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Table of Contents

Bruce K. Berger, Juan Meng, & William Heyman

Role Modeling in Public Relations: The Influence of Role Models and Mentors on Leadership Beliefs and Qualities.....10

Shannon A. Bowen

All Glamour, No Substance? How Public Relations Majors And Potential Majors In An Exemplar Program View The Industry And Function..... 26

Peggy S. Brønn

Adapting the PZB Service Quality Model to Reputation Risk Analysis and the Implications for Corporate Communication.....41

Coy Callison & Trent Seltzer

We'll Get Right Back to You: The Effect of Responsiveness, Accessibility, and Information Utility on Journalist Perceptions of Organizational Media Relations Efforts.....56

Deanna Centurion & Brad Rawlins

Does Familiarity Breed Contempt or Trust? A Case Study of a Gas Pipeline Awareness Campaign among School Safety Officers.....74

SeungHo Cho & Laura Richardson Walton

Integrating Emotion and the Theory of Planned Behavior to Explain Consumers' Activism in the Internet Web site.....95

Jee Young Chung

Examining Legitimacy Gap in Issues Management Applying Expectancy Violation Theory: An Empirical Analysis of Legitimacy Gap in an Issue of Direct-to-Consumer Advertising in Pharmaceutical Industry.....101

W. Timothy Coombs & Sherry J. Holladay

Does What They See Affect How They React: Exploring the Effects of Victim and Neutral Photographs on Reactions to Crisis Events.....120

Adrienne Cooper

Two-Way Communication: A Win-Win Model for Facing Activist Pressure: A Case Study on McDonalds and Unilever's Responses to Greenpeace.....132

Jeffrey L. Courtright & Peter M. Smudde

A Genre Perspective on Public Relations Message Design.....146

Carol Ann Hackley, Qingwen Dong, & Timothy L. Howard,

International Public Relations Faces Challenges: The Impact of Palanca in Shaping Mexico's Public Relations163

Chang Dae Ham

How multiple competitive organizations cope with the same crisis: A Case Study of Rice Cooker Explosion in South Korea.....174

Robert L. Heath, Judy Motion, & Shirley Leitch

Power and Public Relations: Paradoxes and Programmatic Thoughts.....190

Hyehyun Hong

Scale Development for Measuring Health Consciousness: Re-conceptualization.....212

Ann D. Jabro & Rainier Domalski

Production Processes Go South, Plant Closure Processes Underway, Remediation in Progress: Relationship Management Theory Applied to a Potential Crisis Situation.....234

Jin-Ae Kang

Ethical Conflict and Job Satisfaction among Public Relations Practitioners.....252

Eunseong Kim & Terri L. Johnson

Sailing through the Port: Does PR Education Prepare Students for the Profession?264

Anna V. Klyueva

An Integrated Model of Media Selection in Strategic Communication Campaigns.....277

Young ah Lee, Kristen Smarr, & Glen T. Cameron

Examining Usefulness of Model of Resource Assessment as a Possible Tool for Gaining Public Relations' Influence.....288

Nancy Van Leuven

“From Terrorism to Tornadoes: The Roles of P.R. and Media in Crisis Communication.....305

Vilma Luoma-aho

Love, Hate and Surviving Stakeholder Emotions.....323

Diana Martinelli & Elizabeth Toth

Lessons on the Big Idea and Public Relations: Reflections on the 50-Year Career of Charlotte Klein.....334

Tina McCorkindale

Can you see the writing on my wall? A content analysis of the Fortune 50's Facebook social networking sites.....351

Juan Meng & William C. Heyman

Measuring Excellent Leadership in Public Relations: A Second-Order Factor Model in the Dimension of Self-Dynamics.....354

Karen Mishra & Lois Boynton

Talk-the-Talk: Using Internal Communication to Build Trust with employees.....372

Kelly Mitchell & Shari R. Veil

Promoting Violence: Terror Management Theory and Campus Safety Campaigns.....393

Paulo Nassar, Mateus Furlanetto & Suzel Figueiredo

The trajectory of Organizational Communication in Brazil.....404

Ibrahima Ndoye

Paper Title: Crafting the Image of Nations in Foreign Audiences: How Developing Countries Use Public Diplomacy and Public Relations?.....415

Prisca S. Ngondo

An Analysis of the Messages Used in Merck's Gardasil Vaccination Campaign.....428

Katie Delahaye Paine

How to Set Benchmarks in Social Media: Exploratory Research for Social Media, Lessons Learned.....442

Augustine Pang, Yan Jin, & Glen T. Cameron

Final Stage Development of the Integrated Crisis Mapping (ICM) Model in Crisis Communication: The Myth of Low Engagement in Crisis.....449

Hyojung Park & Hye Hyun Hong

From Strategic Management to Policy Consensus in a Health-related Crisis: An Analysis of the National Salmonella Outbreak in the United States.....469

Sun-A Park, María E. Len-Ríos, & Amanda Hinnant

How Intrinsic and External News Factors Affect Health Journalists' Cognitive and Behavioral Attitudes toward Media Relations.....488

Jennie Peña Escobar

Community Relations and OPR: In Search for a New Approach to Local Corporate Community Initiatives.....503

Amy Perkins, Margaret Algren, & Kristen Campbell Eichhorn

The Use of Integrated Marketing Communications by U.S. Non-profit Organizations.....518

Mark R. Phillips & Katie Delahaye Paine

Doing Measurement Right: One Organization's Experience Creating a Best-in-Class Measurement Program from Scratch.....534

Kenneth D. Plowman & Liliya Velbovets

Public Relations in High Profile Family Crisis Situations.....555

Robert S. Pritchard, Debbie Davis, & Vincent F. Filak

The Impact of the Dominant Coalition on Health Care Public Relations Practitioners.....571

Trent Seltzer & Weiwu Zhang

The Impact of Antecedents and Relationship Maintenance Strategies on Perceived Relationship with Political Parties During the 2008 Presidential General Election.....588

Bethe Spurlock & Julie O'Neil

Measuring and Evaluating an Intranet Designed to Enhance Employee Communication and Two-Way Communication.....607

Kevin Stoker & Susan Walton

Corporate Compassion in a Time of Downsizing: The Role of Public Relations in Cultivating and Maintaining Corporate Alumni Social Networks.....623

Elira Turdubaeva

Profile of Public Relations Practice in Kyrgyzstan: Public Relations Purpose, Mission and Function.....635

Chiara Valentini

Looking for Institutionalization: Italian Public Relations and the Role of Credibility and Professionalism.....650

Shari Veil

Friend vs. Foe: Viewing the Media as a Partner in Crisis Response.....667

Carolina Villamizar, Marcela Restrepo, & Andrea Alfaro

Formulation of a measurement scale from the perceptions a community has of a corporate brand based on the implementation of a Corporate Social Responsibility Program.....675

Tom Watson & Anna-Marie White

Communicating ‘dual citizenship’ – how do charities manage their reputation for ‘good works’ while undertaking commercial activities?.....686

Louis Williams & David Dozier

Comparing Winners and Losers.....700

Donald K. Wright & Michelle D. Hinson

An Analysis of the Increasing Impact of Social and Other New Media on Public Relations Practice.....718

Su Lin Yeo & Krishnamurthy Sriramesh

Adding Value to Organizations: An Examination of the Role of Senior Public Relations Practitioners in Singapore.....737

Koichi Yamamura & Masamichi Shimizu

Public Relations in Japan: Expert Opinion on its Future.....755

Role Modeling in Public Relations: The Influence of Role Models and Mentors On Leadership Beliefs and Qualities

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Abstract

This study examined perceptions of 222 PR practitioners regarding qualities and characteristics of excellent leadership in the profession. Limited research has been devoted to leadership qualities and practices in public relations. However, technical and managerial roles have been studied extensively (Broom & Dozier, 1986; Dozier & Broom, 1995; L. Grunig, J. Grunig and D. Dozier, 2002), and some qualities and practices of excellent leadership are implicit in the managerial role. These include ethical practice and counsel, involvement in strategic decision-making and professional knowledge and expertise.

In addition, Excellence theory (D. Dozier, L. Grunig, & J. Grunig, 1995; J. Grunig, 1992; L. Grunig, J. Grunig, & D. Dozier, 2002) suggests that public relations leaders should be members of the dominant coalition, practice two-way symmetrical communication and report directly to the CEO or president, among others.

This study specifically examines two of the national survey questions that probed respondents' perceptions about 1) factors that influence their beliefs about excellent leadership and 2) the most valuable sources of leadership skills and development. A majority of respondents said role models and mentors exerted the greatest influence on their beliefs about excellent leadership. In addition, role models, on-the-job-experiences and individual initiative and desire were the most important sources of leadership development. These findings support the idea that leaders communicate values primarily through their behaviors, which influence organizational culture and those they lead (Schein, 1985). The study bears implications for practice and education and contributes to an emerging area of research regarding leadership in the field.

Role Modeling in Public Relations:

The Influence of Role Models and Mentors on Leadership Beliefs and Qualities

Leaders are crucial to the success and future of organizations and professions, and leadership studies have been prevalent in the literature on management and organization behavior over the past 40 years. Research articles, books and papers on leadership numbered in the thousands even 20 years ago (Yukl, 1989), and publication rates have continued to rise.

Researchers have developed many concepts and theories to explain and predict leadership effectiveness and organization performance. Major theories and approaches have encompassed leader traits and skills, leader behavior and activities, leader power and influence, situational determinants of leader behavior, and leadership as an attributional process, among others

(Northouse, 2007). Of course, leadership in public relations also is crucial to the profession's success, image and future (Berger & Reber, 2006). However, the subject has been little explored by scholars in the field, and this study seeks to advance our knowledge in this area.

This study draws from a national survey of 222 PR professionals who shared their perceptions about the most important dimensions and characteristics of excellent leadership in PR. Specifically, we focus on responses to two of the survey questions that asked respondents to identify 1) valuable sources of leadership skills and development and 2) factors that influence their beliefs about leadership values and qualities. The results underscore the importance of role models and mentors as sources for leadership development and influencers of beliefs about appropriate leader values and qualities.

Public Relations Research and Leadership

The concept of leadership in public relations is implicit in notions of excellence in communication management. Some public relations scholars have recognized the importance of applying leadership skills to develop successful communication professionals, enhance the practice, and help practitioners participate successfully in strategic decision making in dominant coalitions (e.g., Berger & Reber, 2006; Berger, Reber, & Heyman, 2007; Choi & Choi, 2008; Lee & Cheng, 2008; Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002; Werder & Holtzhausen, 2008a, 2008b).

One of the most comprehensive research projects in the field of public relations, the IABC Excellence Study, provides a conceptual framework for understanding the functions of public relations and for discussing leadership and its application in the scope of excellent public relations (Grunig, 1992; Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002). Excellence theory investigates the characteristics and values that a public relations unit could (and should) have at the program level, the departmental level, the organizational level, and the economic level. The researchers suggested that, to achieve excellence in public relations and communication management, public relations managers (leaders) should be able to explain "*why* public relations contributes to organizational effectiveness and *to what extent* by asserting that public relations has monetary value to the organization" (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002, p. 10).

Specifically, the researchers suggested that organizations should empower public relations as a critical management function. Senior public relations executives should be members of the dominant coalition of the organization and involved in the strategic management processes of the organization to ensure that public voices are heard and considered in key organizational decisions. To be effective in this role, public relations leaders required a managerial view and professional knowledge and experience. In addition, an organization's structure and culture also are seen to influence the effectiveness and role of public relations. A "culture for communication" is characterized by a participative organizational environment, a symmetrical system of internal communication, equal opportunities and high job satisfaction among employees (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002).

Researchers also have argued that some professionals do not possess the requisite capabilities or knowledge to perform effectively in the managerial or leader role. The lack of professional expertise, leadership skills, and organizational knowledge, and/or inexperience with organizational politics and power relations limit their success and the effectiveness of practice (e.g., Berger, 2005; Berger & Reber, 2006; L. Grunig, 1992; Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002).

For instance, Berger and Reber's (2006) power relations theory discusses the use of power to make PR units more active, effective, and ethical in organizational decision making. The researchers made the assumption that public relations is inherently political and suggested that "individual professionals can increase their influence if they become more politically astute, employ more diverse influence resources and tactics, and exert greater political will in organizational arenas where decisions are shaped through power relations" (Berger & Reber, 2006, p. 2). Berger, Reber, & Heyman (2007) further explored factors which help public relations leaders achieve professional success and maintain their leadership positions inside organizations. They found a complex set of factors and patterns that seemed important to success, including communication skills; diverse experiences and assignments; a proactive nature; and relationship-building, networking, and interpersonal skills.

Choi and Choi (2007) adopted a behavioral approach to explore what leadership means in public relations. By defining PR leadership as "the process of influence which leads to organization-wide collaborative endeavors to achieve public relations goals" (p. 2), they identified six distinct public relations leadership behaviors that favorably influenced the value of public relations in an organization. These included providing organization members with a clear vision about the organization's public relations policies and strategies, exerting upward influence, acting as a changing agent, and creating alliances in and out of the organization.

The relationship between leadership styles and the application of PR practice has been another area research interest. Based on a national survey of PR professionals, Holtzhausen and Werder (2008a) investigated how leadership styles have been presented in practice. They concluded that two leadership styles--transformational and inclusive--were most common in public relations environments. The researchers argued that the two styles are actually related, though have different focuses in application (i.e., transformational leaders focus on inspiring followers through communication, while inclusive leaders engage in participative practices). They suggested that combining an inclusive leadership style with transformational leadership behaviors might positively affect public relations strategies and outcomes.

This emerging area of research has the potential to help us better understand leadership qualities and perhaps even to enhance the preparation of leaders. Such development raises questions about how professionals come to learn leadership skills, and how they develop values and beliefs about leadership. Answers to such questions seem important to improving our ability to develop excellent leaders in practice and in the classroom. This study, then, explores one potential source of leadership values and skills—role models and mentors, which are related concepts.

To date, few public relations studies have examined role modeling and mentoring aspects of leadership in the field. Mentoring is recognized as important to professional development and advancement by professional associations like the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA). University public relations educational programs, internships and campaign classes provide opportunities for mentoring of students. In research by Aldoory (1988) and Grunig, Toth and Hon (2001), female practitioners highlighted the importance of mentoring to their development. A recent study of PR professionals (Pompper & Adams, 2006) found that mentoring was more likely to be successful when 1) compatibility and rapport exist between mentor and protégé and 2) mentoring programs are formalized and reflected in organizational values, practices and structures. The researchers also found that mentors helped protégés to advance by providing

skill-development opportunities, empowering them and validating their work, guiding them through organizational politics, and introducing them to networks of relationships.

Role Models and Mentors

Sociologist Robert Merton first used the term “role model” in a Columbia University study of the socialization of medical students (Holton, 2004). Role models were part of Merton’s theory (1968/1949) of basic units of social structure, i.e., reference groups and social roles. He argued that individuals compared themselves with groups who held social roles to which they aspired, and these roles were accompanied by a set of expected behaviors which others might emulate in order to achieve their goals. He also suggested that role models are important for people as sources of self-reflection about their own values.

Today, the term is used more broadly to refer to virtually any individual who provides a good example of positive behaviors. Parents are early role models for many, and some PR professionals have argued that parenting models and parental leadership may exert far greater influence on our society than presidents or other national leaders (Thayer, 1986). The growth and spread of popular culture has led to diverse, sometimes controversial and often public role models today, from sports figures (*Be like Mike!*), to film stars and celebrities, to rock and Hip Hop musicians.

The word “mentor” is taken from Greek mythology and the philosopher, Mentor, who tutored and counseled Telemachus when his father, Odysseus, was away on his journeys. Mentor’s counsel emphasized the value of logic, ethics and relationships (Sosik & Lee, 2002). Mentoring today is often a professional and workplace concept: a mentor is “an influential individual in your work environment who has advanced experience and knowledge and who is committed to providing upward mobility and support to your career” (Scandura & Williams, 2004, p. 455). Mentors may facilitate socialization and sponsorship into organizational networks, provide opportunities for learning and developmental relationships, and enhance work effectiveness and career development (Sosik, Godshalk, & Yammarino, 2004).

Role models and mentors can be closely related concepts, and they are linked in some of the literature. A mentor, for example, may also be a role model for a protégé, demonstrating consistent and positive behaviors in the work place. But not all mentors are role models, and individuals may be influenced by a variety of role models inside or outside of the organization. What’s of primary interest in this paper is the extent to which role models or mentors in organizations: 1) represent sources of leadership skills and development in public relations, and 2) influence practitioner beliefs about leadership values and qualities. Though these concepts have been little studied in the public relations literature, they have been examined in transformational leadership, vocational, career development and management studies.

Transformational leadership

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, leadership research experienced a paradigm shift with the advent of charismatic and transformational theories (Northouse, 2007). Unlike traditional leadership theories, which emphasized rational processes, the new approaches focused more on affective dimensions, e.g., emotions, values, ethics and long-term relationships, as well as followers’ motives, needs, and satisfaction (e.g., Bass, 1985; House, 1977; Conger, 1999; Conger & Kanungo, 1987).

Theories of charismatic and transformational leadership are broader in scope because they involve leader traits, power, behaviors, and situational variables in a dynamic model. Moreover, charismatic and transformational leaders articulate a realistic vision of the future that can be shared by subordinates. Organizational behaviorists in this area have shown that the benefits of such leadership include broadening and elevating the interests of followers, generating awareness and acceptance among the followers of the organization's mission, and motivating followers to go beyond their self-interests for the good of the organization (e.g., Bass, 1985; Beyer, 1999; Conger, 1999; House, 1976).

The roots of charismatic and transformational leadership are found in Weber's (1947, 1978) original work on power and authority, which explained the rise of modernity, capitalism, and bureaucracy in the West. Trice and Beyer (1986) summarized Weber's (1947) conceptualization of charisma into five elements: (1) an individual with exceptional powers or qualities, (2) a social crisis or situation, (3) a set of ideas providing a radical solution to the crisis, (4) devoted followers who are attracted to the exceptional person; and (5) the validation of the person's extraordinary gifts by repeated successes.

Conger and Kanungo (1987) suggested that charisma is an attributional phenomenon: followers attribute charismatic qualities to a leader based on their observations of the leader's behavior. Leaders who make self-sacrifices, take personal risks, and are willing to incur high costs to achieve a shared vision will more likely be perceived as charismatic by their subordinates. Bass (1985) regarded the idealization of the leader by followers as the most important feature of charisma. He suggested that transformational leadership focuses on developing followers to their full potential, i.e., leaders transform followers by making them more aware of the importance and values of task outcomes and by activating their higher-order needs. Transformational leaders, then, help create an environment of trust and serve as role models (Bass, 1985, 1990) who may influence the beliefs, values, behaviors and career success of organizational members (Sosik et al., 2004).

In their analysis of the bond trading scandal at Salomon Brothers, Sims and Brinkman (2002) found that the company's leader had reinforced an unethical organizational climate through his decisions and actions. The researchers concluded that leaders represent "significant others" in the lives of organizational members through the power and communication of their behaviors. Scarnati (2002) reached a similar conclusion, arguing that leaders bear a responsibility to model desired behaviors for the benefit of the organization and those they supervise: "Leaders model the standards, the climate and the expectations of the organization" (p. 181).

Mentors and mentoring

In a brief review of the literature, Scandura (1992) noted that mentoring has been demonstrated to enhance work effectiveness, job and career success, and salary and promotion opportunities for protégés. Other studies suggest that mentoring also benefits the mentor (Kram, 1983; Ragins & Scandura, 1999), who may develop coaching skills, enrich his or her own work experience, and gain the respect and support of the protégé.

Mentors serve two primary functions for protégés: *career development* and *psychosocial support* (Kram, 1983). In the career development function, mentors provide protection, coaching, challenging assignments, career planning advice, sponsorship in the organization and a network of social connections. These support activities help the protégé develop professional and political

knowledge and skills and gain social visibility and recognition. Psychosocial support for the protégé is provided through a mentor's friendship, counseling, acceptance and confirmation of work, and role modeling of expected values and behaviors.

According to Grosjean et al. (2004), role modeling by mentors and leaders represents a "powerful communication mechanism that conveys the expectations, values and assumptions of the culture and climate to the rest of the organization" (p. 228). Research also suggests that protégés and other organizational members are likely to adopt the leadership style of mentors or other organizational leaders if they are respected and seen as ethical and competent (Bass, 1990).

Organizations also benefit from a mentoring system, especially during times of rapid changes in markets and organizational structures (Eby, 1997). Such changes are prominent in the work world today, e.g., globalization, pervasive restructurings, growing participative work arrangements, spread of new technologies, and so forth. As a result, employee career paths have changed: organizations are flatter, job changes are more frequent and opportunities for advancement are scarcer, so employees need increasingly diverse and portable skill sets (Hall & Mirvis, 1995). These and other alterations in the work place heighten the importance of mentoring to provide social, vocational, and role modeling support to help employees and organizations better cope with changing requirements.

Social learning theory

Sosik et al. (2004) identified a number of theories that have been used to explain how mentor-protégé relationships form and lead to learning. These include transformational leadership, human development, leader-member exchange, personal learning, mentoring functions and social learning theories. Bandura's (1977, 1986) social learning theory helps explain how protégés and other organizational members may learn through the role modeling of mentors and leaders. The theory describes how people learn by observing others' attitudes, behaviors and the outcomes of the behaviors:

Learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do. Fortunately, most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others, one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action (1977, p. 22).

Bandura argued that four conditions are necessary for an individual to observe and successfully model a particular behavior of another. The observer must first pay attention to who is modeling a behavior. Then the observer must retain or remember the behavior in order to, third, be able to reproduce or replicate the behavior. Finally, the observer must be motivated to want to actually demonstrate the behavior. In this regard, self-efficacy plays an important role: people who are confident of their abilities to model the behavior successfully are more likely to do so. Each of these four conditions may be complicated or affected by a number of factors, which suggests the pace and amount of successful modeling will vary among individuals.

Social learning theory suggests, then, that mentors and transformational leaders may serve as important role models for protégés and organizational members through behaviors they exhibit. Further, protégés and organizational members may successfully model those behaviors

to the extent to which they attend to observing the behavior, retain it, are able to replicate it, and possess the motivation to demonstrate it at some point.

Of course, not all mentors/leaders are positive role models. Examples of those whose behaviors are less than exemplary are frequently portrayed in the media. Sociological theorists have referred to this as “anomie,” a condition that occurs “when there is an acute disjunction between the cultural norms and goals and the socially structured capacities of members of the group to act in accord with them” (Merton, 1968, p. 216). Some people cannot consistently behave in line with social norms and values.

In addition, various factors render it difficult for mentors/leaders to consistently serve as positive role models (Sosik & Lee, 2002). Such factors include potential problems inherent in power imbalances between mentors/leaders and their protégés/members, undercurrents of gender or racial issues or differences, and organizational or professional contexts and structures. Despite these and other issues, the various literatures suggest overall that mentoring and role modeling may be powerful sources of learning, development and even advancement for organizational members, and they also facilitate achievement of organizational goals.

Research Questions

Based on the literature review, this study examines the following research questions:

RQ1: Do public relations professionals view role models and mentors as valuable sources for developing leadership skills?

RQ2: Do role models and mentors influence PR practitioner’s beliefs about leadership values and qualities?

Method

Some of the data collected in a national online survey of 222 PR professionals were used to assess the research questions. That survey (Meng, Berger, Gower & Heyman, 2009) examined practitioners’ perceptions about the relative importance of five dimensions of excellent leadership in the field -- relationship building, self-dynamics, ethical orientation, strategic decision making and communication knowledge and expertise. The survey also captured perceptions about the extent to which organizational culture and structure influence actual leadership practices. The overall goal of the research project was to develop a measurement model for assessing the most important qualities and characteristics of excellent leadership, and the study confirmed the importance of the five dimensions and the influential role of culture and structure.

A stratified sampling strategy was used with the survey to draw participants from a database of names of more than 50,000 PR professionals, which is maintained by Heyman Associates, a PR executive search firm in New York. To capture perspectives of more experienced and higher-level professionals, and to ensure diversity of gender and organization type, the initial sample was deliberately drawn and included 1,000 full-time PR practitioners. An email invitation was sent, followed by a reminder email one week later. Data collection was completed through the Zoomerang online survey service. Of the 1,000 professionals invited to participate, 338 visited the survey link and 222 (22.2%) actually completed the questionnaire.

Females represented 59.9% (n=133) of the sample, and males 40.1% (n=89). Participants overall were experienced professionals in mid- and upper-levels of management. More than three quarters of the sample (n=170, or 76.6 %) had worked in public relations for more than 15 years and were older than 40 years of age (188, or 80.2%).

The largest percentage of respondents worked for public corporations (83, or 37.4%), followed by private corporations (43, or 19.4%), PR agencies (39, or 17.6%), nonprofit organizations (27, or 12.2%), government organizations (15, or 6.8%), and educational institutions (14, or 6.3%). Ethnicity of the sample was predominantly Caucasian (198, or 89.2%), with a small number of African American (8, or 3.6%) and Hispanic (8, or 3.6%) participants.

Responses to two of the questions in this survey are analyzed in the present study. The first question asked survey respondents to “Identify the three most important sources contributing to the development of leadership skills in public relations.” Participants were invited to select responses from a list of nine possible sources, based on the literature, or to write in other sources. All but one of the 222 participants responded to this question, and their answers were used to examine RQ1.

The second, open-ended question that was assessed asked participants to “Briefly describe an experience or event in your life which strongly influenced your beliefs about leadership qualities and values.” Of the 222 survey participants, 119 (53.6%) wrote answers. The demographics of respondents to this question were similar to those of overall participants. The researchers coded these answers using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), whereby the data are coded, discussed, conceptualized, and organized according to patterns, themes and anomalies that emerge. These data were used to assess RQ2.

Results

The first research question examined whether public relations professionals view role models and mentors as important sources for developing leadership skills. According to survey participants, they do (Table 1).

Table 1

Sources of PR leadership skills and development (n=221)

<u>Sources of leadership skills</u>	<u>1st mention</u>	<u>2nd mention</u>	<u>3rd mention</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Percent</u>
On-the-job experiences	63	61	38	162	73.3%
Individual initiative, desire	46	33	54	133	60.2%
Examples set by role models	59	43	29	131	59.3%
Personal experience or event	24	28	24	76	34.4%
Communication skills training	12	22	25	59	26.7%
Mentors, mentoring programs	4	22	28	54	24.4%
University education	9	5	6	20	9.0%
Professional development programs	1	5	14	20	9.0%
Genetics	3	1	2	6	2.7%
Other	0	1	1	2	0.9%
Total	221	221	221		

Examples set by role models were mentioned second most frequently as the first (59 mentions, or 26.7%) or second choice (43 mentions, or 19.5 %) of leadership development sources, and third overall (131 total mentions, or 59.3%). Based on the results, participants seemed to suggest that role models, on-the-job experiences and individual initiative and desire to become a leader are the three most important sources of leadership skills and development. Though mentioned far less frequently by participants, mentors and mentoring programs were nevertheless named by nearly one-quarter of participants (54 total mentions, or 24.4%) as being among the most important sources of leadership skills and development.

When combined, and we have discussed relationships between the two concepts, role models and mentors appear to be the most important sources of leadership development and skills, according to surveyed professionals (187 total mentions, or 84.6%). These two categories, along with job experiences and individual initiative, far outpace more formal sources of leadership development such as communication skills training, university education and professional development programs such as those offered by PRSA and other associations.

No significant differences were noted by gender, organization type or size, or years of professional experience.

Qualitative results

RQ2 focused on whether role models and mentors influence PR practitioner's beliefs about leadership qualities and values. Responses to an open-ended question on the national survey were used to assess this RQ. The open-ended question asked participants to "Briefly describe a personal experience or event in your life which strongly influenced your beliefs about

leadership qualities and values.” Of the 222 survey participants, 119 (53.6%) wrote brief responses, which averaged about 70 words in length. These responses were subsequently coded into categories that are depicted as simple frequencies in Table 2.

Table 2

Influences on PR practitioners' beliefs about leadership values and qualities (n=119)

<u>Category</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Role models	53	44.5%
Mentors	16	13.4%
Crisis experiences	15	12.6%
Work experiences	12	10.1%
Education or training	6	5.0%
Epiphanies	5	4.2%
Life events	5	4.2%
Others	7	5.9%
Totals	119	99.9%

Most of the experiences or events were work related (96 of 119, or 80.7%), and role models (53) and mentors (16) collectively were mentioned by more than half of the respondents (57.9%). Crisis situations (15) and an accumulation of work experiences (12) were mentioned by at least 10% of respondents. Formal education and leadership training programs (6), life events (5), e.g., a military event, and epiphanies (5), i.e., moments of sharp insight or realization, were mentioned infrequently. Other responses included mentions of a specific book, the Tylenol case example and particular characteristics of excellent leadership.

Most of the role models or mentors who were mentioned were public relations professionals (33) or organizational executives (23), e.g., CEO or president. Parents, politicians, religious leaders and members of the medical and military communities also were cited. About three-quarters of the role models mentioned set positive examples, while the others demonstrated negative behaviors. Both apparently influenced practitioners' beliefs about excellent leadership values and qualities. Characteristics of positive role models that were mentioned most frequently include a strong ethical orientation, vision, communication and decision-making skills, and empathy and concern for others in the organization, or among its publics.

Some of the responses were general in nature:

- I learned from watching successful and unsuccessful PR leaders. The successful ones were visionary and forward looking, always five steps ahead.
- For me, it was watching successful mentors and mimicking their behaviors.

- Exposure through work to excellent leaders with highly developed mentoring and decision-making skills and vision. Leadership requires a steady hand, good insights, inspiring vision and a superior understanding of the external world. Other respondents described powerful experiences on the job or in their personal lives with both positive and negative role models:
 - I learned how NOT to lead through a male director who used company resources and female colleagues like his personal play things. While I'm also male, I found this offensive, immoral and was sick to my stomach when I was compelled to bring these problems to light with the CEO.
 - Working as a press secretary for a Senator. I never saw the man side-step responsibility, even in the most adverse situations. He treated everyone with respect and dignity, even if they did not afford him the same. He also had a great ability to "cut through" the matter to clearly see the end game, even though he may have been in the middle of a mud storm. He trusted his instincts and his own character and, in turn, that taught me to trust mine.
 - At the age of 12, I learned that my local minister, a man who was my hero and role model, then, was having an affair with a lady in the church choir. It had a major impact on me and led me to distrust to some extent the words of all leaders. I came to believe strongly that actions were far more important than words.
- Respondents also described some experiences with role models that were less direct, but nonetheless influential in their beliefs about leadership values and qualities:
- Watching a client in another city operate—an excellent leader. He unwittingly became my role model for how to successfully lead an organization.
 - Seeing the Dalai Lama speak live in Houston, Texas and comparing his easy, unaffected and joyful manner to the typical manner of many CEOs.
 - Reading about what Mark Hurd did when he learned of spying on HP board members; he was open and honest and confronted the issue immediately.
 - Seeing how President Reagan was able to attitudinally lead the US out of a serious economic funk by projecting a belief in America, a belief in our collective ability to right our course and a return to a prosperous, forward-looking nation.

Many of the role model and mentor experiences highlighted specific attributes. These included open-mindedness and the ability to seek and evaluate ideas from all sources; giving credit to others; being enthusiastic; bringing out talent in others and creating a sense of shared risk and reward; upholding a strong set of values in every situation; and the power of warm, genuine communication with all.

Discussion

This study examined practitioner perceptions of role models and mentors in public relations and discovered that they are sources for leadership development and influencers of beliefs about excellence in leadership. The findings contribute to a slim literature on leadership in public relations. However, they can't be generalized to the profession because the sample was relatively small (222), and it was deliberately constructed to capture perspectives of more experienced, higher-level practitioners and to ensure diversity of gender and organizations.

Nevertheless, the study provides some evidence that what professionals do and experience on the job, and what they observe leaders and mentors doing on the job, along with their own initiative and desire to lead, far outweigh other sources of leadership development and other factors that influence their beliefs about leadership values and qualities. These findings support social learning theory (Bandura, 1977, 1986), which argues that people learn by observing others' attitudes, behaviors, and the outcomes of those behaviors. The results also support Schein's (1985) contention that leaders communicate values primarily through their behaviors, and, in doing so, they influence organizational culture and those they lead.

These findings seem intuitive, but little empirical research provides evidence of the value of role models and mentors in the profession, or documents the extent to which role modeling and mentoring are incorporated into workplace learning and development, or into educational or external professional development programs. Yet, if excellent leadership is crucial to the PR profession and its future, it seems important to examine these concepts more closely and use the knowledge we gain to enhance the preparation of current and future leaders. In this section we briefly sketch out the current state of leadership development in public relations and suggest some next steps.

The landscape of leader development and cultivation in public relations is populated here and there with a number of somewhat disconnected structures and approaches that may be grouped into three rough categories: individual organizations, university educational programs and professional associations. Some organizations, for example, have long-time internal development programs where individual or team-mentoring programs are formalized, and leadership development programs and extensive curricula help prepare individuals for broader responsibilities (e.g., Whirlpool's Worldwide Leadership Academy). These programs may rely on internal experts or specialist providers, e.g., Center for Creative Leadership, to prepare and deliver training. Participants volunteer or are more often selected for such programs based on past performance, future promise, or political relationships.

University education programs in public relations provide some course content related to leadership, but a quick review of leading textbooks, course syllabi and some current but incomplete research suggests that little formal attention is devoted to leadership in classes. On the other hand, as Pompper and Adams (2006) and others have noted, students may learn from mentors and role models through internships and campaign courses, shadowing exercises with professionals, team or club project assignments, and involvement in the Public Relations Student Society of America, among other groups.

Professional associations like PRSA, The Arthur W. Page Society (AWP), and the Institute for Public Relations (IPR) also may play a mentorship role by providing professionals with challenging association assignments, recognition for work, social networks, and professional and career development opportunities (Eby, 1997). In addition, associations deliver leadership development programs for some members or member organizations. These programs typically consist of two- or three-day sessions where professional experts deliver knowledge or skills training in various subject areas, e.g., new technologies, ethics, and measurement. The programs also provide social interaction time for participants to build networks and learn from the experiences of each other. These are valuable programs, but they reach relatively few of the more than 250,000 practitioners in the US today due to costs and capacity. Further, only about 10% of professionals belong to these organizations.

A number of roadblocks to advancing leadership also mark the PR development landscape. First, not all PR mentors and leaders are equal in capabilities and practices, and the real problem of anomie is ever present. Second, not all education and professional development programs are created equally, and the content and quality of instruction vary. Third, such programs are but moments in a long professional chain; once participants re-enter the workplace, they confront ongoing issues and responsibilities that may constrain their efforts to enact what they've learned. Fourth, the job marketplace today is dynamic, and professionals may or may not transport and use their learning into new positions or organizations.

Fifth, participants in professional development and education programs often evaluate the quality of their workshops and courses, but there appear to be few if any metrics to assess the long-term outcomes of development and educational programs. As Bandura (1977) noted, four conditions are necessary for an individual to observe and successfully model a particular behavior in the classroom, the workplace, a workshop, or other venues. Attention to, and retention of desirable behaviors are the first two steps. The other two crucial steps are the ability to model the behavior and the motivation to actually do so. We know little about the extent to which those who undergo leadership learning or development activities actually model or enact desired leadership behaviors on the job.

Given this brief and general overview of the current situation, we suggest three steps that might help us enhance and advance leadership in the profession:

1. Designate the leadership challenge as a national priority in the profession. This seems especially crucial at a time when public trust in organizations and the profession are very low, and new technologies, globalization, and the rise of new and empowered stakeholders are reshaping traditional communication practices and placing a premium on ethical and transparent leadership.
2. Create a national forum through which we begin to develop consensus regarding the key dimensions or qualities of excellent leadership in the field. We imagine there are as many definitions of leadership, and approaches to leadership preparation, as there are definitions for public relations. Some agreement in the field about what leadership is and means is a prerequisite to implementing educational or development programs.
3. Catalog and analyze existing leadership development programs--in associations, organizations, and universities--to identify content, delivery approaches, metrics, and best practices. Examine the extent to which mentoring and role modeling are present in such programs. This initiative might provide the basis for meaningful systemic change in the preparation of leaders.

In fact, we believe there's already a foundation for such actions. The AWP Society, for example, is populated by high-level corporate and agency executives and leading academics. This is an ongoing forum for information sharing and problem-solving by current leaders in the field. The Page Center supports research into ethics in practice and has produced a video series of oral histories of long-time and recognized leaders in the field. The Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations provides grants and support for research into leadership and seeks to recognize and advance leadership in the classroom and the practice. It has produced a series of video interviews with 15 recognized leaders who speak directly to the topic.

IPR has long supported and led efforts to create and make visible research and measurement approaches that can enhance ethical and effective practice. PRSA possesses expertise in the delivery of skill- and career-development programs and the distribution of information and knowledge to thousands of practitioners.

Imagining the possibility of these and other professional groups working together to address the leadership challenge in public relations is a crucial first step to actualization. It also is an opportunity for current leaders in the field to perform an important role-modeling function for the profession.

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All Glamour, No Substance? How Public Relations Majors and Potential Majors in an Exemplar Program View The Industry and Function

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Studies in public relations often conclude that the field is misunderstood (Kopenhaver, 1985; Stacks, Botan, & Turk, 1999) and misrepresented in media (Spicer, 1993). Public relations professionals themselves often do not know what is involved in or support public relations education (Wright & Turk, 2007). Both the special issue (Public Relations Review, 1999) on public relations education and a following study published in this journal (Bowen, 2003) argued that public relations majors often do not realize what is involved in the academic discipline or the professional field. This research builds on the findings of those studies to ask: Are public relations educators doing any better in communicating the core competencies, responsibilities, knowledge requirements, skills, and abilities of the discipline and the public relations major? Through the use of focus groups across majors at a top research university, we can see that little is known about public relations among non-majors, but public relations majors can articulate the requirements and functions of the field. Several major areas of confusion emerged about public relations related to: marketing or promotion, spinning the truth, image, and public relations as a career choice. These ideas show a critical lack of transparency in public relations. Credibility of the public relations function is hampered by this failure to communicate about the functions and core competencies of the field. Implications for both the public relations practice and for public relations education are discussed.

Purpose

In 2006, “The Professional Bond” report of the Commission on Public Relations Education issued a call to action in support of public relations education. The Commission members argued that, like other professions, public relations practitioners and educators must struggle to contribute a shared vision of “what constitutes strong, ethical practice in service to society” (p. 85). Is public relations practice really acting in service to society? Many scholars (Cheney & Vibbert, 1987; Grunig, 2000; Heath, 2001; Heath & Ryan, 1989; Spicer, 2000) argued for a positive social role for public relations. But, does society know and value the role of public relations as information provider, access equalizer, problem solver, mediator, ethical counselor, crisis manager or a facilitator of social change?

This research argues that public relations educators and practitioners need to do public relations for the field of public relations. According to the literature collected in support of this study, it appears that public relations has failed to communicate its worth to society as a whole as a valuable contributor to the communication allowing society to function. The researcher seeks to emphasize the urgent need for awareness of the role and functions of public relations in society, in organizational life, within governments, in innumerable publics, and as an academic pursuit. Awareness of the value and functions of public relations should be focused on journalists, government officials, non-governmental organizations, top management teams and their CEOs, broadcast media, and the entertainment industry. Greater awareness among these influencers of

the true management functions of public relations would benefit the practice as a whole. It would help public relations achieve professional status, help it to attract motivated students with appropriate abilities and goals, and assist in its interaction and functional ability within organizations.

Professionalism of Public Relations

Pratt and Rentner (1989) argued that a body of knowledge based on definitive research should give public relations legitimate claim as a profession. Ehling (1992) determined that the qualification of public relations as a profession is “hardly debatable” (p. 455) but the stature of the discipline lags far behind that of other professions and is nebulous to those outside the industry. Ehling (1992) quoted comments at a symposium delivered by public relations leader Patrick Jackson: “We may know we can qualify as a profession, but does the rest of the world know this? The resounding answer is no” (p. 455).

Not much has change in the years since those comments were delivered, although the major industry associations insist that public relations is a profession. PRSA (<http://www.prsa.org/aboutUs/mission.html>) states that their number one mission is to “build the public relations profession” (np). However, critics argue that public relations has yet to achieve professional status and exists only as a trade or a skilled technical communication activity. In order to achieve professional status, the field would have to adopt some form of licensing before practice, equivalent to a CPA, a bar examination, or medical boards. Further, it would have to hold to consistent ethical standards and monitor infractions, barring those who transgress from participating in the profession. Public relations falls short of those professional standards, although the field does meet the standards of having a body of knowledge and a definitive area of practice based on learned technical skill. Perhaps the failure of public relations to hold professional standards and therefore be generally recognized as a profession is part of the problem in a lack of credibility for the field.

