Tier 1) are those possessing only one of the four attributes. Potential Gated (Tier 2) are those possessing two attributes. Bounded Gated (Tier 3) are those possessing three attributes. Finally, Challenging Gated (Tier 4) represent gated who possess all four attributes. Next, each tier will be analyzed, with a focus

TABLE 6. Gated typology.

|    | P | I | R | A | Tier   | Class type              |
|----|---|---|---|---|--|-------------------------|
| 0  |   |   |   |   | <b>Tier 0: Traditional Gated</b> No possession of attributes   | Traditional Gated       |
| 1  |   |   | X |   | <b>Tier 1: Dormant Gated</b> possession of one attribute       | Captive audience        |
| 2  |   | X |   |   |  | Lost voice              |
| 3  |   |   |   | X |  | Vagabond reader         |
| 4  | X |   |   |   |  | Squanderer Gated        |
| 5  |   | X | X |   | <b>Tier 2: Potential Gated</b> possession of two attributes    | Exploited apprentice    |
| 6  |   |   | X | X |  | Demanding user          |
| 7  | X |   | X |   |  | Potential change agent  |
| 8  |   | X |   | X |  | Illusive apprentice     |
| 9  | X | X |   |   |  | Empowered Gated         |
| 10 | X |   |   | X |  | Vagabond user           |
| 11 |   | X | X | X | <b>Tier 3: Bounded gated</b> possession of three attributes    | Frustrated Gated        |
| 12 | X |   | X | X |  | Influence-Bounded Gated |
| 13 | X | X | X |   |  | Choice-Bounded Gated    |
| 14 | X | X |   | X |  | Threatening Gated       |
| 15 | X | X | X | X | <b>Tier 4: Challenging Gated</b> possession of four attributes | Challenging Gated       |

P = political power; I = information production; R = relationship; A = alternatives.

on the uniqueness of each tier and class. Accordingly, network gatekeeping proposes the following hypothesis:

**Proposition 1:** Gated salience will be positively related to the cumulative number of attributes—political power, relationship, information production, and alternatives—perceived by gatekeepers to be present.

*Tier 0: Traditional Gated*

A gated with no political power, no alternatives to circumvent gatekeeper control or have freedom of choice, no ability to produce information, and no relationship with the gatekeeper is similar to the traditional contemplation of gatekeeping. According to the traditional concept of gatekeeping, the main stakeholders were conceived as holders of sender–receiver roles. Gatekeepers (e.g., editors, gatherers, cultural gatekeepers) were conceived as *senders*, and the gated (e.g., newspaper readers, community members) played the role of the *receiver*. Sending and receiving information may change according to the context: news, cultural habits, technological developments, and so on. Traditional literature conceives of the gatekeeper as responsible for editing, translating, producing, and distributing these information items.

Consistent with the notion of sender–receiver, traditional literature treats information that passes from sender to receiver as having a source–destination direction. The source is presumed to be the origination point of the information when it departs toward the end-user, passing gatekeepers along the way. In some cases, the source is presumed to be produced by the gatekeepers themselves. The information that reaches the gated is presumed to be the destination.

In the context of networks, these traditional notions are usually fallacious. Information in many cases is produced by the gated and can serve as a source. Even when gatekeepers produce information aimed at certain gated, it can be

distributed later and altered by gated along the information flow path. Hence, the traditional notion of source–destination is only one among many others to understand information flow and information control on the Internet or in information networks. Furthermore, according to the traditional literature, gatekeepers were the only stakeholders who created and produced information; the gated were not considered to be capable of producing and creating information unreservedly. Thus, the gated only rarely create information without depending on control and authorization from the gatekeeper. For example, a newspaper reader who aspires to react to an article may do so only via of a specific column reserved for readers’ responses, and the editor must approve it for publication. Another example is community members who may further distribute cultural information which is originally created and disseminated exclusively by the gatekeepers as agents of acculturation. Still, according to the traditional concept, presented here as Tier 0, the main control of the agenda and core values of the community are exercised and planned by the gatekeepers, where the gated are mainly executors or implementers.

*Tier 1: Dormant Gated*

The first tier of network gatekeeping consists of the Dormant Gated, those who possess only one attribute. This tier is characterized by rather strong information control of gatekeepers over the gated.

