

MULTIPLES (GHENT UNIVERSITY) & GAP (UNIVERSITY OF ANTWERP)

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THE 'NEW' GENRE OF TELEPHONE CONTACT TRACING: INTERACTIONAL AND PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS FOR OPTIMIZING PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

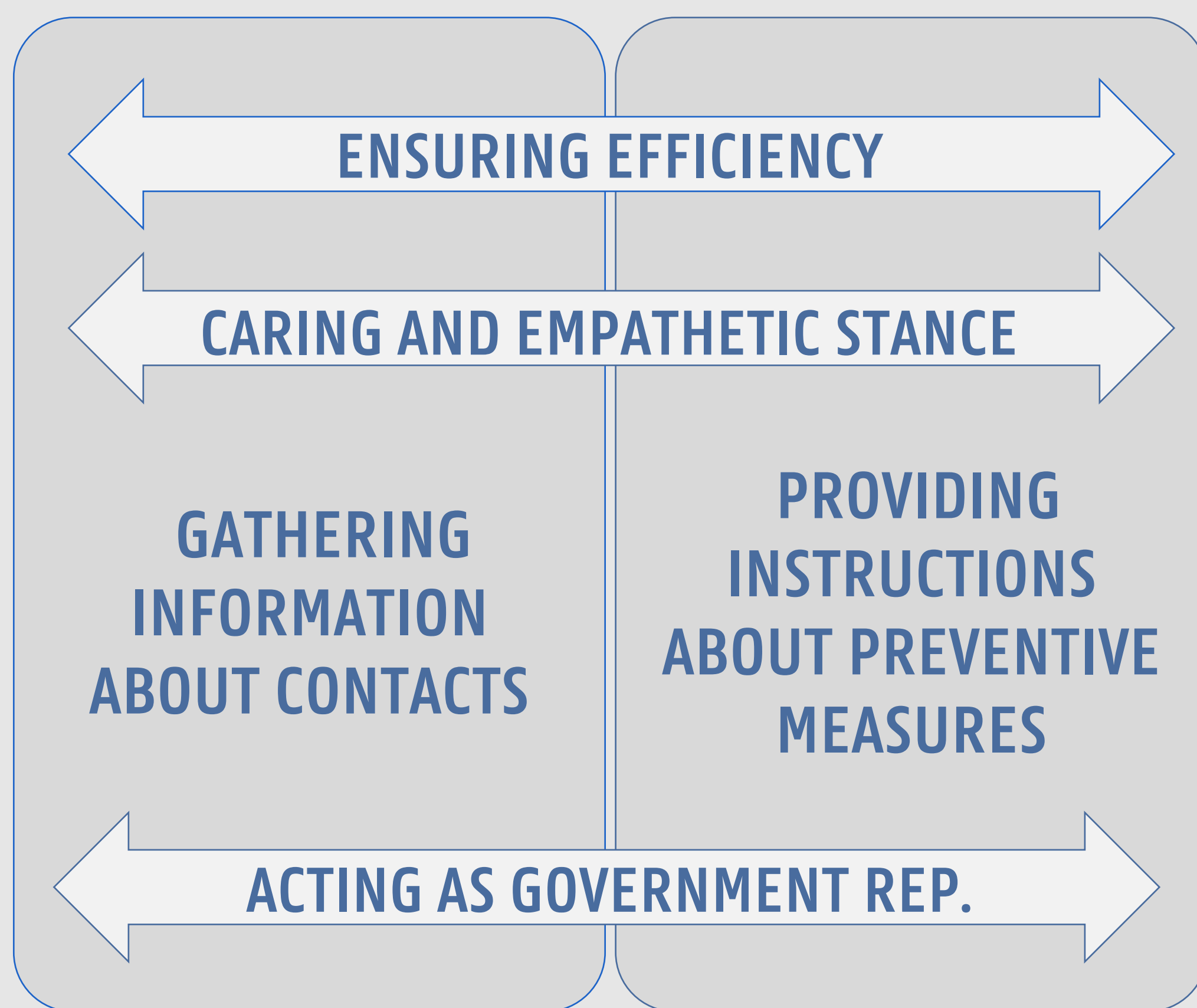
1 CONTACT TRACING IN FLANDERS

Media coverage in Flanders, Belgium has consistently described the Flemish government's centrally-organized contact tracing initiative in negative terms, focusing quasi exclusively on its cost and (perceived lack of) efficiency. The present project aims to contextualize this pejorative characterization by mapping Flanders' centrally-organized contact tracing practice, as well as contributing to optimizing it.

The overarching goal of the project is twofold; first, it aims to identify the interactional dynamics of contact tracing conversations, and second, it attempts to improve practice through coaching interventions and recommendations for recruitment. The project was conducted across three phases, but this poster focusses on the results of the first and second phases.

3 RESULTS PHASE 1

The figure below outlines the dominant functions of COVID-19 contact tracing telephone interactions, two of which are episodic in nature, and three are transversal.



4 RESULTS PHASE 2

The figures below show the impact of the coaching session on six action points. The green, orange and red circles indicate degrees of positive evolution.