Media Perceptions of Public Relations

Cutlip’s (1994) book “The Unseen Power” speaks to the opaque nature of the public relations industry. To further complicate matters, when public relations is not perceived by those outside the field as a hidden or nebulous function, it is often viewed in worse terms, especially by contemporaries in the news media. For many decades, researchers (Aronoff, 1975; Bishop, 1988) have argued that journalists held contemptuous views of public relations, did not consider it a profession equal in status to their own (Kopenhaver, 1985), or held what Cline (1982) found to be “an insidious bias that characterizes public relations practitioners as journalists who have sold out” (p. 63). Spicer (1993) found that the print media connect public relations with meanings such as distraction, disaster, challenge, hype, ‘just p.r.’, war, and schmooze. 83% of Spicer’s sample used negative or pejorative depictions of public relations, and only 17% (the public relations challenge category) were neutral or positive. He contended “All too often, the terms are used to indicate, if not a flagrant disregard for the truth, a willingness to engage in communication activities to hide or obscure the truth” (pp. 59-60). Spicer concluded that connotations of public relations as a positive social force used to provide information and resolve conflict was not present in his sample of print media.

Research by Jo (2003) examined how the media handled the term public relations. Jo quantified 303 stories from 2 prestige press newspapers and 3 evening newscasts, and found that public relations was most frequently equated with image-reputation management and persuasion. Further, 41% of the mentions in Jo's study had negative terms attached to public relations, such as "public relations stunt," compared to only 12% positive uses, such as "public relations advice." Jo (2003) concluded:

The use of public relations terms was likely to refer to publicity, image, campaigns of persuasion, and marketing efforts to promote an organization's products or services. Contrary to the recent emphasis on public relations as relationship management, the overall news portrayal of public relations suggested a discrepancy between the normative definition of public relations and media usage in news stories. (p. 406)

A common misconception perpetuated by the news media shown throughout these studies mentioned above appears to be that public relations is little more than publicity or press agency. News media tend to be unaware of or ignore the other functions of public relations, particularly the managerial roles that more experienced practitioners frequently enact.

The news media are just one source of misinformation about the full role, purpose and functions of public relations. Entertainment media are also responsible for perpetuating many of the negative stereotypes about public relations that those outside the discipline often hold. Recent television programs and films provide numerous examples. The Home Box Office "Sex and the City"[®] series and film portrayed one of the main characters as a public relations professional who was seen doing little other than attending parties and special events. The Samantha character was never portrayed doing statistical research, advising senior management on issues, or undertaking any of the real professional practice we know as public relations management. "Sex and the City"[®] consistently depicted modern public relations as little more than a series of parties and special events involving obsequious flatter as the primary skill of the practitioner.

Many portrayals in entertainment media mistake press agency or media relations for the entire field of public relations. The reality television show Lizzie Grubman's "P.R. Girls"[®] was another example of entertainment that misconceptualized public relations as exclusively press agency and special event planning. The successful feature film "Thank You for Smoking"[®] depicted the managerial world of public relations through the story of a tobacco lobbyist who demonstrated no sense of ethical responsibility and proclaimed that he does not hide the truth, he just spins it. "Phone Booth"[®] was a film in which the lead character is the archetypal sleazy and despicable press agent who was singled out for retribution by a sniper as a result of his dishonest lifestyle. The character nearly escapes death for his misdeeds; clearly, this scenario is a metaphor for an indictment of the industry.

Along these lines, Miller (1999) examined novels and films from 1930-1995 for representations of public relations practitioners. Miller concluded that public relations was viewed with skepticism and scorn, that "representations of public relations are woefully inadequate" (p. 3). These forms of media had archetypal or recurrent characteristics of: ditzy, obsequious, cynical, money-minded, isolated, accomplished, and unfulfilled (Miller, 1999). Immoral actions such as lying, cover-ups, or denial were common place, and according to Miller, these themes remained consistent over several decades.

There is little doubt that these popular representations of public relations practitioners as manipulative and unethical operators impact perceptions of the practice among the general public. Those not familiar with the discipline of public relations have no reason to question the accuracy of these representations. Why would audiences question depictions of public relations when they are consistent across both news and entertainment media? Audience members become socialized by these pervasive images and learn from their messages (Weber, 1957). In the socialization of accepting a common definition based on these depictions, audiences believe that they understand public relations at a basic level, never realizing that they are unfamiliar with the majority of what the practice actually does. The industry and academic discipline of public relations do not respond to these misrepresentations in any meaningful way, and therefore misconceptions of the field among the general public are perpetuated.

Critical Perceptions of Public Relations

One would hardly believe that the news and entertainment media representations of public relations are not the most damning depictions of the field until she or he examines what the actual critics of public relations say. One theme that pervades the critical literature is that public relations exists to undermine democratic governance. Many of the critics of public relations hold that perspective, such as Miller and Dinan (2007), who argued:

Public relations was created to thwart and subvert democratic decision making. Modern public relations was founded for this purpose and continues to be at the cutting edge of campaigns to ensure that liberal democratic societies do not respond to the will of the people and that vested interests prevail. (p. 11)

The authors also equate public relations with unabashed advocacy, involving manipulation, lying, and spin. Millar and Dinan maintained that the “P.R. industry is allergic to openness and transparency” (p. 13) and that public relations practitioners must have some effective way to manage their own deceitfulness allowing advocacy to continue. Industry watchdog groups such as P.R. Watch echo these claims. Stauber and Rampton’s (1995) book also employed the “thwarting of democracy” theme and labeled corporate public relations practitioners attending the meetings of activist groups as espionage agents.

Propaganda and persuasion are also common themes arising in the critique of the public relations industry. One scholar (Snow, 2003) described public relations as a bottom-line based employment of “a propaganda technique to assign a sense of meaning to the meaningless” (p. 31). Snow explained, “News media outlets are likely to expand integration of voice, spin, and slant to the packaging of information” (p. 31). The historical development of the public relations function along with its association with propaganda are hotly contested areas of debate. Wartime propaganda effort and the membership of prominent public relations practitioners on the Creel Committee (The Committee on Public Information) supporting US participation in World War I gave rise to much of the suspicion surrounding modern day public relations. Public relations practitioners and scholars who endorse a persuasion (Miller, 1989) or advocacy (Fitzpatrick & Bronstein, 2006; Seib & Fitzpatrick, 1995) model see public relations in a similar vein as that of an attorney, acting as a vocal advocate in the court of opinion. Although many public relations

practitioners do not see their role as one of outspoken advocacy, this perception now surrounds the entire industry of public relations, thus inculcating skepticism and suspicion.

Academic Perceptions of Public Relations

Do public relations practitioners and academics even agree on an accepted definition and function of the field? Stacks, Botan and Turk (1999) surveyed public relations practitioners and educators to assess the congruence or divergence in their perceptions of public relations. With a sample of 258, they tested the statement: “Overall, the general public understands what public relations is.” Those who strongly disagreed with the statement were 24% of the sample, and those who disagreed comprised 61%, for a combined majority of 85% expressing concern regarding the ambiguity of public relations in the minds of the public. Their (Stacks et al., 1999) study found that “educators and practitioners are in agreement as to the essential skills, knowledge and concepts that should be and are being taught in public relations programs” (p. 27). However, the knowledge of core competencies does not appear to travel outside the field, as represented in the 85% of the sample who thought that the general public does not understand what public relations is or understand its functions. Further, 42% of their respondents disagreed with the statement: “Overall, most working journalists understand what public relations is.” The confusion exists at various levels in universities offering public relations degrees. For instance, one scholar (Xifra, 2007) concluded that “Public relations is the invisible major in Spanish Universities” (p. 212). If only the journalists who rely on public relations for information do not understand the role and functions of the discipline, the effectiveness and credibility of public relations are constrained. Many other groups rely on public relations sources for information, so the impact of the negative level of understanding of public relations is compounded.

Public relations educators tend to agree on what courses make a good degree program in public relations (Hornaman & Sriramesh, 2003). Wright and Turk (2007) noted that many public relations practitioners did not see the value of public relations education “that goes beyond the technical level” (p. 575). When discussing the appropriate curriculum for public relations students, Hornaman and Sriramesh (2003) reiterated a point made by J. Grunig when they wrote “that students need education in public relations, rather than journalism or another field, in order to practice a more sophisticated model of public relations” (p. 4). An ideal education in public relations is well described by Russell (2007), including what she termed “essential curriculum content” in ethics. Pratt and McLaughlin (1989) advised meaningful content in ethics is the public relations curriculum, and this attention to ethics is one way of addressing negative conceptions of the field.

Prior research (Bowen, 2003) established that students in the principles of public relations course were unaware of the management focus and models of public relations, did not understand the level of strategic decision making and ethical counsel required of practitioners, and were unfamiliar with the research required to be a successful public relations manager. That scholar concluded that a key failure of public relations was “that we have not made those outside of our boundaries aware of what responsibilities and functions the discipline involves” (p. 210). The research found that the students majoring in public relations often do not know what the field involves, and asked if we, as public relations educators, are communicating with our publics effectively in order to attract the most promising student who have an intellectual fit with the field.

The questions remain: Do students know what functional areas of study are involved in public relations? Do majors and potential majors understand the emphases of the public relations discipline, or do they fall prey to the negative or narrow interpretations provided by critics, news sources, and entertainment media?

Method

To answer these research questions, focus groups were conducted at a major university with a preeminent public relations program. It was reasoned that students at this university should be well-aware of the nationally top-ranked public relations major as a choice. Focus groups were the method of choice because, according to (Morgan, 1997), they allow the discussion of topics among a group with varying levels of knowledge about an issue, as is germane to this research. Lindlof (1995) pointed out that the group dynamics of focus groups allow for new and emergent ideas to be pursued, rather than the more scripted discussion of interviews or surveys. The discussion in these focus groups often took unpredicted turns that were nonetheless enlightening regarding the research questions posed here.

A total of 10 focus groups were conducted over a two-year period, to vary the students who participated and to gather longitudinal data that could be used to show general knowledge levels rather than events specific to a certain semester or university promotion. Participants signed informed consent forms and were advised of their rights and focus group procedures. They were all undergraduate students enrolled at a public university over 18 year of age.

Focus groups were conducted with university students of various majors, with communication majors, and with public relations majors. Some groups were mixed with all students comprising participants; other focus groups were specific to public relations majors or general university students. Students were anonymous participants who were assigned a number by subject management software, and then given extra credit in the course of their choosing through that software. Focus groups were video and audio recorded and transcribed by a research assistant. Data were analyzed through thematic coding (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and the use of the constant comparison method (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Focus groups were discontinued once the point of theoretical saturation was reached and no new information was gained.

Findings

Participants discussed several areas of misconceptions regarding their knowledge of public relations and the functions of public relations. Generally, the students who were public relations majors had a better knowledge of the field than either communication majors or university students majoring in other areas, such as physics or business. Even the public relations majors did not have a complete knowledge of the functions of public relations, as they often omitted ethics or issues management from their discussion. Public relations majors normally did not hold the common misconceptions of the discipline portrayed in the news and entertainment media, as discussed earlier in this paper. Non-majors held misconceptions of the field that included a number of the concepts found in prior research, as discussed in detail below.

Marketing Emphasis

A primary theme among many of the students participating in this research is a confusion of public relations and marketing. Confusion between marketing and public relations was the most commonly occurring theme in the focus groups conducted for this study. Many students equated public relations with both marketing and advertising, noting that, "Public relations is designed to sell something." Many students echoed the general sentiment that public relations is a marketing support function or is entirely product promotion and publicity, and this perspective was frequently held by those who were general university students or communication majors, rather than public relations majors. For example, one student, a non-public relations major, explained: "I guess it relates to a glam marketing and advertising field, so if you're trying to promote a product, you need someone in P.R. promoting, you need someone to get it out there." General confusion with the marketing function was displayed in numerous comments in non-public relations major groups, such as: "p.r. is brainstorming meetings for marketing."

Many students held the belief that public relations is an advertising function or product branding, as displayed in comments along the lines of: "I think there is more of an advertising aspect of it than anything else" or "P.R. is branding, creating an image." One student expounded, "P.R. as more of a skill than a career, it is a great skill to have. But. . .many jobs just don't come to mind, it's like advertising but being a public face, too." Another student agreed: "Yeah, something like that - it almost seems like in P.R. they are just designing an ad campaign." One defined public relations as "a sort of consumer communications -- more promoting a product, advertising it." Most students tended to sound like the woman who said, "I feel like it's just trying to make up a fancy term for marketing to hide what they are really doing, but P.R.'s like the same old advertising and marketing, just with a smile on your face."

Other university students outside the public relations major regarded it as having a less-than-credible reputation as a second-rate major: "It's a fall back major because the business school is so hard to get into." One student explained: "The ones who can't get into the business school go into P.R." Another student said, "I think business people think communication and P.R., especially, are like the lazy ones who don't want to work." Another explained:

Well, a lot of people do P.R. because they do want to go into the advertising/marketing, and it gets them out there and you're in the P.R. field, you know? Because Marketing is in the business school, right. And business is hard...so you go P.R. instead, like the easier way.

Public relations majors were only slightly less confused about the relationships of the function to marketing and advertising than were non-majors. For example, on public relations major said, "I um learned the term marcomm like marketing and communications from one of my classes this semester and it's like more like brochures and posters and stuff like that. I personally like design and stuff like that and I'm not sure it is part of P.R. job or not." Another major made a comment exemplary of this confusion: "When I think public relations I think of graphic design, like if you are doing marketing and advertising with the websites in general and graphic design." Another major admitted, "I still don't know much about it. I didn't know it was all that strategic stuff going out there and advertising, kind of both."

Some of the public relations majors did not confuse the field with marketing, but instead seemed to lack any real knowledge of the business-oriented basis of public relations, confusing it

instead with image management or publicity. For instance, one major exclaimed, “When I think P.R., I think about relationships between people. I didn’t even consider the business aspect like marketing, advertising!” Another major explained a deficit of information thus:

I was clueless about P.R. I remember going in our first day, our assignment was write ‘what you think P.R. is’ and ask two other people what they think and then like compare and contrast. I had a hard time figuring out what I was going to say because I just had no idea.

Although a lack of information was a common theme, confusion with marketing or advertising were more common, even among public relations majors. The closely-related nature of public relations initiatives employing advertising agencies, conducting product promotion, and so on appears to have led many students to believe that those activities define the entire practice of public relations. These misperceptions harm the ability of the function to be understood for the value it adds to organization-public relationships, to the information provided for the functioning of society, and for the problem-solving ability of public relations. Specific functions such as issues management, financial relations, community relations, or government relations were not mentioned. Some of the public relations majors did not confuse the field with marketing, but instead seemed to lack any real knowledge of the business-oriented basis of public relations, confusing it instead with image management or publicity.

Image Management

As discussed earlier, the entertainment and news media are particularly prone to portraying public relations as an image management function, with activities based on little or no substance but on an often-pleasing façade. As we might expect, students outside of the public relations major ascribed to this misperception frequently. On many occasions, students made comments like this one: “P.R. is all that goes into developing an image.” Students frequently equated image with puffery, such as, “You see it on TV. People use the P.R. stuff loosely, like trying to ‘Get in good’ with someone” or “It is like image and making the image all good, more positive image than anything else.” Other students held that idea, as well, but perhaps equated it with special events, such as indicated in this comment: “I thought it was NYC red carpets -- a lot of people hear P.R. and glamorize it.” A non-public relations major explained: “It’s a lot of event planning. It’s very media driven, as well.” One public relations major added, “It’s very hard and busy so I don’t think of it as glamorous; it is exciting to be the spokesperson though.”

Many students equated public relations with schmooze or favors, along the lines of statements such as this one: “P.R is, like, anyone who can schmooze, like this one guy that worked for me this summer, he could talk his way out of anything.” A similar theme is that public relations tries to be all things to all people: “A lot of it, I feel like, is pleasing everyone. Trying to find the best of everyone’s world.” Or the statement: “I think people throw around P.R. when they’re trying to make a good impression on someone, just being the image that they want to see.” Another student observed, “P.R. is trying to make everyone happy and be in good with everyone” or “get them to like you by being out going, personable, warm.” Outside majors were inclined to link this aspect of what they perceived as public relations with manipulation. For example, one student said, “I feel like P.R. people have to put on this front. It’s all fake.”

Following that statement, others in the group were quick to agree and added comments along the line of these: “Conniving. It’s all about just saying something to look good, like politicians” and “That they (public relations professionals) can’t care less about other people’s feelings because they just want their money.”

Some of the students directly attributed the image they held of public relations to the entertainment industry, as illustrated in this comment by a non-public relations major:

In a lot of (television) shows you see a portrayal of the P.R. person. Like ‘Sex in the City,’ like Samantha. It’s just like the idea of being a people person, being all over town. Everyone wants to be like her. She portrays ‘everything to everyone’.

Another general university student majoring in another discipline agreed, as seen in the statement: “You see it on the news. You hear about certain things people do, and I can identify it as ‘that’s’ was probably a bad P.R. move, or that’s’ probably a good P.R. move’. It’s all image like with celebrities.”

Public relations majors held some of the same misperceptions based on entertainment, but were also inclined to know other areas of the public relations function in addition to special event planning and media relations. Though the students were not articulate at naming the functions per se, they did describe responsibilities that are more akin to the management role of public relations. For example, one major explained key factors of what educators know as issues management in response to a question about the responsibilities of public relations, in saying:

To see steps ahead and anticipate like “This is the problem we’re trying to fix now, this is how we fix it. What might we have to do, what might happen then?” I feel like P.R. people are very aware of the variety of scenario’s that can play out so the way they act is to minimize the bad and maximize the good.

Other public relations majors also described the functions of community relations and financial relations without using those terms, but through identifying the responsibilities they held. The students did know many of the responsibilities of the public relations function hinge on maintaining relationships with publics, as exemplified by this statement from one public relations major: “It is broad in terms of just managing communication between any type of publics. Publics doesn’t mean consumers, it could be internal publics, external publics, stakeholders, people who invest in a company or organization.” The students showed a limited knowledge of the application of ethics in public relations, of public affairs, or of risk management, although they did show awareness of crisis management.

Covering up the Truth

The general idea that public relations is lying, manipulation, covering up the truth, or “spin” of a message into something positive was a recurring, prevalent theme. Students seemed to hold the idea that public relations is manipulative or deceptive by nature. The university students from majors outside of public relations were particularly prone to hold this idea. Their beliefs were along similar lines as these examples: “I think P.R. is more manipulative,” “Public

relations is strategic manipulation,” “It’s creative in, like, a manipulative way,” or “I think you have to be good at manipulating so it’s strategic.”

When asked to elaborate on how and why these ideas came to mind along with public relations, students offered explanations similar to this one: “I just feel like P.R. people are like fake. They have to be manipulators.” Another student who was an accounting major said: “If you’re not covering up the truth then you are not doing your job in P.R. That is what they want and it’s all about keeping the truth spinned and hidden.” Other students agreed, such as the one who added, “-No they don’t always tell the truth: depends on the situation” or the non-public relations major who said, “Sometimes they have to fabricate to make something more desirable, to appeal to the customer.”

Those who majored in public relations might have been expected to hold differing beliefs, but they also discussed public relations in terms of deception. They were less likely to mention public relations as intentional manipulation than students from other majors. Although they did not make comments as negative as the other university students, they still included having to omit negative information, “spin” for positive coverage, and not disclosing accurate information. For instance, on public relations major explained: “It’s not like you just lie, you just omit the negative.” Another explained, “Whenever the people you are representing have done something that comes out negatively, your job is to spin it so it doesn’t look as bad or make it even look good.” Another public relations major explained the function: “It’s hard - people do P.R. in a way that isn’t blatantly lying it’s kind of like omitting the truth without actually lying. I can imagine that being stressful.”

Even the public relations majors did not link the field with ethics until specifically asked by the moderator. Then, comments were cynical, such as: “the P.R. people cover it up – there are not ethics in that.” Another elaborated, “Yea, my professor glossed over it, like, there is some code on ethics, go and read it sometime. Yea, whatever!” A few students, when prompted, did elaborate in a less cynical manner. For example, one woman said, “You have to be advising on ethical stuff with the CEO and that means you really need to do what is right.” These comments were rare, and many students, including those who identified themselves as public relations majors, believed that public relations was unethical at best or manipulation at worst, with no solid foundation in ethics to guide the practice.

How did I End up in Public Relations?

When students in the focus groups including only public relations majors were queried as to how or why they selected the major, they tended to express some confusion and articulated a winding path that led them into public relations. Some explained that they had wanted to go into the business school but had not met certain entrance requirements, while others explained that they “just wound up in public relations because they liked communication.” Many students offered that within the field of communication, public relations seemed like the choice of major offering “real job opportunities when you finish.” Another student offered this indicative explanation:

I wanted to go into advising but had to get an easy second major. I had to pick a track and P.R. seems like it had the most career options with it. At that point I wanted to do psych anyway, and I didn’t really know or care what P.R. is.

Some public relations majors were happy with their choice of the discipline and seemed pleased at the level of responsibilities and disparate career opportunities associated with the field. One student explained the job satisfaction she anticipates along with a career in public relations as “Knowing you have a role in the company that is more than just a writer, more of a valued team member, how important are you in a company.” Another student said that she was glad to be a public relations major because “It makes you more valued and it is substantive, the strategy and stuff - it’s more than just events.”

A large number of students explained that they ended up in public relations “by accident” or were not sure when they decided it would be a good major. Several students exclaimed something similar to the woman who said: “How did I end up in P.R.? I don’t even know – I think it was just like there and easy to do so I thought that it might be a good way to get a job later.” Public relations majors also expressed confusion about what was involved in the public relations major, how they came to study it, and how it would help them in their future careers. For instance, this public relations major at a top-ranked public relations program said:

I don’t know why I went into the major like this. When I went to comm., I went in saying I’ll do P.R., and then, I honestly don’t remember anything we studied in 350, that’s the theory of P.R. class right?

Some students believe that the top-three national ranking of the public relations program was meaningless and that the major was a holding ground for those undecided about their future career direction. For example, one major said: “I think it’s definitely amped up like, no one knows what they want to do when they study P.R. and communications.” Others echoed this sentiment throughout the different focus groups, such as the woman who said, “P.R. is just like the anything major you can do until you figure out what you really want to do.”

Some students expressed the firm belief that they did not need to major in or even study public relations in order to get a job in the field. Many offered sentiments along the lines of a student majoring in general communication studies who said, “They make you take all these writing classes and it seems hard so I just wanted to do communication because I can still get a job in public relations.” Another non-public relations major concurred and said, “All three internships I had have been in public relations and I don’t even major in it!” Students expressed a belief that the public relations classes for majors, although appearing to be time consuming or difficult “according to what the public relations majors say” were not necessary knowledge for success in the field. One student offered this example:

This girl, she graduated from Penn State with a history degree, and is the head of P.R. at Crayola. Like, she’s at the top. Like, she didn’t do PR, but that’s what she fell into. She started at the bottom and just moved up through Crayola.

One student summarized this deficit in understanding the study of public relations by saying, “The only difference is just the classes you’re taking. You can do the same thing with them. It doesn’t matter if you take the P.R. classes or not.”

Discussion and Conclusions

This study has illustrated that the common misperceptions of public relations as marketing or promotion, image enhancement, manipulation, and an overall veiled idea of the responsibilities of the function are prevalent. Misconceptions of what public relations is and does are common among both general university students in various majors, those majoring in general communication, and on a more limited level, by those majoring in public relations. The prevalence of these common misconceptions about public relations lends an air of both deception and mystery to the field, or perpetuates a confusion of the field with the related disciplines of marketing and advertising. Credibility of the public relations discipline itself is undermined by these misunderstandings about the very purposes, activities, and ethical principles involved in public relations. Senior management is not likely to understand the public relations function and the potential contributions to the bottom line of strategic communication as long as the field remains murkily defined and ethically challenged.

What type of research and decision making can public relations be a part of when it is viewed as simple promotion and event planning or a support function of marketing? How can public relations advise on the ethical responsibilities involved in maintaining relationships with publics when it's viewed as obfuscating the truth or outright manipulation? How can future public relations professionals effectively advise toe-to-toe in the dominant coalition against more respected and credible managerial functions?

Public relations educators and professionals are undermining their own credibility and the future credibility of the field. Clearly, the misconceptions of what the function is and does are hampering the influence it can have in organizations, the ability to be perceived as a first-choice major, and the ability to attract students with aptitudes for analysis, honesty, and strategic management. The public relations discipline is therefore self-constraining by allowing these ideas to proceed unchallenged into the minds of future and potential public relations students. The discipline is also self-limiting its own definitions by allowing the news and entertainment media to portray it as spin and event planning or image promotion alone. What becomes of issues management, public affairs, acting as a liaison in internal relations, community relations and corporate social responsibility, acting as an ethical conscience, financial relations, activist and advocacy or NGO communication, coalition building, relationship management, and policy analysis? Are these functions of public relations to be kept secret from potential public relations students until they have declared it as their major or reached graduate student studies? Does that approach not limit the field to those who might prefer and be better suited to the technical role, entertainment publicity, and other public relations roles less rooted in business management?

Implications

The future existence of the public relations function is at stake, Are we to become a fully-recognized and accepted management function? Or should we play a support staff role, implementing the strategic decisions of others through communication campaigns? These questions are not small ones; they drive to the heart of the matter of the credibility of the public relations function as a field that began with less-than-credible pursuits. For public relations to progress as a profession or management discipline, this ideological and pedagogical issue must be resolved.

In this study, university students of diverse majors, who are socialized by the news media and entertainment media were studied. These students often were socialized to accept an incomplete and often inaccurate view of public relations, portraying the field as less diverse, management-oriented, and strategic or research and knowledge based than it is in actuality. These conceptions, most often depicted in entertainment and news media, remain un-counteracted by the public relations industry. Future leaders and influencers are subject to these misconceptions that are perpetuated by the mass media, including tomorrow's private sector and governmental leaders, educators, CEOs and members of top management, lawyers and judges, health care providers, administrators, lobbyists, and so on. Little difference was seen among the focus groups held with general communication majors and with public relations majors. Public relations majors held the misconceptions discussed herein a bit less frequently than communication majors or university students of any major. The discipline of public relations is doing a great disservice to itself by not countering the negative and inaccurate representations of the public relations practitioner as a professional manipulator, face of marketing, front of superficial image, or accidental professional, completely devoid of the ethical responsibility inherent in professionalism.

Potential public relations professionals, students, and educators are affected by these representations and either drawn to the field or repulsed by these depictions. From these data, it appears that what is needed for the future professionalism, credibility, and management stature of public relations is education about the function and its core responsibilities. What is needed is for public relations educators and professionals, especially industry associations, to use their expertise to conduct public relations on behalf of the function of public relations.

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Adapting the PZB Service Quality Model to Reputation Risk Analysis and the Implications for Corporate Communication

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Organizations put their reputations at risk when they misunderstand what their stakeholders expect from them. This produces what Sethi (1977) refers to as the legitimacy gap. A legitimacy gap is that chasm between what an organization believes and does and what its key publics think it should do and believe. A legitimacy gap can have a profound and immediate impact on image and in the long run reputation. People expect specific behavior from an organization regarding societal issues or questions, and when an organization ignores or denigrates issues and in the worst case contributes to making conditions worse, stakeholders will react. The reaction can have negative consequences for the organization's reputation. In contrast, the same stakeholders can reward those organizations that contribute positively to societal issues. In other words, failure to fulfill expectations puts an organization's reputation at risk. However, fulfilling expectations is dependent on an organization being aware of what those expectations are.

This paper explores adapting the PZB Service Quality Model developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985) as an instrument for assessing reputation risk. The PZB model identifies five possible gaps that could exist between customers' service quality expectations and an organization's performance on service quality. Service quality is only one type of quality behavior expected or promised by an organization, and customers are only one stakeholder of an organization. It is reasonable to assume that the logic behind the model can be applied to all stakeholders. Thus in a revised model 'quality behavior' can be substituted for service quality and 'stakeholders' can be substituted for customers. The paper will suggest an adapted instrument for measuring the gaps between stakeholder quality expectations and organization performance.

Introduction

If reputation is so important for organizations, why do they continually end up in crises? Aren't they paying attention to the world around them? Aren't they aware of the consequences of their decisions and behavior? Are they picking up on danger signals? Do they pay attention to public opinion? Do they measure their stakeholders' perception of them? The answer to all of these questions may be 'no' for individual firms. But by answering no, these firms are putting their reputation in danger.

In a report from the British research and consulting firm Economist Intelligence Unit (2005) reputation risk was identified as the greatest threat to global business activities. The global survey from Aon in 2007 gave similar results. This is related to the fact that most business leaders believe reputation can provide a competitive advantage for their organization.

They also recognize that it is impossible to hide poor behavior; with today's technology bad news spreads like wildfire.

Obviously the optimum for an organization is to have a fault-free reputation and to never experience a crisis that puts their reputation in danger. This of course is nearly impossible: most organizations in their lifetimes with experience a crisis of some form. Therefore there is a risk for all organizations that events will occur that will damage their reputation.

Reputation Risk and Expectations

Brønn and Dowling (2008) make the point that risk is a natural phenomenon in the business world. It seems reasonable that we can extend this to the organizational world in general; meaning that any organization made up of a group of people making decisions is subject to risk. The authors identify five domains of risk. Operational risks occur as a result of how an organization goes about its business and policy implementation is deficient for achieving organizational goals. Capital risks are associated with investment decisions such as entering a new market, investing in technology, diversifying portfolios, etc. Accounting, taxation, compliance reporting and pressure from financial markets fall under financial risks. A fourth category of risk defined by the authors is social risk, a risk that what the organization is engaged in may cause harm. Some of these include obesity associated with the food industry, following poor advice from financial service firms, unsafe or costly drugs from pharmaceuticals, pollution by industry, and work-life balance of employees. The last classification of risk includes intangible risks associated with employees, databases, trademarks, core capabilities and intellectual property. All of these risks must be considered in the context of the type of organization but are applicable to any kind of organization.

Jolly (2003) defines reputation risk as 'the risk that the firm may be exposed to negative publicity about its business practices or internal control, which could have an impact on the liquidity or capital of the firm, or cause a change in its credit rating'. Scott and Walsham (2005) argue that this is a typical definition of risk with an emphasis on the impact on financial performance. They suggest a more encompassing definition of reputation risk as "the potential that actions or events negatively associate an organization with consequences that affect aspects of what humans value" (p. 311). This definition is broad enough to include issues that could be considered beyond the narrow concerns of shareholder value to accommodate social, political, and ethical concerns from a wide range of stakeholders.

According to Scott and Walsham, risk places a focus on distinguishing between reality and possibility, while reputation is about assessing and anticipating an organization's performance. Their commonality is the underlying concern of *expectations*. Sethi (1977) advanced this thinking when he asserted in 1977, that organizations put their reputations at risk when they misunderstand what their stakeholders expect from them. This produces what he refers to as a legitimacy gap, the chasm between what an organization believes and does and what its key publics think it should do and believe. 'Legitimacy gap theory' states that society expects a certain behavior from organizations regarding their role and when an organization ignores, oversees or perhaps contributes to making society worse, society will react producing a legitimacy gap that can have a profound and immediate impact on image and in the long run reputation.

Legitimacy

Vidaver-Cohen and Brønn (2008) review organizational legitimacy and stakeholder engagement, drawing heavily on the work of Suchman (1995), who provides an oft quoted definition of legitimacy as the "generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions" (p. 574). This perspective argues that corporations exist as long as their value system is congruent with that of the society in which it operates (Dowling and Pfeffer, 1975; Lindblom, 1994).

Legitimacy is important for the success of both individual organizations and the industries to which they belong (see Deephouse and Suchman 2008). Legitimacy improves ability to compete for resources, exert authority and acquire stakeholder approval (Rao, 1994). It provides a crucial "reservoir of support" during times of organizational or industry crisis (Deephouse and Suchman, 2008). And the loss of legitimacy can threaten the long-term survival of both organizations and industries, suggesting that preserving legitimacy is one of the most important tasks a business leader may face (Oliver, 1992).

According to Pfeffer and Salancik's Resource Dependency Theory (1978), legitimacy is seen as an "operational resource that organizations extract, often competitively, from their environments and which they employ in pursuit of their goals" (Suchman, 1995 p. 576). This is a more strategic perspective that assumes greater managerial control over legitimation processes. Organizations can build and preserve legitimacy through pro-active efforts to "instrumentally manipulate and deploy evocative symbols in order to garner societal support" (Suchman, 1995 p. 572) and by using "verbal accounts or explanations to avoid blame or gain credit for controversial events" (Elsbach, 1994 p.)

Suchman (1995) identifies three main types of organizational legitimacy: Pragmatic Legitimacy, Moral Legitimacy, and Cognitive Legitimacy each of which emphasizes a different aspect of organization-environment "fit". *Pragmatic Legitimacy* is earned by serving interests and meeting expectations of specific stakeholder groups, regardless of whether these interests and expectations are shared by the public at large. According to Suchman (1995), pragmatic legitimacy can sometimes be 'purchased' through concrete rewards to specific stakeholders. He identifies three dimensions of Pragmatic Legitimacy:

- Exchange Legitimacy — attributed to an organization or industry by stakeholders who believe it meets their expectations for value creation.
- Influence Legitimacy – attributed to an organization or industry by stakeholders who believe it will respond consistently to their interests.
- Dispositional Legitimacy – attributed to an organization or industry by stakeholders who believe its leaders share their values and beliefs.

Moral Legitimacy refers to perceptions of congruence between various aspects of organizational performance and societal expectations for moral conduct appropriate to the specific organization. Suchman suggests four dimensions of Moral Legitimacy in organizations:

- Consequential Legitimacy - Accomplishing goals that serve the public interest.
- Procedural Legitimacy - Adopting processes and procedures that reflect shared moral values in the larger social environment.

- Structural Legitimacy - Creating systems and structures that ensure compliance with prevailing ethical standards.
- Personal Legitimacy - Demonstrating integrity and trustworthy behavior among organizational leaders and representatives

Moral legitimacy, according to Suchman, rests “not on judgments about whether a given activity benefits the evaluator, but rather on judgments about whether the activity is 'the right thing to do.' These judgments, in turn, usually reflect beliefs about whether the activity effectively promotes societal welfare, as defined by the audience's socially constructed value system" (Suchman, 1995, p. 579)

Organizations and industries can attain *Cognitive Legitimacy* by conforming so consistently with established models of form and function that they are perceived as "necessary or inevitable based on some taken-for-granted cultural account" (Suchman, 1995, p. 582). Two dimensions of Cognitive Legitimacy are proposed:

- *Comprehensibility* -- Organizational forms and functions are predictable and plausible – consistently fulfilling audience expectations for all organizational entities of the same type.
- *Taken-for-Grantedness* – The form and function of an organizational entity is so permanent and inevitable that no other alternative is plausible.

The legitimacy perspective thus makes it the responsibility of company management to monitor societal values and to ensure the organization is perceived to function in a manner in keeping with those values. Ultimately, according to the view of cognitive legitimacy, these routines would be entrenched within the organization in such a manner that it becomes an automatic part of management routines. As noted by Zyglidopoulos (2003), under this view stakeholders can not conceive of ‘a situation where the firm’s behavior could be other than what it is’ (p. 74).

In their review of the literature on reputation and legitimacy, Deephouse and Carter (2005) assert that both concepts are similar in that they are 1) social constructions (with stakeholders evaluating organizations), 2) are linked with similar antecedents (such as size, financial performance, strategic alliances or regulatory compliance) and 3) create an improved ability to acquire resources. For Beddington et al. (2008), however, the two constructs differ in how they are assessed and the dimensions on which they are assessed. As they state, reputation can be attached to any organizational attribute and the simple act of landscaping a firm’s headquarters could enhance its reputation. According to Walsham and Scott, the relationship between expectations and reputation is nevertheless key as it is imperative that there is congruence between how the organization sees its reputation and the reality of the firm.

Legitimacy gaps

As noted previously, Sethi in 1977 introduced the proposition that legitimacy gap is created when there is a chasm between what an organization believes and does and what its key publics think it should do and believe. This is problematic for organizations, as ‘gaps in society’s expectations of an organization and society’s perceptions of this behavior can create a problem with the perceptions of the legitimacy of the organization itself’ (Bridges and Nelson

200, p. 102). As Heath and Coombs (2008) describe it, when legitimacy gaps widen, stakeholders' desire to correct – or punish – the firms increases. This may include selling stock, activism, or boycotts. Conversely, society can reward those organizations who contribute positively to society.

Heath and Coombs (2006) see the legitimacy gap as a 'powerful way of examining the extent to which an organization's interests align with the interests of its markets, audiences and publics' (p. 267). Heath and Coombs view legitimacy gaps through the lens of issues management, which they say seeks to reduce the legitimacy gap. This is because issues management helps organizations know what their markets, audience and publics expect of them. They can then try to not violate these expectations. However, while the researchers imply that legitimacy gaps are results of planning, communication, decision-making, etc., they provide no overall suggestion for a gap analysis from an organizational perspective.

Zyglidopoulos (2003) also approaches legitimacy gaps through the lens of issue management, specifically the issue life-cycle. He argues that as issues progress through various stages, society experiences changing expectations as new solutions and standards evolve to satisfy expectations. It is during this process that attention is directed to corporations who are complying with new standards or are trying to comply more than others. These firms thus become the behavioral examples. Focus in this research is the impact on reputation from either lagging or leading compliance with expectations.

It is still unclear whether acquiring and maintaining legitimacy is controllable by managers (Zyglidopoulos 2003). Suchman (1995) states that some (strategic legitimacy researchers) see managers as assuming a high level of control over legitimacy processes, while others (institutional legitimacy researchers) see it as a by-product of external processes and out of the control of management. As we learned from the discussion on legitimacy, and as implied in issues management, in order for legitimacy to be embedded within organizations it must be part of managers' routines. To that end, this paper introduces a gap model as an instrument for assessing reputation risk that takes into consideration both stakeholder expectations and management behavior.

The PZB Model

The service quality model known as the PZB Model was first developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985) (see also Zeithaml et al.) to attempt to define and model service quality at a time when there was little focus on the construct. As part of their exploration they concluded that quality involves a comparison of expectations with performance, and thus satisfaction with services is related to fulfilling expectations. Several studies are cited that conclude for example that satisfaction is related to confirmation or disconfirmation of expectations (Smith and Houston 1982), and that consumers compare the service they expect with perceptions of the service they receive (Gronroos 1982).

Through in-depth interviews with executives, a comprehensive case study and an exploratory study consisting of interviews with an extended number of executives, the researchers were able to reveal five 'gaps' regarding executives perceptions of service quality delivery and the tasks associated with service delivery to customers. The first four gaps are related to the firm itself and the fifth to consumers.

The five gaps, which are explained in detail below, are illustrated in figure 1.

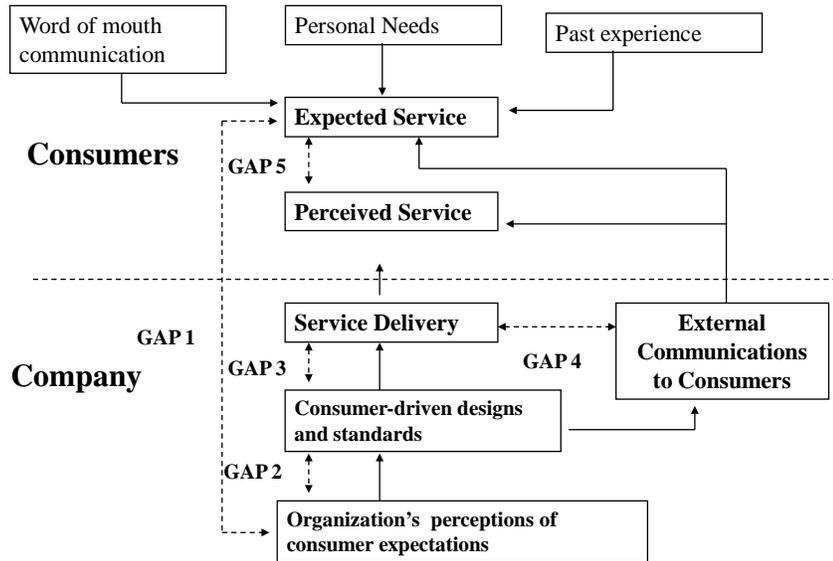


Figure 1 PZB Gap Model

Gap I: Knowledge gap: The difference between consumer expectations and management *perceptions* of consumer expectations.

Gap 2: Standard gap: The difference between management perceptions of consumer expectations and service specifications.

Gap 3: Behavior gap: The difference between service specifications and the service actually delivered.

Gap 4: Communication gap: The difference between service delivered and what is communicated about the service to stakeholders.

Gap 5: Gap between service and expectations: The discrepancy between consumers' expectations of the service and perceptions of the actual service performance.

Gap 1, the knowledge gap, occurs because the organization does not *know* what consumers expect. Organizations are ignorant of consumer expectations or they have erroneous perceptions of their expectations. This can be the result of inadequate research on consumers, lack of upward communication in the organization, not having a focus on relationships with key consumers, excess levels of management that inhibit communication and understanding. A

knowledge gap can also be a result of organizations not monitoring the behavior of consumers. The standard gap, gap 2, is a result of not specifying service that satisfies consumers' expectations of the organization. It does not exhibit the expected correct service or it may have poor standards of service well below those expected of them by consumers. This can be compounded by the absence of service quality that is actively demanded of organizations by their consumers. This is easily evident in customer relationships but may also include ethical guidelines. The lack of emphasis on building relationships that can lead to dialogue is also an issue here.