**Proposition 1a:** Gated salience will be low where only one of the gated attributes—political power, relationship, information production, and alternatives—is perceived by gatekeepers to be present.

*Captive audience.* Gated associated with the Captive Audience type possess the relevant attribute of relationship.

Such a gated does not have any capabilities or intentions to produce information aimed towards the public, and has no political power and no alternatives. Nevertheless, there is a communication channel and a discourse with the gatekeeper, making the traditional relationship of sender–receiver appear inappropriate because these roles of sender–receiver are repeatedly exchanged between the gatekeepers and the gated. In addition, traditional frameworks which emphasize the gatekeeper–gated relationship as unidirectional due to the limited ability of the gated to offer feedback or reciprocation for information sent by gatekeepers do not fit the Captive Audience type. In this class, the gated are stimulated by gatekeepers to interact and provide feedback, and are provided with the ability to do so (e.g., through certain feedback systems). This relationship requires an information exchange between the gated and gatekeeper, but is limited to the rules and agenda set by the political process and framework given and decided upon by the gatekeeper. The gated is a captive audience since they have no political power of bargaining to assure that reciprocity with gatekeepers will yield outcomes that will serve the gated interests. On the other hand, they do not have or cannot choose other alternatives to gatekeepers. This type of gated is mainly passive due to the limited freedom of choice (either when regulated externally or as part of his or her choice of self-regulation) and is being managed by the gatekeepers' preferences and interests.

*Lost voice.* This type of gated should be of interest to all stakeholders. Gated of the Lost Voice class are aware of and utilize their ability to produce information, but their access to other stakeholders is totally dependent on the gatekeeper. Gatekeepers (one or more) provide the infrastructure (e.g., easy-to-use blog software for creating and designing Web sites), and therefore the gatekeepers control the boundaries within that the gated operate. Such gated do not have alternatives for several reasons: A mechanism or technology that can provide them with an alternative does not exist, which implies in this case that the gatekeeper has a monopoly on the infrastructure of the interaction. Another reason for the lack of alternatives might be due to the cost of learning and maintenance. For instance, the cost of switching mechanisms, technologies, or platforms for a user who already has put a lot of resources (e.g., time, effort, money) into one gatekeeper by producing information is not low, even when there are other alternatives. Additionally, the cost of habitus may evidently be even stronger, as social networks infrastructure bundle the gated by creating a communal context and therefore further constrain exit capability. Users in this class prefer to stay under the protection of that gatekeeper and instead focus on producing information for the community good, or as a mechanism of self-expression. This class of gated may be a catalyst to achieving network gatekeepers' goals since gatekeepers acquire some of their political power and reputation via their ability to attract many users, create volumes of information traffic, and show their ability to manage these assets. An example would be a content provider such as YouTube, which empowers users to upload and create information on

its site. The user may not have knowledge of other alternatives, or the cost of switching would be so high that a practical alternative would not be an option.

*Vagabond reader.* Different from other Tier 1 types of gated, this gated is an illusive stakeholder for gatekeepers. The gated are aware of their alternatives and may exchange one gatekeeper with another according to their preferences. Since this gated does not produce information, it is a vagabond reader to whom the gatekeeper needs to supply contextual information and to create incentives or constraints to bundle the gated within the gatekeeper virtual boundaries. Interestingly, empirical studies have shown that attention of users, and more specifically of gated, is concentrated on a small number of gatekeepers from each type (see Table 4) over a long period of time. For example, concentration of attention is a reality in the realm of search providers: Around 90% of search engine users search one of four major engines. The same phenomenon of monopolization of gatekeeping by a few entities is present in other types of gatekeepers as well (Barzilai-Nahon, 2004). Although the scope of existing alternatives for the gated has widened on the Internet, the circumvention of information control is not always possible in networks because of the many gatekeeping mechanisms used by the same gatekeeper (see Table 3). Another deterministic claim put forward by the elitist paradigm (Bagdikian, 2004) has argued that even when gated have freedom of choice or ability to circumvent gatekeeping, the impact of such an alternative is minimal. Choosing an alternative to a gatekeeper is still contingent upon cultural, political, and social contexts similar to those of the original gatekeeper, and thus choosing an alternative is tantamount to substituting one gatekeeper with another with similar characteristics. Nevertheless, alternative platforms to those controlled by gatekeepers and largely enabled by information systems are not without significance, even if they exist only to a limited degree.