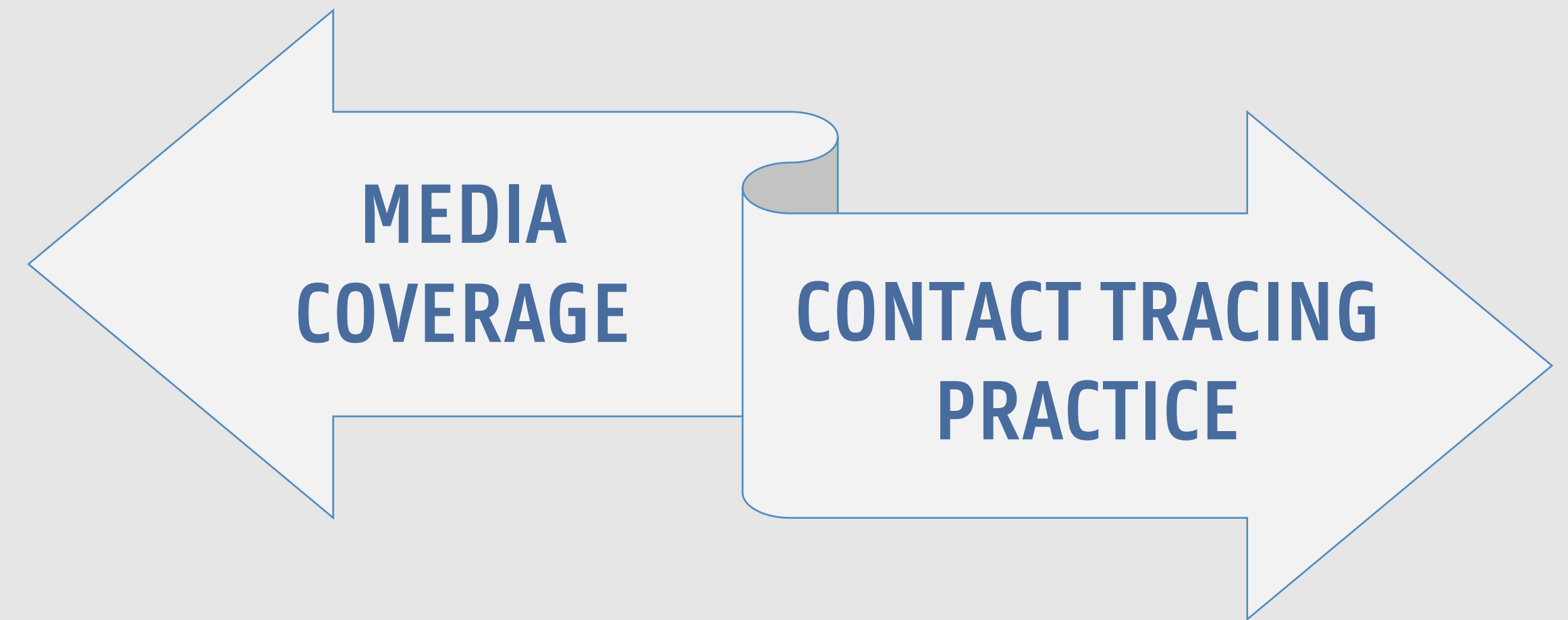
<p>Secure reliable information exchange ●</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey evolution in predicted direction • Corpus no noticeable trend, variation • Interviews giving initiative = pleasant conversation 	<p>Use humor sensibly ●</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey considerable variation & no evolution • Corpus more careful, self-directed humor • Interviews difficult to gauge when/where 	<p>Enhance empathetic stance ●</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey considerable variation & no evolution • Corpus more active listening & voicing comfort • Interviews empathy during call = conditio sine qua non, but difficult skill to master
<p>Frame importance of safety measures ●</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey evolution in predicted direction • Corpus framing often vs never framing • Interviews framing important vs redundant after 1.5 years of pandemic 	<p>Conclude conversation on a positive note ●</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey considerable variation & no evolution • Corpus default, conventional formulae • Interviews skill that is developed automatically, not something to train 	<p>Safeguard role & status as rep. of public policy ●</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey complex variation & some evolution • Corpus answering all medical questions versus consistently referring to health professional • Interviews listen to criticism, but do not engage

5 VALORIZATION

The project's results lend themselves to societal valorization in two ways, viz. in the form of (i) fostering interactional awareness among professionals by working with real examples during training, as well as (ii) disseminating the project's results to contextualize the public image of Flemish contact tracing practice.

Optimizing practice: An additional training module with specific recommendations for recruiting telephone contact tracers.

Contextualizing public opinion: A dissemination event for public, academic, and private stakeholders.



2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The project was conducted across three phases, the foci and data collection/analysis methods of which are outlined below.

Phase 1

The first phase of the project was predominantly concerned with mapping contact tracing telephone interactions in terms of the genre's main communicative functions, its interactional dynamics, and its typical episodic structure. To do so, a corpus consisting of 100 telephone conversations was compiled. All interactions took place in Dutch, and were eventually transcribed, pseudonymized and analyzed in the qualitative data analysis program NVivo. The methodological approach in analyzing the recorded telephone interactions was interactional sociolinguistic and applied conversation analytic in nature (Rampton 2019; Antaki 2011), with a focus on turn-taking dynamics, topic management, and aspects of formulation and face work.

Phase 2

The second phase of the project consisted of a coaching experiment with a pilot group (N = 19) and a control group (N = 19) around six action points. The data consisted of 70 contact tracing, 38 surveys, and 20 interviews. A coaching session using examples of real interactions from phase 1 was developed. Impact of the coaching session on the interactional practice of the pilot group was assessed and compared to the control group. The interviews focussed on meta-pragmatic awareness.

Phase 3

The third and final phase of the project instead took a comparative perspective, evaluating the differences and similarities between (i) local and centrally-organized contact tracing on the one hand, and (ii) and telephone interactions in Dutch and other languages on the other. This phase is still ongoing.



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