Gap 3, a mismatch between actual delivered service and service specifications can occur because there are no human resource policies regarding what standards should be in place and followed. However, it may be that the consumers themselves have not been clear on what sort of standards they expect from the organization. Another issue is – who does what? Who is in charge of mapping and keeping track of these expectations and seeing to it that they are fulfilled?

Performance that does not deliver on promises, sometimes referred to as not walking the talk, leads to gap 4, the communications gap, the difference between delivered service and what is communicated. Organizations may exaggerate promises or perhaps not even provide information in their external communications. This gap can occur due to the lack of integration of communication within the organization – not knowing what one element or unit is saying to whom externally. It can also come from over promising. The organization basically makes promises they can't keep thus setting themselves up for failure by communicating a too rosy picture of what they can deliver.

Gap 5 occurs when the perception of the organization's service does not match the service that is expected of the organization. Expected service is influenced by the organization's external communication, word of mouth, the personal needs of the consumers, and consumers' past experience with the organization. Arguably this is the 'ultimate' test for the organization as this gap depends on the size and direction of the other four gaps, i.e. on how well the organization listens to its consumers, how it interprets their desires and wishes, how well it delivers what it promises and lastly how credible its communications are. Consumers expect certain service from an organization, often because they are promised this through the organization's communication. They also have a perception (image) of how the organization performs this service. The organization, for its part, delivers service based on, at the worst, no knowledge of what their customers expect or how they perceive the organization.

Parasuraman et al. (1985) initially generated a list of 10 criteria for evaluating service quality, defined as the difference between expected service and perceived service. The ten criteria include:

- Reliability – consistency of performance and dependability
- Responsiveness – willingness or readiness of employees to provide service
- Competence – possession of the required skills and knowledge to perform the service
- Access – approachability and ease of contact
- Courtesy – politeness, respect, consideration and friendliness
- Communication – keeping customers informed in language they can understand and listening to them
- Credibility – trustworthiness, believability, honesty

- Security – freedom from danger, risk or doubt
- Understanding/knowing the customer – make an effort to understand needs
- Tangibles – physical evidence of service

Ultimately the criteria were narrowed to comprise five generic dimensions to measure gap 5, perceptions of service delivered and expected service: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles. The assumption is that service quality is achieved if the gap between customers' expectations and subsequent perceptions is large and positive. (The magnitude and direction of each gap has an impact on service quality.) In this model, the expectations are set by the customer, while perceptions are shaped by the firm's performance, or behavior (Niranjan and Metri, 2008). These criteria and the PZB Model have been applied in developing a SERVQUAL scale for measuring the difference between perceived service quality and expected service quality and are widely cited in marketing literature. Both have also enjoyed widespread use in industry (Kang and James 2004).

Stake/RepQual?

In our revised model (figure 2) we use the word behavior as a substitute for service quality. We also substitute stakeholders for customers. Service quality is one of many types of behavior we expect from or are promised by an organization, and customers are only one stakeholder of the organization and it is reasonable to assume that the logic behind the model can be applied to all stakeholders. This logic is supported by Vidaver-Cohen (2008), who refers to the reputation variables identified by Reputation Institute's RepTrak as quality dimensions that stakeholders expect from an organization. In other words, people expect quality in products, service, management, financial performance, working environment, social responsibility and innovation. Stakeholder expectations are also influenced by institutional factors such as moral values, cultural norms, legal demands and generally acceptable performance norms in the particular sector. Similarly stakeholders are influenced by reputational rankings in the media and opinion leaders.

Our new gaps thus become:

Gap 1: Knowledge gap: The difference between stakeholder expectations and management perceptions of stakeholder expectations.

Gap 2: Standard gap: The difference between management perceptions of stakeholder expectations and behavior specifications.

Gap 3: Behavior gap: The difference between behavior specifications and the behavior actually delivered.

Gap 4: Communication gap: The difference between behavior delivered and what is communicated about the behavior to stakeholders.

Gap 5: Gap between behavior and expectations: The discrepancy between stakeholders' expectations of the behavior and perceptions of the actual behavior performance.

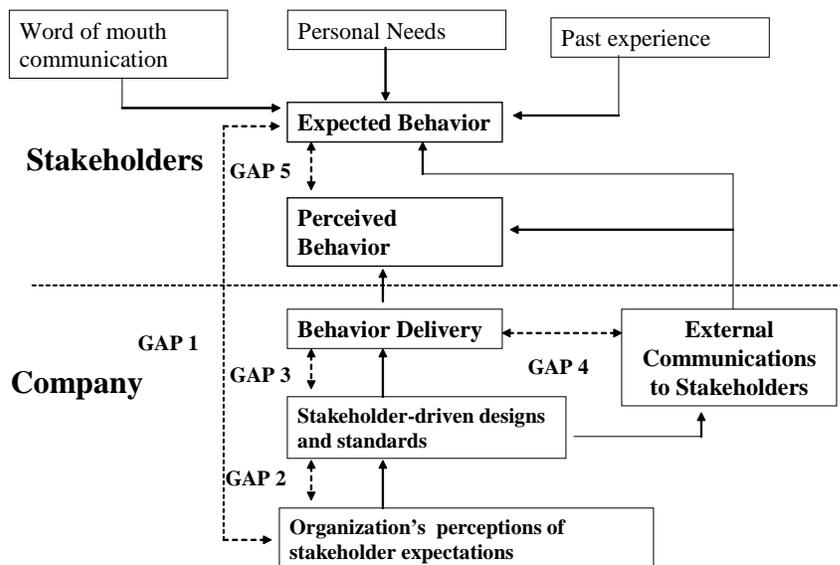


Figure 2 Revised PAB Model

If we look at the gaps and their measurement, we can also see how the model can be adapted. For instance, according to Zeithaml et al. (1988), the size of gap 1, the knowledge gap, is related to a) the extent of marketing research orientation, b) extent and quality of upward communication and c) levels of management. It is reasonable to suggest that marketing research orientation has similar characteristics to issues management, that successful IM programs are dependent on accurate communication, normally from all levels in the organization, and that too many levels of management can create a barrier to sharing information. These are not new concepts in public relations and stakeholder studies.

Gap 2 is related to management commitment to quality, goal setting, task standardization and perception of feasibility. These constructs can be influenced by resources committed to quality, defining quality in ways that people can understand, translating management's perceptions into tasks that can be routinized, and the belief that the goals are realistic (feasible). The standards also optimally should be influenced by stakeholders' expectations. Gap 3, quality specification and delivery gap, is dependent on teamwork, employee-job fit, technology-job fit, perceived control, role conflict, role ambiguity, and supervisory control systems. Nearly all of these factors are human resources or internal communication challenges. For example, Zeithaml et al. (1988) describe role ambiguity as impacted by frequency and quality of downward communication and constructive feedback. Teamwork is dependent on instilling a cooperative atmosphere and a feeling of involvement and commitment in addition to a feeling that upper management genuinely care about employees.

Similarly, the size of gap 4, communication gap, is related to a) extent of horizontal communication and b) propensity to overpromise. When there is little coordination of communication and a feeling of a need to overpromise the gap increases.

Because these four gaps are under the control of the organization, it is possible to adapt several components of the PZB model for these areas. Although to date there appears to be little evidence of attempts to measure gaps 1 through 4, the managerial aspects of the model. It would seem that these are the areas that mirror cognitive legitimacy, a situation where behavior becomes routine and part of an organization's identity to such a degree that they wouldn't consider behaving in another way. This area deserves much more attention in developing the model for application in a stakeholder (non customer) application.

The direct application of the model to gap 5 is somewhat more challenging. The question is if the SERVQUAL attributes reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles can be adapted to our new model to measure perceptions of 'delivered' behavior and expectations. The variables have been tested through other research and have been shown to be reliable indicators of satisfaction with service. A review of the questionnaire used in SERVQUAL indicates, however, that it can not be used as is for non-customer stakeholders. As mentioned previously perceived behavior is impacted by actions of the organization whereas expected behavior is stakeholder-driven and influenced by word of mouth, personal needs and past experiences with the organization. A careful review of the literature and previous research, particularly in the csr field, is necessary to fully develop this part of the model.

Kang and James (2004) used the following adaptation of the SERVQUAL attributes for their own research.

Reliability

1. Providing services as promised.
2. Dependability in handling customers' service performed.
3. Performing the services right the first time.
4. Providing services at the promised time.
5. Maintaining error-free records.

Responsiveness

1. Keeping customers informed about when services will be performed.
2. Prompt service to customers.
3. Willing to help customers.
4. Readiness to respond to customers' requests.

Assurance

1. Employees who instill confidence in customers.
2. Making customers feel safe in their transaction.

3. Employees who are consistently courteous.
4. Knowledgeable employee to answer customer questions.

Empathy

1. Giving customers individual attention.
2. Employees who deal with customers in a caring fashion.
3. Having the customer's best interest at heart.
4. Employees who understand the needs of their customers.
5. Convenient business hours.

Tangibles

1. Modern equipment.
2. Visually appealing facilities.
3. Employees who have a neat, professional appearance.
4. Visually appealing materials associated with the service^a.

Much more work needs to be done to fully investigate the possibilities of adapting this model into a type of legitimacy gap model that can be used to measure behavior satisfaction as expected by numerous stakeholders not just customers. However, if successful the model would provide researchers with a platform on which to build empirical studies of the relationship between stakeholders and their expectations of organizations, a type of BEHAVQUAL. This would enhance reputational risk analysis as it would allow much deeper empirical analysis of not only where specific gaps are occurring but also what are the drivers of expectations versus perceptions for individual stakeholder groups for each 'danger' zone for the organization. Further, by adapting methods already employed by researchers studying gaps between service quality expectations and perceptions it will be possible to build multi-dimensional, multi-level models of behavior quality.

Closing the Gaps and Implications for Communications

Legitimacy theory has a heavy communication component. For example, according to Massey (2001), the strategic approach to legitimacy emphasizes the ways that organizations strategically manipulate symbols, through communication behavior, to achieve legitimacy. According to Sethi (1977), the legitimacy gap can be narrowed through three business strategies: 1) do not change performance but change public perception through education and information, 2) if changing perceptions is not possible, change the symbols used to describe business performance, making it congruent with public perception (no change in performance is called for) and 3) if both 1 and 2 are ineffective, change performance to match society's expectations. Two of these suggestions (1 and 2) imply that the organization should try to close the legitimacy gap by merely communicating that it has changed its performance, not necessarily by actually

doing so. As we have discussed previously in this paper, a strategy of not changing performance, particularly if it is poor, would be quickly unveiled and would, in the end, have disastrous consequences for an organization's reputation.

Bebbington et al. (2008) maintain that legitimacy theory proposes four ways in which an organization can obtain, repair or maintain legitimacy based on Lindblom (1993). They are:

- 1) Corporate social disclosure to communicate changes in output, methods, and goals that have been made in response to stakeholder expectations
- 2) Demonstrate the appropriateness of the output, methods and goals to the public through education and information
- 3) Identifying organizational output, methods and goals with the perception of what is appropriate without really conforming
- 4) Attempt to bring popular views into conformity with organizational output, methods and goals.

Similar to Sethi, numbers 2 through 4 do not require any real change in behavior. These authors suggest that many of these strategies are used in today's CSR reporting/disclosure.

Heath and Coombs (2006) offer seven strategic responses for closing gaps, one of which is performance-related in that it calls for the organization to develop a plan that results in operations that are supported by stakeholders. The six remaining strategies are communication in nature, such as informing, arguing, collaborative decision-making, and co-creating meaning. These last two are in the spirit of legitimacy management viewed as a dialogic process and not a monologic organizational activity. This approach, according to Massey, 'requires ongoing communication between the organization and its stakeholders, not one-way transmission of information from the organization to stakeholders. It involves strategic communications targeted toward specific organizational audiences, and it encourages participation of organizational stakeholders' (p. 156).

The quote from Heath (2006) summarizes the approach advocated by Massey:

To help society to become more fully functioning, managements of organizations (for profit, nonprofit, and governmental) must demonstrate the characteristics that foster legitimacy, such as being reflective; being willing to consider and instrumentally advance others' interests; being collaborative in decision making; being proactive and responsive to others' communication and opinion needs; and working to meet or exceed the requirements of relationship management, including being a good corporate citizen. (p. 100)

As we saw, the PZB model offers specific suggestions for closing the gaps, many of which involve communication. For example, suggestions for closing gap 1 include carrying out more research on stakeholders, more interactions between managers and various stakeholders and better upward communication from those in the organization who are dealing with the stakeholders to managers. Closing gap 2 can be done by setting goals for high standards in all behavior, being innovative, ensuring that high behavior standards are the norm within the organization, and measuring performance. Better internal communications and human resource

intervention can assist in closing gap 3, including information and training, and methods for empowering employees such as providing incentives.

Most importantly, the PZB model has a strong external communication component illustrated by gap 4, the difference between perceived behavior delivery and promised behavior. It is this gap that legitimacy theory comprises and is reflected in the statements of Sethi, Massey, Heath and Coombs and Heath. Media advertising and other communications affect stakeholder expectations and discrepancies between what is promised and delivered can impact perceptions of behavior quality (Zeithaml et al.1988).

Legitimacy theory has to do with matching organizational behavior with society's expectations of their behavior. Today these behaviors encompass many more areas than delivering good product service. As illustrated previously, they comprise investing wisely, treating employees fairly, supporting the local community, in short, as Heath (2006) notes, being good corporate citizens, otherwise known as corporate social responsibility. Society's expectations and perceptions are influenced by the external communications of the organization, often referred to as corporate identity, part of which encompasses csr communication.

Morsing (2006) defines csr communication as communication that is created and transmitted by the organization itself about its work in csr. CSR-wire, a global news agency for csr, defines csr communication as the process as firm goes through to inform their stakeholders about their actual engagements in csr activities. According to Hutton (2001), csr communication has become the third largest expense item in the communication budget of large organizations. Perhaps the model can serve to bring together streams of literature in communication, organizational theory, strategy, HR, as well as social marketing and serve as a basic for providing more insight into achieving cognitive legitimacy.

Conclusions

This paper is a first attempt at adapting the PZB Service Quality Model to Reputation Risk Analysis. We made the case the service quality is just one type of behavior that 'society' expects from an organization, and customers are just one stakeholder. It is thus logical that the model can be applied to measure quality in many types of behavior with many types of stakeholders. The argument for adapting the model is based on legitimacy gap theory, which states that society expects a certain behavior from organizations and when organizations do not fulfill these expectations they put their reputations at risk (at worse even their entire existence). It is thus important for organizations to understand where the 'gaps' are in their behavior and perceptions. This model looks at behavior standards, delivery of those standards, management processes internal to the organization, as well internal and external communication. Thus the model is ideally suited for furthering research in csr communication.

The work on adapting the model is in its early stages. A next step will be operationalizing the attributes for a stakeholder focus as opposed to a customer one. It will be necessary to test the resulting instrument. After that data can be collected on the indicators through cross-sectional studies employing a number of different statistical analyses.

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We'll Get Right Back to You: The Effect of Responsiveness, Accessibility, and Information Utility on Journalist Perceptions of Organizational Media Relations Efforts

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Introduction

Previous research has indicated that the public relations-media relationship is rife with antagonism, conflict, and misperceptions and based on different needs and orientations (Cameron, Sallot, & Curtin, 1997; Ryan & Martinson, 1988; Shin & Cameron, 2004). This state of affairs reflects the inherent conflict of interest that exists within the relationship between the two professions and why the public relations-media relationship has been described as “adversarial...at its core” (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2000, p. 323). At the same time, Sallot and Johnson (2006) propose that “the crux of the newsgathering process is the relationship between these groups facilitating transactional information exchanges that become the news of the day” (p. 151). Therefore, it should be a priority for public relations practitioners to foster healthy relationships with the media as a means of strengthening the organization’s overall media relations efforts and to earn favorable media coverage. Two-way symmetrical communication has been proposed as an ideal means for fostering these types of mutually beneficial relationships (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002; Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2006). The principles necessary for fostering dialogic communication can be considered analogous to two-way symmetrical communication (Kent & Taylor, 1998; Kent & Taylor, 2002; Kent, Taylor, & White, 2003; Taylor, Kent, & White, 2001) and suggest strategies for improving the public relations-media relationship. Specifically, providing stakeholders with useful information and utilizing a dialogic loop may allow public relations practitioners to be perceived as a responsive, accessible, and useful resource to the media.

This paper examines, over a five-year period, the evolution of journalists’ perception of the media relations efforts of Southwest Airlines, a Fortune 500 company renowned for practicing exemplary public relations. Quantitative measurement and analysis is coupled with an in-depth qualitative investigation to understand the media’s perceptions of Southwest’s public relations effectiveness, media relations value, use of two-way symmetrical communication, perceptions of communication channels, and perceptions of the principles necessary for generating dialogic communication—specifically in regards to utility of information, accessibility, and responsiveness. The longitudinal study afforded opportunity for three biennial surveys of key national journalists who routinely report on Southwest Airlines. Synthesizing data garnered through relationship, utility and perception scales as well as robust open-ended responses, results support and advance media relations best practices by providing insight into how Southwest Airlines consistently garners favorable media coverage by fostering favorable associations with journalists. Ultimately, the study results provide foundation for

recommendations to corporate public relations practitioners in their efforts to secure and maintain propitious media relationships.

Literature Review

Media relations is one of the primary functions of public relations practice. Properly managing the relationship with the media is an important strategic objective for media relations professionals given the historically contentious nature of the practitioner-media relationship. Bridges and Nelson (2000) acknowledge that “media personnel are generally very wary of being manipulated, and those in an organization responsible for media relations should carefully cultivate and develop these relationships by acquiring a reputation for both truth and availability... individuals attempting to establish media relations have an obligation to provide accurate and timely information and to respond to inquiries in the same manner... they also have an obligation to avoid flooding the media with time-wasting, self-serving material that has no news value” (p. 108). Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman, and Toth (2009) stress the importance of the relationship between public relations practitioners and journalists in achieving beneficial outcomes for both parties: media coverage for the organization and providing resources to journalists. To facilitate a healthy practitioner-media relationship, Broom (2009) suggests five basic rules for effective media relations: (1) practitioners should act honestly and ethically when dealing with journalists, (2) practitioners should help journalists do their job, (3) practitioners should not badger journalists to cover a particular story or to frame a story in a specific way, (4) practitioners should never ask journalists not to cover a story that may be embarrassing to the organization, and (5) practitioners should ensure that they are sending materials to the appropriate journalist and that the stories being pitched are considered relevant and newsworthy. Broom (2009) places particular importance on media relations practitioners providing journalists with good service since “the quickest, surest way to gain the cooperation of journalists is to provide them with newsworthy, interesting, and timely stories and pictures that they want, when they want them, and in a form they can readily use” (p. 257). Following these guidelines assumes that a media relations function will prove to be effective at advancing an organization’s public relations objectives, which consequently should contribute to organizational success. For media relations efforts, positive outcomes of these quality practitioner-media relationships might manifest themselves as perceptions of effectiveness by journalists, greater effectiveness in pitching stories to journalists, and awareness of specific organizational efforts (e.g., introduction of a new service or initiative).

Excellence Theory provides a theoretical framework for investigating practices that would contribute to media relations, public relations, and overall organizational effectiveness. The theory proposes that “public relations is a unique management function that helps an organization interact with the social and political components of its environment... [organizations] have relationships with individuals and groups that help set the organization’s goals, define what the organization is and does, and affect the success of its strategic decisions and behaviors” (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2006, p. 51). The development of the Excellence Theory therefore represents an effort to establish a general theory of public relations that explains how, why, and to what extent public relations contributes to organizational effectiveness and that provides recommendations as to how public relations at both the functional and program level should be practiced. Programs and departments that engage in excellent practice should

achieve positive outcomes for the organization in terms of stronger, longer-lasting relationships with strategically important publics such as the media. One of the key propositions of the Excellence Theory is that excellent public relations programs and functions are based around the two-way symmetrical model of public relations practice (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2006).

Grunig and Hunt (1984) suggested four models of public relations practice: (1) press agency, (2) public information, (3) two-way asymmetrical, and (4) two-way symmetrical. The two-way symmetrical model has been proposed as an ideal means for fostering mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002; Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2006). Most of the activities engaged in by public relations practitioners that the media find objectionable are behaviors that would be indicative of a public relations function practiced using the press agency or public information models (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). The use of two-way models of media relations may represent a step in the right direction toward building mutually beneficial public relations practitioner-media relationships and addressing some of the criticisms that arise on both sides of the relationship. According to Grunig and Hunt (1984) practitioners utilizing the two-way asymmetric model of media relations “set objectives for what information they want the media to disseminate. In contrast to press agents, however, they understand news values and package the information in ways journalists will accept” (p. 227). Problems may still arise when applying the two-way asymmetrical model “because media relations specialists usually try to control coverage of their organization and to limit it to organizational public relations objectives. Journalists frequently want open access to an organization, something the asymmetric model may try to limit” (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 227).

The two-way symmetrical model differs from the asymmetrical model in that practitioners utilizing it attempt to balance the interests of the organization against those of the public (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2006). The model places a premium on understanding publics and then working to reach outcomes that create mutual benefit for both parties in the relationship. An excellent public relations department should not only employ the two-way symmetrical model of public relations practice at the functional level but also seek to build public relations programs to communicate with strategically important publics, such as the media, and base these programs on two-way symmetrical practice. To this end, practitioners managing the public relations function must not only have an appreciation for the two-way symmetrical model but must also possess the knowledge and skills required to implement programs based on two-way symmetrical communication (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2006). For a media relations program, this would entail not only listening to journalists and being responsive to their needs but also fostering greater access to the organization and providing useful information in a form that journalists need and want (Grunig & Hunt, 1984).

One of the benefits of two-way symmetrical practice is the likelihood that it will foster dialogue between an organization and its publics. Dialogic communication represents “any negotiated exchange of ideas and opinions” (Kent & Taylor, 1998, p. 325) and has been proffered as an “ethical and practical approach” (Kent & Taylor, 2002, p. 21) to public relations that contributes to the formation of satisfying, long-term relationships built on trust and mutual understanding. Therefore, dialogic communication represents an important outcome of two-way symmetrical communication, i.e., dialogue should be the product of practicing the two-way symmetrical model of public relations (Kent & Taylor, 1998; Kent & Taylor, 2002).

The communication principles necessary for fostering dialogue are somewhat analogous to principles of two-way symmetrical communication (Kent & Taylor, 1998; Kent & Taylor, 2002); these principles suggest strategies for improving the public relations-media relationship. In an effort to clarify the role of dialogue in public relations, Kent and Taylor (2002) identified five features that they proposed would result in a dialogic orientation for public relations practice: “*mutuality*, or the recognition of organization-public relationships; *propinquity*, or the temporality and spontaneity of interactions with publics; *empathy*, or the supportiveness and confirmation of public goals and interests; *risk*, or the willingness to interact with individuals and publics on their own terms; and finally, *commitment*, or the extent to which an organization gives itself over to dialogue, interpretation, and understanding in its interactions with publics” (Kent & Taylor, 2002, pp. 25-26). Subsequently, Kent and Taylor (2002) proposed three ways in which public relations practitioners could facilitate dialogue in their interactions with publics: (1) by building interpersonal relationships with publics, (2) by building mediated relationships with publics, specifically noting the potential to do so online, and (3) by setting up a process for communication with publics that will result in dialogue.

Michael Kent, Maureen Taylor, and William White have also extended the understanding of the dialogic principles necessary for building and maintaining relationships between organizations and publics through a series of studies investigating the identification and use of dialogic principles by organizations online (Kent & Taylor, 1998; Taylor, Kent, & White, 2001; Kent, Taylor, & White, 2003). Kent and Taylor (1998) proposed the following principles for facilitating relationship building in an online, mediated space: (1) providing a feedback loop to facilitate dialogue, (2) providing useful information to publics, including the media, (3) providing incentives for visitors to return in order to continue engaging in dialogue over time, (4) providing an easy to use interface for visitors (i.e., to make information easily accessible), and (5) conservation of visitors (i.e., maintaining engagement in the dialogue). Seltzer and Mitrook (2006) extended the investigation of the use of dialogic communication in online relationship building through an analysis of weblogs and found that many of the dialogic principles were utilized to a greater extent by weblogs than via traditional Web sites.

In summary, these perspectives provide a basis for exploring how the media relations function in an excellent public relations department could be practiced to facilitate mutually beneficial public relations practitioner-media relationships. Specifically, media relations practitioners should provide journalists with useful, organized, and relevant information; should utilize a dialogic loop in order to be responsive to journalists’ needs, and make both themselves and organizational officers accessible to the media. These principles should be applied both in an interpersonal context and in mediated spaces such as Web sites and weblogs. Following these principles may allow public relations practitioners to foster stronger relationships with media that lead to organizational effectiveness. This could take the form of perceptions of effective media relations practice among journalists and positive organizational outcomes in terms of favorable media coverage. To investigate the connection between excellent media relations practice and favorable media relations outcomes, this study analyzes journalists’ perceptions of the media relations function at Southwest Airlines, an organization that has been consistently recognized for outstanding public relations.

Southwest Airlines Public Relations

Southwest Airlines (SWA) is a Fortune 500 company with headquarters in Dallas, Texas. SWA employs 35,000 people, operates a fleet of over 500 aircraft, and services 64 cities with over 3,000 flights a day, making it the largest domestic carrier in the United States. In 2008, *Fortune* recognized SWA for the twelfth year in a row in the magazine's annual corporate reputation survey; SWA is the only airline to appear in the list's top 20 and was recognized as the most admired airline in 2005 (Southwest Airlines, 2008).

Southwest Airlines Public Relations (SWA PR) has been repeatedly recognized for its expertise in corporate communications, media relations, and public relations practice. In 1999, The Texas Public Relations Association awarded SWA its top award, the Lone Star Award, for its commitment to practicing creative public relations. In 2000, *PR Week* named SWA's corporate communications department the top communication department in the nation. Other accolades include a Gold Quill award from the International Association of Business Communicators for outstanding media relations, a Public Relations Competition Platinum Award, and awards for "Best Blog" in 2007 and 2008 from *PR News* (Southwest Airlines, 2008; Southwest Airlines Media, 2009c). The company's "Adopt-A-Pilot Program" has won numerous awards since its inception in 1997, including a Silver Anvil Award from the Public Relations Society of America, a Golden Bell Public Relations Platinum Award, and a 2002 Katie Award from the Press Club of Dallas for Most Outstanding Media Relations Campaign (Southwest Airlines, 2009).

SWA PR's media relations function appears to be committed to being responsive to the needs of journalists. On its media Web site, SWA PR proclaims that it is "charged with ensuring members of the media get the information they need...any spokesperson can answer an inquiry when a journalist is on a deadline. Our goal is to be interchangeable for the media to ensure someone always is available" (Southwest Airlines, 2009a, para. 1). To this end, SWA PR operates a 24-hour hotline through which the media has access to an on-call public relations representative. SWA PR also has utilized the Web to reach out to the media, employing a variety of online resources including a media Web site and a weblog to communicate with – and potentially build a relationship with – journalists. The media site, swamedia.com, features downloadable press kits, fact sheets, backgrounders, a news release archive, photo and video galleries, management team biographies, speeches by SWA officials, helpful industry links, contact information for the public relations team, RSS feeds, current news, suggestions for story ideas, and options for signing up to receive news releases and news alerts via e-mail (Southwest Airlines, 2009b). In addition to a traditional media site, SWA also operates an award-winning weblog, "Nuts About Southwest" (blogsouthwest.com), which features RSS feeds, podcasts, options for uploading and downloading multimedia, and links to SWA social media profiles on YouTube, Flickr, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter (Nuts About Southwest, 2009). Many of these activities appear to implement the suggestions made by Grunig and Hunt (1984) as to how a media relations function might practice a two-way symmetrical model of public relations.

Through these tools, SWA PR seeks to answer the needs of the travel and business journalists who cover the airline industry. Lubbers (2005) points out that public relations practitioners and journalists are extremely dependent on each other in the travel and tourism industry, making the media relations function vital in facilitating this relationship. Additionally, many business reporters may not be adequately trained to cover business and financial news; this, coupled with the reticence of corporate executives to communicate openly with journalists,

especially in times of crisis, places added emphasis on public relations practitioners to play a boundary spanning role between the organization and the media by supplying reporters with access to officers within the organization and to ensure that business reporters have adequate background information about the organization (Wilcox & Cameron, 2007).

Hypotheses and Research Questions

Excellence theory posits that “excellent” public relations departments are not only managed to meet the needs of strategically important publics – such as the media – but that the practitioners within those departments should have a knowledge of, an appreciation for, and the ability to practice the two-way symmetrical model of public relations (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2006). Additionally, employing two-way symmetrical communication is a means for fostering an open, honest dialogic communication with external and internal publics (Kent & Taylor, 1998; Kent & Taylor, 2002).

Kent and Taylor (1998, 2002) identified principles intended to foster dialogue. Testing the prevalence of these dialogic principles in an excellent public relations department requires first identifying a department that is recognized as exemplary. With a department selected, investigations can then be made into the antecedents of the determinations. To establish that journalists’ perceptions of SWA PR mimic those of agencies applauding SWA PR efforts, the following hypothesis is posited to allow a foundation on which the antecedents of quality media relations can be investigated:

H₁: Journalists perceive SWA PR as an excellent PR department in comparison to other airlines’ PR departments.

As Excellence Theory posits that an excellent public relations department will practice a two-way symmetrical model of public relations that in turn will lead to organizational effectiveness (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2006), and in that two-way symmetrical communication built on dialogic principles of responsiveness, accessibility, information quality, and professionalism should lead to dialogic communication, the following hypotheses are forwarded to establish how the adherence of SWA PR to these standards are key to its public relations effectiveness:

H_{2a}: Journalists who perceive SWA PR as effective will perceive SWA PR’s media relations as responsive.

H_{2b}: Journalists who perceive SWA PR as effective will perceive SWA PR’s media relations as accessible.

H_{2c}: Journalists who perceive SWA PR as effective will perceive SWA PR’s media relations as providing quality communications.

H_{2d}: Journalists who perceive SWA PR as effective will perceive SWA PR’s media relations as professional.

To obtain a thorough understanding of what Southwest Airlines Public Relations does right (and wrong) in regards to their media relations efforts, the following research questions were investigated:

RQ₁: In what form do journalists want to receive materials from SWA PR?

Online communication tools, specifically Web sites and weblogs, have been proposed as avenues for facilitating dialogic communication and building healthy relationships between organizations and external publics (Kent & Taylor, 1998; Kent, Taylor, & White, 2003; Taylor, Kent, & White, 2001; Seltzer & Mitrook, 2006). Therefore, we were especially interested in how SWA PR utilized these channels in communicating with journalists. Therefore:

RQ₂: What role does SWA PR's online communication efforts play in their media relations efforts and are journalists utilizing these online channels?

Method

Project overview

Beginning in 2004, Southwest Airlines Public Relations contracted a faculty research team at a large Southwestern university's college of mass communication to investigate how key journalists see the PR efforts of the airline. Biennially from 2004 to 2008, the study has progressed through three installments in the ongoing project. While methodology has morphed from telephone survey in its first form to web surveys in the last two, efforts have been made to maintain consistency between questions from year to year in order to establish how perception has evolved over time. Likewise, the responses of individual journalists were tracked where possible to provide insight not only into how the media as a whole sees SWA PR but also to uncover how individual opinions changed.

Participants and Procedure by Year

In 2004, 26 telephone interviews were conducted with key journalists from March 5 through April 7. A list of 59 journalists outlined as key reporters covering the airlines was supplied by the SWA PR department. The journalists were business or travel reporters for newspapers and magazines throughout the United States. All journalists were telephoned a minimum of five times or until the journalist completed the interview or outright refused to be interviewed. Telephone messages were left on the answering machines or with assistants for all journalists not answering their telephones. While only seven journalists refused to be interviewed, 25 other journalists were not interviewed for a variety of reasons centering on the inability of researchers to personally contact the journalist and journalists migrating to new jobs. Prior to being contacted by the researchers, all journalists on the call list were sent a preliminary email by a SWA PR executive informing them of the study. Once contacted, journalists were guaranteed anonymity and directed through the audit questionnaire. The interview process required 20 to 30 minutes for completion. The final response rate was calculated at 44.1 %.

In 2006, the survey procedure was transformed from a telephone survey to a Web survey. The initial 2004 audit was conducted through personal interviews involving researchers who may have been viewed as having close ties to SWA personnel. Because one criticism of personal interview research centers on the fact that it is assumed respondents may be hesitant to speak poorly on topics thought to be dear to researchers (Fowler, 1993), the 2006 audit was designed to ensure that more candid perceptions of SWA PR were garnered. To this end, the 2006 audit employed Internet survey methodology where respondents could be promised confidentiality. For the 2006 survey, the SWA PR department provided the researchers with the names and contact information for 53 key journalists who routinely cover SWA. Twenty-eight of those were common to the 2004 list, the remainder we added after establishing themselves as of particular interest to the airlines. On May 19, each of the 53 journalists received an explanatory email from an SWA PR official stating that he/she would be contacted by a researcher who would extend an invitation to participate in a media audit. The potential respondents were assured that their participation and perceptions would be confidential and that the researcher would at no time link any individual comments provided to any one journalist. On May 24, a researcher contacted via email each journalist previously invited to participate in the audit. Each respondent was provided a link to the questionnaire and a password granting access. By June 8, 15 journalists had responded. A second reminder was distributed on June 9. On June 29, a SWA PR official distributed a third and final request for participation. By July 17, a total of 25 respondents had completed the survey (5 respondents also participated in the 2004 study), and data collection was halted. The final response rate was calculated at 47.2 %.

For the 2008 media audit, 67 key journalists who routinely cover SWA were invited to participate in an Internet survey. Fifteen of those were common to the 2004 and 2006 list; four were common to only the 2006 list. The remainder we added after establishing themselves as of particular interest to the airlines. SWA PR officials provided the names of all journalists and their contact information. On April 22, each of the 67 journalists received an explanatory email from an SWA PR official stating that he/she would be contacted by a researcher who would extend an invitation to participate in a media audit. The potential respondents were assured that their participation and perceptions would be confidential and that the researcher would at no time link any individual comments provided to any one journalist. On April 23, a researcher contacted via email each journalist previously invited to participate in the audit. Each respondent was provided a link to the questionnaire and a password granting access. By April 23, 13 journalists had responded. A second reminder email was distributed on April 29. By May 20, a total of 22 respondents had completed the survey, and data collection was halted. Three respondents were repeat participants from the 2004 and 2006 audits; two were repeaters from the 2006 audit only. The final response rate was calculated at 32.8%.

Measures

The overall goal of the audit was to gauge media professionals' opinions concerning the SWA PR and its activities. In general, journalists were asked to describe the strengths and weaknesses they perceived in SWA PR and particularly to provide recommendations to increase the value of the public relations activities of the airlines. More specifically, the audit focused on providing insights in the following areas:

- Whether journalists consider SWA PR to be effective

- Whether journalists consider SWA PR to be a valuable resource
- SWA PR strengths
- Accessibility of SWA PR staffers
- Responsiveness of SWA PR
- Journalist perceptions of SWA PR “personality”
- Usefulness of various SWA PR materials distributed to media
- Quality of various SWA PR materials distributed to media
- Preferred means of receiving SWA PR materials
- Perceptions of quantity of materials distributed by SWA PR
- Perceptions of SWA PR compared to other airlines

As the study was conducted initially via a telephone survey and later an Internet survey, the formatting of items to measure the key constructs was not held steady. Instead, the instrument and items evolved over time to meet the demands of the particular methodology. Likewise, while the intent of the audit was somewhat static across the three instances of data collection, items used to measure the key constructs were added or deleted as suggested by previous efforts. The individual questions used to collect data in each iteration of the instrument will be detailed in the Results section.

Results

Data analysis overview

Because certain constructs were measured differently depending on the audit, results are reported per year. Likewise, data analysis did not involve tracking data in trends via time series analyses. SWA PR did not disclose any concrete changes in their approach from year to year. As such, any assumption that year of audit would influence results is purely speculative and not robust enough to demand trending the data. All hypotheses and research questions, then, were examined by year and reported as such.

Hypotheses

H₁ predicted journalists perceive SWA PR as an excellent public relations department in comparison to other airlines’ public relations departments. H₁ was supported. For each year of the audit, one item was included to gauge perceptions of SWA PR as compared to the public relations departments of other airlines as a means of establishing relative perceptions of excellence. Journalists were asked: “On a scale of “0” to “10” with “0” being *much worse* and “10” being *much better*, how would you rate the public relations department of Southwest Airlines compared to the public relations departments of other airlines?” For 2004, the average response was 8.14 with a range of “7” to “10.” In 2006, the average was 8.48 with a range of “5” to “10.” In the last year of the audit, 2008, the mean remained elevated but decreased to a 7.90

due in part to a wider range of responses (answers provided ranged from "0" to "10"). It should be noted, however, that in 2008 only 1 respondent out of 20 scored SWA PR less than the scale's midpoint, and the most common response (mode) was "10." Ultimately, these perceptions gathered in a scale that asked participants to consider SWA PR in comparison to public relations departments at other airlines suggest that SWA PR is, in fact, well regarded.

H_{2a} predicted that journalists who perceive SWA PR as effective will perceive SWA PR's media relations as responsive. H_{2a} was supported. In 2004, 25 of the 26 respondents answered in the affirmative to the question "Do you consider Southwest Airlines Public Relations to be a valuable source of information?" The other respondent answered "sometimes—I don't deal with them frequently." When asked to explain why they saw SWA PR as a valuable information source, 11 of the 23 journalists mentioned fast response time (question included no prompts). One respondent comment representative of others said: "They respond very fast, and we are always on deadline and in a hurry. So they get back with me really quick, and that's like A-number-one most important with me." Also, assuming that perceptions of SWA PR's strongest attributes are related to judgments of effectiveness, 2004 respondents answers to the question "What are the strengths of Southwest Airlines Public Relations?" were considered. Of the 23 journalists who answered the question, 14 mentioned responsiveness as a strength of SWA PR. Statements such as "You get the information you need; SWA responds" and "Responds to things very fast on deadline" are typical. As a more direct measure, journalists in 2004 were asked specifically "On a scale of "0" to "10" with 10 being *very responsive* and 0 being *not responsive at all*, how would you rate SWA's responsiveness?" Of those that answered the question, 91% responded with a score of 10.

In 2006, all 25 journalists responded "yes" to the question "Do you consider Southwest Airlines Public Relations to be a valuable source of information?" As in 2004 when asked to qualify their affirmative response, the majority, without any prompt, attributed their positive perception of SWA PR to the department's responsiveness. In fact, 15 of the 25 journalists mentioned responsiveness with the following answer typical of those listed: "They always respond immediately, with in-depth responses and explanations that elaborate on the issue I'm reporting on." Likewise 15 of 22 listed "responsiveness" when outlining SWA PR strengths with a typical answer being "On any story, their response time is almost always fabulous." When asked to rate SWA PR responsiveness directly ("On a scale of "0" to "10" with 10 being *very responsive* and 0 being *not responsive at all*, how would you rate SWA's responsiveness?"), the most common response was a 10 with 16 of the 23 journalists indicating a score of 8 or higher.

On the 2008 audit, journalists again outlined answers that would seem to tie responsiveness directly to perceptions of effectiveness. Where in 2004 and 2006 no respondent disagreed that SWA PR was a valuable source of information, three among the 22 journalists participating in the 2008 audit answered in the negative. In further evidence of the link between responsiveness and perceived effectiveness, two of the three dissenters indicated the reason for their reaction was based upon SWA PR personnel not responding quickly enough in recent attempts to gather information. Of those agreeing that SWA PR was effective, 13 of the 15 journalists listed fast response times among the reasons for their positive perceptions. One journalist wrote "Staff is always responsive, returning calls in a timely manner and providing accurate information," a response similar to those of other journalists. Responsiveness also appeared predominately in comments about SWA PR's strengths. Of the 20 journalist who listed

a strength for SWA PR, 13 indicated quick response times. The comment that SWA PR “knows how important it is to communicate with the media, so the staff is accessible and responsive” reveals impressions similar to those uncovered in the two previous audits. Finally, on the direct measure where participants were asked to rate SWA PR on responsiveness, 11 of the 21 journalists responding marked a “10” on a scale of “0” to “10” with 10 being *very responsive* and 0 being *not responsive at all*. In fact the only two scores below the scale mean on the question were provided by journalists who had previously indicated that they did not see SWA PR as effective, again establishing the relationship between perceived effectiveness and response time.

In a final test of H_{2a}, data across the three audits was collapsed into a single data set so as to allow a sufficient sample size for a correlation analysis. Focusing on scores on the responsiveness item and the excellence item employed in testing H₁, analyses revealed that perceptions of responsiveness co-vary with perceptions of SWA PR’s excellence in comparison to other airlines’ public relations departments ($r = .70, p < .001$).