*Squanderer gated.* This is a gated with political power. Sources of political power are usually external to the network context, but either have not yet been exercised by the gated or they are not conscious of the sources in the context of networks. The squanderer is typical of a dormant gated, without the knowledge or skills to exercise power in a network context. A squanderer's lack of awareness of the medium and its opportunities and challenges, or lack of technical skills, causes other attributes (information production, alternatives, and relationship) to be irrelevant to the discussion. These gated are faithful to gatekeepers and trust them to represent them and culturally translate their needs to a network context. Examples of such gated could be public figures who rely on specific technological gatekeepers to represent them and translate their identity to the network society.

#### *Tier 2: Potential Gated*

This tier represents gated who possess two attributes.

**Proposition 1b:** Gated salience will be moderate where two of the four gated attributes—political power, relationship, information production, and alternatives—are perceived by gatekeepers to be present.

This class of gated is interesting as they are no longer dormant gated, but on the other hand have not yet fully materialized their potential to possess all four attributes.

*Exploited apprentice.* Having the ability to produce information with an exchange of information with the gatekeeper, but a lack of alternatives or political power, places the gated in a position for potential exploitation by the gatekeeper. In this case, the relationship is used to convey the gatekeeper's needs and preferences, and for purposes of channeling the gated content creation and distribution according to the gatekeeper agenda. This is a classical manifestation of the second dimension of power, where the gatekeeper uses the reciprocity and enduring relations with the gated to set a political agenda according to his or her preferences, and raising issues which are confined to the safe issues of the gatekeeper. For survival, gatekeepers need to demonstrate continuous information production to competitors, society, and individuals, and this is one way to do so. An example is a content provider that allows a number of writers to expose their content on his or her infrastructure. Writing on that gatekeeper infrastructure is accompanied with self-regulation of the gatekeeper—codes of behavior and writing which may sometimes include restriction of topics and issues.

*Demanding user.* A gated with alternatives and a channel of communication and exchange with gatekeepers has the opportunity to convey its preferences, needs, and demands to the gatekeeper. It is a potential threat, but not yet a threat. This gated has neither political power nor produces information, so the only bargaining power derives from the ability to move from one gatekeeper to another. To fulfill this potential threat, the gated needs to gather a community, a critical mass of many gated, who will materialize the threat to move to another gatekeeper. Acquiring critical mass will give this gated political power and the ability to be more influential on gatekeepers. Nevertheless, even without gathering a critical mass on behalf of the gated, this is a sensitive situation to the gatekeeper due to the temporariness of the situation, in particular if the gatekeeper is not a dominant one. A dynamic that enforces the gatekeeper to understand and reciprocate to the gated needs may rise, which may later lead the gatekeeper to a change of attitudes.

**Potential change agent.** When the gated has political power and reciprocal, enduring, and direct exchange with the gatekeeper, conditions for potential change occur. Like the previous type, Demanding User, the gated can convey their needs and demands through exchange of communication. In contrast to the Demanding User type of gated who need a critical mass of support to enforce responsiveness

on behalf of the gatekeeper, the political power of the potential change agent may do the work and request gatekeeper attention. This attention may yield changes in intentions, and later changes of behavior, although no alternatives exist for this class of gated.

**Illusive apprentice.** This type does not have relationships with the gatekeeper. With no communication channel and exchange between the stakeholders, no negotiation is being held. Therefore, gatekeepers cannot directly exploit gated content production through channeling and designing information topics and agendas. Control is manifested here in an indirect way by regulating behavior, setting rules, and providing the platform for the gated (e.g., confining writers to write short essays on the gatekeeper virtual platform). These gated are not just passive readers who may have alternatives elsewhere but they also produce content. Although they have alternatives, the cost of switching may appear higher than can be afforded. Nevertheless, the possibility and existence of alternatives that suit the gated's needs, along with the ability to produce information increase the gated's bargaining position. Gated will move on from one gatekeeper to another until an appropriate network and technology suitable to their needs is found. If such a gatekeeper who satisfies the needs of the gated is found, they will benefit from a collaborative contribution of content. For gatekeepers, this class of gated is hard to get under their wings of management, and gatekeeping is mainly indirect.