H_{2b} predicted that journalists who perceive SWA PR as effective will perceive SWA PR’s media relations as accessible. H_{2b} was supported. In 2004, journalists who rated SWA PR as effective also overwhelmingly agreed that SWA PR was accessible. Using a scale of “0” to “10” with 10 being *very accessible* and 0 being *not accessible at all*, SWA PR’s accessibility received a mean rating of 8.23. In fact, only one respondent rated accessibility lower than the scale’s midpoint. In 2006, the responses were even more positive with journalists’ mean rating of SWA PR’s accessibility as a 9.30. For 2006 where all journalists in the audit labeled SWA PR as effective, no responses were below the accessibility scale midpoint and all but five of the 23 journalists answering the question indicated scores of “9” or “10.” For 2008, the overall average response on the accessibility scale was 8.33. Of those respondents who had agreed on previous items that SWA PR was effective, scores on accessibility ranged from “6” to “10” with an average score of 9.00; for the three people who had indicated SWA PR was not effective, the individual scores on accessibility were “1,” “3,” and “9” with an average response of 3.25. Again, the variations in the 2008 scores based upon judgments of effectiveness lend support to perceptions of accessibility being tied to opinions of PR effectiveness. Finally, after collapsing data across the three audits, analyses revealed a significant positive correlation ($r = .72, p < .001$) between perceptions of accessibility and perceptions of SWA PR’s excellence in comparison to other airlines’ public relations departments.

H_{2c} predicted that journalists who perceive SWA PR as effective will perceive SWA PR’s media relations as providing quality communications. H_{2c} was supported. In 2004 when asked to explain why they judged SWA PR as a valuable source of information, 17 of the 23 journalists providing an unprompted answer stated that SWA PR provides quality information. An example of a typical response is: “They’re informative; they usually know the subject matter without a lot of difficulty. They understand that I’m writing for a newspaper and I need information.” For a more direct measure of quality, journalists were asked to respond to the item: On a scale of “0” to “10” with 10 being *possessing much quality* and 0 being *possessing no quality at all*, how would you rate the quality of the materials distributed by Southwest Airlines?” Of the 25 journalists answering the question, all rated the materials as a “5” or better with the average score being 8.12.

The 2006 respondents also frequently listed SWA PR’s tendency to provide quality information among the reasons the department is seen as valuable. On an item that asked journalists to list reasons that SWA PR was a valuable source of information, 12 of the 25

respondents mentioned quality of information or knowledge of staffers. Typical of the responses, one journalist detailed: "Company spokespeople provide accurate information on the company and, in some instances, on industry-wide situations." On the direct measure asking journalists to rate the quality of material distributed by SWA PR, the average mark was 7.52 with responses ranging from "4" to "10" with 21 of the 23 participants scoring the department a "6" or higher on a "0" to "10" scale with 10 being *possessing much quality* and 0 being *possessing no quality at all*.

Finally, eight of the 15 respondents in the 2008 audit who saw SWA PR as a valuable information source listed quality of information when asked to detail their opinions. One journalist stated "They almost always answer my questions with all the information I need and usually with little corporate spin." Of the three respondents who indicated that they did not see SWA PR as a valuable information source two cited lack of responsiveness, but one stated that information provided is not always "worthwhile." In response to the item asking journalists to rank the quality of SWA PR material quality, those who judged SWA PR as a valuable source of information provided answers that averaged 8.05 and ranged from "5" to "10." The three journalists who stated that they did not perceive SWA PR as valuable had an average response of 5.00 and a range of "1" to "7."

In final testing of H_{2c} , a correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between perceptions of SWA PR material quality and perceptions of SWA PR's excellence in comparison to other airlines' public relations departments. A significant positive correlation ($r = .62, p < .001$) suggests that as positive perceptions of quality in collateral materials increase so does too then positive perceptions of SWA PR in relation to other airlines' public relations departments.

H_{2d} predicted journalists who perceive SWA PR as professional will perceive SWA PR's media relations as effective. H_{2d} was supported. The construct of professionalism was measured by investigating ratings on five items that were included only in the 2008 audit. The five items asked journalists to employ a "0" to "10" scale where 0 was labeled as *Not at all* and 10 was labeled *Very much so*. The five items were presented as "Southwest Airlines Public Relations Department:" 1) is easy to reach; 2) gets you what you need; 3) is professional; 4) is polite; and 5) is helpful. All items were subjected to principal component factor analysis, and only one factor with an Eigenvalue greater than 1.0 emerged accounting for 90.79% of the variance. The factor demonstrated high loadings on *easy to reach* (.98), *gets you what you need* (.95), *is professional* (.98), *is polite* (.87), and *is helpful* (.98). The ratings showed a high degree of inter-item consistency ($\alpha = .97$), which warranted the construction of a composite measure, labeled *Professionalism*, by averaging the ratings across the five items.

When comparing scores on professionalism to scores obtained on the item asking if journalist perceived SWA PR as a valuable source of information, it became evident that the two co-vary. In fact, among those who agreed that SWA PR was a valuable source of information, the average score on the professionalism item was 8.97 with a range of 4.80 to 10.00. For those three journalists who disagreed that SWA PR was a valuable source of information, the average professional score was 4.27 with a range of 0.20 to 8.40. Additionally, analysis conducted to determine the relationship between perceptions of SWA PR professionalism and perceptions of SWA PR's excellence in comparison to other airlines' PR departments revealed a significant

positive correlation ($r = .86, p < .001$), suggesting that as positive perceptions of professionalism increase so does positive perceptions of SWA PR in relation to other airlines' PR departments.

Research questions

RQ₁ asked about the format in which journalists want to receive information from SWA PR. In all audits, the journalists were given the opportunity to indicate not only what method of delivery they most preferred but also what methods they found acceptable. As can be seen in Table 1, the most preferred means of news release distribution is through including the release copy as the body of an email. In terms of what journalists saw as acceptable, distribution through email attachments, via Newswire and through a website download all garnered some support. Perhaps as an indication of shifting technology in public relations, the trend of distribution by fax machine, which was acceptable by the majority in 2004, acceptable by little more than a quarter in 2006 and finally shunned completely in 2008, seems to suggest that practitioners have completely left behind a communication tool that was once the activity center of most public relations offices.

RQ₂ asked what role SWA PR online communication efforts play in their media relations efforts and whether journalists are utilizing these online channels. Because SWA PR has cycled through several efforts at online channels and these have all been refined and evolved year to year, the decision was made to investigate only 2008 audit responses. By looking only at the current offerings, the data should paint a clearer picture of how SWA PR, in what it sees as its best effort, is meeting the online expectations of journalists. Of those answering the question, 85% had visited www.swamedia.com, SWA's dedicated media website. The site was rated an average of 7.71 (range "4" to "10") on an item that asked respondents to evaluate the site on a "0" (poor) to "10" (excellent) scale. On an open-ended item that asked the reason journalists visited the media website, the most common answer was news releases, followed by company statistics (revenue, employee numbers, aircraft numbers, and financial data). Mentioned less frequently was photographs/images and contact information. A final item asked what pages on the media website were most helpful. Of those responding, 58.8% listed fact sheets as most helpful; followed by speeches, the photo gallery and a section labeled "What's New" (all garnered 11.8% each). PR practitioner contact information was seen as most helpful by 5.9%, and no one indicated the video gallery was most helpful. Questions concerning perceptions of SWA's blog (www.blogsouthwest.com) were also included on the 2008 audit. Seventy percent of respondents indicated that they were aware of the blog, and those that were rated it a 5.21 (range of "3" to "8") on an item that asked about the blog's usefulness on a "0" (not at all useful) to "10" (very useful) scale. Additionally, 78.57% of all respondents said they visited the blog less than once a week. Finally, an item was included in the audit to determine how many journalists subscribed to the SWA RSS feed. No journalists indicated subscribing to the feed.

Discussion

One component of Excellence Theory posits that two-way symmetrical communication as initially outlined by Grunig and Hunt (1984) is key to achieving public relations success (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2006), defined as building mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and key constituent publics. Working from the assumption that two-way symmetrical communication is critical to excellent public relations practice, then the antecedents

of quality two-way communication are the fundamental building blocks of successful public relations efforts. Taking into consideration the findings of researchers focused on uncovering the components of dialogic communication (Kent & Taylor, 1998; Kent & Taylor, 2002; Kent, Taylor, & White, 2003; Taylor, Kent, & White, 2001), the study outlined here attempted to establish and test the link between the effectiveness and these antecedents—specifically practitioner responsiveness, practitioner accessibility, practitioner dedication to information quality, and practitioner professionalism.

For a company to put under the microscope in an in-depth investigation of how public relations practices influence perceptions of excellence, it is difficult to image a more suitable organization than Southwest Airlines. *PR Week* has ranked SWA's corporate communications department as the top communication department in the nation (2000), and the department has won numerous other awards and recognitions (Southwest Airlines, 2008; 2009; Southwest Airlines Media, 2009c). In an effort to establish SWA PR's excellence among the journalists participating in the present study, survey participants were asked directly to rate SWA PR in relation to other airlines' PR departments. For all three years of the audit, journalists rated the SWA PR department as better than its counterparts at other airlines. With this as a starting point, investigations were warranted into what exactly it is that SWA PR does that garners it such favor.

Kent and Taylor (1998, 2002) state that creating an environment in which communication can freely take place is key to establishing meaningful interaction with key publics. As such, responding to requests for communication opportunities would seemingly rank as crucial in excellent public relations. Lending support to this argument, the SWA media audits uncovered responsiveness as the most often mentioned strength of the SWA PR department. The majority of respondents in every year of the survey ranked SWA PR highly in terms of responsiveness. Perhaps more importantly though, when offered a question that merely asked to detail SWA PR's key strength with no prompts, the staff's quick response to media inquiries was listed again and again. Taking into consideration that the few journalists who did not see SWA PR as effective singled out episodes where they received no response from staffers, it becomes even clearer that judgments of effectiveness may be linked more strongly to responsiveness than any other single factor. For practitioners in general, this finding implies being quick to answer questions and concerns may trump other considerations. SWA PR details on its media website that there is always a practitioner "on call" who can answer questions and the department respects media deadlines and the fact they cannot be postponed due to lack of organizational response (Southwest Airlines, 2009a). In this case, SWA PR not only provided a dialogic loop that practitioners could utilize, it actually followed through on the promise of dialogue and responded to media requests in a timely manner, reinforcing similar findings from the research on online dialogic communication (Kent, Taylor, & White, 2003; Taylor, Kent, & White, 2001; Seltzer & Mitrook, 2006) that stresses the point that providing opportunities for two-way communication are meaningless if organizations do not take advantage of those opportunities.

Closely related to responsiveness and also detailed as important by the journalist respondents was accessibility. While evaluations of responsiveness may be most tied to how quickly an answer to a question materializes, accessibility stems from being available to participate in a communication effort, regardless of whether a quality response results from that communication or not. SWA PR received high marks on the accessibility scale in all three audits, and the fact that practitioners were available to answer questions appeared commonly in

response to the item asking about SWA PR strengths. Again, the few people who evaluated SWA PR as ineffective were also most likely to rate the department as inaccessible. Establishing the relationship between accessibility and responsiveness, the very participants who evaluated SWA PR poorly in terms of responsiveness did the same on the accessibility measure. As responsiveness and accessibility correlated positively with effectiveness, the data establishes the importance of both. Clearly, a practitioner that is not accessible cannot be responsive. From this perspective, it seems an even stronger case is made concerning the importance of a practitioner being able to quickly provide information to journalists.

Undoubtedly, journalists want more than merely accessible and responsive practitioners. If the reason behind the contact is request for information, it can be assumed journalists would prefer high quality collateral materials carrying the information sought. Respondents in all three audits rated SWA practitioners as providing quality information and judged materials distributed by the PR department as possessing high quality. Respondents detailed that information provided by practitioners was accurate and appropriately presented so as to make it easily placed in media content. In particular, respondents suggested that SWA practitioners seemed to have a sense of what type of information a journalist would need to perform his/her job duties. The high, positive correlation of evaluations of information quality and perceptions of SWA PR effectiveness suggests that judgments of the two are related and intertwined. The revelation that journalists appreciate accurate and appropriate information, however, seems less than earth-shattering.

Finally, in investigation of the possible antecedents to perceptions of excellent public relations, the study revealed that practitioner professionalism closely relates to perceptions of PR effectiveness. Overwhelmingly, those journalists who judged SWA PR as effective also judged SWA practitioners as professional. In fact, professionalism correlated more highly with effectiveness than did responsiveness, accessibility or information quality. It should be noted though that judgments of how easy practitioners were to contact and the quality of the information they provide were included in the composite measure of professionalism. As this study made no effort nor had the statistical power to unequivocally parse how each individual component contributed to perceptions of professionalism, perhaps the most robust recommendation that can result from this portion of the study is again that being available for quality communication is critical. More succinctly, journalist judgments of professionalism in practitioners may stem from how readily reachable they are and how good the content is they provide.

In more direct testing of commonly provided content, the media audit provided an opportunity to determine in what format journalists prefer to receive the most fundamental of public relations collateral materials, the news release. Across all three time periods, journalist most preferred news releases distributed in the body of email messages. When asked not what they preferred but what they found as acceptable, again distribution via the body of an email prevailed but through email attachments and through PR Newswire did not trail by much. Perhaps most surprising was that by 2008 no journalist saw distribution by fax machine as acceptable and only half judged downloading a release from the SWA website as viable. Despite the fact that including news release copy in the body of an email strips out formatting and might be seen as rendering the presentation lacking aesthetics, the finding that email attachments are not the preferred means of distribution might be traceable to fears of attachments carry viruses as has been determined in previous research on media relations (Callison, 2003). Ultimately,

regardless of the reasons, it seems that news release dissemination through email is clearly preferred.

Finally, the present study asked respondents to indicate their use and evaluation of online media resources. Previous research has identified the value of online channels in facilitating application of dialogic principles, specifically citing availability, accessible, and providing up-to-date information. Specifically, the 2008 audit presented questions about a media-focused SWA PR website, SWA's blog, and the company's RSS feed. On the media relations website, journalists reported it as a commonly visited and valuable tool. The journalists also indicated that they most often were searching for news releases and company statistics when visiting the site. Despite similar levels of awareness between the online newsroom and the company blog, journalists indicated they saw the blog as less useful and visited it infrequently. Launched with the blog, the company's RSS feed received even less support with not a single respondent subscribing to the feed. The overall indication, then, from analyses of data gathered in regards to online efforts seems to be that online newsrooms fill the primary needs of journalists as long as they serve as repositories of valuable information.

Conclusion

As a primer in how public relations can be practiced successfully to contribute to organizational effectiveness, Excellence Theory provides guidance as to how practitioners can help organizations achieve their goals. While the entire breadth of the recommendations forwarded by the theory are beyond the focus of the present study, the media audit conducted here provided an opportunity to investigate a small component of the theory as it deals with public relations at the programmatic level, in this case, an in-depth analysis of an organization's media relations efforts. That two-way symmetrical communication leads to mutually beneficial practitioner-journalist relationships is an idea that has received little criticism since it was first introduced 25 years ago. What exactly leads to successful communication relationships, however, continues to raise the curiosity of researchers and practitioners alike.

In this attempt to uncover what an organization can do to be judged as an effective partner in the public relations-media relationship, the Southwest Airlines public relations department served as the point of focus. SWA PR has consistently been viewed as a model of excellent public relations, and the journalists participating in the audits presented here did nothing to refute that positive perception. What the journalists did do, however, was paint a clear picture that responsiveness, accessibility, quality of information provided, and professionalism are closely tied to evaluations of public relations effectiveness. Most commonly occurring was the idea that SWA PR receives much of its praise simply because it creates a communication environment where journalists feel that a practitioner will readily respond to informational requests; i.e., a dialogic feedback loop is not only present, but it is actively utilized. SWA PR doesn't simply pay lip service to two-way symmetrical communication to facilitate dialogue; it walks the walk, or rather in this case, talks the talk.

This study may offer nothing more simple or concrete than the recommendation that public relations professionals in any industry should make every effort to be not only available to answer questions but prepared to provide those answers quickly. Other conclusions that journalists prefer news releases distributed through email attachments and that dedicated online pressrooms are more valued than blogs or RSS feeds can and should inform practice. But no

particular technology may equal the benefits that can be gained by ensuring that knowledgeable practitioners simply answer the telephone when journalists call.

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Table 1. Preferred and Accepted Means of News Release Distribution by Year

Means of News Release Distribution	2004		2006		2008	
	Preferred	Acceptable	Preferred	Acceptable	Preferred	Acceptable
Via PR Newswire	3.8%	100.0%	0.0%	65.2%	0.0%	75.0%
Faxed hard copy	7.7%	69.5%	0.0%	26.1%	0.0%	0.0%
In body of email	76.9%	100.0%	73.9%	95.7%	85.0%	100.0%
Attachment to email	7.7%	78.2%	26.1%	87.0%	10.0%	95.0%
SWA website download	3.8%	82.6%	0.0%	56.5%	5.0%	50.0%

Does familiarity breed contempt or trust? A case study of a gas pipeline awareness campaign among school safety officers

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Organizational trust has been defined by Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis, and Cesaria (2000) as an “organization's willingness, based on its culture and communication behaviors in relationships and transactions, to be appropriately vulnerable if it believes that another individual, group or organization is competent, open and honest, concerned, reliable, and identified with common goals, norms and values” (p. 8). Approximately one in every 20 schools is located within a quarter mile of a transmission pipeline (pipelines that transport energy products, such as oil or natural gas, from one region to another). This makes them vulnerable to the possible consequences of a pipeline accident. In order for pipelines to continue to operate in these communities, there must be a certain amount of trust with pipeline companies that no harm will come to the schools.

This paper will explore the trust relationship between schools and one energy pipeline company in order to gain more understanding about the measurable connection between awareness and trust. By using a pre-test/post-test survey around a safety awareness campaign, this study examines whether increased voluntary transparency of this vulnerability engenders more trust or creates more concern and contempt. In particular, does increasing school awareness of safety measures and the possible risks of close proximity to a pipeline enhance trust with the company sharing that information?

Background on Pipeline Industry

More than two million miles of pipelines, mostly underground, crisscross the United States transporting energy products such as natural gas, propane and diesel fuel to homes and businesses every day. Transportation Safety Board statistics show that pipelines are the safest way to transport these products, but while serious pipeline incidents are very rare, when they occur, they can cause injury, death, damage to property and negative environmental impact.

Congress enacted The Pipeline Safety Act of 2002 to assure that individuals living and working near pipelines are notified regarding the location of pipelines, the signs of a potential pipeline leak and recommended response actions. Provisions of the law require pipeline operators to communicate a defined set of messages to various publics on a specified timeframe. The law also requires pipeline companies to measure the effectiveness of their public awareness efforts and to demonstrate continuous improvement.

Schools near pipeline facilities are one of the publics impacted by the law. According to the Smalley Foundation, one in every 20 schools in the United States is located within a quarter mile of a pipeline. As new schools are built in previously rural and fast-developing suburban areas, the number of schools near pipelines will increase.

Natural gas pipeline operators classify schools as “High Consequence Areas” requiring more frequent communication and additional messages. To comply with the Pipeline Safety Act, they must communicate pipeline awareness and safety messages annually with schools located near their facilities and must measure the effectiveness of their efforts. When compared with other homes and businesses located near their facilities, most pipeline operators consider schools to be a more vulnerable location if a pipeline incident were to occur given the issues involved in evacuating a school and the potential for increased media attention. Anecdotal evidence from pipeline field personnel who interact with schools near their operations indicates that schools near pipelines often have limited knowledge about the pipeline’s existence and many do not have specific procedures in place to respond to a pipeline emergency.

Industry efforts to communicate pipeline safety messages with publics have historically focused on one-way, push communication. Consequently, industry research has ignored relationship measures such as trust. As progressive pipeline operators utilize communication vehicles that enable two-way dialog with publics, the importance of fostering and measuring relationships, trust and transparency will increase.

The research study referenced in this report was designed to help a large transmission and gathering pipeline company create an effective communication campaign to reach schools near their operations. The campaign included pre- and post-surveys to establish baseline metrics including trust and measure the impact of the overall campaign.

Literature Review on Trust

Trust is a valuable social lubricant that enables parties to communicate and interact with one another. As Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) have identified, it “is fundamental to functioning in our complex and interdependent society” (p. 549). In particular, trust is needed for any kind of interdependent relationship.

As organizations strive to build working relationships with key stakeholders, trust is a central component of that effort. Bruning and Ledingham (2000) have reported that the organization-public relationship (OPR) indicators of “trust, openness, involvement, investment, and commitment impact the ways in which organization-public relationships are initiated, developed, and maintained” (p. 162). In particular, regression analysis has shown that the dimension of trust is the strongest predictor of consumer satisfaction.

This is likely the reason why Hon and Grunig (1999) included trust as one of four variables used to measure relationships. In the development of their instrument, Hon and Grunig identified trust as an essential component of satisfactory relationships between organizations and their stakeholders and defined it as “one party’s level of confidence in and willingness to open oneself to the other party” (p. 2). They then identified three dimensions to trust: integrity, or the belief that an organization is fair and just; dependability, or the belief that an organization will do what it says it will do; and competence, or the belief that the organization has the ability to do what it says it will do.

Research on interpersonal relationships recognizes interdependence and the risk of vulnerability as important considerations to trust (Fischman, 2003). This appears to extend to organizational relationships as well. In an IABC funded study to measure organizational trust, Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis, and Cesaria (2000) defined organizational trust as “The organization's willingness, based on its culture and communication behaviors in relationships and transactions,

to be appropriately vulnerable if it believes that another individual, group or organization is competent, open and honest, concerned, reliable, and identified with common goals, norms and values” (p. 8).

Before one party entrusts another with that vulnerability, it often evaluates the trustworthiness of the other party. Rousseau et al. (1988) described trust as the willingness to accept this vulnerability “based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another” (p. 35). According to Morrow et al. (2004) that includes the belief that another will not act to exploit one’s vulnerabilities” (p. 50).

After a fairly thorough review of the trust literature, Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995) three critical elements of being trusted: ability, benevolence, and integrity. Similarly, in the organizational behavior literature, trust has been defined as a collective judgment of one group that another group will be honest, meet commitments, and will not take advantage of others (Bradach & Eccles, 1989; Cummings & Bromily, 1996). In his review of the trust literature, Rawlins (2007) borrowed heavily from the definition developed by Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (2000) for the following multidimensional definition of trust:

Trust is one party’s willingness—shown by intention and behavior—to be vulnerable to another party based on confidence developed cognitively and affectively that the latter party is (a) benevolent, (b) reliable, (c) competent, (d) honest, and (e) open.

For the purposes of this paper, we will be using this definition for trust, with particular emphasis on the attributes of competence, reliability and benevolence.

Trust functions as a way of reducing uncertainty (Holmes & Rempel, 1989; Luhmann, 1979). For organizations, trust is necessary for cooperation and communication, and the foundation for productive relationships (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy 2000, p. 55). According to Govier (1992), distrust impedes the communication that could overcome it, so that “suspiciousness builds on itself and our negative beliefs about the other tend in the worst case toward immunity to refutation by evidence” (p. 52). Accordingly, when those in authority engage in self-disclosure and show benevolent motives they are more likely to be trusted by those dependent on that authority (Gabarro, 1978; Lazerlere & Huston, 1980)

Risk Communication and Trust

Defining risk & risk communication

There is a rich body of literature pertaining to risk communication, which has increasingly included trust as part of its analysis of the practice (McComas, 2006). Risk has been defined by Stern and Fineberg (1996) as the “things, forces, or circumstances that pose danger to people or to what they value” (p. 215). Meanwhile, risk communication has been defined as “a purposeful exchange of information and opinion among individuals, groups, or organizations regarding health or environmental hazards” (Lundgren, 1994, as quoted in Trettin & Musham, 2000, p. 410). According to Calman (2002) the primary purpose for risk communication is to “provide the individual or community with sufficient information to make choices about the consequences of the risk and thereby assist in deciding which action or actions, if any, are to be taken” (p. 166).

While effectively and honestly informing publics “about the risk factors associated with a wide range of natural hazards and human activities” (Menon & Goh, 2004, p. 376), effective risk communication requires more than just one-way communication. According to Trettin and Musham (2000), the contemporary approach also requires stimulating interest in these risks and involving citizens in the decision-making. To be effective, risk communication must be interactive and aim for partnerships, according to Renz (1992). Simplistic attempts to use outdated one-way systems that do not permit the community to provide feedback and make aware its own information needs “can increase the outrage and decrease the community’s trust of the agency” (Sly, 2000, p. 154). Perhaps the need for an expanded definition lead Heath, Seshadri and Lee (1998) to rely upon the definition provided by National Research Council: “An interactive process of exchange of information and opinion . . . [that] involves multiple messages about the nature of risk and other messages, not strictly about risk, that express concerns, opinions, or reactions to risk messages or to legal and institutional arrangements for risk management” (as found in Heath et al., 1998, p. 36).

In focus groups conducted by Trettin and Musham (2000) residents’ attitudes toward risk were shaped by a number of factors:

- “perception of economic costs or benefits associated with particular facilities (and concern about whether those costs or benefits were equitably distributed)”
- “sense of community involvement or lack of involvement in decision-making policy at facilities”
- “satisfaction or lack of satisfaction with access to information about facilities”
- “trust or lack of trust in how hazardous facilities were managed”
- “beliefs about health risks”
- “knowledge of science and technology” (p. 415)

Risk communication efforts must address these concerns in order to alleviate anxiety and fears related to the potential risk.

Issues with Risk Communication

A critical component to effective risk communication is overcoming the anxiety, angst, outrage, and dread of citizens who face potential risks related to human or natural made hazards. Early research in risk communication focused on the efforts to increase awareness and understanding of risk among possibly affected groups. Previous research indicates that simply increasing the frequency of messages and repetition does not effectively overcome the risk perception gap between authorities and the publics affected by the risk. This may be explained in large part by more recent research that recognizes that publics, especially made up of laypersons, do not evaluate risk based on factual information alone. There is a difference between how risk is perceived by experts and non-experts. Experts determine risk using a formula that calculates probability by magnitude. After reviewing the writing of Slovic, Fischhoff, and Lichtenstein (1982, 1987; Slovic, 1987), Heath et al. (1998) summarized that “lay risk perceptions are determined by factors other than statistical estimates, such as dramatic media presentations, controllability, catastrophic potential, equity, uncertainty, and threat to future

generations” (p. 40). The public often perceives risk from a more affective and less rational approach. As McComas (2006) reported:

In describing what they term the affect heuristic, Slovic and colleagues (2004) explained that people base their risk judgments not only on what they think about the risk but also on what they feel about it. If people have positive feelings about an activity, they tend to judge the risks as lower than if they have negative feelings about the activity and vice versa. Feelings also can override analytical reasoning. (p. 78)

To illustrate this heuristic, McComas (2006) used the example of the summer of 2001, dubbed the “Summer of the Shark” by Time magazine, when several shark attacks created a panic among beach tourists although there were fewer attacks in 2001 than in 2000. In fact, the experts noted that people were more at risk driving to the beaches than from a shark attack. Nonetheless, the use of statistics and reason didn’t calm the irrational fear of vacationers around the country. This led McComas to conclude that “public perceptions of risk frequently do not align with scientific assessments” (p. 78).

The mass media can amplify the perception of risk, but research shows that this is more likely to have a “third-person effect” of leading people to believe in a societal level of risk that is more likely to affect others than themselves (af Wahlberg & Sjoberg, 200; Tyler & Cook, 1984; Morton & Duck, 2001). While mass media play an important role in alerting people of risks, research has shown that people more often rely on interpersonal channels to assess their personal risks (Petts & Neimeyer, 2004; Scherer & Cho, 2003).

For risk messages distributed through more interpersonal channels to have credibility with publics, the source of the messages must be trusted.

Defining Trust in Risk Communications Literature

Much like the general trust literature, there are varying definitions and concepts applied to the term “trust” in the risk communications literature. Some definitions are very broad; some are more constraining. Some are similar to the definitions provided previously in this paper, and some provide an insightful perspective on different levels of trust.

Many of the concepts of trust outlined in the previous section are found in definitions of trust in the risk communication literature. Concepts such as vulnerability, evaluation of trustworthiness of the other party, and characteristics such as competence, integrity, and benevolence are found in many definitions. In their book, *Trust in Cooperative Risk Management*, the editors define trust as “the willingness, in expectation of beneficial outcomes, to make oneself vulnerable to another based on a judgment of similarity of intentions or values” (Siegrist, Earle & Gutscher, 2007).

Calman (2002) borrowed from a definition developed by Hupcey et al. (2001) to write the following: “Trust emerges from the identification of a need that cannot be met without the assistance of another and some assessment of the risk involved in relying on the other to meet this need. Trust is a willing dependency on another’s actions, but is limited to the area of need and is subject to overt and covert testing. The outcome of trust is an evaluation of the congruence between expectations of the trusted person and actions” (p. 166). This definition

adds the concepts related to the interdependent nature of trust and includes the evaluative nature of trust; meaning that it is a cognitive exercise and not merely an affective condition.

The definition provided by Heath et al. (1998) most closely approximates the definitions from the organizational trust literature: “Trust consists of judgment that a source is competent, unbiased, honest, lacks a hidden agenda, and is genuinely concerned about the welfare of the people affected by it” (p. 40). This definition relies heavily on the trustworthy characteristics found in interpersonal and organizational trust literature and also considers trust as a rational judgment.

McComas (2006) has identified trust as the most prominent recent development in risk communication, in particular the elaboration of “social trust” (Cvetkovich & Lofstedt, 1999; Earle & Cvetkovich, 1995; Lofstedt, 2005). Although the definition of social trust also varies, the general understanding is that it differs from interpersonal trust. The social trust process leads to citizens choosing to trust or rely on risk management institutions as unknown entities rather than specific, and known, individuals. It could be described as an individual to institutional level of trust. This is similar to the concepts of trust in organizational communication, which asks how people feel about their trust of larger organizations such as corporations and government. According to McComas (2006), research suggests that “social trust in risk management is based, in part, on perceived shared values, which are learned via stories or narratives that institutions tell (Earle & Cvetkovich, 1995, 1999).

Drawing upon the distinction that social trust differs from interpersonal trust, in such that social trust doesn’t mean trust that is placed in specific individuals based on the perceived presence or absence of certain traits (which is aligned with source credibility by some in this school of thought; Earle & Cvetkovich, 1995), Trettin and Musham (2000) defined public trust as “uncritical acceptance” that would allow another party “to take action without fear of the consequences” (p. 411). This limiting definition of trust is more closely aligned with Rotter’s (1967) research on personality and cognitive traits of trusting individuals. Rotter defined trust as “an expectancy held by an individual or a group that the word, promise, verbal or written statement of another individual or group can be relied upon” (p. 651). Using demographics and sociometrics, Rotter measured different levels of trusting behavior. He distinguished between high, medium, and low trustors. Certain individuals approach gullibility when they have high trusting traits and low discernment of the other party. When trust is described in these terms, it is easier to agree with the conclusion of Trettin and Musham (2000) that trust may not be a realistic or necessary goal. Instead, they argued for a skeptical and watchful audience that demands credibility from the risk management institutions. They define credibility as a state of being believable, trustworthy and reliable. The conclusion is based on a different operationalization of the terms trust and credibility than found in other trust literature. When a definition of trust includes the rational judgment of citizens to calculate whether another entity is worthy of their trust, the recommendation of not needing trust in risk communication is less logical.

Credibility is defined as the state of being “believable, trustworthy, reliable.” Believability is based on one’s perception that the credible person or institution possesses expertise and knowledge. Trustworthiness implies that the credible person or institution provides an emotional basis for faith and confidence. Reliability indicates that the credible person or institution is predictable, adheres to procedures, and shows fiduciary responsibility. Definitions similar to this one for the relationship between trust and credibility have been proposed by risk

communicators and social psychologists (Frewer, Howard, Hedderley, & Shepherd, 1996; Kasperson & Golding, 1992; Peters et al., 1997).

Risk Communication and Trust

The general erosion of public trust in institutions such as corporations and government is often cited as a major stumbling block to the success of risk communication programs. Calman (2002) advised that “if trust has been established, then the problems that arise will be easier to deal with” (p. 160). Sly (2000) reported that several case studies have shown that “the public scrutinizes the behaviour, the performance, and the process of the agency more closely than they do the risk estimates and other factual content in the messages themselves” (Sly, 2000, p. 155). This demonstrates the increased need for trust between these institutions and their publics, because the trustworthiness of the institution is just as important as, if not more so than, the quality of its messages.

However, as Trettin and Musham (2000) have argued, “most risk communication programs fail to overcome the rampant public distrust that plagues most efforts (p. 411). Respondents in their focus groups recommended that institutions understand that publics demand something more than being asked to blindly trust them. Some pointed out that “risk communication would improve if institutions trusted the public more and provided information in ways they could understand” (p. 415).

Heath, Seshadri and Lee (1998) found that increased knowledge correlated positively with trust and perceived openness for persons living close to a chemical plant. Their study confirmed that “communication that dealt with resident’s cognitive involvement, dread, and uncertainty would improve perceptions openness and trust” (p. 35). A later study by Heath and Palenchar (2000) suggests that increased knowledge of emergency response measures gives people a greater sense of control. Accordingly, “this may translate into more trust for the industry” (p. 132). “Understanding emergency procedures may increase a person’s perceived ability to handle a crisis, if one occurs” (Heath & Abel, 1996a).

Knowledge as a condition for empowerment and involvement appears to increase trust and perceptions of openness and reduce “dread” among these publics. According to Heath et al. (1998), “feelings of dread intensify when people think the risk is involuntary, unfair, not under their control, and low in benefits” (p. 39). Citizens are much less accepting of risk based operations “if they think they are denied access to sources of information and are not told the whole story, but fed half-truths” (Covello, 1989; as quoted in Heath et al., 1998, p. 43). As Heath et al. (1998) explained:

Trust and openness are closely linked. To gain trust, communicators should be honest, frank, and open. Worst-case estimates should be identified, and industry spokespersons should give information to avoid suspicion that they have something to hide. However, Burton (1989; Heath & Abel, 1996b) stressed that mere quantity of information is not useful. (p. 132)

However, Heath and Palenchar (2000) also found that persons who believe they are at risk are more likely to be cognitively involved. “Cognitively involved persons acquire, pause to consider, and evaluate information. They are more likely to form or change attitudes through central cognitive message-driven routes (Petty & Cacioppo, 1984). Grunig’s (1989) situational theory reasons that when people recognize a problem, perceive low constraint, and have high involvement, they will seek and process information and become an active public. Cognitively

involved people have more arguments to use when receiving and processing information about issues, and read more, watch more television, and are able to communicate more about the relevant issues (Heath & Douglas, 1990).” (41)

People with high levels of cognitive involvement are easier to inform about risk and emergency actions, but they also are inherently more distrusting. Heath and Palenchar (2000) found that people who are cognitively involved have a higher sense of risk and are less trusting of government and industry officials. The good news about this group is that it is more likely to become informed about the risk and the measures to take to reduce the negative effects of the potential hazard. The concern is that people who are more cognitively involved are also more likely to be more vigilant and less trusting. However, as proposed by Heath and Palenchar (2000), if this group is kept informed about the risk and the actions it can take to prevent and reduce harm, it gives the group more empowerment and control. This seems to increase the acceptance of the presence of the risk, but does it lead to increased trust?

Research Questions

Based on the literature related to trust and risk communication, the following research questions were developed. The research questions are adapted to the specific case being measured in this study, namely the risk communication surrounding the operations of a transmission or gathering pipeline near schools.

RQ₁: Will levels of awareness of pipelines increase after the communications campaign?

RQ₂: Do efforts to increase the awareness of pipelines result in increased levels of feeling informed and trust?

RQ₃: Are respondents with greater knowledge of the pipeline more likely to trust the pipeline company?

RQ₄: Are those living/working closest to the pipelines more aware, more informed, and more trusting?

For the purposes of this research, awareness was defined by the following questions:

- Three dichotomous (yes/no) questions were asked to distinguish respondents that were aware and knowledgeable about the pipeline. These three questions were:
 - Prior to receiving this survey, were you aware that this pipeline company operates a gas transmission, liquid or gathering pipeline near your school?
 - Do you know where this pipeline operator’s pipeline is physically located in relation to your school’s buildings or athletic facilities?
 - Are you aware of the prevention measures that the pipeline operator takes to maintain safe pipeline operations?

- Two questions using a 7-point scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7) were used to assess level of feeling informed.
 - I feel well informed regarding the pipeline operator's pipeline near our school.
 - This pipeline operator provides me with the information I need regarding its pipeline near my school.

Trust was measured with four questions using a 7-point scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7) to assess level of feeling informed. The first question asked participants about the reliable safety of the pipeline operator, the second asked about the benevolent intentions of the pipeline operator, the third asked about the competence of the pipeline operator to keep pipelines safe, and the fourth question measured a behavioral predisposition to contact the pipeline operator if they had questions.

- I feel comfortable calling the pipeline operator whenever I have a question about their pipeline near my school.
- This pipeline company operates a safe pipeline near our school.
- I believe the pipeline operator is concerned about the safety and welfare of our students, staff and facilities.
- I feel confident about the pipeline operator's ability to keep its pipelines safe.

Methodology

Cyera Strategies conducted phone interviews with school principals in Texas, Indiana and Illinois to assess the extent to which existing safety procedures included protocol for identifying and responding to a pipeline emergency. In addition, the interviews measured the principal's ability to influence safety protocol and implementation. Based on this assessment, the school principal or principal's designee responsible for school safety procedures was identified as the primary audience for communication materials from pipeline operators.

Prior to launching a formal campaign to communicate required messages with schools, Cyera Strategies developed an online survey tool to help the pipeline company establish baseline metrics for awareness, trust and preparedness at schools near their operations.

The online pre-test survey was conducted between October 15, 2008 and January 13, 2009. The subsequent online post-test survey was conducted March 5 – April 25, 2009. Both surveys targeted principals, or the principal's designee, responsible for safety at the school. An e-mail with a link to the online survey was sent to a distribution list that was created and verified by the pipeline company using Internet and phone research.

The school contact list includes schools located within approximately 3,000 feet of the company's pipeline operations and is subdivided into tiers based on risk criteria such as distance from pipeline, product transported and pipeline pressure. Tier 1 schools included those located within 300 feet of the pipeline or those within 660 feet of pipelines greater than or equal to eight inches in diameter or operated at a pressure greater than 500 pounds-force per square inch gauge

(psig). Tier 2 schools include those located between 301- 660 feet of a pipeline greater than or equal to six inches in diameter and operated at a pressure between 100-500 psig. Tier 2 also includes schools located further than 660 feet of a pipeline when the pipeline nearby is a large diameter, high-pressure line or one that transports sour gas (H₂S).

In the pre-test survey, a total of 140 schools received the survey invitation, and 41 completed the survey from both tiers for a response rate of 29.3%. Schools were offered a chance to win a \$250 American Express gift card in exchange for participation in the survey. In addition, two reminder e-mails were sent prior to the close of the survey and phone calls were made to prompt participation.

For the online post-test survey, the same 140 schools received the survey invitation via e-mail and in letter mailed to the school with instructions for completing the survey online. Fifty-five schools completed the survey from both tiers for a response rate of 39.3%. The same strategies to increase response rate were replicated. Of the 140 schools in tier 1 and tier 2, 16 participated in both surveys.

In the pre-test survey, 95 percent of survey respondents were principals or assistant principals and 85 percent of respondents identified themselves as the “person responsible for safety plans, procedures, training and drills” at their school. In the post-test, 78 percent identified themselves as principals or assistant principals and 81 percent as the person responsible for safety.

Results

Will levels of awareness of pipelines increase after the communications campaign?

Prior to the communications campaign, 19 respondents in the pre-test survey (46.3%) were aware of the company operating a transmission pipeline near the school. Only 6 (14.6%) were aware of where the pipeline was located and 2 (4.9%) were aware of the prevention measures the company took to maintain a safe pipeline. Only 2 (4.9%) felt well informed of the pipeline, and 3 (7.3%) agreed that the company provided them with the information they need regarding the pipeline. Only 3 (7.3%) remembered receiving information from the pipeline company prior to the communications campaign.

After the campaign, a Chi-Square analysis indicated that all levels of awareness increased significantly, with 38 (69.1%) aware of the company operating a pipeline near the school (Chi-Square=5.04, df=1, p =.025), 30 (54.5%) aware of the pipeline’s location (Chi-Square=15.96, df=1, p <.001), 24 (43.6%) aware of the prevention measures (Chi-Square=17.87, df=1, p <.001), and 34 (61.8%) remembering receiving information from the pipeline company (Chi-Square=29.46, df=1, p <.001). Additionally, they were more likely to feel well informed (n=25, 45.5%) and to agree that the company provided them with the information they needed (n=28, 50.1%).

These results would indicate that the communications campaign was significantly successful in increasing awareness of the pipeline, its proximity, and the safety measures used by the company. But, did this increase in awareness enhance the school officials’ sense of trust toward the pipeline company?

Do efforts to increase the awareness of pipelines result in increased levels of feeling informed and trust?

Those who responded to the survey following the communications campaign were significantly more likely to feel well informed and were significantly more likely to show higher levels of trust. A t-test analysis between the two groups showed significant increases in respondents' feeling well informed, believing the company provides them with the information they need, comfort in calling the company, and believing the company operates a safe pipeline, cares about them and is able to keep the pipeline safe. See Table 1.