**Empowered gated.** This class represents one that possesses the attributes of political power with the ability to produce information, but does not have alternatives to producing the information elsewhere and does not have a relationship with the gatekeeper. Gated are empowered because of their ability to produce information, reach out to other users, and potentially influence others (the third dimension of power), which makes their political power even stronger. Gatekeepers may enjoy their role as facilitators and providers of skills and abilities, a phenomenon similar to the one mentioned in Management literature that conceptualizes gatekeepers as intermediaries. Gatekeepers gain powerful users who cannot threaten to switch to other alternatives. Consequentially, this contributes to the gatekeeper's political power in respect to other competitor gatekeepers. For example, studies have demonstrated that providers of virtual communities are dependent on the volume of users who produce information as a source of revenues (Barzilai-Nahon, 2006).

**Vagabond user.** Changes in political power among gatekeepers are complex. Information systems and networks provide gatekeepers with more mechanisms to exercise their power compared to traditional gatekeeping (see Table 3), but at the same time provide the gated with more possibilities to circumvent gatekeeping. Notwithstanding, with this increasing freedom and ability to circumvent gatekeeping, the attention of the gated becomes more centralized and

dependent on a few sources of power, making gatekeeping even more important for users' activities on networks. The Vagabond User has political power and alternatives, so gatekeepers cannot rely on their gatekeeping mechanisms to lock in this type of user under their boundaries of control. However, this class of users does not produce information, possibly due to a lack of technical skills or lack of will to produce content. Therefore, these gated are dependent on gatekeepers to represent their preferences, although no direct interaction is made with them. An example of such a class can be Web campaigning: Politicians who like to have their campaign online and have many alternatives. They will not produce the information themselves and usually will not have a direct, enduring communication with the technology gatekeepers.

### *Tier 3: Bounded Gated*

This tier represents gated who possess three attributes.

**Proposition 1c:** Gated salience will be high where three of the four gated attributes—political power, relationship, information production, and alternatives—are perceived by gatekeepers to be present.

These gated classes undermine the foundations of traditional gatekeeping by positioning themselves as actors who deserve high attention from gatekeepers. Gated in this tier are bounded, with each type bounded by a different attribute, resulting in different levels of interactions with the gatekeeper that are sometimes not balanced.

*Frustrated gated.* The multifaceted balance between gatekeepers and gated is well articulated through this type. These gated only lack political power. Owning vast resources, gatekeepers are more likely than are gated to create and produce most of the content resulting in a greater impact on society. Although gated can create and produce information independently without having to pass through a content gatekeeper, the visibility and impact of their work is usually limited. The limited degree of visibility and impact is relative to the information disseminated by gatekeepers who control the major portion of audience attention. Moreover, even if independent from content gatekeepers, the gated are still dependent on other types of gatekeepers (see Table 4), such as infrastructure providers, and government or industry regulators.

Yet, gated can gain more political power via the ability to set public discourse and agenda (second dimension of power) and influence decision making directly (first dimension of power), potentially making their impact greater. Their information platforms and content alone can lead to an impact on other users and decision makers by influencing preferences and awareness (third dimension of power), and empowering them by giving gatekeepers more choices. The mass production of information and power rely on information produced by individuals, not necessarily employees of the gatekeeper.

Gatekeepers rely on gated's ability to produce information as well as their participation and involvement in networks and also are aware of the ability of the gated to switch patrons if needed. Therefore, there is a sensitive balance in trying to satisfy gated needs to ensure that they will stay in the boundaries of control of the gatekeeper and also promote gatekeepers' goals. This enforces gatekeepers to fulfill a more active role of guardian/protector and ensures that their social networks or platforms are operational and satisfy all constituencies. For example, note the proceedings of MySpace (a social-network Website) to protect the virtual communities of minors. Minors, a major portion of MySpace, also are the main production force of content. Public criticism coming from parents and other stakeholders has raised the issue of online social networks serving as venues for online sexual predators. In response, MySpace took on a protective gatekeeping role by self-regulating content and creating rules. This provided virtual-community members with a sense of protection and safety, removing the need for members to seek alternatives to MySpace.