Only 16 of the schools participated in both the pre-test and post-test surveys. A paired t-test was conducted on the responses of these schools to evaluate the increase in the variables that used the dichotomous scale of agree and disagree following the campaign. The means increased significantly on each variable from the pre-test to the post-test:

- “I feel well-informed of the pipeline” increased from 2.25 to 5.12 ($t = -5.12$, $df = 15$, $p. < .001$);
- “The pipeline company provides me with the information I need” increased from 2.38 to 5.31 ($t = -5.65$, $df = 15$, $p. < .001$);
- “I feel comfortable calling the pipeline company” increased from 2.75 to 5.25 ($t = -4.04$, $df = 15$, $p. = .001$);
- “The pipeline company operates a safe pipeline” increased from 2.38 to 5.31 ($t = -2.41$, $df = 15$, $p. = .029$);
- and “I’m confident in the company’s ability to keep the pipeline safe increased from 4.50 to 6.00 ($t = -2.77$, $df = 15$, $p. = .014$).

Table 1: Comparison of levels of being informed and trust between the pre-test and post-test respondents

Variable	N	Mean	SD	t	df	P
I feel well informed regarding the pipeline operator's pipeline near our school						
Pre-Test	40	2.15	1.37	-5.47	94	.000
Post-Test	36	4.04	2.01			
This pipeline operator provides me with the information I need regarding its pipeline near my school						
Pre-Test	40	2.27	1.43	-5.65	94	.000
Post-Test	36	4.29	2.07			
I feel comfortable calling the pipeline company whenever I have a question about their pipeline near my school						
Pre-Test	40	3.02	1.60	-4.42	94	.000
Post-Test	36	4.65	1.89			
The pipeline company operates a safe pipeline near our school						
Pre-Test	40	4.37	1.54	-3.64	94	.001
Post-Test	36	5.49	1.46			
I believe the pipeline company is concerned about the safety and welfare of our students, staff, and facilities						
Pre-Test	40	4.98	1.50	-4.15	94	.000
Post-Test	36	6.11	1.03			
I feel confident about the pipeline company's ability to keep its pipelines safe						
Pre-Test	40	4.66	1.56	-4.01	94	.000
Post-Test	36	5.82	1.16			

Are respondents with greater knowledge of the pipeline more likely to trust the company?

A t-test analysis indicated that before the communications campaign, those who responded that they knew about the pipeline were significantly more likely to agree that they felt informed, that the company provided them with the information they needed, and comfortable calling the pipeline company. The t-test analysis on the post-test survey indicated significant increases on the same three variables. When the pre-test and post-test were combined, the differences between the aware group and unaware group are significantly different across all measures of trust (see Table 2). This would indicate that the significance levels are somewhat affected by the small size of the sample.

Table 2: Comparison of respondents who were aware and not aware of pipeline near school

Variable	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p	
I feel comfortable calling the pipeline company whenever I have a question about their pipeline near my school							
Pre-test	Aware	19	3.58	1.77	2.15	39	.038
	Not Aware	22	2.55	1.29			
Post-test	Aware	38	5.00	1.52	3.18	53	.004
	Not Aware	17	1.88	2.09			
Overall	Aware	57	4.67	1.78	4.81	94	.000
	Not Aware	39	2.92	1.72			
The pipeline company operates a safe pipeline near our school							
Pre-test	Aware	19	4.74	1.45	1.45	39	.156
	Not Aware	22	4.05	1.59			
Post-test	Aware	38	5.74	1.33	1.91	53	.062
	Not Aware	17	4.94	1.82			
Overall	Aware	57	5.40	1.37	3.05	94	.003
	Not Aware	39	4.44	1.73			
I believe the pipeline company is concerned about the							

safety and welfare of our students, staff, and facilities							
Pre-test	Aware						
	Not Aware	19	5.26	1.59	1.14	39	.262
		22	4.73	1.42			
Post-test	Aware						
	Not Aware	38	6.21	1.09	1.09	53	.279
		17	5.88	.86			
Overall	Aware						
	Not Aware	57	5.89	1.34	2.39	94	.019
		39	5.23	1.33			
I feel confident about the pipeline company's ability to keep its pipelines safe							
Pre-test	Aware	19	5.05	1.43	1.53	39	.135
	Not Aware	22	4.32	1.61			
Post-test	Aware	38	5.87	1.09	.48	53	.634
	Not Aware	17	5.71	1.31			
Overall	Aware	57	5.61	1.26	2.27	94	.025
	Not Aware	39	4.92	1.63			

Additionally, there are relatively strong positive and significant correlations between the levels of feeling informed and the levels of trust (Pearson's r ranged from .452 to .738, $p < .001$). Those who feel well informed about the pipelines, and who believe that the company provides sufficient information, are more likely to score significantly higher on the trust measures. The different measures of trust are also highly, and significantly, correlated with each other, suggesting a high positive relationship among these variables. See Table 3.

Table 3: Pearson correlations between levels of awareness and measures of trust.

		The pipeline company provides me with the information I need regarding its pipeline near my school.	I feel comfortable calling the pipeline company whenever I have a question about their pipeline near my school.	The pipeline company operates a safe pipeline near our school.	I believe the pipeline company is concerned about the safety and welfare of our students, staff and facilities.	I feel confident about the pipeline company's ability to keep its pipelines safe.
I feel well informed regarding the pipeline near our school.	Pearson's <i>r</i> Sig. (2-tailed) N	.941 .000 96	.746 .000 96	.520 .000 96	.471 .000 96	.468 .000 96
The pipeline company provides me with the information I need regarding its pipeline near my school.	Pearson's <i>r</i> Sig. (2-tailed) N		.786 .000 96	.533 .000 96	.479 .000 96	.452 .000 96
I feel comfortable calling the pipeline company whenever I have a question about their pipeline near my school.	Pearson's <i>r</i> Sig. (2-tailed) N			.547 .000 96	.507 .000 96	.518 .000 96
The pipeline company operates a safe pipeline near our school.	Pearson's <i>r</i> Sig. (2-tailed) N				.730 .000 96	.835 .000 96
I believe the pipeline company is concerned about the safety and welfare of our students, staff and facilities.	Pearson's <i>r</i> Sig. (2-tailed) N					.806 .000 96

Are those living/working closest to the pipelines more aware, more informed, and more trusting?

A crosstab showed that, overall, those in tier 1 who live/work closer to the pipeline were likely to be more aware of the pipeline, its location, safety measures and remember receiving information from the pipeline company: 57.4% of tier 1 respondents were aware of the operation of a pipeline compared to 62.9% of tier 2 respondents; 44.3% of tier 1 knew where the pipeline

was located, compared to 25.7% of tier 2; 34.4% of tier 1 were aware of prevention measures, compared to 14.4% of tier 2; and, 41.0% of tier 1 remember receiving information from the pipeline company, compared to 34.3% of tier 2. However, a Chi-Square analysis showed that the only significant difference was between levels of knowledge regarding prevention measures (Chi-Square = 4.56, df = 1, p. = .033).

Table 4: Comparison of respondents overall in Tiers 1 and 2

Variable	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p
I feel well informed regarding the pipeline operator's pipeline near our school						
Tier 1	61	3.46	2.07	1.50	94	.136
Tier 2	35	2.83	1.81			
This pipeline operator provides me with the information I need regarding its pipeline near my school						
Tier 1	61	3.57	2.15	.91	94	.364
Tier 2	35	3.17	1.95			
I feel comfortable calling the pipeline company whenever I have a question about their pipeline near my school						
Tier 1	61	4.02	2.01	.38	94	.702
Tier 2	35	3.86	1.85			
The pipeline company operates a safe pipeline near our school						
Tier 1	61	5.18	1.64	1.39	94	.169
Tier 2	35	4.71	1.49			
I believe the pipeline company is concerned about the safety and welfare of our students, staff, and facilities						
Tier 1	61	5.79	1.32	1.54	94	.127
Tier 2	35	5.34	1.43			
I feel confident about the pipeline company's ability to keep its pipelines safe						
Tier 1	61	5.46	1.41	.92	94	.228
Tier 2	35	5.09	1.52			

A t-test was conducted to determine the difference between tiers on the scale questions measuring levels of feeling informed and trust. While the means to these questions were consistently higher for tier 1, none of them were significantly different (see Table 4). When comparisons between the tiers were tested in the pre-test and post-test responses, the same pattern occurred without any significant differences.

Discussion and Conclusion

Considering the low levels of awareness and sense of being informed, one of the surprising results of the pre-test was the relatively high level of trust. This could possibly be explained by the literature in *irrational trust*. Weber, Malhotra and Murnighan (2005) proposed a model—called the motivated attributions model—explaining why individuals engage in acts of irrational trust. The model’s central idea is that one party’s trustworthiness correlates with the extent to which the other party feels dependent upon the first for particular outcomes they feel they can achieve through the relationship. When an individual feels dependent on another for certain expected outcomes, the individual may be less cautious than normal in the face of risk. When feelings of dependence are low, the process of reciprocal trusting actions indicative of the development of a trusting relationship may not begin at all. In addition, fears related to self-awareness (such as damaging their image through trusting acts) may hinder trustors in the trust development process. The motivated attributions model also predicts that impression management concerns will influence the probability of an initial trusting act occurring, as well as the kind of act employed (i.e. one that will reflect upon the trustor in a positive light) (Weber et al., 2005).

Murray, Holmes, & Griffin (1996) found that when people engage in acts of irrational trust, they often construct idealized images of the other party to deal with the social risks and fears of exploitation inherent in a trusting relationship. This research points to a negative relationship between a party’s “rational” assessments and their feelings of dependence. In addition, the increased dependence on a party causes individuals to place greater focus on attributes that support a positive view of the party, thus promoting the (sometimes irrational) perception that the party is trustworthy (Weber et al., 2005; Fine & Holyfield, 1996; Ruscher & Fiske, 1990). Weber et al. (2005) proposed five additional consequences of dependency increases. Potential trustors will “a) engage in less information search to assess a potential counterpart’s trustworthiness; (b) be more likely to evaluate ambiguous information about the counterpart positively; (c) exaggerate the likelihood that the trusted party will reciprocate; (d) be more likely to engage in initial acts of trust; and (e) be more likely to trust precipitously” (p. 87).

Nonetheless, the results of the post-test also indicated that increased awareness and knowledge of the pipelines correlated with increased trust. This result provides additional support for the findings of Heath et al. (1998) that increased knowledge is correlated with trust and perceived openness. While, such increased knowledge among school principals is likely to increase their cognitive involvement and raise concerns about the potential risk of the nearby

pipelines, the trusting variables increased significantly. This provides support for previous hypotheses that giving information provides the stakeholders with more autonomy, empowerment, and control through open and honest communications. Those who were the most knowledgeable were also the most likely to trust the pipeline company.

This would suggest that companies engaged in risk related operations should make more efforts to inform community members of those risks. While this increases awareness and cognitive involvement about the risk, this is apparently offset by the sense of openness and concern that leads to trusting relationships.

Of course, there are obvious limitations to this study, which include the limited number of responses in a one case scenario. This makes the generalizability of the results limited. Additionally, only 16 schools participated in both the pre-test and post-test surveys, which gave very little statistical power for the paired t-tests. Therefore, the direct measure of the effect of the communications campaign is limited.

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Integrating Emotion and the Theory of Planned Behavior to Explain Consumers' Activism in the Internet Web site

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Abstract

The present research integrates the core aspects of anger with the theory of planned behavior to investigate factors influencing online activism in a Web site. This study conducted online survey, and the sample was members who joined the *V4400 Sobi-ja-heem* Web site. The Web site *V4400 Sobi-ja-heem* was initiated by a consumer who was irritated at the cell phone manufacturer Samsung Inc. because its model, "Any-Call V4400," had major product defects such as the malfunction of the camcorder, poor tone quality, fuzziness of the screen, and broken text messages. The findings suggests that adding anger in Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) enhances the explanatory power of the theory in predicting an intention to participate in activities to correct the issue, which indicates the possibility of combining emotion and the TPB in the prediction of online activism.

Introduction

In today's society, an organizational Web site is a necessity for a corporation to thrive and meet consumer needs. Businesses use web sites to provide product information for potential customers as well as to allow consumers to purchase goods and services. It can also be argued that a Web site is a powerful tool for publics through which they can pressure a company regarding an issue, such as correcting a defective product or poor services provided by a company. With the proliferation of Weblogs and other consumer activism Web sites, it is increasingly important for public relations practitioners to monitor and understand cyber activism. To date, there has been no theoretical framework developed to explain how issue publics behave within consumer activism Web sites designed to pressure organizations to address product or service issues. This study attempts to contribute to the theoretical building through combining the theory of planned behavior (TPB) and anger to explain the actions of consumers responding to defective phones manufactured by Samsung.

Literature Review

Theory of Planned Behavior & Anger Activism Model

The theory of planned behavior (TPB) extended from the theory of reasoned action has been used extensively to explain socially significant behaviors. In consumerism context, a number of studies have applied the TPB to predict consumers' purchasing behavior,

consumption of a product, or consumerism. Meta-analysis (Armitage & Conner, 2001) has shown that TPB accounted for 27% and 39% of the variance in behavior and intention, respectively.

However, the model has been limited to consider affective influences on behavior (Bagozzi, 1988; Zanna & Rempel, 1988), because attitude, subjective norm, and perceived control in TPB are based on cognitive belief. For some behavior and contexts, affective variables may be important for understanding and predicting behavior. Many researchers have argued that attitude refers not only cognitive components but also affective ones (Batra & Ahtola, 1990; Edwards, 1990; McGuire, 1969; Trafimow & Sheeran, 1998). According to McGuire (1969), the affective component includes emotions, feelings, or drives associated with an attitude object, while the cognitive component includes beliefs, judgments, or the thoughts associated with an attitude object.

Recently, Bae's (2008) study in an organ donation context found that adding emotions such as empathy and sympathy toward the individual needing a cornea transplant to TPB enhanced the explanatory power of the theory in prediction intention. Arvola et al. (2008) employed affective and cognitive attitude to explain consumers' intention to purchase organic food, and the findings of the study supported the usefulness of incorporating affective attitude into the framework of TPB.

The current study also attempts to add affective attitude to TPB for obtaining a parsimonious model to explain consumers' activism in online context. According to the emotion literature (Dillard & Meijnders, 2002), there are three perspectives of emotion. First, the uni-dimensional model depicts emotion as ranging from intensely positive to intensely negative affect. Second, emotions have two dimensions in which positive and negative emotions are distinct. Finally, the discrete emotions refer to diverse emotional states and have relatively specific functions (Hullett, Loudon, & Mitra, 2003; Lazarus, 1991; Weiner, 1986). This study focuses on anger as an intense negative emotion that frequently appears in consumers' response to product defects and service failures. Anger is elicited as a result of individuals' appraisals of high other-responsibility for negative events and high other-control over these negative events (Averill, 1983). What consequences are expected from a consumer's anger?

Lerner and Keltner's (2000) appraisal tendency framework argued that anger has a mediating effect between consumer appraisals about service failure and his/her retaliatory intentions or behaviors. The retaliatory behaviors refer to consumer activism: signature movement to petition, publicizing an issue through mass media or Internet, talking to their friends, organizing an event, joining an activist group, writing letters to key officials, organizing a sit-in, boycott, or so on. Similar to the appraisal tendency framework, the anger activism model (Turner, 2007) supports that anger contributes to the explanation of how actively a consumer participates in communication regarding a negative issue of a company. The model assumes that individuals possessing high levels of anger are likely to engage in activities to correct the issue.

The aim of this study is to examine how consumers' anger toward service failure of a company is integrated into a model of TPB in explaining consumer activism in the Internet Web site. To examine the research question, this study investigated a case reflecting consumers' online activism.

A Web site V4400 Sobi-ja-heem was initiated by a consumer who was irritated at the cell phone manufacturer Samsung Inc. because its model, "Any-Call V4400," had major product

defects such as the malfunction of the camcorder, poor tone quality, fuzziness of the screen, and broken text messages. A number of consumers who had a similar experience with the product joined the Web site, and currently the total number of members for the Web site is close to 10,000. They strongly attacked the company and advocated for other users to join in publicizing the issue. The Web site provides various communication tools that allow members to interact with the Webmaster and other members (e.g., bulletin board, member service area, Q&A, complaint area, bug board, bug pictures room, links to other sources). Using these features, the members discussed the problems of the Anycall V4400 cell phone model and exchanged information about the issue. They also did signature movement as physical activism to file the issue with the Consumer Protection Institute and mass media. These messages and activities successfully attracted national newspapers and news channels.

Hypotheses

To test efficacy of TPB in online context, the following hypotheses are suggested;

H1: Subjective norms, attitudes, and perceived behavioral control will account for a significant amount of the variance in the intention to participate in an activity to correct V4400 issue.

Another purpose of the current study is to determine if anger would be useful to explain online activism, and if integrating anger with TPB would provide a more powerful model to explain consumers' activism using the Internet.

H2: Anger will significantly account for the intention to participate in an activity to correct V4400 issue.

H3. Integrating anger and TPB will increase variance in the intention to participate in an activity to correct V4400 issue.

Finally, as assumption in TPB, this study tested whether intention is a significant predictor of behavior. Regarding V4400 issue, members in Web site have taken part in physical activism: signing of a petition to *Consumer Protection Institution*. Thus, people who have high intention to engage in an activity to fix V4400 would be likely to participate in the petition movement.

H4. Intention to engage into an activity to correct V4400 issue will significantly predict participation in the petition movement.

Method

Sample

This study conducted online survey, and the sample was members who joined the *V4400 Sobi-ja-heem* Web site. We sent an email invitation to the members with the URL address of the survey Web site. Two hundred eighty participated the survey, and the response rate was about 3%, which is in line with most commercial online surveys. About 86% were male, and the mean age of respondents was 25 years. In terms of occupation, most were currently employed (45%), some were college and graduate students (45%), and some reported other occupations (10%).

Measurement

Subjective norm. Subjective norm is based on individuals' perception of whether important other people in their life would want them to perform the behavior. To measure it, two items were measured by 5-point scale items that ranged from 1= strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree; (a) "Most people who are important to me would approve if I participated in the movement," (b) "Most people who are important to me think that I should participate in the movement."

Attitude toward the movement. Attitude in TPB refers to the overall positive or negative evaluation of performing behavior. Participants responded to the statement, I feel this participation is: good, wise, beneficial, pleasant, satisfying, and favorable. Responses were made on 5-point scales ranging from 1= strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

Intentions to participate in an activity to correct V4400 issue. Two items were included to measure past and future intentions to take part in the movement using 5-point scales ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree; (a) "I have the intention to get involve the movement for changing the problem of V4400," (b) "I intend to participate in any movement to correct V4400 issue in the future."

Perceived behavioral control. Perceived control over behavior was defined as "perceived controllability of behavior" based on PBC (Ajzen, 1991). To measure it, two item were asked to respond using 5-point scale ranging from 1 = very little control to 5 = complete control; (a) "How much personal control do you feel you have over participating an activity regarding V4400 issue," (b) "How much do you feel that participating in an activity against V4400 issue is beyond your control."

Anger. The object of anger in this study was a party (*Samsung*) caused the V4400 issue. The anger was measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale (*Strongly disagree—Strongly agree*). Participants were asked to respond to the following three items: (1) "I feel anger toward *Samsung* company regarding the V4400 issue (2) "I feel displeasure toward *Samsung* company," (3) "I am livid at *Samsung* company." Reliability analysis for these three items measuring anger resulted in a Chronbach's α value of .84.

Results

The first hypothesis proposed that the three independent variables-subjective norm, perceived control, and attitude-would significantly predict members' intention to participate in activities to correct the V4400 issues. To test the hypothesis, multiple regression was performed and found that each perceived behavioral control ($\beta = .31, p < .001$) and attitude ($\beta = .34, p < .001$) significantly predicted the intention, but subjective norm was not significant, ($\beta = .08, p = .185$). R^2 value for this model was 0.402, which means that the three variables account for 40.2% of the variance in the intention to members' participation to online activity.

The second hypothesis was proposed to see if the Web site member's anger affects their intention to activism. To analyze it, linear regression was conducted. The analysis yielded that anger ($\beta = .38, p < .001$) significantly predicted members' intention to participate in an online activity to correct V4400 issue. R^2 value for this model was 0.146, which means that the variables account for 14.6% of the variance in the intention to members' participation to online activity.

Hypothesis three predicted that integrating anger and the TPB will significantly increase variance in the intention to participate in online activities to correct V4400. To test it, hierarchical multiple regression was performed. The findings showed that adding anger into the first model including subjective norm, perceived control behavior, and attitude increased variance in explaining the intention, R^2 change value for this model was 0.022 ($p < .001$), which means that the addition anger in the TPB accounted for an additional 2.2% of the variance in members' intention to participate in activities to correct V4400 issue. Thus, integrating anger and TPB significantly increased the variance, and total R^2 value was 0.424.

The fourth hypothesis was proposed to see if the intention was significantly related to one form of activism, signing a petition. To test it, we conducted independent t-test. The results was that there was significant difference in the intention between people who signed the petition ($M = 4.40$, $SD = .71$) and people who did not ($M = 3.90$, $SD = .66$), $t(183) = 2.06$, $p < .05$.

Discussion

The present study employed anger and the TPB to examine the role of emotional response and consumers' cognitive response to an issue to predict intention to engage in an activity to correct V4400 issue. The findings of the study provide empirical support for both anger and TPB as significant components to illuminate what should be considered regarding online consumer activism. That is, associating anger with TPB became a good model for explaining consumers' intention to participate an activity to correct the V4400 issue. Anger apparently provides sufficient impetus for the intention formation.

On the other hand, subjective norm in TPB was not found to be a significant factor in predicting consumers' intention to participate in an activity to fix V4400 issue. There are some reasons that might be considered. First, participants who took part in this online survey can be a skewed sample; the participants are likely highly involved with the issue and joined this Web site to do something to correct the problem. We analyzed skewness through descriptive statistics, but the skewness value (-0.4) obtained from the analysis indicated that the sample showed a normal distribution. Thus, sampling is not a problem causing subjective norm to be an insignificant predictor in the intention to engage in an online activity to correct V4400 issue. Another possibility is that the variable, subjective norm, was not fundamentally as important to explain consumers' activism in online context. This should be explored in future studies.

Regarding physical activism, as previous findings in TPB literature, the intention to participate in online activity in this study was significant in explaining participants' behavior, specifically, their action in signing a petition against Samsung. Participants who signed the petition had higher intention to take part in online activity to correct the V4400 issue than participants who did not sign.

In summary, this study contributed to the building of a theoretical framework to explain how cognitive and affective components influence the explanation of consumer activism in an online context. Anger, perceive behavior control, and attitude toward the V4400 issue were significant variables to predict participants' intention to correct the problems experienced. Intention was a significant predictor of physical activism, or the signing of a petition against Samsung. The results have implications for issue managers facing an issue activated and publicized by consumers' Web sites. Developing tactics to more effectively diffuse anger among

an organizations' consumer publics, could be an efficient strategy to decelerate the expansion of a negative issue.

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**Examining Legitimacy Gap in Issues Management Applying Expectancy
Violation Theory:
An Empirical Analysis of Legitimacy Gap in an Issue of Direct-to-Consumer
Advertising in Pharmaceutical Industry**

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The pharmaceutical industry is subject to many laws and regulations regarding patenting, orphan drugs, or testing new drugs. No matter how the industry manage issues well enough, these issues have resulted in debates and misconception toward the industry among publics. Among others, the issue of direct-to-consumer advertising (DTC ads) has been controversial since its first appearance in the U.S. edition of *Reader's Digest* in 1981. (Woloshin, Schwartz, Tremmel, & Welch, 2001). More importantly, the issue has gained great attention since the Food and Drug Administration loosened the regulation on DTC ads since 1997 (Gellad, Kenneth, & Lyles, 2007).

While a significant amount of research has endeavored to examine the effects of DTC ads on consumers and the impact on health providers (Donohue, Cevalco, & Rosenthal, 2008), the nature of controversy among publics have not been discovered. A nationwide survey conducted by a professional market research firm showed general publics' distrust in pharmaceutical companies in 2007 (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2007). The firm named the discrepancy as 'perception gap' between the public's perception on pharmaceutical industry and the industry's actual performance. The prevailing misconception and so-called 'perception gap' need to be examined not only from practical perspective but also from theoretical perspective.

Legitimacy is a license to operate in a society for an organization. The underlying assumption is that 'business is a social institution,' which needs a society's acceptance for survival (Sethi, 1977). Despite of its importance, legitimacy has been an ambiguous goal for an organization. To better understand the concept of legitimacy practically, it is necessary to break down the concept to what is called the 'legitimacy gap,' which is the discrepancy between business behaviors and actions and societal expectation (Sethi, 1977). When the gap is wide, the organization's survival is threatened. As Heath (1997) defined an issue as a dispute between parties because of the gaps in facts, values, or policies, the legitimacy gap occurs when the issue becomes controversial in society. Therefore, managing the legitimacy gap is one of the goals in issues management.

Legitimacy gap acknowledges the discrepancy between social norms and organizational behavior. By applying Expectation Violation Theory (EVT), which also acknowledges the gap between an individual's expectation towards non-verbal behavior and actual behavior, the legitimacy gap can be theoretically explained. Derived from EVT, the present paper conceptualizes the violated interpretation in the media as a macro-level of legitimacy gap. This gap exists between societal expectations interpreted in media and organizations' self-representation.

The present study aims to examine a macro-level of legitimacy gap in the issue of DTC ads and the discourse on the issue. The paper first (1) reviews the literature on legitimacy gap and issues management regarding the legitimacy gap; (2) conceptualizes the macro-level of legitimacy gaps applying EVT, and later (2) examines macro-level of legitimacy gap and the discourse on the issue examining a discrepancy between media framings and industrial issues framing on DTC ads for a period between 1997 and 2008 utilizing EVT and framing theory.

Literature Review

Organizational Legitimacy and Legitimacy Gap

Organizational legitimacy has gained attention from many researchers in the management literature (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990). Despite of its popularity, the definition of legitimacy is not clear (Bussy, 2007; Suchman, 1995). Dowling and Pfeffer (1975) explained that an organization can be legitimate when its activities are congruent with social values. Many researchers agree that legitimacy is an acceptance from audiences (Keable, Landry, & Banville, 1998). Ashforth and Gibbs (1990) argued that legitimacy is a social judgment and accredited to the organization by its public. Among these, Suchman's (1995) definition adopts a more inclusive and broad-based definition by incorporating evaluative and cognitive dimensions. He argued that "legitimacy is a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions" (p. 574). Overall, legitimacy acknowledges the approval or acceptance from the public.

However, it is hard to measure legitimacy empirically. To better understand legitimacy and attempt to measure it, the concept of legitimacy gap needs to be considered. Dowling and Pfeffer (1975) argued that the disparity between social value and organizational behaviors is a threat to organizational legitimacy. This notion has developed into the 'legitimacy gap.' Sethi (1979) introduced the concept of legitimacy gap to explain 'the logic of business actions,' and argued that the gap should be managed strategically (p. 58).

Although little research has attempted to measure the legitimacy gap, several scholars have suggested the ways to manage legitimacy gap or legitimacy. Dowling and Pfeffer (1975) suggested three strategies: conforming to the prevailing definition of legitimacy, altering the definition through communication, and communicating symbolic meanings. Ashforth and Gibbs (1990) explained two types of legitimacy management: substantive management and symbolic management. Substantive management involves real changes in organizational operations such as organizational structures, goals, or socially institutionalized practices. Symbolic management is to portray them to be congruent with social values and expectations. Suchman (1995) argued that there is an agreement on the notion that legitimacy management can be seen in two broad approaches: strategic and institutional. The strategic approach adopts a management perspective in that organizations can manage and manipulate legitimacy. Public relations activities can be categorized into this approach (Bussy, 2007). To the contrary, the institutional approach explains that legitimacy is a function of the external influence on an organization. In most cases, the role of communication is important in management of the legitimacy gap. Dowling and Pfeffer (1975) pointed out the importance of communication between an organization and its publics because social values and expectations are reflected in communications.

The Role of Issues Management: Managing Legitimacy Gap

Research interest in issues management began in the 1960s when corporations adopted policy changes in response to political activism. The change in societal climate was crucial for an organization's existence, and it led to the emergence of issues management. In its early stages, issues management was defined as a program that companies used to improve their involvement in the public policy process (Public Affairs Council, 1978). However, in this turbulent society, the issues organizations deal with are diverse, ranging from issues related to the corporate level to societal level issues such as the environmental or inflation. Publics' support towards issues help not only the policy-making process, but also support the business climate. Consequently, among many public relations theories and practices, issues management plays a significant role in corporate communications that influence the public agenda (Berger, 2001; Reynolds, 1997) or public policy (Heath, 1997). Heath (1997) stated that issues management helps an organization in managing emerging public issues and ultimately helps an organization achieve its strategic business goals.

Coombs (1992) summarized three objectives in issues management literature: managing issues in the public policy process, corporate social responsibility discourse, and general responses to disagreement on issues. The first objective was the origin of issues management as Jones and Chase's (1979) asserted that the objective is to affect public policy process. Since then, scholars have examined how issues management results in favorable policy making or strategies to manage issues suggesting the strategic process of identifying, scanning, monitoring, analyzing, and prioritizing issues (Heath, 1997). The second objective has expanded issues management research to the corporate social responsibility discourse. Researchers have argued that issues management should meet the standard of corporate social responsibility (Heath, 1997). The third objective is a generalization of previous two objectives (Coombs, 1992). Coombs (1992) explained that the third objective of issues management is in response to any discontinuities dealing with internal and external issues.

Managing the legitimacy gap encompasses the third objective. Although responses to any issues are important in issues management, the notion that the issue produces *the legitimacy gap* has been disregarded. When the issue violates societal expectations, managing the legitimacy gap is as important as gaining favorable support from the public. Bridge (2004) explained the legitimacy gap approach as one of the important theoretical underpinnings in issues management. Coombs (1992) applied the concept of legitimacy to analyze the issues management process of President Ronald Reagan's Task Force on Food Assistance, thereby showing that the failure in establishing legitimacy on the hunger issue resulted in the failure of policy proposal. However, although abundant research has emphasized defining the concept and explaining its importance, not many studies have tried to measure the legitimacy gap. Without clear understanding, it is meaningless to keep emphasizing legitimacy in organizational discourse. The following section analyzes the concept of legitimacy gap by applying Expectancy Violation Theory (EVT).

Theoretical Framework

Micro- and Macro-level of Legitimacy gaps Applying Expectancy Violation Theory

Legitimacy gap is based on the notion that there is discrepancy between the social norm and publics' expectation. In other words, when publics feel discrepancy between the social norm

and organizational behavior or performance, a legitimacy gap grows wider. The concept of expectation and violation is consistent with the Expectancy Violation theory (EVT). Although EVT has been applied to the interpersonal communication (e.g., Bachman & Guerrero, 2008), it is also applicable to other disciplines such as marketing (Burgoon, Dunbar, & Segrin, 2002). Recently, Campo, Cameron, Brossard, and Frazer (2004) examined health messages (alcohol, smoking, and exercise) processing among college students using social norms marketing and EVT.

Burgoon and Hale (1988) argued that an individual has an expectation toward the non-verbal behavior of others. When the expectation was violated to a certain degree, the victims are aroused. The violation was either positive or negative based on (1) the evaluation of the communicator (communicator rewardingness), (2) implicit messages with the behavior, and (3) the behavior itself. There are some nonverbal behaviors which inherently produce either negative or positive evaluations. Also, there are some nonverbal behaviors that carry implicit messages; therefore, the violation can be understood differently in a different context. The first evaluation of behavior itself and second interpretation of implicit meaning of behavior can be affected by communicator rewardingness (Burgoon & Hale, 1988). Communicator rewardingness refers to “the reward value of the violator” which means a function of all characteristics of a communicator such as personality, gender, or physical attractiveness (Burgoon & Hale, 1988, p. 62). The positive valence violation leads to positive attitudinal or behavioral outcomes. For example, when an individual’s expectation regarding physical distance from others is violated by invading his/her private boundary, he/she evaluates the valence of violations as either positive or negative based on behavior itself, violator’s rewardingness (e.g., physical attractiveness), and implicit message (violator’s motivation to engaging communication). When the evaluation is a positive violation, he/she is likely to have a positive attitude towards the violator. When it is a negative violation, he/she is likely to have negative attitude towards the violator such as assuming the violator is rude. Burgoon and Hale (1988) argued that the discrepancy arises among societal expectations, personal expectations, and the actual violation. The largest negative violation gap occurs between positive individual expectation which is greater than societal expectation and the actual behavior is negative with high reward communicator. After examining the violation valence, positively evaluated violation produces favorable communication patterns and consequences (Burgoon & Hale, 1998).

When the theory is applied to the relationship between an organization and its public, it is reasonable to assume that publics have certain expectations toward issues or organizational behaviors toward the issue. When the expectation is violated, the public is aroused and they evaluate the issue and the related organization as either positive or negative. This notion is congruent with the concept of legitimacy. Whereas the positive violation produces benefits to the organization, the negative violation produces negative evaluations on issues or organizations as EVT predicts. As the legitimacy gap implies negative perceptual discrepancy held by publics between organizational behavior and societal norms (Suchman, 1995), negative violations in EVT can be explained as legitimacy gaps in public relations context.

Three important elements in gaps are personal expectation, societal expectation, and actual behavior, and the gaps occur among them. Also, as aforementioned, there are three variables to affect evaluation of violations in the interpersonal communication context: implicit messages, behavior itself, and communicator rewardingness. Burgoon and Hale (1998) explained

that violated behaviors are examined by either the interpretation of societal norm (i.e., implicit messages) or evaluation by “the recipient for this particular occasion” (i.e., behavior itself) (p. 63). Through this process, communicator rewardingness mediates the evaluation. Then, violation interpretation by societal norm is one of important factors in expectation violation. If violation interpretation is evaluated negative, a negative violation occurs when an individual has no prior information about the communicator. Even an individual perceives rewardingness of communicator and evaluate the behavior later on, initial violation interpretation also important as Burgoon and Hale (1998) said communicator rewardingness mediates overall expectancy violation.

In most cases, no public knows every issue. They are guided to think about certain issues by media (i.e., agenda-setting theory). Even more, publics might be primed for certain issues by media (i.e., priming theory). Priming and framing are important in shaping social issues and subsequent judgments (Gergen, 1992). Danowski (2008) argued that public relations campaigns can have a priming effect on shaping news contents among journalists. Therefore, the public would evaluate expectation violation based on violation interpretation from the media. At the same time, in a societal level, the discrepancy occurs when society considers the issues or organizational behavior as violations. This macro level gap should be examined to further assess individual level of gaps. Issues are perceived as problematic (Hallahan, 2001) so that the media represent them as violations in society. Their expectation violation can be different from the relevant organizations’ view points. Issues or organizational behaviors are presented to the public in a desired way via public relations efforts such as news releases, advertisements, special events or other channels. Then, the macro-level of legitimacy gap can occur between societal expectation presented in mass media and organizational self-presentation.

Macro Level Legitimacy Gap: Gap between Expectation Interpreted as Media Framing and Organizational Behavior as Issues Framing

Expectation Interpreted as Media Frames. Societal interpretation in the media is important in that publics are guided to think about certain issues by media (i.e., agenda-setting theory) or publics “learn of themselves and others” (Tuchman, 1978, p. 1). Framing is a means of organizing “disparate facts into a coherent story” (Barnett, 2005, p. 342) or “packaging of information” (Scheufele, 2000a). Scheufele (2000b) differentiated media frames from audience frames. Whereas media frames, utilized by journalists, are defined as a central idea or story line that gives meaning to an unknown events (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987), the audience frame refers to the individual’s mental schemas of ideas that guide his/her information processing (Entman, 1993). Media frames are a means to convey complex issues to make sense of an event for audiences who have limited prior information (Scheufele, 2000a). Price and Tewksbury (1997) argued that these two frames interact to influence an individual’s perception and attitudes. At the same time, scholars have argued that publics can be primed for certain issues by media. In other words, publics form a standard toward issues provided by media (i.e., priming theory). Priming and framing play pivotal roles in shaping social issues and subsequent judgments in dealing with them (Gergen, 1992). Therefore, media framing can not only be a tool to make sense of complex issues, but it also guides standards for judging the issue and forming publics’ perception and attitudes toward the issue. In this regard, societal expectation can be operationalized as media framings which influence publics’ perception and attitudes.

Organizational Actual Behavior as Issues Framing. As media framing is important among journalists, many public relations scholars argued that framing in public relations is an important tool to shape news frames (Darmon, Fitzpatrick, & Bronstein, 2008; Esrock, Hart, D’Silva, 2002; Hallahan, 1999; Vasquez, 1996). Danowski (2008) examined that public relations campaigns can have both short-term and long-term priming effects on shaping news coverage among journalists. From an issues management perspective, issues framing is important in the issue communication process. Vasquez (1996) argued that public relations practitioners should engage in information-assembling, information-promotion, and information-consuming activities as boundary spanners. In the issues management process, Vasquez (1996) asserted that information-assembling and information-promotion are “the construction of frames” and presenting the frames to the public (p. 71). Frames enable organizations to negotiate the relationship between an organization and its key publics (Vasquez, 1996). Hallahan (1999) suggested seven models of framing applicable to public relations: situation, attributes, choices, actions, issues, responsibility, and news. Among them, issues framing aims to explain “in alternative terms by different parties who vie for their preferred definition a problem or situation to prevail” (p. 210). Hallahan (1999) suggested a concept of “frame strategists” for public relations practitioners. Therefore, issues framing and media framing on the same issue exist concurrently. Hence, the following research questions are suggested to examine media framing and issues framing.

RQ 1: How have media coverage and industrial news releases about DTC ads appeared in the period between 1997 and 2008?

RQ 2: What types of media framings and issues framings have appeared in news coverage and industrial news releases of DTC ads between 1997 and 2008?

At the same time, many researchers argued that public relations’ efforts do not directly affect news content because they are filtered by journalists’ viewpoints (Kioussis, Popescu, & Mitrook, 2007; Turk, 1983). Curtin (1999) argued that although public relations is a key news source, public relations materials are used when they do not support the agenda-building goals of the sponsoring organization. Sometimes, many issues in the news were often poorly explained or biased (Jamieson, 1992). This might result in important consequences for public policy decisions and legislation (Kosicki, 1993). Therefore, when issues become controversial, organizations’ media relations efforts do not necessarily work in gaining news contents. Consequently, the macro-level of legitimacy gap between organizational issue position (issue framing) and news contents (media framing) occurs. Hence, the following hypothesis will lead this study to examine the macro-level of legitimacy gap.

RQ 3: What types of violations (either negative or positive) have appeared in news contents and news releases?

RQ 4: What are the gaps on valences between news contents and news releases?

As the negative violation in EVT leads unfavorable communication patterns and consequences, the negative violation (legitimacy gap) will lead negative evaluation on issues or

organizational behaviors. In issues management context, the negative results could be regulatory enforcement by policy makers. Therefore, the following hypothesis is suggested to examine the result of macro-level legitimacy gap.

H: The greater number of negative violations (i.e., legitimacy gap) between news coverage and news releases on an issue of DTC ads relates to the greater regulatory enforcement towards pharmaceutical industry.

Method

Samples

The study examined the discrepancy between news coverage about DTC ads and pharmaceutical companies' news releases for the period from January 1997 to November 2008. This period was selected to see the trend of media framing and issues framing of DTC ads because FDA allowed broadcast DTC ads of prescription drugs since August 1997. Therefore, it is reasonable to see the trend of news coverage and the industry's news releases on the issue of DTC ads. News articles were examined from four leading newspapers: *The Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, *Washington Post*, and *The New York Times*. The relevant articles and industrial news releases were examined from the *Proquest* newspapers database.

The key terms to find the retrieved articles contained the name of 'direct-to-consumer,' 'drug advertising,' and the abbreviation of 'DTC' in pharmaceutical industry. This resulted in 759 articles in all available newspapers, but news stories which were irrelevant to DTC ads were excluded through screening the abstracts of news stories. Therefore, total of 355 news stories were analyzed: 117 (33%) from *The New York Times*, 117 (33%) from *The Wall Street Journal*, 55 (15.5%) from *Washington Post*, and 66 (18.5%) from *USA Today* were analyzed. For industrial news releases, a total of 93 releases was found, but news releases from private marketing firms or public relations firms were excluded. Therefore, 32 (60.4%) news releases from *PRNewswire* and 21 (39.6%) news releases from *BusinessNewswire* were selected. To see the trend of regulatory enforcement actions, the frequency of warning letters and untitled letters regarding DTC ads was analyzed from FDA website (www.fda.gov/cder/ddmac/lawsregs.htm).

Coding Procedure

Descriptive Features. The coders coded the frequency of both news articles and industrial news releases. Type of stories (news coverage and news releases), types of newspapers, type of industrial materials, year of publication, month of publication, section of news stories (financial/economy/money, editorial/opinion, health/fitness/life, book review), types of news stories (news, editorial, opinion/op-ed, letters, interview), and number of words.

The lists of framings. To analyze media framings and issues framings, first, PhRMA's position statement (available in its website, www.phrma.org) was analyzed to identify the industry's preferred issue frames. Second, news articles dealing with DTC ads were reviewed to examine media frames. The frames identified both in news articles and PhRMA's position statement were units of analysis in the present study. Several framings from both media frames and issue frames from the pharmaceutical industry were identified. Within each frame, sub-

frames were developed to specify different points associated with a particular frame. Table 1. shows frames and sub-frames from the media and the industry.

Table 1. List of Frames

Framing	Description
Frame 1.	The issue of DTC ads is under investigation.
Sub-frame 1-1.	Congress investigates the issue of DTC ads.
Sub-frame 1-2.	FDA warns/regulates the issue of DTC ads.
Sub-frame 1-3.	Advocacy groups appeal the danger of the issue of DTC ads.
Frame 2.	DTC ads aim to educate consumers.
Sub-frame 2-1.	DTC ads are helpful to educate consumers to diagnose symptoms.
Sub-frame 2-2.	DTC ads help initiating doctor-patient relationship.
Sub-frame 2-3.	DTC ads are beneficial to the elders for their health.
Sub-frame 2-4.	A company lunches new DTC ads aiming education for consumers.
Sub-frame 2-5.	DTC ads hurt doctor-patient relationship.
Frame 3.	DTC ads are marketing.
Sub-frame 3-1.	DTC ads are another marketing tool.
Sub-frame 3-2.	DTC ads increase profits.
Sub-frame 3-3.	Pharmaceutical industry spends too much money on DTC ads.
Sub-frame 3-4.	A company launches new DTC ads spending much money
Frame 4.	Customers should be careful about DTC ads.
Sub-frame 4-1.	DTC ads do not give information about risks or side-effects.
Sub-frame 4-2.	The industry's argument of educating consumers is questionable.
Sub-frame 4-3.	DTC ads lead consumers to overuse drugs.
Sub-frame 4-4.	DTC ads are deceptive and misleading.
Frame 5.	Pharmaceutical companies self-regulate DTC ads.
Sub-frame 5-1.	Pharmaceutical companies regulate DTC ads voluntarily.
Sub-frame 5-2.	Pharmaceutical companies comply to DTC ads guideline of PhRMA.
Sub-frame 5-3.	Pharmaceutical companies regulate DTC ads forced by FDA.

Headline/Story Valence. Headline valence and story valence for both news coverage and news releases were coded as negative (-1), neutral (0), or positive (+1).

Intercoder Reliability. Two trained coders coded 75 news stories (21.1%) and 36 news releases (67.9%) to examine the intercoder reliability. Hosti's reliability coefficient was 0.936

(newspapers) and 0.911 (news releases). Scott's (1955) π was 0.823 for newspapers and 0.799 for news releases.

Results

The Trend of News coverage and News releases

Regarding the first research question, descriptive features of news coverage and news releases were analyzed. For the amount of news stories, there was a significant difference in numbers of stories between news contents and news releases ($\chi^2(1, 407) = 220.588, p < .001$). Also, there were significant differences in the number of stories among four newspapers ($\chi^2(3, 352) = 36.651, p < .001$). Table 2. shows the distribution of news articles among four newspapers and news releases of *PRNewswire* and *BusinessNewswire*.

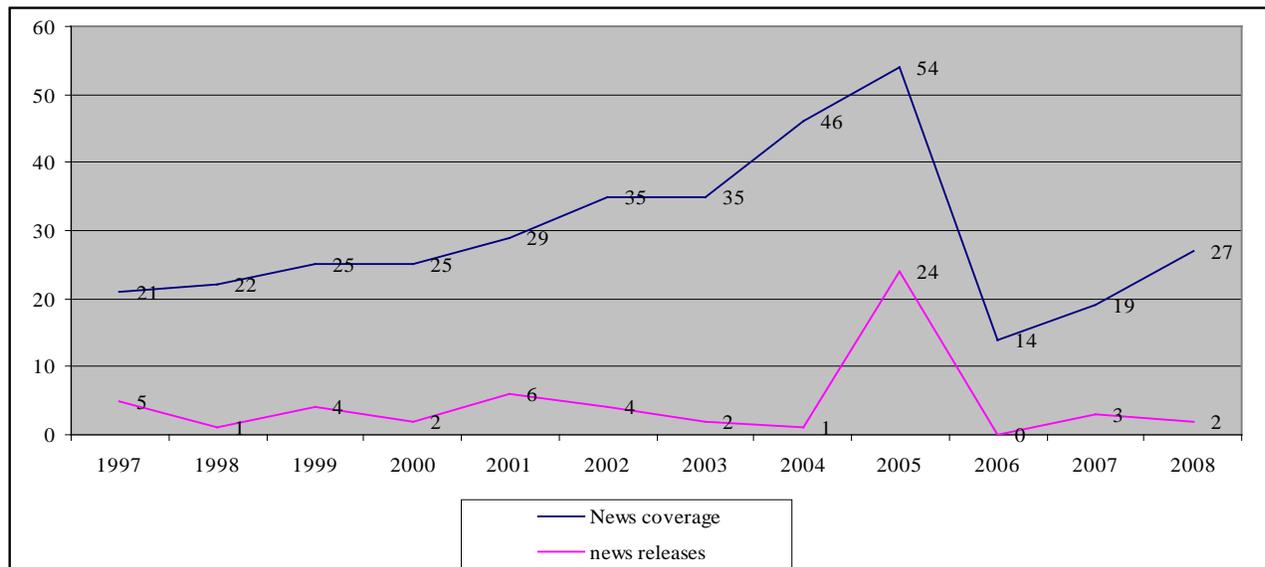
Table 2. Total Number of Stories and Average Words counts

	Stories	Story Length
<i>The New York Times</i>	117	795.56
<i>USA Today</i>	66	590.62
<i>The Wall Street Journal</i>	117	777.28
<i>The Washington Post</i>	55	883.11
<i>PRNewswire</i>	32	668.56
<i>BusinessNewswire</i>	21	684.52

Among news coverage, most news articles appeared in Financial/Money/Business section ($n = 253, 71.3\%$), Health/Fitness/Life section ($n = 57, 16.1\%$), Editorial/Opinion ($n = 37, 10.4\%$). Also, 364 news stories are a type of news article (89.2%), 42 stories are types of editorial/opinion/op-ed/letter (10.3%), two stories were a type of interview (0.5%), and nine articles were letters from audiences (2.2%). In terms of word count for measuring story length, there was a significant difference among them due to the difference between *The Washington Post* and *USA Today* ($F = 3.494, p = .016$).

Figure 2 shows the trend of the news coverage and news releases over the study period. During the years between 1997 and 2008, most news articles appeared in 2005 ($n = 54, 15.3\%$) and most news releases appeared in 2005 concurrently ($n = 24, 44.4\%$).

Figure 2. Trend of news stories



Trend of media frames and issue frames

In answering the second research question, the most frequent media frame in news coverage was ‘DTC ads are marketing’ (n = 132, 37.2%). The second most frequent media frame was ‘Customers should be careful about DTC ads’ (n = 84, 23.7%). The next frequent media frame was ‘The issue of DTC ads is under regulatory investigation’ (n = 68, 19.2%). Media frame of ‘DTC ads aim to educate consumers’ appeared least (n = 43, 12.1%).

Among issue frames in news releases, the issue frame of ‘Pharmaceutical companies self-regulate DTC ads’ was most frequent (n = 23, 42.6%). The next frequent issue frame was ‘DTC ads are marketing’ (n = 20, 37%). The issue frame of ‘DTC ads aim to educate consumers’ was next frequent (n = 10, 18.5%). The frames of ‘The issue of DTC ads is under investigation’ and ‘Customers should be careful about DTC ads’ did not appear. Table 3 shows the frequency of media frames and issues frames across the newspapers and industrial news sources.

Violation Interpretation and the Macro-level Legitimacy Gap

To answer the third research question, means of headline valence, story valence, and overall valence for both news coverage and news release were calculated (see Table 4.). The good-of-fitness t-tests were conducted to examine the mean differences among the three. The results showed that there were significant differences on news headline valence ($t = 40.696, p < .001$), story valence ($t = 229.888, p < .001$), and overall valence ($t = 228.349, p < .001$) between news coverage and news releases. Table 4 shows the valences of headline, story, and overall news stories and Table 5 shows the valences of three across the four newspapers. Table 3 shows the valences of each frame for both news contents and news framing. Valences of news stories were all negative and valences of news releases were all positive. In other words, there were gaps on valences between news contents and news releases.

To answer the fourth research question, the valence of news contents and that of news releases were summed up. The maximum difference is 2 and the minimum is 0. The frame of ‘The issue of DTC ads is under regulatory investigation’ had .90 degree of gap. The frame of ‘DTC ads aim to educate consumers’ had .65. The frame of ‘DTC ads are marketing’ had 1.19, and the frame of ‘Pharmaceutical companies self-regulate DTC ads’ had 1.43. The largest gap was the sub-frame of ‘DTC ads increase profits’ that had 1.27, and the least was the sub-frame of ‘DTC ads are beneficial to the elders for their health’ that had 0, in turns, there was no gap between news coverage and news releases. The overall gap was 1.44. Each gap was listed on Table 3.

Table 3. List of Media frames

Framing	Description	NYT	W P	WS J	US A	N of stories	Overall valence	PR	BIZ	N of stories	Overall valence	Gap
Frame 1.	The issue of DTC ads is under investigation.	19	8	29	11	68	-0.90	0	0	0	0	.90
Sub-frame 1-1.	Congress investigates the issue of DTC ads.	6	1	2	2	11	-.91	0	0	0	0	.91
Sub-frame 1-2.	FDA warns/regulates the issue of DTC ads.	13	7	23	9	52	-.90	0	0	0	0	.90
Sub-frame 1-3.	Advocacy groups appeal the danger of the issue of DTC ads.	0	0	4	0	4	-1.00	0	0	0	0	1
Frame 2.	DTC ads aim to educate consumers.	12	3	14	14	43	.35	7	3	10	1.00	.56
Sub-frame 2-1.	DTC ads are helpful to educate consumers to diagnose symptoms.	4	3	6	9	22	.73	5	2	7	1.00	.27
Sub-frame 2-2.	DTC ads help initiating doctor-patient relationship.	2	0	0	1	3	.67	2	0	2	1.00	.33
Sub-frame 2-3.	DTC ads are beneficial to the elders for their health.	1	0	1	0	2	1.00	0	1	1	1.00	0
Sub-frame 2-4.	A company lunches new DTC ads aiming education for consumers.	0	0	7	0	7	1.00	0	0	0	0	1
Sub-frame 2-5.	DTC ads hurt doctor-patient relationship.	5	0	0	4	9	-1.00	0	0	0	0	1
Frame 3.	DTC ads are marketing.	48	15	44	25	132	-.59	12	8	20	.60	1.19
Sub-frame 3-1.	DTC ads are another marketing tool.	22	4	24	10	60	-.50	5	3	8	.62	1.12
Sub-frame 3-2.	DTC ads increase profits.	5	1	3	2	11	-.27	0	2	2	1.00	1.27
Sub-frame 3-3.	Pharmaceutical industry spends too much money on DTC ads.	12	10	13	10	45	-.87	0	0	0	0	.87
Sub-frame 3-4.	A company launches new DTC ads spending much money	8	0	2	2	12	-.17	3	1	4	.50	.67

Frame 4.	Customers should be careful about DTC ads.	29	25	19	11	84	-.95	0	0	0	0	0	.95
Sub-frame 4-1.	DTC ads do not give information about risks or side-effects.	9	6	11	2	28	-.96	0	0	0	0	0	.96
Sub-frame 4-2.	The industry's argument of educating consumers is questionable.	6	7	1	3	17	-.94	0	0	0	0	0	.94
Sub-frame 4-3.	DTC ads lead consumers to overuse drugs.	4	6	2	2	14	-.93	0	0	0	0	0	.93
Sub-frame 4-4.	DTC ads are deceptive and misleading.	8	5	5	4	22	-1.00	0	0	0	0	0	1
Frame 5.	Pharmaceutical companies self-regulate DTC ads.	8	3	7	3	21	-.43	13	10	23	1.00	1.43	
Sub-frame 5-1.	Pharmaceutical companies regulate DTC ads voluntarily.	5	2	1	1	9	-.22	0	1	1	1.00	1.22	
Sub-frame 5-2.	Pharmaceutical companies comply to DTC ads guideline of PhRMA.	0	0	1	1	2	.00	12	9	21	1.00	1	
Sub-frame 5-3.	Pharmaceutical companies regulate DTC ads forced by FDA.	3	1	5	1	10	-.70	0	0	0	1.00	1.70	
	Total	117	55	11	66	355	-.59	32	21	53	.85	1.44	
				7									

Table 4. Means of headline/story valence

	Valence (M)	
	News coverage	News release
Headline	-0.45 (SD = 0.899)	0.35 (SD = 0.520)
Story	-0.58 (SD = 0.677)	0.85 (SD = 0.408)
Overall	-0.59 (SD = 0.681)	0.85 (SD = 0.408)

Table 5. Means of headline/story valence

	Valence (M)			
	NYT	WP	WSJ	USA
Headline	-0.50 (SD = 0.551)	-0.38 (SD = 0.652)	-0.45 (SD = 1.171)	-0.41 (SD = 1.022)
Story	-0.63 (SD = 0.638)	-0.73 (SD = 0.525)	-0.50 (SD = 0.765)	-0.55 (SD = 0.683)
Overall	-0.64 (SD = 0.636)	-0.73 (SD = 0.525)	-0.50 (SD = 0.773)	-0.55 (SD = 0.683)

No significant differences

DTC ads News Coverage, News Releases and Regulatory Enforcement

To test the hypothesis, the frequency of news coverage, news releases, and regulatory enforcement were analyzed. Table 6 shows the trend of valence of news coverage and news releases, gaps between the two, and the number of FDA regulatory enforcement actions. The gap and FDA actions are correlated to one another ($r = 0.535$, $p = 0.037$). Also, valence of news releases are highly correlated to FDA actions ($r = 0.701$, $p = 0.006$). Therefore, the hypothesis was supported. Figure 3. shows a graphical trend of media frames and FDA regulation across the study period. Figure 4. shows a graphical trend of legitimacy gaps and FDA regulation across the study period.

Table 6. The trend of news coverage/news releases valence and FDA regulation actions

	Overall Valence of News Coverage	Overall Valence of News Releases	Gap	FDA
1997	-0.52 (SD = 0.602)	0.80 (SD = 0.447)	1.32	13
1998	-0.33 (SD = 0.761)	1.00	1.33	18
1999	-0.36 (SD = 0.638)	0.75 (SD = 0.500)	1.11	6
2000	-0.48 (SD = 0.770)	1.00	1.48	17
2001	-0.66 (SD = 0.721)	0.83 (SD = 0.408)	1.49	10
2002	-0.57 (SD = 0.739)	1.00	1.57	8
2003	-0.57 (SD = 0.698)	0.50 (SD = 0.707)	1.07	9
2004	-0.78 (SD = 0.513)	1.00	1.78	8
2005	-0.70 (SD = 0.603)	0.96 (SD = 0.204)	1.66	9
2006	-0.14 (SD = 0.864)	0	0.14	0
2007	-0.74 (SD = 0.653)	0.67 (SD = 0.577)	1.41	2
2008	-0.70 (SD = 0.669)	0.00 (SD = 1.414)	0.7	3

Figure 3. Trend of media frames and FDA regulation actions

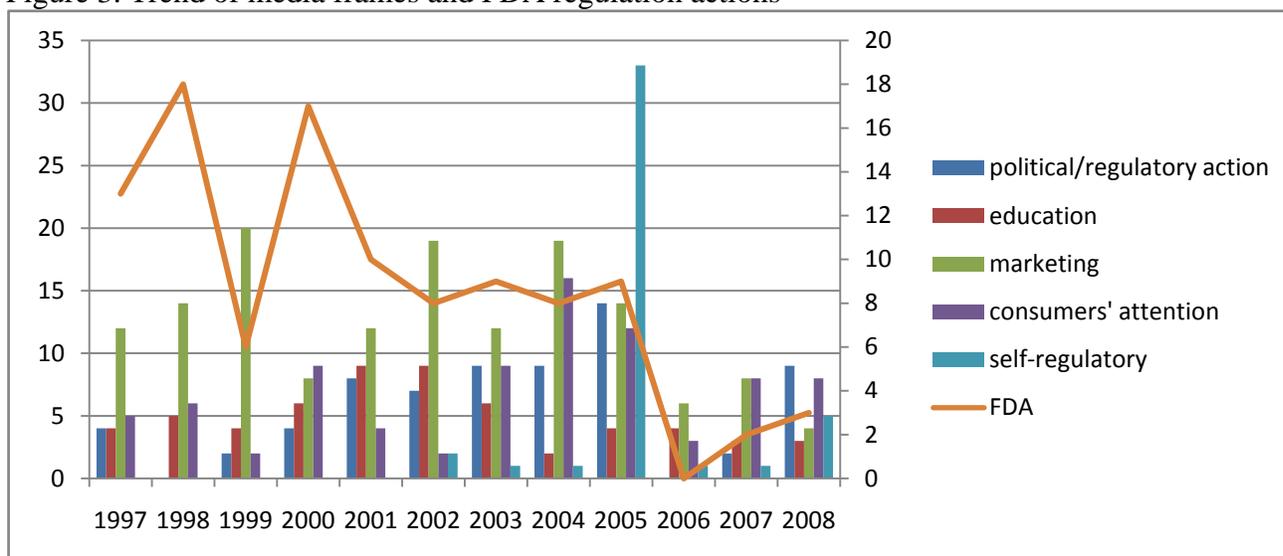
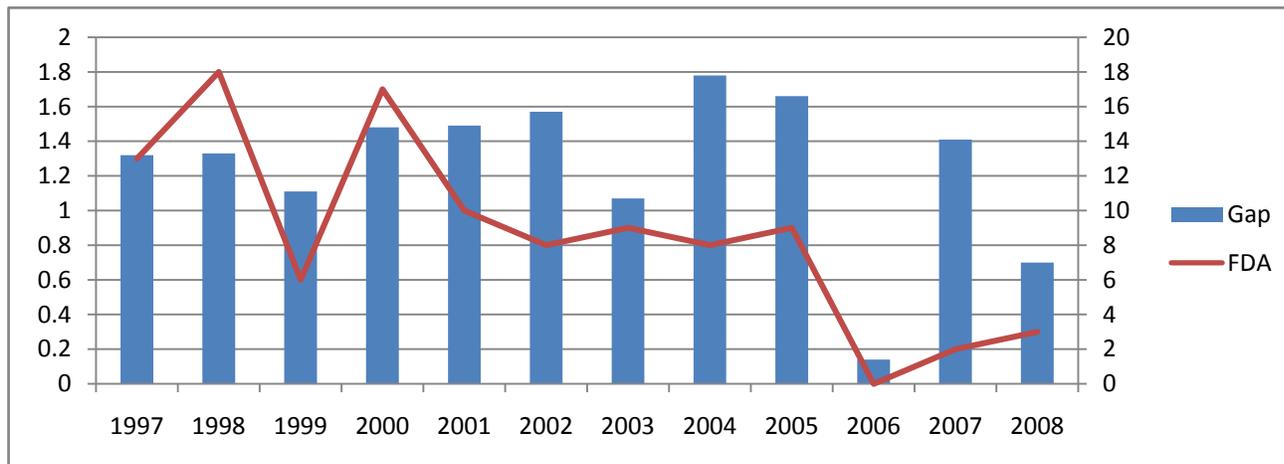


Figure 4. Trend of legitimacy gaps and FDA regulation actions



Discussion

The legitimacy gap has gained attention from scholars in both management and public relations. While management literature has argued the importance of communication in managing the gap, the concept of legitimacy gap has been largely neglected in public relations. From the issue management perspective, the legitimacy gap should be managed strategically for issues that are perceived as problematic in society.

Although the pharmaceutical industry contributes greatly to a society by improving public health, the public distrusts the industry. This notion can be understood from the concept of legitimacy gap which acknowledges the discrepancy between societal expectation and business performance (Sethi, 1977). The industry has been faced with a variety of issues, and issues management should deal with those issues and the legitimacy gaps resulting from controversial issues. Recently, the issue of DTC ads has emerged as the most controversial during the past decade (Donohue, Cevasco, & Rosenthal, 2008). However, the focus of controversy has not been discovered. The present study examined the legitimacy gap between societal expectation interpreted by the media and the industry's self-presentation applying Expectancy Violation Theory and framing theory.

As the FDA loosened the regulations on DTC ads after 1997, DTC ads have been controversial. The issue has received large amounts of news coverage exhibiting various viewpoints. These viewpoints have been represented as frames. While the media (printed media in the present study) has paid great attention to the issue, it seemed that the pharmaceutical industry did not respond properly in terms of the amount of news stories and news releases. During the 10-year period, the finding shows that relatively little amount of news releases was presented compared to news stories. However, the trend of the numbers of stories for both sides seems similar to one another (see Figure 2). In other words, as the number of news stories was increasing between 2001 to 2005, the number of news releases was also increasing. It seems that the industry knew the trend of news coverage and acted properly.

However, when it comes to consider the media frames and issue frames, it does not seem that the pharmaceutical industry used appropriate issues frames. While much media attention had

paid to the frame of ‘marketing’ with negative valence and ‘education’ with positive valence, the frame of ‘education’ was used least. More importantly, the Pharma, which represent the pharmaceutical industry, has focused on the ‘education’ frame, but pharmaceutical companies have not shown enough support in terms of news release. Also, the frame of ‘customers should be careful’ in the media, there had not been appropriate responsive issues frames toward it.

By applying EVT, the present study examined violations of interpretation of the issue. The media’s violation interpretation was negative, resulting in the gap between the media coverage and industrial position. In other words, it caused a macro-level legitimacy gap. Obviously, the existence of gaps is confirmed in the present study. The present study also showed that the relationship between the number of regulatory enforcement and the legitimacy gap between the media and the industry. This finding suggests that the industry should pay attention to the media and the authority concurrently. The result of negative violation is anticipated unfavorable business climate, the present study confirmed the need for strategic issues management. With regard to regulatory investigation, the number of news releases was greater. However, from the issues management perspective, the industry should have paid attention before the FDA actions.

In addition, understanding the tendency of negative violation across the newspapers and the tendency of media frames used in the newspapers is also important. Among four newspapers, although the number of stories of *The Washington Post* is small, it has a large amount of word counts on average and the most negative valence.

Practical Implication

The results showed that both the media and the industry have competing points of view; therefore, the industry did not respond to the media’s main argument. Issues communication efforts should involve two-way communication (Heath, 1997). Therefore, the industry needs to respond to the media’s accusations. Therefore, as the results showed that the violation interpretation on the issue of DTC ads in the media was mostly negative, it resulted in the negative legitimacy gap. Public relations practitioners should understand the gap, and try to loosen the gap such as responding in an appropriate way, suggesting reasonable frames, or using consistent frames. Also, DTC ads campaigns aim to educate publics using large amounts of money. However, education should not occur only through advertising but also in the form of public relations activities. While DTC ads have appeared in television or magazines, the finding shows that media relations efforts have not appeared in elite newspapers and even in industrial news sources. At the same time, from the relationship management perspective, the openness or trust did not appear in the campaign as the media frames of DTC ads often imply deceptive or misleading information.

Theoretical Implication

Applying EVT, the prevalent hostile news coverage was probed and the controversies on the issue were discovered using framing theory. Also, although much research has emphasized the importance of issue framing in issues management, the present study showed narrow scope of issues framing limited to ‘education’ and a small amount of news releases from the industry. Public relations practitioners should pay attention to the creation of favorable issue frames and

communicate effectively with those issue frames. To do that, research needs to support the way to form issues framings.

Further study

The present study showed the negative violation in the mass media (especially in elite printed newspapers). This negative interpretation affects publics' perception. The individual level of negative violation needs to be examined as the individual-level of legitimacy. When they are examined together, the issue and the legitimacy gap would be better understood and managed strategically. Also, when the individual-level of legitimacy is examined, the concept of communicator rewardingness should be taken into close consideration as a significant mediator.

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Does What They See Affect How They React: Exploring the Effects of Victim and Neutral Photographs on Reactions to Crisis Events

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Abstract

Understanding perceptions of crisis situations is important to developing appropriate crisis responses. Given that visual images commonly appear with online and traditional media reports, we should explore their effects on crisis responsibility and other variables associated with perceptions of crises. Three image conditions (victim image, neutral image, and no image) were compared. Perceptions of crisis responsibility, reputation, anger toward the organization, and negative word-of-mouth intentions were similar across experimental conditions.

A strong theme in crisis communication research is the need to understand the crisis situation. The rationale is that the crisis situation helps to dictate what is required for an appropriate or effective crisis response, the words and actions offered in response to a crisis. Following the “it depends” logic of Contingency Theory (Cameron, Pang & Jin, 2008), the crisis response depends on the nature of the crisis situation. A critical component of the crisis situation is how people perceive crisis responsibility—the degree to which people feel the organization is responsible for the crisis (e.g., Coombs & Holladay, 1996). This is the audience-centered aspect of the crisis situation. How people perceive crisis responsibility and other relevant crisis factors will limit which crisis response strategies can be used effectively. Research can help to map the factors that will shape audience perceptions. In turn, crisis managers can use this information to anticipate how stakeholders are likely to react and plan their crisis response accordingly.

It is common for most stakeholders to experience a crisis as a mediated event (Deephouse, 2000). A small percentage of people are actual victims of a crisis. Most people learn about the crisis from stories that appear in the traditional and online media, including news stories and blogs. Whether traditional or online, crisis news stories often include visual elements such as a photograph or diagram. For online news stories, it is common to supply a slideshow of multiple pictures related to the crisis. These visual cues could have an important effect on people how perceive the crisis, thus affecting the crisis response efforts of the organization. Unfortunately, we know little about how visual images of a crisis affect perceptions of a crisis. In light of our increasingly visually-oriented culture, researchers should explore the impact of the visuals that accompany media reports of crises. Understanding how visual images influence crisis perceptions would add to our understanding of the factors that shape crisis situations and hold implications for crisis communication.

Perceptual Nature of Crises

A crisis can be defined as “the perception of an unpredictable event that threatens important expectancies of stakeholders and can seriously impact an organization’s performance and generate negative outcomes” (Coombs, 2007b, pp. 2-3). A key component of this definition is the perceptual nature of a crisis. We could argue that a crisis does not exist if stakeholders do not perceive it. This also means a crisis does exist if stakeholders believe there is one. As such the definition honors the co-creation aspect of public relations (Botan & Taylor, 2004). Meaning is socially constructed and that would hold true for crises as well.

As both Contingency Theory and Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) note, the effectiveness of the crisis response depends the crisis situation. How people perceive the crisis situation, especially crisis responsibility, is a critical factor in understanding the crisis situation (Coombs, 1995, 2007a, 2007c). Of course, other factors including culture (Lee, 2004; Huang, 2006) or any of the internal variables from Contingency Theory such as organizational characteristics, public relations department characteristics, and individual characteristics (Shin, Cameron & Cropp, 2006) are also important. The focus here is on factors that shape stakeholder perceptions of the crisis situation, what we can term *audience perception factors*. The term “audience” is used to denote that the research is audience-centered. The point is to understand how the audience is likely to perceive the crisis so that the crisis response can fit with those perceptions. Failure to take into account audience perception factors may leave the organization appearing out of touch, arrogant, and irresponsible.

Research from SCCT and Contingency Theory have provided some insights into audience perception factors. SCCT emphasizes *crisis responsibility* as the key element of the theory. The type of crisis, history of previous crises, and relationship reputation (prior reputation) have all been shown to shape audience perceptions (Coombs, 2004; Coombs & Holladay, 2001, 2006, 2007). Contingency Theory examines a wider range of variables shaping the crisis situation but includes audience perception factors in the threat appraisal (Cameron et al., 2008; Jin & Cameron, 2007; Jin, Pang & Cameron, 2007; Pang, Jin & Cameron, 2004). Generally the approaches and results from SCCT and Contingency are compatible and easily integrated with one another (Holtzhausen & Roberts, in press). Research has also explored the effect of video versus print presentation of crisis stories on crisis perceptions (Coombs & Holladay, in press). Extant research has begun to map the audience perception factors.

Crisis Perceptions and Crisis Communication

It is important to expand on the relationship between audience perceptions and crisis communication. To explore the relationship it is helpful to quickly review the types of crisis response strategies and then the specific connection to audience perceptions.

Crisis communication is a very broad topic that covers a wide range of factors and disciplines (Coombs, 2007b). In this paper, we are concerned with crisis communication as the response to the crisis event. The crisis response is a strategic application of communication to the crisis event. Sturges (1994) identified three strategic foci for the crisis response: (1) instructing information which helps people cope physically with the crisis, (2) adjusting

information which helps people cope psychologically with the crisis, and (3) reputation repair which attempts to “fix” the reputation damage inflicted by a crisis. Sturges believes instructing and adjusting information must be delivered before any reputation repair messages. SCCT uses Sturges’s typology to create a base response that should be used in any crisis situation. That base response is to provide instructing information (public safety as the number one priority) along with an expression of sympathy (adjusting information) and corrective action (adjusting) when possible. Only after providing the base response should crisis managers turn their attention to reputation repair (Coombs, 2007c)

A significant concern in crisis communication is managing stakeholder reactions to the crisis, organization in crisis, and crisis response (Coombs, 2009). All three of Sturges’ strategic foci are forms of stakeholder reaction management. However, reputation repair is the area of managing stakeholder reactions that has received the most attention in the literature (Coombs, 2009). Common crisis responses used for reputation repair include: denial, claim no responsibility for the crisis; scapegoat, blame others for the crisis; excuse, minimize responsibility for the crisis by emphasize lack of control over events or lack of intention to do harm; justification, emphasize minimal damage from the crisis; compensation, provide money and/or gifts to victims; apology, publicly accept responsibility for the crisis and ask for forgiveness; reminder, tell people about past good works; ingratiation, thank stakeholders for helping; and victimage, explain that the organization is a victim of the crisis (Coombs, 2007b).

Managing stakeholder reactions does not mean controlling or manipulating. Rather, managing represents attempts at influence. However, effective stakeholder reaction management requires an understanding of those reactions. Crisis managers cannot expect to create any reaction they desire. Instead, how the stakeholders react is a constraint within which crisis managers must operate. For instance, if stakeholders are likely to strongly perceive the organization is responsible for the crisis, use of a denial or justification crisis response is unlikely to be effective. Instead, crisis managers should be using compensation and/or apology (Coombs, 2007c). Table 1 provides a sample of the way audience perceptions can affect the crisis response, especially reputation repair efforts.

Table 1:

Sample SCCT Crisis Communication Recommendations

1. The first step in the crisis response should be any instructing information, including recall information. This is one-half of the base response to a crisis.
2. The second step in the crisis response should be an expression of sympathy, any information about corrective actions, and trauma counseling when needed—the adjusting information. This is the second-half of the base response to a crisis.
3. For crises with minimal attributions of crisis responsibility and no intensifying factors, instructing and adjusting information is sufficient.
4. For crises with minimal attributions of crisis responsibility and an intensifying factor, add excuse and/or justification strategies to the instructing and adjusting information.
5. For crises with low attributions of crisis responsibility, and no intensifying factors, add excuse and/or justification strategies to the instructing and adjusting information.

6. For crises with low attributions of crisis responsibility and an intensifying factor, add compensation and/or apology strategies to the instructing and adjusting information.
7. For crises with strong attributions of crisis responsibility, add compensation and/or apology strategies to the instructing and adjusting information.
8. The compensation strategy should be used any time victims suffer serious harm.
9. The reminder and ingratiation strategies can be used to supplement any response.
10. Denial and attack the accuser strategies are best used only for combating rumors and/or challenges to the morality of an organization's behaviors.
11. Victimage can be used any time there is evidence that the organization is suffering greatly from the crisis.

The extant research confirms the value of understanding audience perceptions. By understanding how various elements in the crisis situation might affect people, we can anticipate how the audience (stakeholders) will react to a crisis. In turn, if we can anticipate audience perceptions, we can select a crisis response that should mesh most effectively with those perception. Thus, the situation helps to dictate the crisis response. The better we understand the audience perception factors, the more effective crisis managers will be at anticipating stakeholder reactions and selecting a crisis response to “fit” with those reactions.

News Report Visuals as an Audience Perception Factor

One unexplored aspect of audience perceptions is the visuals used with news stories. Given that news stories are an important source of information for stakeholders (Deephouse, 2000), factors related to news stories should be investigated as relevant audience perception factors. Dragga and Voss (2003) examined a large sample of accident reports and discovered the reports hid the human consequences of accidents. The reports were so objective that they did not contain any visuals showing or relating humans to the accident. Dragga and Voss (2003) claimed the presentation of reports “strips victims of their humanity” (p. 61). They developed a set of guidelines for the tasteful inclusion of the human element in accident reports. Dragga and Voss believe a failure to consider the human element reduces the urgency to address the factors that created the accident. In other words, policy makers are less likely to feel the need to take action. The belief is that visuals that include the human element will intensify perceptions about the danger of a crisis—alter how people perceive the crisis. The article was speculative, however, and did not offer evidence to support the ability of images to change perceptions of crises.

Other research has demonstrated the ability of images in news stories to shape how people interpret the story (Gibson & Zillman, 2000; Zillmann, Gibson, & Sargent, 1999). Of the most relevance to crisis communication is the finding that photographs intensified risk perceptions. The study examined risk perceptions related to Appalachian tick disease. The experiment kept the story content consistent but altered the images (tick, tick plus victim, and no image). When people saw photographs that contained images related to the risk (the tick) or images of the risk and victim (tick and victim), the risk was perceived as significantly greater

than when there was no image (Gibson & Zillman, 2000). In another study, an image of a victim from an amusement park ride created greater concern over ride safety and less confidence in ride safety than when there was no image or one of people enjoying the ride. Again, the content of the stories remained constant as only the image changed.

Considered together, these studies suggest that organizations should be concerned with the visual images that accompany reports of crises because they may increase readers' concerns and fears. Organizations have little to no control over the visual images included in reporting. However, in light of the potential for visual images to shape perceptions of the crisis situation, public relations practitioners should be interested in learning how these images impact perceptions. For example, the inclusion of images featuring victims of a crisis could intensify attributions of crisis responsibility. As people consider the victims and sense greater danger, they could judge the organization as more responsible for the crisis. As demonstrated by the SCCT research, increased perceptions of crisis responsibility necessitate a more accommodative response. Practitioners would benefit from investigations of the impact of these visual images on stakeholders' perceptions of the crisis situation. This issue is especially important because the organization in crisis typically has no control over the visual images used in the reporting. Being able to anticipate the effects of victim images would help crisis communicators develop appropriate responses.

RQ1: Will perceptions of crisis responsibility be stronger in a victim image condition than in a neutral image and no image condition?

It is important to consider crisis responsibility because it impacts a number of other important variables in the crisis situation. Crisis responsibility has proven to be one of the factors that affect perceptions of organizational reputation, intentions to engage in negative word-of-mouth communication, and level of anger (Coombs, 2007c; Coombs & Holladay, 2007). Reputation is an important, intangible asset that management seeks to protect (Davies, Chun, da Silva & Roper 2003; Fombrun & van Riel 2004). Crises threaten reputations so it is an important variable to consider. Negative word-of-mouth is a dangerous outcome from a crisis as well. Managers want to prevent negative word-of-mouth because of the harm it can inflict on organizations. Because anger has been shown to motivate people to engage in negative word-of-mouth communication, it is an important consequence of a crisis as well (Coombs & Holladay, 2007). It follows that victim images in a story might affect these three important variables too. A second research question was posed related to the effects of a crisis on other audience perceptions, affect, and behavioral intentions.

RQ2: Will participants in the victim image condition report weaker perceptions of organizational reputation, stronger anger, and stronger negative word-of-mouth intentions than those in a neutral image and no image condition?

Methods

Participants

The research participants were 90 undergraduate students enrolled in a Midwestern university in the United States. Their ages ranged from 18 to 25 years ($M = 20.14$, $SD = 1.43$). The sample was 40 percent male ($n = 36$) and 60 percent female ($n = 54$).

Design and Materials

A news report describing an airliner crash associated with loss of life was used for the study. The TAM airliner crash was selected because most participants would be unfamiliar with TAM, the year-old story of the crash in Brazil, and the visual images that may have appeared in news reports of the accident.

Three experimental conditions were created for this study. All three used a news report that appeared in and was attributed to the *New York Times*. The news report described an actual airline crash in Brazil in 2007. The TAM airliner carrying 176 people skidded off a runway while landing, crashed into an office building and gas station, and ignited an explosion and blaze that took over 6 hours to control. The news report described the accident and the firefighting efforts and included comments from the governor of the area who arrived on scene. The governor was quoted, saying there was no chance of survivors given the severity of the explosion.

The conditions varied according to the type of visual image that appeared with the news story. Two conditions included a photograph on the same page as the news story and the other condition included the news story and no visual image. One condition included a photo of the crash that showed the airliner's tail section and numerous fire fighters at the scene. Two firefighters carried a victim's body. The photo caption read: "Firefighters carry the body of a victim of the crash of a TAM airlines Airbus A320 at Conoghas airport in Sao Paulo on Wednesday morning." This condition represented the victim image condition. The second condition included a photo of a TAM airliner on the ground. The photo caption read "TAM Linhaus Aereas Airbus A340-541 PT-MSN is taxiing towards Terminal." This condition represented the neutral condition where the plane operated as expected. The third condition included only the news story and no visual image. The visual image conditions used color photos obtained from a TAM airlines website.

Measures

The measures used in this investigation have been used in other studies. Reputation was assessed using a five-item organizational reputation scale (Coombs & Holladay, 1996). Crisis responsibility was assessed with five items, two from the personal control dimension of McAuley et al.s' (1992) attribution scale and three items adapted from Griffin et al.s' (1992) responsibility measure. Anger toward the organization (e.g., "Because of the incident, I feel angry at TAM airlines") and negative word-of-mouth intentions (e.g., "I would say negative things about TAM Airlines to other people") were each measured with three-item scales (e.g., Coombs & Holladay, 2005, 2007). The instrument included two manipulation check items assessing the visual images conditions: "The news story included a picture of the crash" and "The news story included a picture." Responses to all items were recorded on a 7-point scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

Procedures

Participants were told the study involved perceptions of organizations and they would read a news story and report their perceptions of the organization in the news story. After signing the consent form, participants received the instrument. They were instructed to carefully read the story and answer the questions that followed. One page contained the stimulus news story and photo (in two conditions) and the following two pages contained the research instrument. Administration required about 15 minutes.

Results

Reliabilities

Reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) were computed for the measures. Reliabilities were .83, .81, .82, and .75 for reputation, responsibility, anger, and word-of-mouth, respectively. All were reliabilities were within in the acceptable range (Stewart, 2002).

Manipulation checks

The visual image conditions were manipulated in this design. To check the effectiveness of the experimental manipulation, one-way ANOVAs were used to compare responses on two items: "The news story included a picture of the crash" and "The news story included a picture." The overall effect for the first manipulation check item was significant ($F(2, 87) = 143.92$, $p < .001$). The Scheffe procedure was used to examine pairwise comparisons. Participants in the victim image condition differed significantly ($M = 6.67$) from the neutral plane photo ($M = 1.53$) and the no photo ($M = 2.00$) conditions. As expected, there was no significant difference among the plane and no photo conditions ($p = .38$).

Table 2:
Manipulation Check Results

Manipulation Items	No Photo		Neutral		Victim Image		<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
"The news story included a picture of the crash."	2.00 ^a	1.46	1.53 ^a	1.48	6.67 ^b	.84	143.9	2, 87	< .001
"The news story included a picture."	1.77 ^a	1.33	6.9 ^b	.31	6.83 ^b	.59	352.3	2, 87	< .001

Note. Means with different superscripts are significantly different using the Scheffe procedure, $p < .001$

The overall effect for the item "The news story included a picture" was significant ($F(2, 87) = 352.33$, $p < .001$). Posthoc comparisons revealed participants in the victim image photo

($M = 6.83$) and neutral plane photo ($M = 6.90$) conditions differed significantly from the no photo ($M = 1.77$) condition (for both, $p < .001$). As expected, the difference between the crash photo and plane photo conditions was not significant ($p = .96$). Overall, the manipulation check analyses demonstrated participants perceived differences between the conditions as intended (see Table 2).

Research Questions

The research questions were examined using one-way ANOVAs. Visual image condition served as the independent variable and reputation, crisis responsibility, anger toward the organization, and negative word-of-mouth intention were dependent variables. The results of the analyses are shown in Table 3. Research Question 1 asked if perceptions of crisis responsibility would be stronger in the victim image condition than in the neutral and no image condition. The results of the oneway ANOVA revealed no significant differences among perceptions of crisis responsibility for the three images [$F(2, 87) = 1.21, p = .30$]. These results indicate the victim image was not associated with stronger perceptions of crisis responsibility.