*Influence-bounded gated.* Having political power, alternatives, and an enduring reciprocity with gatekeepers, but not the information production attribute, is an impairment of influence-bounded gated. Gated can exercise their power through their relationships with gatekeepers, for example, by setting the political agenda to encompass certain issues that the gated would like to promote (second dimension of power). However, their ability to influence preferences, awareness, and attitudes is limited by the lack of information production. The non-production is not necessarily attributed to an inability or lack of technical skills, but may sometimes encapsulate other obstacles such as lack of awareness, lack of desire by gated, or non-action due to pressure coming from the communal, social, and even legal context to produce information. Although alternatives exist, such gated are mainly readers and listeners, and are therefore passive in their contribution and creation of social capital and norms. Their main focus is on channeling interests of the gatekeeper.

*Choice-bounded gated.* Having the right to choose among alternatives does not imply having an alternative. Interestingly, in many cases, constraints to alternatives are not external, but embedded within ourselves—a notion that can be described as the *information paradox*. As part of the opportunities of the information society, we are given many choices, but as a result of self-regulation, we prefer to limit ourselves to culturally known or similar information. The choices are then limited to no practical alternatives. The digital divide also is an issue when trying to understand the alternatives attribute. Most of the content and applications on the Internet originate in English, with some localized but a larger portion being external to what is culturally known or familiar to non-English speakers. This gap makes it harder for non-English speakers to participate in the discourse, leaving them in many cases with no *alternatives* but for a few local gatekeepers. Gatekeepers should pay careful attention

to this type of gated if constraints are merely technological. The rapid development of technology requires continued monitoring of the availability of alternatives provided to the gated.

*Threatening gated.* This class of gated possess three attributes: political power, alternatives, and information production. The lack of reciprocal communication channels between the gated and the gatekeeper make it impossible for both sides to convey their preferences and needs, and to start the discourse or negotiations necessary to balance expectations. This type of gated is a threat to gatekeepers due to its ability to switch over to other gatekeepers. In addition, gatekeepers have only an indirect ability to influence the gated. The control is made indirectly through regulation and infrastructure mechanisms.

#### *Tier 4: Challenging Gated*

The gated in this tier possess all four attributes.

**Proposition 1d:** Gated salience will be very high where all four gated attributes—political power, relationship, information production, and alternatives—are perceived by gatekeepers to be present.

This class represents a fully networked gatekeeping stance where all stakeholders (i.e., gatekeepers and gated) epitomize their resources and capabilities. The bargaining power of the gated under this class is the highest. At the same time, control of information by gatekeepers is expressed through having a large variety of mechanisms to exercise this control (see Table 3).

The challenging gated creates a new situation in which gatekeepers need to question their role as gatekeepers. Information, and the technology that carries it, are no longer artifacts, but become spaces in which politics of information plays a major role. This stance challenges the hegemony of control of gatekeepers and is temporary due to its inherent instability and few modes that may evolve from it. Hence, (a) the gated may take advantage of this stance to transform themselves into gatekeeper roles in other contexts; and (b) to promote its interests, the gated may collaborate with the gatekeeper and may serve a very significant role to make the powerful gatekeepers even more powerful. For example, Barabasi and Reka (1999) demonstrated that the distribution of links into and out of nodes on the network follows a power law. New Web sites prefer linking to well-attached Web sites, allowing the powerful to get more powerful. This alliance will stay stable as long as interests of the gatekeeper and gated are not in conflict. (c) The gated adapt to the discourse, process, and rules of control of the gatekeeper, and cooperate according to gatekeeper influence and interests; and (d) there is a continuation of the power struggle between the gated and the gatekeeper, who has a certain advantage over the gated. In most cases, the gatekeeper will set the agenda, control the boundaries of the discourse and therefore the available actions for other stakeholders, control the process, and control

gatekeeping mechanisms that may constrain abilities and actions of the gated.