Table 3:

Means, Standard Deviations, and Statistics from One-Way ANOVA

	No Photo		Neutral		Victim Image		<i>F</i>	df	<i>p</i>
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD			
Crisis Responsibility	3.38	(1.10)	3.29	(1.09)	2.96	(1.12)	1.21	2, 87	.30
Reputation	4.75	(1.11)	4.90	(.95)	4.92	(1.15)	.23	2, 87	.79
Anger	3.09	(1.10)	3.06	(1.11)	3.04	(1.45)	.99	2, 87	.99
Negative Word-of-Mouth Intentions	3.96	(1.23)	4.14	(1.09)	4.03	(1.49)	.85	2, 87	.85

Research Question 2 asked if participants in the victim image condition would report weaker perceptions of organizational reputation, stronger anger, and stronger negative word-of-mouth intentions than those in a neutral image and no image condition.

The oneway ANOVA revealed no significant differences between conditions for organizational reputation [$F(2, 87) = .23, p = .79$]; anger toward the organization [$F(2, 87) = .01, p = .99$]; and negative word-of-mouth intentions [$F(2, 87) = .16, p = .85$]. The results indicated no significant differences among the dependent variables. Thus, the inclusion of the victim image did not increase threats to the organization.

Discussion

This exploratory study has broken new ground by examining visual images that accompany crisis reports and has contributed to our understanding of potential influences on perceptions of crisis situations. Systematic research is required for the further development of our knowledge base in crisis communication. The television show “Eleventh Hour” aired an episode with a plot involving a boy being cured of cancer by drinking water from a recently appearing spring. Others came to be cured of their illnesses. However, a number died from the water. The scientist hero on the show demonstrated the cure was a result of heavy water contamination in the spring that was a proper treatment for the boy’s form of cancer but could be deadly when too much is consumed. The relevance to this piece is the use of science to establish cause and effect relationships rather than relying on speculation. People who learned of the spring water’s miraculous healing of the boy with cancer speculated that the spring water was a cure for all ailments. However, the scientist wanted to determine what exactly was in the water that helped the boy and warned others about abandoning their scientifically-derived treatments for speculation.

Crisis managers are offered a wide range of advice on crisis communication. Much advice has no stronger foundation than people thinking the spring will cure all ills. Just because some strategy was observed in a successful or unsuccessful crisis communication effort does not mean that the observed strategy was *the cause* for success or failure. Speculation needs to be tested and proven before it is accepted or rejected. Although cases may suggest possible factors that shape audience perceptions during a crisis, we should remain skeptical until we systematically test those suggestions. The results of this study are further testament to the need for testing. Based upon similar research, it was proposed that photographs of victims with crisis stories should affect audience perceptions and reactions. The data from the experiment found this was not the case. Audience perceptions of crisis responsibility and organizational reputation were no different in the victim photograph, neutral photograph, or no photograph conditions. Nor were there any significant differences between the visual image conditions for the level of anger, or intended negative word-of-mouth. Speculation and assumptions are dangerous when they are the grounds for giving advice to crisis communicators. Like the spring water, speculative advice can endanger those involved in the crisis by failing to be effective.

We need to continue to systematically investigate factors associated with audience perceptions of the crisis situation. By supplying certain types of information, organizational spokespersons may attempt to influence how journalists frame crisis reports in the media. However, spokespersons have no control over what visual images the media include when they have access to victims or crisis sites. In light of news values emphasizing the importance of dramatic visuals to intensify audience interest in news stories, media outlets are likely to prefer pictures of crises that depict human suffering. It is important to explore how these visuals shape audience perceptions. We could assume from related research that victim images would intensify how people perceive and react to the crisis situation thus affecting the crisis communication necessary to address the crisis. This assumption did not hold true when tested. While this research project has begun this exploration, future research should continue this line of investigation by focusing on the impact of visuals in media stories. At this point in the research, however, it appears that visual images do not have a strong impact on perceptions of crisis responsibility, reputation, sympathy for the organization, anger toward the organization, and negative word-of-mouth intentions.

In contrast to images supplied in media reports, organizations can select what images they include at their own websites. What images should organizations supply? We really do not have an answer to this question at this time. At best we can offer speculations, not evidence-based advice. This clearly is a weakness in our knowledge base of crisis communication recommendations and additional research is needed. As organizations increasingly move to web-based information and other non-traditional media, they should consider the effects of visuals on perceptions of the organization. It is important to systematically investigate how visuals influence audience perceptions of the organization in crisis. We should study the impact of organization-supplied visuals at their websites to better understand how these visuals may help and hurt an organization's crisis communication efforts.

The crisis situation is a mosaic composed of many different variables. It is critical to understand what variables compose that mosaic so that we can anticipate more effectively how people will react to crises. In turn, understanding how people are likely to react to a crisis allows crisis managers to select more effective crisis response strategies for protecting stakeholder and the organization during a crisis. SCCT and Contingency Theory have begun to explore what variables comprise the crisis situation mosaic. This study examined the potential impact of victim images in photographs used with crisis stories. The results showed images of victims in photographs do not significantly affect perceptions and reactions to the crisis situation. The implication is that crisis managers do not need to worry if the news media use victim images in their stories. The victim image will not alter how people will react to the crisis, which means it will have no effect on the selection of the crisis response. The value of this study is that it adds another piece to the mosaic that is the crisis situation. With each piece we add to the mosaic, crisis managers gain additional insights into how people will react to crises and the effect that can have on their crisis communication.

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Two-Way Communication: A Win-Win Model for Facing Activist Pressure: A Case Study on McDonalds and Unilever's Responses to Greenpeace

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Introduction

Activists and consumers are increasingly demanding companies act in the best interests of the global society and the environment, therefore a corporation's environmental record is becoming an important factor in maintaining business success. This paper consists of two case studies which examine how Greenpeace, an independent global environmental campaigning organization, targeted major multi-national corporations, McDonalds and Unilever. This multiple case study will examine how these corporations responded to activist pressure and offer prescriptive insight on how corporations can avoid conflict and create mutually beneficial outcomes when responding to activist pressure. The author suggests that if public relations practitioners can create a dialogue with environmentalist publics through two-way communication the profession of public relations can be a guiding force for creating more sustainable business practices, fostering corporate social and environmental responsibility, and creating positive social change. This paper will discuss changing attitudes toward environmental issues, the credibility of corporate sustainability, and symmetrical communication. By studying the use of two-way dialogue in the practice of corporate communications with environmental activist organizations these case studies will help to test the real world validity of theoretical propositions about two-way symmetrical communication (L. Grunig 1992).

This paper will examine two cases in which Greenpeace highlighted the environmental practices of companies who were purchasing rapidly expanding agricultural commodities from parts of the developing world being deforested for agricultural expansion. Rather than directing its campaigns on the suppliers, Greenpeace chose to focus their efforts on McDonalds and Unilever, large highly visible international corporations using the raw materials in their supply chains (Greenpeace, 2006). Greenpeace called attention to the roles of these two companies in destructive environmental practices and asked them to take action (Greenpeace 2006, Howden 2006). By choosing to work with Greenpeace both companies were able to help create moratoriums on destructive practices causing deforestation and pressure suppliers and producers to change their environmental policies (Greenpeace 2008, Howden 2006). These case studies will demonstrate how two-way communication can be used to avoid conflict, foster mutually beneficial relationships between companies and activist publics, and converge seemingly conflicting ideologies. This research will also add to the scholarly understanding of how two-way communication and symmetrical communication works in a real world context.

Corporate Sustainability

News stories have often portrayed environmentalists and developmentalists as being engaged in an ideological battle that cannot be reconciled (Killingsworth and Palmer, 2002). In their book *Ecospeak* Killingsworth and Palmer (2002) argued that the mass media has created an

oversimplified dichotomy of environmentalists, “who seek long-term protection regardless of short-term economic costs” and developmentalists “who seek long-term economic gain regardless of short term economic costs” (9). Although the media may represent developmentalism and environmentalism as two opposing sides, that does not mean individuals make a value judgment and simply choose one side over the other. Survey research by Dunlap and Van Liere (1978) thirty years ago could not place individuals’ views in black and white terms and identified “a surprising degree of acceptance” of both the environmentalist, New Environmental Paradigm (NEP), as well as acceptance of the developmentalist, Dominant Social Paradigm by individuals among the general public (12). This study used a Likert-type scale to survey the general public and a group of known environmentalists about crucial aspects of what they identified as the NEP which addressed limits to growth, the balance of nature, and anti-anthropocentrism (Dunlap and Van Liere 1978, 12) Killingsworth and Palmer (1992) examined a wide range of perspectives regarding role of nature in society and identified a need for “a generally accessible narrative” to reconcile conflicting demands and bridge the knowledge gap to recondition the discussion of environmental issues to broader contexts and audiences (21, 277).

In recent years the award-winning documentary “An Inconvenient Truth” and rapidly rising gas prices have sparked the mainstream media’s awareness of environmental issues. Instead of becoming activists many people are showing their commitment to environmental issues with their checkbooks. A study of students and the general public in the United Kingdom by found that attitudes, rather than socio-demographic traits, behavior, or environmental knowledge, may be most consistent predictor of pro-environmental purchasing behavior (Schlegelmilch, Bohlen, and Diamantopoulos 1996, 49, 51). Market research has identified 68 percent of the U.S. population as “Light Greens,” who buy green products sometimes, and 12 percent of the U.S. population as “True Greens,” who regularly look for ‘green’ products (Hanas 2007, 3).

Rather than viewing sustainability as contradictory to goals of corporations, sustainable development aims “to meet the needs and aspirations of both current and future societies” (Prexl and Signter 2006, 11). Prexl and Signter (2006) view corporate sustainability as “a new management concept which poses an alternative to the traditional models of wealth maximization” which is committed to “the planned and strategic management process of working towards a balance of economic, social and environmental values” (2).

John Paluszek (2007), Senior Counsel at Ketchum, said that corporate sustainability and corporate social responsibility are not only a defensive commitment but also an opportunity because cause related marketing and a commitment to corporate sustainability can give a business an edge over competitors. Overall the concept of corporate sustainability calls for a change in corporate attitudes which Crognale (1992) identified as the need for an integrated approach which combines “a sound environmental program; a skilled environmental manager to oversee this program; and a willingness of the corporation’s public relations department to divulge more about the company’s environmental program” (191). The concept of corporate sustainability suggests while making positive changes is good for the image and sales of a company, a lack of responsibility for environmental issues can be damaging to the company’s image and bottom line.

Prexl and Signitzer (2006) argued the public relations department is best suited to communicate about issues of sustainability and corporate sustainability communications can help

a company work towards “a balance of economic, social and environmental values” by “enhancing trust and credibility amongst customers by positioning the company as a sustainable organization with sustainable products, using sustainable products to build relationships with customers through marketing, and can contribute to the general communication about the issues of sustainable development by empowering the general public” (2, 6-7). Most importantly Prexl and Signitzer (2006) pointed out the role of the public relations practitioner as mediator, they cited the high conflict potential of corporate sustainability due to “various stakeholders having differing interests in the company’s sustainability performance,” such as investors interested in increased return rates and activists groups demanding environmental reform (16). In order to establish trust and credibility among stakeholders, advocacy groups, and skeptical ‘green’ consumers more companies and corporate communicators are looking beyond marketing and advertising and creating sustainability reports, engaging in stakeholder dialogues, and creating information campaigns (Bernhart and Slater 2007; Prexl and Signitzer 2006).

When addressing criticism from activists and NGOs issues of credibility should be a key concern, research from the Edelman Trust Barometer (2007) has indicated that the public believes NGOs are very credible sources of information and believe NGOs are more credible than big corporations (7). Both Carey and Arndt (2007) and Gettler (2007) discuss a new trend of businesses and NGOs creating alliances, as companies are beginning to view working with NGOs as a way to help their public image and boost their credibility as well as improve their bottom line. Businesses can adopt more socially responsible corporate images by working with activists who criticize them and inviting them in to help fix problems, employing activists and NGOs as consultants, and engaging in “corporate activism” which can help avoid conflict and increase a company’s credibility (Carey and Arndt 2007; Gettler 2007).

Creating a Dialogue

Numerous texts and articles in business, public relations, and marketing point to a need for and the importance of companies, and their public relations departments, creating a dialogue with environmental activists and citizens but there is little agreement as to what form this dialogue should take. Although creating a “meaningful dialogue” is often advocated, a 1992 study by L. Grunig, in which 34 in-depth case studies were conducted on public relations behavior regarding conflict with activist groups, found that creating a meaningful dialogue and balanced two-way symmetrical communication was the rarest approach used in dealing with activist pressure and has been a largely untested strategy (514). In less than half of the cases action was taken as direct result of activist pressure and that action was often directed a members of the public not associated with the activists or in the form of one-way communication, such as press releases (L. Grunig 1992). After examining various strategies organizations used when dealing with activist pressure L. Grunig (1992) and found all but the two-way symmetrical model to be ineffective (525). L. Grunig (1992) maintained “the research inherent in this model allows for the crucial proactive, rather than reactive, public relations” which “should eliminate any sustained, bitter social divisiveness” (514).

Unlike one-way communication which disseminates information through monologue, two-way communication exchanges information through dialogue (Grunig and Grunig 1992). Bernays originated the asymmetrical approach which is characterized by “gathering information from target publics in order to devise effective message strategies” which may be used to

persuade or manipulate publics (Dozier, Grunig, and Grunig 1995, 41). While the unbalanced asymmetrical model attempts to change the public, the symmetrical model attempts to achieve balance by adjusting the relationship between organizations and publics by focusing on dispute resolution to negotiate mutually beneficial outcomes (Dozier, Grunig, and Grunig 1995, 41; Grunig and Grunig 1992, 289). According to Grunig and Grunig (1992) the two-way symmetrical model is not only the most ethical approach to public relations, this ethical approach is also the “model most effective in meeting organizational goals” (308). By creating channels of communication before controversy begins and keeping open channels of communication activists are more likely to trust the organization especially when a possibility of compromise is emphasized (L. Grunig 1992, 526). Dozier, Grunig, and Grunig (1995) noted excellent communications departments use both the asymmetrical and symmetrical models, which they concluded make up a single mixed-motive model combining the “short-term use of asymmetrical practices within the context of a broad symmetrical philosophy” (51). Heath (2006) lends support for the mixed-motive model, he asserted that issues management is a management function which at its best promotes stewardship through dialogue and collaboration, for Heath when both parties on sides of a debate use persuasion, symmetry is “best defined by the ability of ideas to sustain themselves under public discourse” (93). Karlberg (1996) suggested that in order to truly achieve symmetry the resources of both sides of a debate must be equal and research should seek to discover “cost-effective symmetrical public relations opportunities and strategies” to be utilized by “resource-poor segments of the population trying to engage the media or enter into public discourse” (274).

Research Questions

It is the purpose of these case studies to show that the field of public relations has undergone many changes since 1992 when L. Grunig did a series of 32 case studies on corporations’ public relations behavior in responding to criticism from activists and found most Grunig companies did not respond to activist pressure or used only one-way approaches. Where L. Grunig (1992) found little evidence of public relations departments effectively using two-way responses to activist pressure, she believed that this would be the most effective method. Although the two-way symmetrical model often becomes more of a mixed-motive model in practice these two case studies will seek to demonstrate how positive outcomes can be achieved when companies create a two-way dialogue with activists (Dozier, Grunig, and Grunig 1995). It is the view of the author that the practice of public relations is an evolving concept and the two-way symmetrical model is a teeter-totter that is slowly moving from being unequally balanced on the side of corporate and government interest and is moving toward a more balanced center. Therefore when L. Grunig (1992) found few instances of two-way communication when focusing on situations where practitioners were dealing with activist pressure these cases may suggest that the fruitfulness of two-way communication would be better understood if researchers examine cases of conflict being avoided through the uses of two-way communication.

Although Greenpeace was critical of both McDonalds and Unilever initially, they were quick to praise the companies when they came to the table to discuss the issues Greenpeace had with their suppliers and chose to help put pressure on suppliers and producers to change. These case studies will seek to understand how international NGOs like Greenpeace are learning to play on relationships in the interconnected global economy. Both case studies will demonstrate

how working with activist groups who are criticizing the company and engaging in a dialogue can not only repair image damage but also garner good publicity and improve a company's public image. By examining what happens when corporations move from not responding or using one-way communication with activists to a more two-way dialogue these case studies will offer prescriptive insight for corporations confronting activist pressure and allow the business and scholarly community develop best practices for dealing with activist criticism. This research is useful to both the business community and the scholarly community in public relations. It will help the business community better understand how the mainstream public's changing environmental consciousness is affecting companies' business practices, communication strategies, and relationships with environmentalist organizations and help scholars better understand the real world applications of two-way symmetrical communications, on which there has been little research.

McDonalds Case Study

Businesses in the global market are linked through the complex systems of interconnected relationships of conglomerate organizations, suppliers, manufacturers and retailers. Activist organizations like Greenpeace are learning to play on these relationships in order to get companies they believe are engaging in harmful environmental practices to change. In several campaigns Greenpeace has traced the supply chain of raw materials to manufacturers and retailers calling attention to their role in destructive practices and putting pressure on them to do something about it. In the summer of 2006 the world saw the effectiveness of this strategy when McDonald's partnered with Greenpeace after the organization's three year investigation showed that chicken McNuggets being sold in Europe had been fed on soy grown in deforested areas of the Amazon rainforest. This partnership led to a landmark moratorium on the purchase of Brazilian soy grown on newly deforested land.

Soy, corn, and many other export crops grown in the United States are genetically modified. Biotech foods are unpopular and have been banded in some countries in Europe which created a niche for non-modified soy that allowed Brazil to become the world's largest exporter of soy (Kaufman, 2007). As Brazilian growers and international soy traders seized this opportunity soy production quickly overtook logging and cattle ranching as the biggest source of deforestation in the Amazon (Greenpeace International, April 6, 2006, 21). Although carbon dioxide from rainforests is a vital check on greenhouse emissions, deforestation accounts for 20 percent of greenhouse gas emissions (Greenpeace, April 2, 2008, 1). Three quarters of the recent deforestation in the Amazon basin occurred illegally as state-owned reserves were infiltrated by loggers and ranchers and deforested then sold to soy farmers who intensively farmed the soil (Howden, July 17, 2006, 2). Not only did few of the farmers have legal titles to their land, Brazilian laws which require agricultural development be limited to 20 percent of a farmer's land leaving the remaining 80 percent as forest also were ignored (Greenpeace International April 6, 2006, 27; Lawrence and Vidal 2006, 1). Using satellite images, previously unreleased government documents, and undercover monitoring Greenpeace campaigners conducted a three year investigation into the Brazilian soy trade entitled "Eating Up the Amazon" which implicated Cargill and other multi-national soy export companies in illegal and unethical deforestation, land-grabbing, slavery, and violence in the Amazon Basin and traced their connections to major UK food companies. (Greenpeace April 6, 2006, 5, 27-35).

Despite ongoing criticism from locals, conservationists, and NGOs Cargill's responses remained defensive until they were pressured by suppliers. Through press releases and its spokeswoman Laurie Johnson, Cargill responded to criticism regarding its role in deforestation claiming the land in question had already deforested (Lawrence and Vidal 2006). Cargill has responded to all criticism by insisting they are essential to development and economic growth in this impoverished region of Brazil (Howden July 26, 2006). In May of 2006 Cargill published a five page report in which it agreed that the rainforest should be preserved, Brazilian law should be obeyed, and illegal practices should be eradicated but did not accept any responsibility for the allegations and critically fired back at Greenpeace. Cargill's response argued that they are working with other NGOs toward insuring compliance with the Brazilian Forest Code, that deforestation in the region would be worse if Cargill was not there, and emphasized the companies' good works in the community of Santarem (Cargill 2006). Cargill claimed most of the soy going through the facility in Santarem was grown outside of the Amazon and that Greenpeace had no proof that they bought soy from farmers using slave labor (Cargill 2006). Cargill also accused Greenpeace of being hypocritical because the organization is critical of genetically modified (GM) soy and the soy operation in the Amazon region is dedicated to non-GM soy which is more labor intensive and less profitable for farmers to grow allowing the poor in the region to take over a niche others may not want (Cargill 2006).

It was not until Cargill and other multi-national soy exporters were under pressure from McDonald's and other major UK retailers that the industry's attitude toward the issue began to change. Cargill also owns British-based Sun Valley foods which supplies major clients such as McDonald's and Morrisons supermarkets with processed chicken products that are sold throughout the UK and Europe (Howden, July 17, 2006). Through their investigation Greenpeace traced Amazon grown soy into the supply chains of McDonalds, Morrisons, and other major companies in operating Europe including KFC, Tesco, Sainsbury's, Asda, and Unilever (Greenpeace April 6, 2006).

After Greenpeace's report was released in early April 2006 Greenpeace volunteers in chicken suits protested at several of McDonald's restaurants in the UK. The fast food giants immediately took action, met with members of Greenpeace, and agreed to get Amazon soy out of its chicken feed. The company quickly formed an alliance with other UK retailers to put pressure on the soy suppliers to stop sourcing soy from the Amazon (Greenpeace International, July 25, 2006; Howden, July 26, 2006). On McDonald's UK website the company thanked Greenpeace for bringing attention to what the company called "a social responsibility issue for our supply chain" and asked to meet with them. Karen Van Bergen, McDonald's UK vice president told *The Guardian*, "McDonald's has had a long-standing policy not to source beef from recently deforested areas in the Amazon rainforest, so it was important to us to bring soy sourcing in line with this policy" (Lawrence and Vidal 2006, 2).

As a result of the alliance with Greenpeace, McDonald's and leading UK supermarkets put pressure on their multinational soy suppliers who signed two year moratorium on buying soy from newly deforested areas of the rainforest on July 24 of 2006, not quite three months after the investigation was published (Greenpeace International 2008; Howden July 26, 2006, McDonalds UK 2008). Under the terms of the moratorium the soy exporting multinationals agreed to work with government agencies and NGOs to set up a monitoring system to insure that soy is not

coming from newly deforested land and to insure that Brazilian law is being complied with (Cargill 2006, Greenpeace International 2008, Howden July 26, 2006).

Greenpeace and the UK and national news media praised McDonalds for playing a very positive role in the campaign and gave the organization a lot of credit for the moratorium (Greenpeace International, July 25, 2006; Howden July 26, 2006 Kaufman 2007; Lawrence and Vidal; Sauven 2006). According to Greenpeace's website the purpose of the moratorium was to stop the destruction until a working group of soy traders, producers, NGOs, and government officials could create an action plan to insure legality, governance, and long term protection of the Amazon rainforest (2008). Greenpeace's website calls the moratorium a "historic deal that impacts far beyond the golden arches" and sent a message to suppliers that whether or not they have an excuse or no raw material that causes embarrassment will not be tolerated" (Greenpeace International July 25, 2006, Lawrence and Vidal 2006, 1). In an August 2, 2006 article he wrote for *The Guardian*, John Sauven, campaigns director for Greenpeace wrote that the moratorium demonstrated, "the influence consumers can have on events thousands of miles away, and the power that can be brought to bear when business is willing to apply it's might to the greatest problems faced by our species and our world" (2).

Since the moratorium, Cargill farmers in two Amazon municipalities can only sell to Cargill if they promise to plant trees on deforested land (Downie 2007). Cargill is paying the Nature Conservancy, and international NGO, \$390,000 to oversee the Responsible Soy Project, a sustainable soy development program which seeks to find solutions to bringing farms in compliance with Brazil's 80/20 Forest Code (Downie 2007). Conservationists hope that if this program is successful it could become a model of sustainable development all over Brazil (Downie 2007). According to an April 2, 2008 Greenpeace press release the moratorium is holding well and monitoring of the area has shown that no soy produced last year came from deforested areas (Greenpeace International 2008).

Although the reaction Cargill issued in May took little responsibility for the allegations in Greenpeace's report when the moratorium was announced Lori Johnson Cargill's vice president told *The Independent*, "This is critical first step but there is much more to be done" (Howden July 26, 2006, 2). Shortly after the moratorium in August of 2006 Cargill released a feature article in *Cargill News* about the controversy and the moratorium. The article attempts to illustrate how the company is dedicated to developing the local community and helping farmers become more sustainable and claims the company had already been working toward sustainability goals with NGOs before the July 2006 moratorium (Dienhart 2006). The article also claims that Greenpeace and other conservationists in the developed world don't care about economic development for the many people living in Amazon and that soy production is not the biggest cause of deforestation in the Amazon (Dienhart 2006). Although Cargill never admitted to any wrong doing and refuted many of the claims in the 2006 report Johnson's comments in a 2007 *Washington Post* article indicated a positive attitude toward the moratorium stating, "We really didn't see an immediate problem with the soy farmers, but we could see how it could grow into a big problem in the future. The moratorium will give everyone time to plan how to better control the farming and protect the forest" (Kaufman, 2).

Greenpeace knew it would be difficult to successfully pressure Cargill and other soy-multinationals into action by focusing the exporters alone. Changing tactics and implicating the soy producer's clients in Europe and focusing on awareness and acceptance of their position

among European news media and consumers proved to be a successful strategy. Greenpeace achieved their goal of ending deforestation by getting clients to pressure Cargill and other soy multi-nationals into adopting more sound environmental and social responsibility principles. Although in this case McDonald's response to Greenpeace was more reactive than pro-active McDonald's turned what could have been a reputation damaging situation into an opportunity to improve its image regarding its corporate environmental and social responsibility. After receiving praise for their role in the Amazon soy moratorium McDonald's in the UK have continued to seize this reputation building opportunity by taking more steps toward creating a "greener" company. McDonald's in the UK are now using organic milk and free-range eggs sourced from UK farmers, switching to Rainforest Alliance Certified coffee, and using biodiesel from its own cooking oil for its delivery fleets (McDonald's UK, July 27, 2007). This case is one example of how the short term goals of economic prosperity and long term goals of sustaining the planet for future generations can come together when industry makes a commitment to environmental principals and corporate sustainability by creating a dialogue with environmentalist publics through two-way communication.

Unilever Case Study

In April of 2008 Greenpeace revisited the strategies used in their Brazilian Soya campaign in a similar campaign which targeted palm oil production in Indonesia. Greenpeace's campaign goal was to stop the destruction of valuable rainforests and peatlands in Indonesia which their report "Burning up Borneo" claimed to be damaging to the local economy, endangered orangutans, and the global climate (Greenpeace, April 21, 2008, 2). Instead of directing their campaign at the palm oil suppliers they chose to target one of the largest users of palm oil in the world, Unilever, the company behind international brands like Dove, Lipton, Knorr, Blue Band, and Suave (Greenpeace April 22, 2008; Unilever). On April 21, 2008 Greenpeace activists occupied the production lines of a Unilever factory near Liverpool and activists dressed as orangutans hung banners and passed out flyers at Unilever headquarters in London, the Netherlands, and Rome (Greenpeace April 21, 2008). Greenpeace also sent activists in orangutan costumes to three public relations and marketing firms that work with Unilever (Magee 2008, 1). The protest actions coincided with the release of the Greenpeace report "Burning up Borneo" and also included a viral video called "Dove Onslaught(er)" and billboards and flyers mimicking the Dove campaign for real beauty with photos of orangutans and generated a lot of media attention and tens of thousands of protest emails to Unilever from around the world (Greenpeace International April 21, 2008, 1-2; Greenpeace International).

On May 9, 2008, just two weeks after the campaign began, Greenpeace campaigners were invited to meet with senior executives at Unilever headquarters and the company agreed to support an immediate moratorium on deforestation for palm oil in South East Asia, aggressively lobby other major palm oil purchasers like Kraft, Nestle, and Cadburys as well as the Indonesian government to support the moratorium. Greenpeace initially wanted Unilever to stop doing business with their suppliers who were deforesting rainforest and peatlands but the company and Greenpeace reached an agreement that Unilever would put pressure on these companies to change their practices, support the moratorium, and adopt new sustainability certification through the Roundtable on Responsible Palm Oil (RSPO) (Greenpeace International; Unilever Global Site). Unilever's website and a video the company released shortly after the launch of the

Greenpeace campaign said the company had gone beyond what Greenpeace had asked them to do and will begin sourcing 100% certified sustainable palm oil by 2015 (Unilever Global Site).

In 2007 Greenpeace detailed the destruction of the world's deepest peat beds located in the province of Riau in Sumatra, which contain an estimated 14.6 billion tons of carbon (18). The report claimed the increasing clearing, draining, and burning of peatland resulted in 1.8 billion tons of carbon dioxide being released annually causing four percent of all annual global greenhouse gas emissions, which has given Indonesia the third highest man made climate emissions in the world (17, 23). Greenpeace's 2007 report "Cooking the Climate" also detailed how deforestation is exacerbated by the palm oil trading and processing methods commodities companies who are members of the RSPO and supplying the biggest food manufactures in the world such as Unilever, Nestle, Kraft, and Procter and Gamble (44). In the report the RSPO acknowledged to Greenpeace that RSPO members such as Cargil, ADM, Sinar Mars, and Golden Hope's trading and refining processes which indiscriminately purchase and blend oil making traceability impossible (Greenpeace Nov. 8, 2007, 44). Unilever is head of the RSPO and purchases three percent of the total world palm oil production mainly from suppliers like Cargil, ADM, Sinar Mars, and Golden Hope (Greenpeace Nov. 8, 2007, 42). Palm oil is also a major source of biodiesel, along with soy and rapeseed oil, which has been driving the expansion of palm oil plantations in Indonesia, and companies like Cargill and Sinar Mars are expanding their trade and buying more palm oil to be refined into biodiesel (58). The reports suggested a temporary ban for forest clearance and peatland degradation and for a global funding mechanism for avoiding deforestation to be part of the post-2012 phase of the Kyoto protocol and urged the Indonesian government and palm oil suppliers and purchasers to support a moratorium on deforestation of rainforests and peatlands (Greenpeace Nov. 8, 2007, 63-65).

When the "Cooking our Climate" report came out in 2007 Unilever responded to the news media saying they were "looking for a sustainable solution" and said the company "attempted to ensure oil was grown in an environmentally responsible way," but those efforts had "been made harder by the rush to biofuels" (Forbes 2007, 1; The Toronto Star 2007, 1). A year later little action had been taken by the RSPO and the Indonesian government. Greenpeace then narrowed the focus of their campaign for ending deforestation from palm oil on to Unilever.

In their second report, "Burning up Borneo," Greenpeace provided new evidence that "it is Unilever's own palm oil traders and producers (themselves RSPO members) who are leading 'aggressive expansion' of the sector that results in the devastation of the last remaining orangutan rainforest and peatland habitat in Borneo" (Greenpeace April 21, 2008, 2). The report claimed half of Unilever's palm oil supply came from Indonesia and criticized the company for failing to lead the palm oil industry toward sustainable practices through its purchasing power or through its leadership role in the RSPO (Greenpeace April 21, 2008, 2). An April 21, 2008 press release on the Greenpeace International website about why Unilever was being targeted by their campaign called the RSPO "little more than a greenwashing operation" and said although Unilever's website paints the company as both environmentally and socially responsible "when it comes to palm oil the reality is very different" (1).

Shortly after the protest Unilever put a video on its website discussing the problem of deforestation as well as the problem of conversion of land for biofuels and asserted that the company is on the same side as Greenpeace and was happy to support the moratorium on deforestation in Indonesia and was committed to go above the NGOs expectations and commit to

sourcing 100 percent certified sustainable palm oil by 2015. The video asserted that the company believes 80 percent of the palm oil they were using came from sustainable plantations that had not yet been certified. The video stated a desire for Greenpeace to continue to keep tabs on Unilever's suppliers, to get support from government organizations, and to sort out the certification process to guarantee sustainable palm oil.

Currently Unilever's website features information about 'certified sustainable palm oil' prominently and discusses sustainable palm oil certification, the Greenpeace protest, and how the company has agreed to take action (Unilever Global Site, 2). The website also discussed the November 2008 celebration of the delivery of the first batch of certified sustainable palm oil, however the site also admitted that on the same day as the celebration Greenpeace issued a report on how the same supplier, United Plantations, had violated RSPO sustainability standards elsewhere (Unilever Global Site, 4). Unilever's Director for Sustainable Agriculture, Jan Kees Vis, and President of the RSPO was quoted on reacting positively to the criticism saying, "It is vital that organizations like Greenpeace can challenge the process at all stages" (Unilever Global Site, 4). Unilever's Global Site also contains a lot of information about the RSPO and features information about the company's sustainable palm oil plantations in Ghana as well information about the company's commitment to sourcing other sustainable and animal friendly agricultural products such as fish, eggs, tomatoes, soy, and Rainforest Alliance certified Lipton tea.

The announcement of Unilever's decision to drastically alter their businesses practices in response to Greenpeace sparked a lot of media coverage as well as articles discussing Unilever and Greenpeace in regard Corporate Social Responsibility in marketing claims as well as how companies should respond to activist criticism in the public relations and advertising trade media. In an article for *Advertising Age* Jack Neff discussed how companies in the forefront of ethical marketing like Unilever, who were at the top of ethical and sustainability indexes in 2007, and Procter and Gamble Co. with its Children's Safe Drinking Water program, have become popular targets for Greenpeace and discusses how one ethical claim can cause consumers and activists to criticize a company on other fronts (1-2). The May 2, 2008 issue of PR Week discussed the tactics Greenpeace used by dressing as orangutans and ambushing Ogilvy, Jackie Cooper, and Lexus PR, three communications agencies that work for Unilever, to urge the agencies to put pressure on their client (Magee 2008, 1). In Magee's (2008) article Lexus CEO Margo Raggett was critical of Greenpeace for showing up unannounced calling the protest action "inappropriate and, to a large degree, pointless" saying people would pay more attention to the tactics used than the issue and that Greenpeace activists could have made an appointment to discuss concerns (1).

Although Greenpeace's attention getting tactics may not seem conducive to creating a dialogue with big corporations, their tactics were very successful in getting the companies to come to the table and discuss the issues. Greenpeace's attention getting tactics put highly visible pressure on the Unilever, and the public relations and marketing firms they hire to manage their image, and sent them a message that their ethics and accountability will be publicly judged. Although their tactics got a lot of attention they were successful in calling attention to the issue as well. Rather than using one way communication in the form of a statement blaming the biofuels industry for their inability to ensure that the palm oil they were buying was not linked to destructive environmental practices, Unilever might have been able to avoid Greenpeace's attention getting protests by inviting members of the NGO to their headquarters and beginning a dialogue with them after their first report implicated them in deforestation in 2007.

Discussion

It may not be realistic for NGOs to ask communication agencies to put pressure on their clients to have more socially responsible business practices, although it should be necessary for any company, especially any company that is trying to promote a socially responsible image, to ask its public relations department to be pro-active in identifying critics and potential critics and help them to respond to those critics. Although Unilever should have done more to address concerns about their role in deforestation sooner, they were able to use Greenpeace's campaign as an opportunity to reassert themselves as a leader in the solution to the problem and affirm their commitment to sustainability. If Unilever chose not to engage with Greenpeace two-way communication and chose to respond with one-way communication or not respond at all it is very likely they would have suffered much more damage to their reputation. As long as Unilever can make good on their promises and continue to work toward sustainability in all of their brands Unilever's public image as a socially and environmentally responsible company should continue to grow.

Both McDonalds and Unilever were able to turn criticism which could have been damaging to their image and their bottom line into an opportunity to assert their commitment to sustainable business practices by engaging their critics in a dialogue and taking action. As Unilever had positioned their company as socially and environmentally responsible before coming under criticism it is arguable that Unilever had more at stake and therefore less of a choice about engaging Unilever in a two-way communication and taking action than McDonalds. Both cases provide examples of L. Grunig's (1992) theory that two-way symmetrical communication is the best way to create a win-win situation when responding to activist publics in practice and also demonstrates how now, more than ever before, activist groups have the ability to make an impact on organizations with far greater resources.

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A Genre Perspective on Public Relations Message Design

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Human beings are captivated by categories. The eras of classical music are marked by styles: baroque, classical, romantic, etc. Oscars and Tony Awards are given for Best Actor, Best Actress, Best Supporting Actor, Best Supporting Actress, Best Director, and so on. We have the need to make distinctions of hierarchy, classifying things by their similarities and differences. It's actually pretty useful. The entertainment industry's use of genre conventions to create works of art depends on the audience's understanding of how a play, movie, book, or song fits the characteristics of a particular type. Some of this is a matter of taste, but the functional power of genres enables people to make sense of these and other types of communication without having to think hard about it. Not only this, but they have been adapted for audiences with particular needs (e.g., the visually and aurally impaired).

It is this basic ability or need to create and use categories that is at the heart of public relations. We believe public relations can become both more understandable and more effective for all parties through a genre-based view. More important, we believe a stronger grasp of the theoretical and the practical dimensions of public relations discourse genres is vital to successful strategic planning. In this essay we lay the foundation for these contentions by grounding the theory of genres in past and contemporary times. We also explain the prevalence of discourse genres in today's organizations and how they function. Finally we present our view of the "generic" nature of public relations as a method for analysis and practice.

A Historical Perspective on Genre and Discourse Conventions

The practice of public relations and the development of rhetoric in Ancient Greece have a common starting point: democracy. Democracy arose after the overthrow of the last Athenian tyrant, Cylon, and the codification of oral standards into written laws (Raaflaub, Ober, & Wallace, 2007). Those in power established courts of law and a legislature and therefore depended upon successful message strategies to avoid a repeat of the uprising, effected in part by the sheer number of citizens that brought about Cylon's downfall. Because civil strife is common, we use symbols and forms—genres of discourse—to forestall the need for physical conflict and, of course, to pick up the pieces after wars when they occur.

With the creation of written law, courts to apply it, and public assembly to extend or modify it, oral rhetoric blossomed in Athens. To debate laws, adjudicate them in court, and to inspire citizens to respect the rule of law, Greek leaders and landowners learned to engage in public argument, and teachers arose to help them improve strategies of developing, organizing, framing, and expressing ideas so that audiences could be persuaded (Murphy, Katula, Hill, & Ochs, 2003). What is most important to understand here is that rhetorical genres arose because of the *practice* of rhetoric. Aristotle merely organized what we might call a book of "best practices" of rhetoric, and he organized his ideas according to broad, common situations that any speaker might encounter.

Aristotle was the most renowned of the Athenian teachers. Perhaps this is because he wrote on so many topics: rhetoric, politics, ethics, and biology—and others. We don't know in what order he wrote his different works, but his *On Nature* is the epitome of category systems. What high school graduate does not know that animals and plants are divided into genus and species? From that word, *genus*, we have the related word, *genre*. Just as he divided all knowledge into the various disciplines, and flora and fauna into categories based on their similarities and differences, Aristotle divided public speaking situations into three broad categories: one for legal argument, another for public debate, and a third for special ceremonies. He also suggested that some arguments were more appropriate in the courtroom than they were in the legislature or a community event.

Likewise, public discourse today has its genres. The average person may not know that there are five components to creating a suitable tribute at a funeral, for example, but he or she recognizes when a speaker has given a poor eulogy. Violations of style are obvious: We should not speak ill of the dead or dwell on matters not directly related to the deceased, for example. Eulogistic strategies are less obvious on a surface level (cf. Kunkel & Dennis, 2003), but sometimes violations of these implicit audience expectations are obvious. Consider the eulogies at Richard Nixon's funeral. California Governor Pete Wilson focused too much on himself and his positive connections to what Nixon stood for. In contrast, Robert Dole came closest to fulfilling the expectations of the situation. Dole emphasized the loss to the nation that had occurred. He eulogized Nixon as a consummate politician who was as complex as the average person: He was "one of us." Dole met the difficulties of the situation, eulogizing a man whose greatness in conducting foreign policy was eclipsed by scandal and resignation from office. Dole's word choices ("style") and strategies (or "substance") were, overall, appropriate to the situation.

Corporate discourse also has its genres (see Figure 1), and we can think about them at various levels. The layperson knows that organizations use memos, quarterly and annual reports, etc., to conduct business – what management communicates. Students, however, learn the patterns of organization required to create news releases, public service announcements, and other genre conventions – the craft of what public relations practitioners do. At a deeper level, genres are grounded in the situations they address and the purposes organizations bring to their use. They are strategic because they rely on linguistic and rhetorical principles that suggest the style, form, and function appropriate to the situation – the reasons *why* all organizational communicators create discourse and *how* they do so. It is at this deeper level that we will focus primarily throughout the rest of this essay.

FIGURE 1. Representative genre set for corporate discourse, including those for public relations.

• Formal letters	• Annual corporate reports (e.g. financial and public-interest)	• Interviews
• Memos (printed & electronic)	• Tax forms	• Articles
• Meetings (e.g. team, department, company)	• Corporate image pieces (e.g. brochures, Websites, advertisements)	• Matte releases
• Shareholder meetings	• Prepared statements	• White papers
• Project/progress/trip reports	• Press releases	• Case studies
• Research reports	• Video news releases (VNR)	• Public service announcements (PSA)
• Proposals	• Photo news releases (PNR)	• Advertorials
• Formal presentations	• Audio new releases (ANR)	• Newsletters
• Public Speeches	• Fact sheets	• Video programs
• Strategic planning documents	• Backgrounders	• Pitch letters
• Employee handbooks	• FAQs ("frequently asked questions")	• Pitch calls
• Training manuals	• Biographical statements	• Conversations (telephone, face-to-face, or real-time video conference calls)
• Owners manuals	• Press conferences	• Blogs
• Periodic financial reporting documents	• Press kits	• Podcasts (video & audio)
		• Wikis

Although, in everyday parlance, we talk about organizations issuing statements, news releases, and the like, the messages themselves are not merely the product of an organization's various departments. Genre conventions are co-created through interactions with publics: media contacts, consumers, communities, investors, legislators/regulators, etc. Audience understandings of recurring situations and expectations that arise from those perceptions impinge upon what the organization says and how it says it. Some situations provide greater flexibility than others. News releases have an obvious, standard form (the inverted pyramid) and strategies that frame a story's main point and build the organization's image. Additional strategies for them vary, however, depending of the situation (e.g., investor news, personnel announcements).