Here, a theoretical quandary should be raised: If the gated possess all four attributes (i.e., political power, alternatives, information production, and relationships), are they still gated? Or would that make them gatekeepers? This is an important distinction of roles, which needs to be put forward in the network gatekeeping salience theory. The possible transformation of the gated into gatekeeper is not achieved through a possession of certain attributes. It is the capability of the gated to perform an act of information control, the capability to carry out this control, and the context surrounding the control that makes one a gatekeeper. Being a powerful entity does not, necessarily, make one a gatekeeper. Additionally, a gatekeeper can possess only some attributes, but it is the discretion to exercise gatekeeping along with the context that turns someone into a gatekeeper. Certainly, affiliation with powerful circles or the elite increases ones' chances to play the role of a gatekeeper. Nevertheless, one of the contributions of network gatekeeping salience theory is the understanding of the dynamism of interactions that involve information control. Gatekeeping is a dynamic state which is contingent upon the social context from which it evolves.

There is certainly a preference to think of powerful organizations or certain entities as "eternal" gatekeepers. The proposed theory takes a dynamic approach and claims that even these potential gatekeepers serve as gated in certain circumstances and during interactions with other stakeholders. Most actors switch roles from gatekeepers to gated interchangeably, and seldom can we point to an entity and regard it as an eternal gatekeeper. Therefore, even if one has the discretion to control information, it is the context that determines his or her role. Hence, to identify gatekeeping, it is important to identify the boundaries of the network as part of the context; who is responsible for these boundaries, and who manages the rules of the game and the discourse in this network.

## Discussion

In the analysis, I have proposed that gated possess some combination of four critical attributes (a) their political power in relation to the gatekeeper, (b) their information production ability, (c) their relationship with the gatekeeper, and (d) their alternatives in the context of gatekeeping. Network gatekeeping predicts that salience of a particular gated to gatekeepers is correlated to the possession of these attributes; that is, low if one attribute is present, moderate if two attributes are present, high if three attributes are present, and very high if all four attributes are present. Dormant Gated can increase their salience to gatekeepers and move into other tiers by acquiring other missing attributes.

While static maps of gatekeepers are heuristically useful if the intent is to raise consciousness about "who or what really counts" or to specify a stakeholder configuration at a particular context and time, one should remember that this is a simplification of reality. Therefore, network gatekeeping

champions a dynamic notion as part of it. Gatekeepers and gated are not monolithic social and political entities nor is their behavior in context of their stakeholders. Accordingly, in a dynamic environment, the interests and goals of the stakeholders constantly change, and so do their gatekeeping and gated roles. Additionally, their political behavior is variably positioned according to these different contexts. Gated change their salience, requiring different degrees and types of attention from the gatekeeper depending on their attributed possession of relationship with the gatekeeper; information production; alternatives the gated might have in context of gatekeeping; and the political power of the gated in relation to the gatekeeper.

A good example of dynamism of gatekeeping theory can be seen in the story of Wikipedia. The Internet and later Web 2.0 technologies such as Wikipedia caused many to doubt the traditional conceptualization of power and information relations, suggesting gatekeeping as an obsolete term. Wikipedia was initially brought into the world as a Dormant Gated (Vagabond Reader) to create an alternative to the proprietary control of information from encyclopedia content providers. Later, by providing users with the ability to produce information and create an alternative to the traditional gatekeepers, they transformed into being Potential Gated (Illusive Apprentice). Alongside rising criticism about the quality of information being produced, the Wikipedia platform gave rise to another missing attribute, political power, allowing the gated to move into the tier of Bounded Gated (Threatening Gated). The dream of a bottom-up, collaborative, neutral technology to enable fuzziness in traditional power interrelations between designers and users appeared to be problematic in Wikipedia. Effectively, 80% of the articles in Wikipedia are written by 10% of its volunteering editors, transforming Wikipedia to be a gatekeeper by itself (Barabasi & Reka, 1999; Giles, 2005).

## Summary and Conclusions

### *The Future of Gatekeeping Research Within the Information Science Context*

This article formulates a network gatekeeping theory that provides an interdisciplinary foundation for the development of other theories and additional hypotheses that deal with information control in the context of networks. It provides definitions of gatekeeping constructs suited for networks and within an information context. Finally, a network gatekeeping salience theory is proposed, which addresses stakeholders' relations through four attributes of the gated: information production, relationship of gated–gatekeeper, political power, and alternatives to the gatekeeper. The theory also emphasizes the dynamism of information control that is contingent upon the context. It provides opportunities for analyzing and explaining gatekeeping through an understanding of political and social relationships. Consequently, this theory enables researchers to address the commonalities of various gatekeeping phenomena, develop constructs, and formulate

relationships among these phenomena and constructs. Gatekeeping theory holds the key to a more useful, in-depth, and comprehensive theory of information control in society. Table 7 summarizes the main foundations of network gatekeeping discussed in this article, and compares them to past gatekeeping theories, illuminating the differences in research focus of scholars.

The top half of Table 7 represents the identification component that provides the nomenclature of the five main constructs of network gatekeeping: Gate, Gatekeeping, Gated, Gatekeeping Mechanism, and Gatekeeper. This part of the table emphasizes the following. First, traditional theories focus on certain types of gatekeepers (e.g., editors, mediators), and this focus necessarily limits attention to an analysis of a limited number and limited variations of gates. However, observation suggests that there exist both a multitude of gatekeeping mechanisms with multiple gatekeepers, compelling a model that allows for many gates and types of gates. Second, the absence in traditional literature of a clear and transparent vocabulary for discussing the concept of gated results in studies that concentrate solely on gatekeepers, ignoring the important roles of the gated. One of the contributions of network gatekeeping is that it encompasses these gated roles as components in the conceptual framework and compels their consideration in discourse of theory and practice. Third, this article broadens the gatekeeping conceptualization to encompass any information control activity and adds to the literature the concept of gatekeeping mechanisms.

The second part of the table represents the salience component, which articulates the salience of gated to gatekeeper through four attributes: relationship with the gatekeeper, information production, alternatives, and political power. Different types of gated emerge from the combination of these four attributes, illuminating a different spectrum of choices, processes, and dynamics (see Table 6). This part of the table highlights several issues: First, it reflects the dynamism of the theory by articulating the continuity of modes of the four attributes. For example, a gated can have political power in different levels and scope in relation to the gatekeeper. Second, it exemplifies a transformation from the rather one-sided and static view of the gatekeeper in traditional literature to a more dynamic view that reflects bargaining between gated and gatekeeper. On one hand, traditional literature has conceived the gatekeeper as the main source for information production, the powerful disseminator of information; on the other hand, it has emphasized the scant alternatives available to gated. Network gatekeeping recognizes the possibilities for a versatile and dynamic nature of the relationship between gated and gatekeeper due to frequent, enduring, and direct exchange; the potential dynamic interchange of information production between gatekeeper and gated; the growing range of alternatives that exist for the various stakeholders along with additional gatekeeping mechanisms which gatekeepers can exercise; and the potential for the gated to have and exercise political power.

Figure 1 illustrates some of the main characteristics discussed earlier. It exemplifies that the gated may be associated

TABLE 7. Comparing traditional theories of gatekeeping with network gatekeeping.

|   | Traditional gatekeeping   | Network gatekeeping  |
|---|---|--|
| <b>Network gatekeeping identification</b>                                 |   |  |
| Gate<br><i>(the passage point)</i>  | One-to-few number and types of gates  | Few-to-many number and types of gates  |
| Gatekeeping<br><i>(the process)</i>                                       | Primarily a process of: selection (communication); intermediation (management); dissemination and preservation of culture (Information Science) | A more inclusive definition which encompasses any process of information control (Table 1).  |
| Gated<br><i>(on whom gatekeeping is exercised)</i>                        | No vocabulary in the literature   | Network gatekeeping identification recognizes the role of those subjected to gatekeeping. Network gatekeeping salience presents the dynamism of gated types (Table 6). |
| Gatekeeping mechanism<br><i>(the means used to carry out gatekeeping)</i> | Mainly editorial mechanisms<br><br>Primarily a manual process   | Many mechanisms to execute gatekeeping (Table 3 exhibits some).<br><br>Due to information volume, procedures become more automated.                                    |
| Gatekeeper<br><i>(who performs gatekeeping)</i>                           | Individuals   | Focus shifts to institutional actors.<br>Two dimensions are suggested: authority and functional gatekeepers (Table 4).   |
| <b>Network gatekeeping salience</b>                                       |   |  |
| Relationship<br><i>(gated-gatekeeper)</i>                                 | Relations of sender-receiver; the gatekeeper is the sender.   | Continuity modes of relationships between no relations or indirect relations (sender-receiver mode) and through frequent, enduring, and direct exchange.               |
| Information production<br><i>(of gated)</i>                               | Notion of source-destination; the gatekeeper is the source.<br><br>Only gatekeepers produce information freely.                                 | Association between source-destination and gatekeeper-gated positions are interchangeable.<br><br>Gated also may produce information.                                  |
| Alternatives<br><i>(for gated)</i>  | Scant-none alternatives to gatekeeping.   | Possible circumventions of gatekeepers and gatekeeping mechanisms exist.   |
| Political power<br><i>(in relation to the gatekeeper)</i>                 | Gatekeeper has most of the political power.   | Gated also may have political power.   |

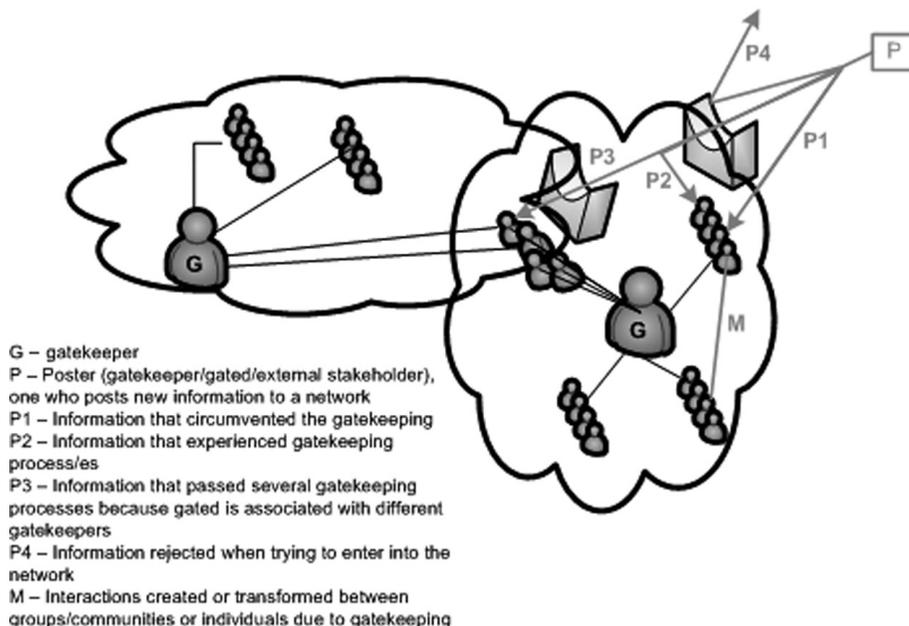


FIG. 1. Illustration of network gatekeeping.

with multiple networks and gatekeepers, and that the gated may be viewed as individuals or as part of groups, organizations, and communities. This figure also illustrates the possibility of multiple gates and a gatekeeping mechanism (see Figure 1, P3) and the possibility of circumventing gatekeeping (see Figure 1, P1). Figure 1 also shows that the gatekeeper may serve as a mediator between groups and communities (see Figure 1, M) and as an access controller (see Figure 1, P4). The diagram illustrates that information production and posting may be done by either the gated, gatekeeper, or external stakeholder; and it shows that gates may exist within a network as well as at the network boundaries.

The purpose of this article to incite a momentum in the development of network gatekeeping theory came at the expense of refining the different types of gated and the ability to fully articulate the dynamism of the theory. For the sake of clarity in a pioneering articulation of a theory, I have necessarily made some broad assumptions that may be subjected to some reservations. Therefore, I call for additional theoretical refinement and clarification of network gatekeeping, and specifically understanding the spectrum of dynamics of gated activities and characteristics.

The article emphasizes networks of information and technology, yet the aim of Network Gatekeeping is to be applicable and reflect a broader range of networks that are not necessarily presented through technology only. It is important that future work extend and develop the framework in other contexts; for example, the context of networks of communities interacting with gatekeepers in varied ways such as face-to-face interactions. Laying the foundations of network gatekeeping theory is only the first step in establishing a sound framework which later could be utilized. There is a need for further operationalization and empirical observation, the generation of testable hypotheses, and the creation of context-specific models; for example, looking for conditions and circumstances in which gated may operate under a specific tier, or identifying what constraints and incentives exist to change positions in relation to different gatekeepers. Empirical investigations are needed to strengthen the foundations of the suggested theory.

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