Because his categories are so broad, all corporate discourse genres fit within Aristotle's three situations. The most recognizable for publics and practitioners alike is a specific type of courtroom discourse, although today it also takes place in the court of public opinion. Crisis communication, in part, employs the Greek rhetorical genre of self-defense, the *apologia*. Although it may include an apology, when corporate apologia is used, the organization has an array of strategies to choose from when it does not admit to wrongdoing (or only partially takes the blame). In the case of *Dateline NBC*'s 1992 test of the C/K pickup (with the alleged exploding gas tank), in 1993 General Motors relied on counterattack to show that NBC News had rigged its tests of the vehicle. During its press conference, the company also used differentiation to distinguish its expert testimony and scientific evidence from NBC's, creating doubt regarding the latter. It used minimization to demonstrate that the risk of explosion was not nearly as likely as the news program had implied (Hearit, 1996; Smudde, in press). In the case of the Mercedes A-class situation in 1997, the company at first denied that design flaws could be

responsible for a vehicle overturning during its own tests of the vehicle (Ihlen, 2002). When trade publications and other publics did not believe Mercedes Benz, it adopted changing strategies over time – and used different combinations of them within particular discourse conventions (e.g., a news conference). Due to the wide variation in crises that occur, the specifics of the accusation against organizations, and the purposes that they have in alleviating the crisis, corporate *apologia* most likely does not fit a definition of “genre” when it requires that particular combinations of style, strategies, and situation recur over time.

The combination of situation, audience expectations, organizational purposes, and rhetorical choices thus suggests some important assumptions that we can make about genres – and a few remaining important questions. Genres somehow become agreed upon between message sources and receivers, but why do some genres stabilize through repeated use (e.g., eulogies, PSAs,) and yet invite variation (e.g., news releases, corporate *apologia*)? Certainly the key aspects we must recognize when using a generic perspective for message planning include attention to the constraints imposed on strategic choices by the situation, the audience, and organization’s purpose in communicating. But how do these genres come into being, and what influences their persistence, evolution, and perhaps demise?

According to Campbell and Jamieson (n.d. [1978]), genres indeed have a life cycle: Figuratively, they are born, mature, perhaps change, and sometimes go dormant through lack of use. The news release had its origins in journalism. Although the basic form remained the same, when journalists left the profession to do public relations on behalf of business, efforts to build up clients and organizations were added to an objective-sounding style and the inverted pyramid. This, of course, has persisted, with variations, even with the migration of news releases to electronic formats. Although some have hailed its demise in recent years, the news release continues to play a central role in corporate communication. Some genres maintain their basic, strategic integrity across media (e.g., public service announcements). Other types of discourse (e.g., annual reports, employee newsletters, press kits) have been adapted to new technologies, changing audience expectations, and the explosion of information available through multiple channels.

Corporate discourse conventions therefore are more than just recipes for organizing ideas. The principles behind genre theory require communicators to have intimate knowledge of the organization and its goals, values, and purposes. Research of the situation that a campaign and its messages are designed to address takes on even greater significance when we realize that information drawn from research directly informs the substance of what should be said. The same is true for audience research. Moreover, good writing skills and experience become even more important because an understanding of style and message strategies is central to the better use of genre conventions. These imperatives require sensitivity to the relative stability and flexibility of specific genres. (After all, some of the best jazz artists are classically trained: They know the rules and when they can bend them.)

Genre as a Method for Strategic Message Planning

Broad understanding of the underlying assumptions of genre theory thus guides our appreciation and use of specific writing conventions. Let’s reconsider each component of the genre theory we covered earlier. In this section, we recap the basic assumptions regarding corporate discourse conventions and then illustrate and extend them.

1. *Why genres?* Discourse genres exist because of the recurring confluence of types of situations that suggest appropriate symbolic responses to them.

One of the key controversies in late 20th century rhetorical study has been a chicken-or-the-egg question: Which comes first, the message or the situation? A good deal of the time, discourse conventions are employed to respond to situations: a product introduction, an increased need for organ donors, etc. This does not mean, however, that such messages might not be employed to *shape* perceptions of a situation. In the early 1990s, Ketchum worked on behalf of Sun Sweet Growers to change the image of the lowly prune, “the Rodney Dangerfield of fruit,” as a feature story placed in the magazine *Eating Well* put it. Certainly the use of the feature as a discourse convention was a response to the prune’s image as a laxative and something people ate in their old age, but the story also capitalized on the development of new uses for the product (e.g., prune puree as a shortening substitute) that would appeal to health-conscious publics. Although growers eventually changed the marketing label to “dried plums,” such publicity items helped to change audience perceptions of why and when prunes could be used.

Messages also may be employed in advance of a situation. Much of corporate strategic planning includes anticipating what might happen. This effort includes public relations professionals thinking about the future and what may lie down the road so the organization avoids obstacles or, at least, is better braced for impact. Proactive situations, like the introduction of a wholly new and innovative product or special events, rely on sound future-oriented thinking about, in the case of innovations, the great value that can be obtained and, in the case of events, the exceptional community development that can be shared. Other instances, like emergencies, require advanced, contingency planning as well because corporate officials have good reason to be prepared “when the shit hits the fan.” Although contingency plans provide much of the material needed to manage and communicate about an emergency situation, contingency plans include places for the exact specifics of a situation to be filled in.

Discourse genres, then, work both ways: as reactive and proactive ways organizations communicate with their publics (and vice versa). The communication is conducted in ways that invite degrees of literal participation with an organization’s work (e.g., understanding more about causes and effects, agreeing with a policy, or buying a product or service). Publics and organizations co-construct meaning about what is going on and the influence and effects it has.

2. *Form follows function.* The purposes that drive the use of a particular genre are governed by sound rhetorical strategies, not simply an adherence to a familiar pattern of organization.

Perhaps one of the oddest news conferences on record has to be the October 4, 2005, announcement of a partnership between Sun Microsystems and Google (Sun, 2005). The respective principal speakers, Scott McNealy, Sun’s CEO, and Eric Schmidt, Google’s CEO, talked about Schmidt’s credentials and commented on how he had worked for Sun at one time. After a long discussion of the ups and downs of Sun’s history, McNealy introduced Andy Bechtolsheim, saying that Bechtolsheim had invested money in both companies at their beginnings, not mentioning that he was a cofounder of Sun – but trade publications found no real news: “The announcement left many bloggers less than thrilled, and blog entries with titles such as ‘Big whoop,’ ‘That’s it?’ and ‘Google and Sun announce yawn’ abound on blog search site Technorati” (Guevin, 2005). The two CEOs also were vague during the question-and-answer

period that followed. WebProNews reported, “A few attempts to gain some deeper meaning to the press conference, besides seeing Messrs. McNealy and Schmidt trade a Sun server and software for a Google-branded lava lamp, were brushed aside by the duo” (Utter, 2005). Reporters and technorati in the blogosphere were left to speculate about what degree the two companies were taking on Microsoft and what products would result from the partnership. By failing to follow discourse conventions, the only news gained from what the *Los Angeles Times* called “an often confusing Silicon Valley news conference” (Gaither, 2005) was that the news conference occurred and that great things could be expected from Sun and Google.

Those organizations that use genre conventions properly can build upon them to create messages with visual and discursive impact. Honda, in addition to its full-color annual report in a PDF file, provides a similar report on corporate social responsibility. Two of these sections are expanded into separate annual reports on environmental efforts and, in Japanese only, its Driving Safety Program (Honda, 2008a, 2008b). General Electric (2009) has made its “Our Company” heading on its website easy to follow so that investors, consumers, and other interested publics can link to a separate page for investor relations and individual sites dedicated to GE’s Ecomagination environmental campaign and to its efforts at corporate citizenship.

3. *Two-way communication.* Genres are not simply responses that the organization employs to respond to situations. Audience perceptions of the situation – and expectations of what the organization should say and how it should say it – are as much a part of what shapes the strategic, organized response as the organization’s interpretation of what needs to be said and done.

The ideal of ethical public relations as “symmetrical communication” can be recast as dialogue that is a co-creation of meaning. Shared meaning is negotiated meaning. The genre conventions associated with employee relations serve as cases in point. Willihnganz, Hart, and Leichty (2004) tell of difficult changes in a small manufacturing company. A married couple, owners of Auto Tech, decided to retire and move out of state. A CEO change resulted in organizational decisions no longer made through informal communication, but via memos and formal meetings. The change in genre conventions created a crisis situation that was finally resolved with the return of the original owners. In contrast, when Dow Chemical and Union Carbide merged in 2001, Ketchum Public Relations assisted Dow, among other things, in implementing a “merger mailbox” to answer employee questions and having Dow leaders give in-person presentations on the first day of the merger at all 90 company sites (PRSA, 2002). This Silver Anvil award-winning campaign achieved 85% employee satisfaction with communication on Day 15 of the merger and less than 1% resignations during the first month.

Organizations and audiences need to be on the same page regarding what genre conventions are appropriate. This is not only true when organizations communicate, but also when publics address them as receivers. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) rarely are given a hearing by organizations because of its penchant for outrageous behavior reminiscent of the protest genre, the diatribe, employed by the Greek Cynics and, more recently, the Yippies in the 1960s (cf. Windt, 1970). Consumers can be more effective when they use reasonably stated letters, e-mails, and telephone calls to convey their concerns. This is what happened when New Englanders learned that Nabisco was stopping production of Crown Pilot Crackers, a product associated with growing up with the weekly evening meal of chowder.

Sustained consumer communication and resulting media coverage changed the company's mind (Escrock, Hart, D'Silva & Werking, 2002).

4. *Stability and Flexibility*. Public relations practitioners not only should know the characteristics of a given discourse convention. They should recognize how much latitude they have in using them. Some genres allow for great creativity. Others, especially those prescribed by government agencies, restrict the strategic choices the communicator may make.

The beauty of discourse genres is they are rule-governed, which means people can use any discourse exactly as prescribed by the rules or bend or even break the rules to fit specific rhetorical purposes. The stability of discourse genres for public relations is especially needed when time is of the essence. Emergency situations (i.e., organizational crises, issues, and disasters) leave practitioners little time to consider other artful ways to handle communications. Hurricane Katrina is an example of all three types of emergency communication. It naturally was a disaster because of the havoc it wreaked on the city of New Orleans and the surrounding area, including southern Mississippi. It precipitated organizational crises for the city of New Orleans, the state of Louisiana, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Indeed, FEMA was the "poster child" for ineffectiveness because of, in part, the top administrator's misuse of internal communiqués via e-mail, as reported by journalists. It also stood as an issue of public safety that was poorly addressed over the years because, as news reports revealed, civil engineers and government officials knew well about the limitations and weaknesses of New Orleans' levy system and what should have been done to better protect the city (Littlefield & Quenette, 2007). The art of effective public relations in emergency situations is more concerned with content than its innovative presentation. Traditional conventions for press releases, news conferences, interviews, and so on work like recipes for what to say about what happened, why, and how it can be avoided in the future.

The conventions for public relations discourse also are flexible so they can accommodate situational needs for both an organization and its publics. The requirements for publicly traded companies to report on their annual performance are an example of genre flexibility in the face of stability. Regulations, like the U.S. Securities and Exchange Act of 1934 (and its subsequent regulations that fall under the purview of the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission), specify particular kinds of information and their presentation that must be shared with investors. Corporations are obligated to annually publish a simple, text- and table-heavy, black-and-white Form 10-K. But many companies also choose to publish a "flashy," four-color report that shows more about the organization's story for the previous year in addition to the required information. For example, Indian Oil's 2007-2008 annual report provides readers with its document totally online through dedicated links to it and its sections, which seems at first blush innovative and appropriate. The document, however, is simply divided up into excerpts in separate PDF files of black-and-white pages for each section, and each simply presents fundamental messages about the business area or topic required without innovation highlights. In contrast, Samsung's 2007 annual report provides a full-color report that, along with the detailed financial data and analysis, features artistic photography of personnel and products, but beneath these "flashy" images are straightforward messages about company performance on required subjects.

5. *Generic Adaptability*. Since genres have a life cycle, we extend that metaphor to recognize that discourse conventions do not merely change over time in response to audience expectations and organizational needs. Some readily transfer to new media channels; others require adjustment to be more, we might say, user friendly.

Today's variety of media choices make possible what business today calls "repurposing" – using items in ways different from the original intent behind them. To some degree, public relations professionals have done this with genre conventions for the past century. Some material in press kits is made specifically for it, while other items have been used in previous campaigns. Biographical statements and backgrounders are frequently repurposed. Yet our point is more profound: Today's corporate communications environment invites novel use of genre conventions in ways that might, at first blush, seem questionable choices.

Consider the case of Steve Irwin, the Crocodile Hunter, who in 2004, twice had to defend his reputation. The first situation, in which a visitor to Australia Zoo videoed Irwin feeding Murray the Crocodile while holding his one-month-old son in his arms, created an ethics stir which polarized even his most loyal fans. Despite a rather disjointed apologia on NBC's *Today Show* (Touchet, 2004), the media firestorm that January died down, with only the Australian state of Queensland considering some regulation to cover such incidents of alleged child endangerment (Callinan, 2004). That summer, however, another reputational crisis occurred when scientists accused Irwin of swimming far too close to animals while filming a documentary, *Ice Breaker*, in the Antarctic (Middleton, 2004). This time Irwin's crew created a well-framed apologia, a program episode called "Confessions of the Crocodile Hunter" (Irwin & Stainton, 2004). Aired on the Discovery Channel in the United States, the program presented Irwin's life story with an emphasis on his philosophy regarding and practices in the wild. So much more effective than his earlier apologia, this program was repurposed and continuously run in tandem with "Steve's Story" (Irwin, 1996) on the Discovery Channel for at least the first 24 hours after Irwin's accidental death on September 4, 2006. The apologia became part of a fitting eulogy.

Not all repurposes are successful. During the second author's former life in radio broadcasting, he saw many times when companies and nonprofit organizations would send print news releases without any adaptation to the needs of audio presentation. Indeed, often print releases were sent for use on the radio station's community calendar without being converted into what today would be called a media alert. This one-size-fits-all mentality even can occur in Top 100 media markets. When the second author was working in public radio, the city's arts foundation created its theme for its annual fundraising event, replete with preproduced public service announcements. At the time the station aired both classical music and jazz. However, the agency hired to produce the PSA had used a country music bed for the recording. At the request of the station's manager, a script was provided for use by its announcers, although the foundation representatives would have preferred to have the recorded announcer's voice used for the entire campaign.

Clearly, attention to genre conventions in corporate communication can make public relations efforts more coherent and appealing. Although they can be used reactively, the best use of genres is proactive. With awareness of their characteristics, degree of flexibility, and adaptability to different uses, professional communicators can use these genre conventions more effectively and, most important, strategically. These genres for public relations (see Figure 2) are

specific types that fall into Aristotle's broader, tripartite system. It is our contention that most of what public relations does falls under one of those categories, *epideictic*, i.e., celebratory rhetoric.

FIGURE 2. Public relations discourse genres

Prepared statements	Biographical statements	Newsletters
Press releases	Press conferences	Video news programs
Media advisories	Press kits	Corporate reports
Video news releases	Interviews	Corporate image pieces
Photo news releases	Articles	Pitch letters
Audio news releases	White papers	Pitch calls
Fact sheets	Case studies	Written correspondence
Backgrounders	Speeches	Conversations
FAQs	Public service messages	Blogs
Tip Sheets	Advertorials	Podcasts

Public Relations Genres as Celebrations of the Organization

Public relations involves the measured and ethical use of language and symbols to inspire cooperation between an organization and its publics. This work subsumes various purposes, such as persuasion, education, celebration, and so on. Of these purposes, much of the literature about public relations puts the greatest emphasis on persuasion (e.g., Fawkes, 2007; Miller, 1989; Read, 2007). Indeed, public relations and persuasion are often equated with one another (and sometimes with manipulation; cf. Grunig, 1989). This is not surprising, since public relations' most noticeable efforts are usually when organizations face Aristotle's forensic situation – i.e., the courtroom – actually, the court of public opinion. Our earlier examples certainly include efforts to persuade – e.g., General Motors' defense against NBC *Dateline*'s accusations of making trucks with gas tanks that could potentially explode, the Crocodile Hunter's *apologia* of being more concerned for showmanship than the safety of his child or of the natural world that he so loved. Similarly, Aristotle's deliberative genre is not confined to the legislature but can apply to any occasion in which people are being asked to change how they will do things in the future. The *Eating Well* feature article was an attempt to get consumers to use prunes (hopefully Sunsweet prunes) in new ways, and the failures of FEMA in the wake of Hurricane Katrina stemmed from a lack of proper timing and persuasion to tell storm survivors what to do next.

We believe, that the focus on persuasion is limited and over-privileged, although this perspective has been well defended. Public relations books and scholarship have used myriad pages to examine campaign mistakes (“I can't believe they did. . .”) or celebrate Silver Anvil Award winners. Case studies have their place, but public relations is not just focused on audience behavior, purchasing patterns, and the bottom line (although we must not forget those important goals). The quest for cooperation between an organization and its publics truly seems more appropriately encompassing because professional communicators are purpose-driven, whether that purpose is to persuade, inform, refute, or celebrate. In short, the essence of public relations is to establish identification between publics and organizations such that they see themselves in

each other's positions no matter what their respective stances on matters are (cf. Smudde, in press). For this reason, we maintain that the bulk of what public relations people do on a day-to-day basis is *epideictic*.

The Epideictic Nature of Public Relations Discourse

There is no exact translation of the Greek word, but its origins are found in the games and festivals of ancient Athens, when part of the event's program included public speaking and written composition (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969). Confined to such situations, scholars typically explain to students that *epideictic* messages are ceremonial in character, focused on "praise" and "blame" (i.e., extolling the virtues that the community holds dear, and sometimes vilifying what it does not stand for, at times even casting aspersions on enemies). Thus funerals are *epideictic* situations that invite eulogies of praise for the deceased. Today, all sorts of celebrations provide opportunities for *epideictic* discourse: a ribbon cutting, a retirement dinner, all sorts of organizational events. Its utility for organizations, however, is far greater and untapped (pragmatically and academically).

As Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969) assert, the *epideictic* genre of discourse conventions form "a central part of the art of persuasion, and the lack of understanding shown toward it results from a false conception of the effects of argumentation" (p. 49). As such, we argue that much of what public relations does stems from its celebratory nature (see also Crable & Vibbert, 1983). Scholarship has moved well beyond viewing epideictic messages as opportunities for speakers to display rhetorical skill and audiences to appreciate it. From this scholarship, we have determined epideictic's four core functions: celebratory, performative, epistemic (i.e., knowledge producing), and preservative. These functions are not simplistic, unidimensional terms: Each has specific components that make public relations key not only to organizational success, but also to a more enlightened view of publics as audiences and how organizations seek to inspire cooperation with them.

Celebratory Function

The celebratory function of epideictic discourse includes ritualistic and axiological dimensions. Ritualistic dimensions concern how a special occasion is particularly memorialized. This means that speakers make a special point to follow established, accepted patterns of language and behaviors for exalting or decrying something. Public relations discourse in this case need not be as dramatic as that sounds. In public relations, the ritualistic dimension is obvious in new-product unveilings, statements of self-defense, and news conferences, but it also is subtle in news genres, in which the writer should temper word choices so that the message conforms to the journalistic standard of objectivity. The other dimension of the celebratory function is axiological, which focuses on values-oriented statements that address something in terms of praise and blame. Public relations' axiological function is seen at its best when organizations explicitly or implicitly communicate values that the organization stands for, values that its products or services represent, or, through issue advocacy, values associated with the corporate position regarding the issue at hand. Simultaneously, the values expressed through the discourse also should reflect those held by target publics. Public relations influences society through invocation of organizational core values, but must be a reflection of the environment in

which their clients operate as well. Values appeals, therefore, work best when they are shared by the organization and its publics.

Performative Function

The performative function of epideictic discourse is chiefly concerned with *ethos*, and, in the case of public relations, performative epideictic discourse establishes who the organization is and how it develops a relationship with the audience (Black, 1970; McMillan, 1987). There are three components to the performative function. First, the political component sees the speaker as a leader that is acting as a member of a community. In this social role, the speaker has a “bardic” (i.e., grand promoter or evangelist) and/or prophetic voice (Lessl, 1989), both of which mean the speaker “sings the praises” of the organization and the past, present, and future value the community derives from it, although the prophet also might cast aspersions on enemies or chastise a community for not living up to its values. By the same token, audiences have the role of observer, judge, and participant as they experience the speaker and the message, evaluate what is said, and choose to take action or not. In public relations the political component of its discourse is evident in feature articles and annual reports, for example. Second, the identity management component concerns reputation building through *ethos* (cf. Sullivan, 1993) so that audiences acknowledge and embrace a speaker’s credibility and authority. In public relations fact sheets and corporate social responsibility reports, for example, fulfill this need to manage an organization’s identity. Third, the rhetorical (or symbolic) component of performative epideictic discourse involves the creation of consubstantiality between an audience and the speaker. The discourse in this vein is designed to influence audiences immediately and over the long term, defining their roles and relationship to each other. In public relations, Lindeman’s (2006) view of outputs, outtakes, outcomes and outgrowths are dimensions of the range of results sought to inspire cooperation between an organization and its publics.

Epistemic Function

The epistemic function of epideictic discourse focuses on the knowledge-building capacity it has for speakers and, especially, audiences. This function covers two dimensions: educational and explanatory. The educational dimension features messages that inculcate values and encourages the imitation and buy-in to certain virtues that are established through socialization. Public relations practitioners exercise this dimension when they publish advertorials or public service announcements. The second epistemic dimension is explanatory, which involves defining or otherwise facilitating audience understanding of something. This dimension can be realized when discourse addresses what the audience already knows as the basis for connecting it with something new they do not know and should embrace, and that new knowledge balances audience and organizational needs. It also can be realized as discourse, which

refers to the power of epideictic to explain the social world. Audiences actively seek and invite speech that performs this epideictic function when some event, person, group, or object is troubling. The speaker will explain the troubling issue in terms of the audience’s key values and beliefs. (Condit, 1985, p. 288)

Thus the epistemic and celebratory functions work in tandem. The celebratory function reflects the worldview that the organization and its publics share; the epistemic function attempts to influence how audiences think about the world and what they believe to be true.

Preservative Function

The preservative function of epideictic discourse conserves and reinforces the community values that may be celebrated or vilified through messages (cf. Cherwitz & Hikins, 1982, Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969). There are three important components to this function. The first is coherence, which concerns how the language and the very structure of the discourse itself helps everything work together within the text and, especially, among all other epideictic functions. Public relations discourse must always cohere with other corporate discourse on many levels, at the very least to “stay on message.” The second preservative component is reflexive: Rhetoric functions for the organization as a means of self-persuasion (cf. Burks, 1970). Discourse becomes part of the public record and, therefore, influences how the organization and its members perceive themselves in relationship to their surroundings. Rhetoric thus becomes a historical record of what the organization says and does – a repository of organizational memory from which anyone may draw ideas for new discourse. Finally, epideictic preserves messages for future usage. The most obvious way this occurs is repurposing, in which practitioners create premises for future communication to inspire cooperation (even forensic or deliberative discourse; cf. Cheney & Vibbert, 1987) and for other epideictic situations. In the practice of public relations, discourse is regularly reused for multiple purposes, and that can include the reapplication of text from one document or occasion to another, like information from a fact sheet to a news release to a speech. However, the public availability of organizational discourse allows others – publics, opinion leaders, the news media, activists – to quote, paraphrase, or recast ideas as they see fit. This futuristic dimension can be quite far-reaching, because public discourse may be invoked long after its original moment of communication (cf. Courtright, 1991). For example, what an organization’s founder said or wrote becomes fodder for press kits, speeches, annual reports, and advocacy advertising. Also, what an organization says in its financial discourse about its past performance has implications for people’s perceptions of its potential future performance (e.g., whether investments in a publicly traded company may be prudent).

A Holistic View of Epideictic Public Relations

Taken together, the four functions of epideictic discourse provide us with a usable and useful view of public relations that can be used at the tactical level, but they are especially potent at the *strategic* business level. This view represents an untouched and powerful way to plan, act, and evaluate public relations. Because celebratory rhetoric showcases community (or societal) values, much of what passes for newsworthy information is focused on those values that organizations and their publics share – and these are shared through the conventions of the discourse genres in Figure 2. Corporate officials must take into consideration their constituents’, stakeholders’, customers’, markets’, and other audiences’ viewpoints, needs and expectations when making *epideictic* arguments about what is going on. (This approach is no different than it would be with forensic or deliberative discourse.) Epideictic arguments are not only about the news or other matters, although that is important. The arguments are invitations to participate,

even if it is only momentary or intellectually if not ultimately behaviorally, in the dramatic celebration of what is going on within, for and about an organization that also concerns its publics. The invitations also include claims, backed by evidence and reasoning (cf. Toulmin, 1958), that participation would be good. When the news is good, bad, or neither, the invitation to the celebration is relevant.

During his years in industry, the first author felt this kind of dynamic was the root cause for communications (but could not put his finger on it), not just merely releasing news or information. Indeed, the use of information in the service of persuasion, education, celebration, etc., was always the means to the end of inspiring cooperation between an organization and its publics. Some audiences are friendlier than others. Communicating with particular audiences should be helpful in some ways while targeting others not so much: Detractors will almost never change their minds against something and should be targeted cautiously, advocates can help evangelize about something and should be targeted as ambassadors, and those in the middle are more numerous and most prone to moving toward one extreme or the other depending on the forcefulness and effectiveness of the discourse directed to them. Publics are not mere observers, although admiration of the organization-as-speaker's abilities certainly contributes to positive impressions. Indeed, Oravec (1976) maintains that Aristotle linked such discourse to practical wisdom, common-sense understandings of the world. Such discourse contributes to audience learning and asking them to make judgments that may serve as the basis for later persuasion. (This is exactly what Crable and Vibbert [1983] argued that Mobil Oil did with its "Observations" series of advertisements in Sunday supplement magazines.) Values-based arguments reinforce or change beliefs (what publics accept as true), which in turn prime specific attitudes that lead to somewhat predictable behaviors. As Edward Bernays observed, "People want to go where they want to be led" (Blumer, Moyers, & Grubin, 1983).

These connections are vital to practicing professional communicators also. Public relations efforts that extol the innovativeness of a product or service, for example, are engaging in *epideictic* discourse. The purpose is to celebrate the launch of a new product or service, and that celebration is worthy, virtuous, important, etc., because of specific persuasive arguments about its value, benefits, and so on. Public relations efforts to thwart attacks on an organization, for example, also are *epideictic* discourse. The purpose in such cases is to persuade people that the attacks are baseless, inappropriate, ill-informed, etc., while people should join the organization in the celebration of itself and what good it stands for. And public relations efforts to support a public policy measure, for example, also are *epideictic*. The purpose in this case is to promote the soundness, efficacy, value, etc., to society and invite participation and support from publics as the organization leads the charge. (Note that the first example of these three would be a purely *epideictic* form, the second could follow a forensic form, and the third example could follow a deliberative form.)

The conventions for the discourse in Figure 2 not only can prepare audiences for action, but they also are reputation-building opportunities for organizations (cf. Beale, 1978). The formal *epideictic* dimensions of public relations discourse generally involve what is fine/crude, honorable/abhorrent, noble/base, virtuous/shameful, and so on. The discourse forms that are chosen and the messages designed must be those that best meet with the target audiences' needs and expectations while balancing the organization's position. The nature of *epideictic* discourse, then, necessarily involves ethics, and Aristotle makes clear connections between them. Not only

most organizations try to identify with live up to societal values, but they also must use the discourse forms that audiences use to gain information—and they must do so without insulting the audiences’ intelligence or affronting their sensitivity to what they consider proper, ethical communication. Related to our word ethics, though, is one of Aristotle’s principal means of argument, *ethos* – the character of the speaker as implied within messages.

Persuasive aspects of public relations may indeed be the most noticeable and, therefore, most public. However, as a graduate student of ours once observed, the best public relations is obviously subtle. With appropriate attention to situations as opportunities to present corporate values, address audience values, and invite cooperation as a result, public relations messages at heart are *epideictic*. The true test of any campaign is not only its immediate goal, but also how the organization’s use of discourse conventions within it serve the organization and its publics over the long term. Public relations genres build and sustain relationships with publics and, simultaneously, strengthen corporate reputation. Every message is an opportunity to inspire cooperation. Of all the purposes that public relations seems to fulfill in its quest to inspire cooperation, celebration is key.

We use the category epideictic as an overarching orientation to these discourse conventions, because it really is a broader category than genre. “Genus” is a nice word for it, but we won’t pursue the biological analogy to its discourse parallels. Within the broad category of epideictic, we treat public relations discourse conventions as genres that have specific characteristics with implications for message design. Our generic approach to public relations recognizes the important role that rules play in effective public relations discourse. Our approach also recognizes how important competence in those discourse genres is to effectively planning, executing, and evaluating communications.

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International Public Relations Faces Challenges: The Impact of *Palanca* in Shaping Mexico's Public Relations

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Abstract

As people of the world become more and more interdependent, public relations plays a critical role in shaping international political affairs and business. Public relations can help countries and organizations develop positive images among their counterparts around the world. The powerful communication profession can greatly help the world avoid conflicts or war, help organizations work effectively together, maximize utility, and minimize costs to benefit people worldwide. However, among the challenges facing international public relations are cultural barriers.

Based on our previous research (Hackley & Dong, 2001; Hackley, Dong & Howard, 2007; Howard, Hackley & Dong, 2008), this proposed project will focus on the high-context/collectivistic Mexican culture by investigating how *palanca* (a Spanish term for “lever” as the literal translation or use of personal influence or having connections in figurative terms) shapes Mexican public relations principles and practice. Different from the previous theoretical and analytic approaches in our investigations, this study will take a case-study approach to examine how *palanca* as a cultural phenomenon influences public relations. The study will use interviews to collect information from both American and Mexican public relations practitioners in Mexico, along with secondary analysis of existing data.

Introduction

The emergence of global public relations signals opportunities and challenges (Hackley, Dong, & Howard, 2006). On the one hand, it creates golden opportunities for countries around the globe to manage issues and solve problems. On the other, it faces many challenges due to differing cultural values (Lee, 2005). Research shows that three major factors shape the landscape of global public relations, including the rapid development of the public relations field, its leading role in assisting the world economy, and the democratization of information worldwide (Wilcox, 2006).

Sriramesh and Vercic (2007) point out that public relations is present and is well-developed and further developing in the Americas, Asia, Australia, and Europe. In particular, Asia has emerged as a developed public relations area. China and India are two leading countries in economic development, and they are adopting Western ways of public relations management (Hackley, Dong, & Howard, 2006). These researchers add that cultural differences pose a critical barrier in implementing American public relations standards in global settings.

“Key to being successful in the global marketplace is to find the right balance between local customs and universal interests and practices” (Howard & Mathews, 2006, p. 157). In fact, “globalization has presented new ethical challenges for U.S. professionals who must apply Americanized codes of ethics in foreign markets” (Seib & Fitzpatrick, 1995, p. 50). Nelson (2003) noted that the “most common mistake most of us, working in international business, make is to take it for granted that our values, symbols and beliefs are universally shared, acceptable or at least understood” (p. 68).

Molleda and Moreno (2006) indicate that globalization’s diverse political, socioeconomic, and cultural dimensions form an optimum framework for the development and analysis of public relations. They add that the dynamic global context generates an ideal opportunity to advance international public relations across many parts of the world. Studies show that international public relations has advanced worldwide due to adaptation of democratic principles, increasing global interdependence, and advancement of communication technologies (Sharpe & Pritchard, 2004, cited in Molleda & Moreno, 2006). Molleda and Moreno (2006) state that public relations in Mexico has advanced due to the “practices of transnational corporations and the democratization process that motivates openness, greater professionalism and the expansion of public relations across diverse organizations” (p. 104).

The Role of *Palanca* in Mexican Culture

Hofstede (2001) suggest that countries can be identified by four cultural dimensions: individualism/collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, and masculinity/femininity. Studies suggest that the dimension of individualism and collectivism tends to be observed in many critical social contexts, including family, schools, workplace, and the media. Andersen and Wang (2006) point out that “a culture’s degree of individualism versus collectivism is one of the most extensively researched dimensions of culture” (p. 255).

Andersen (2003) maintains that collectivistic cultures focus more on community, collaboration, shared interest, harmony, tradition, and maintaining face, while individualistic cultures emphasize freedom, personal responsibility, privacy, innovation, and self-expression.

Hofstede (2001) offers a similar definition of individualism and collectivism: “Individualism stands for a society in which the ties between individuals are loose: Everyone is expected to look after him/herself and his/her immediate family only” (p. 225). He adds that “collectivism stands for a society in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people’s lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty” (p. 225). In his study of cultural values among more than 50 modern nations, Hofstede (2001) notes that the United States is high in individualism, while Mexico is one of the most collectivistic-oriented countries.

Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988) contend that those countries with individualistic cultures tend to be low context, which promotes a direct and explicit communication style. Countries with high collectivistic cultures tend to be high context, emphasizing an indirect and implicit communication style. One of the key constructs that influences individualism and collectivism is self-construal. People from individualistic countries tend to have independent self-construal, depending more on their own selves for decision making, while those from collectivistic countries tend to have interdependent self-construal, relying more on others for decision-making.

Collectivistic cultures tend to focus on group orientation and employ avoidance, third-party intermediaries, or other face-saving techniques. Samovar, Porter, and McDaniel (2007) point out that collectivism is contextual, finding that in Mexico, harmony and cooperation in learning are stressed instead of competition. One Mexican saying illustrates the point well: “The more we are, the faster we finish” (p. 144).

Lindsley and Braithwaite (2006) write that each country shares a set of cultural norms and patterns, and these cultural patterns are viewed as “core concepts” (p. 281). Lindsley and Braithwaite summarize five core concepts that reflect the basic values held by most Mexicans: *confianza*, *simpatia*, *palanca*, *estabilidad*, and *manana*.

Confianza refers to trust, which is the key to developing and maintaining good relationships. Mexican culture focuses on trust-based interpersonal relationships. Hodges and Daymon (2008) suggest that “central to beliefs of Mexicans is the importance of placing trust with great care” (p. 6). Research shows that trust is heavily emphasized in collectivistic countries such as Japan, China, and Mexico.

Simpatia is emotional support for the benefit of the group. Lindsley and Braithwaite write that “being *simpatia* is something to strive for in organizational relationships and is demonstrated through communication behaviors that show positive emotional connection with others” (2006, p. 282). The cultural script on communication focuses on commitment to harmony and cooperation, observed commonly in collectivistic countries.

Palanca can be viewed as “a person providing a favor, or the action of providing a connection or favor” (Starr, pp. 30). Starr points out that it is very hard to find an equivalent translation in English for this concept, and it must be understood in a collectivistic cultural context. Since *palanca* plays a critical role in shaping interpersonal relationships as well as relationships within and between groups, this concept has a significant impact on the practice of public relations in Mexico.

Estabilidad refers to stability (Lindsley & Braithwaite, 2006, p. 283). Because Mexicans put an emphasis on the stability of their country, Mexican personal and organizational roles tend to overlap. The desire to maintain a stable environment can be observed through a wide range of behaviors, including asking questions about colleagues’ families, discussing personal matters before business, taking action to promote employees’ personal well-being (Lindsley & Braithwaite, 2006). According to Hofstede (2001), Mexico, as well as Japan and China, rank high in uncertainty avoidance.

Manana literally refers to tomorrow. Lindsley and Braithwaite (2006) write that “Most Mexicans use time clocks but also consider time to be more interpersonally negotiable, and what counts as being ‘on time’ can be mediated by unexpected events beyond one’s control” (p. 284). The father of intercultural communication, Edward Hall, proposed two classifications of time: monochronic vs: polychronic. People who are using monochronic focus on time as lineal and take time commitments seriously. While people who are using polychronic tend to be flexible in managing time, and they change their plans often and easily. The concept of *manana* shows a flexibility of time management, and Mexican people tend to follow the polychronic notion of time.

In summary, all five core concepts of *confianza*, *simpatia*, *palanca*, *estabilidad*, and *manana* present unique Mexican cultural characteristics. These core concepts indicate that Mexican culture is collectivistic, with an emphasis on relationships, family stability, and

emotional support. Since this paper focuses on the practice of public relations in Mexico, it is the authors' belief that *palanca* tends to pose the most challenge to the practice of public relations in Mexico, as do *guanxi* in China, and *wasta* and *shabaka* in the Middle East. *Palanca*, which focuses more on personal, in-group, and favor-based relationships, becomes a significant contrast to American public relations,

which focuses more on public, open, ethically guided, and professionally oriented working relationships.

The Impact of *Palanca* on Public Relations

Understanding networking with the overlay of cultural tradition is essential for anyone entering the global public relations arena. *Palanca* in Mexico and Latin America, for example, dictates how personal networks function in the cultures of Latin America. Such interpersonal networking focuses more on trust, less on legal systems, more on relationship, and less on principles (Hackley & Dong, 2001).

“One of the cultural concepts that must be considered in social and business transactions within Latin American cultures is the concept of *palanca*” (Starr, 2003, p. 30). Starr contends that “*Palanca* facilitates transactions and interactions in organizational relationships through an individual's legitimate authority and the network of relationships he or she possesses,” adding that “*palanca* revolves around relationships, rather than monetary or business goals” (Starr, 2003, p. 33).

In some ways, *palanca* is akin to the American concept of reciprocity, the relationships associated with “I'll scratch your back if you scratch mine.”

***Palanca's* Catholic Roots**

Catholicism is an integral component in the lives of most Latin Americans; indeed, more than half the world's 1.1 billion Catholics live in Latin America (Cevallos, 2004). The Roman Catholic Church is not only the seat of religious power and spiritual guidance, but also serves as the foundation for personal and business ethics (Markkula Center for Applied Ethics, 2007).

Palanca in large part derives from the ancient Greek concept of *agape*, or brotherly love (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2009). The early Church fathers, who were schooled in the writings of Aristotle (lotsofessays.com, 2009), saw *agape* as higher and purer than *eros* (passion) or *philia* (friendship), two forms of love discussed by the student of Plato in his *Nicomachean Ethics* (Salim, 2007).

In its most lofty manifestation, *palanca* can be seen in acts of compassion and generosity toward one's fellow man without any explicit demand or suggestion of reciprocity. The giver is simply giving out of the goodness of his heart.

In the practice of public relations, this can be most easily seen in philanthropic work that is done by a firm for the benefit of the community in which it operates. Of course, cynics are always quick to suggest that all acts are self-serving (Philosophy Forum, 2007) and that even funds or services that are made available for the greater good are done so in order to enhance the reputation and improve the credibility of the sponsoring entity. All this goodwill directly benefits the company—in short, all efforts are aimed at generating “good PR.”

It is important in such a discussion, however, to separate primary objectives from positive outcomes that arise from those objectives. There is, in other words, a difference between setting out to generate “good PR” as the primary or even sole objective for undertaking a project that will benefit others and aiming to help others and in the process reaping positive outcomes for oneself. If the former course is taken, this is not *palanca* in its *agape* sense. If, however, the latter course is adopted, one is acting out of a love for his fellow human beings and, consequently, good may return to him tenfold.

Understanding networking with the overlay of cultural tradition is essential for anyone entering the global public relations arena. *Palanca* in Mexico and throughout Latin America, for example, dictates how personal networks function. Such interpersonal networking focuses more on trust, less on legal systems, more on relationships, and less on principles (Hackley & Dong, 2001).

In order to better understand one of the critical cultural phenomena in Mexico, this study poses the following research question: To what extent does *palanca* affect public relations practice in Mexico?”

Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach to study effects of a cultural phenomenon on shaping public relations practice in Mexico. This case study is investigated through a mixed convenient survey and telephone interviews, with both American public relations practitioners who have experiences in Mexico and Mexican public relations practitioners who are doing public relations in their own country.

Researchers used two key directory sources to select subjects for the study: O’Dwyer’s Directory of Public Relations Firms---2008 and Directory.com.mx. All of the 19 firms under multicultural markets and six firms under Mexico in the O’Dwyer’s list were contacted via email and fax. All 14 firms listed under Directory.com.mx were contacted via both email and fax. In addition, researchers also used personal contacts, public relations regional chapters, and other networks to seek assistance in reaching out to potential respondents.

Sample

Thirty-nine questionnaires were emailed and/or faxed to public relations practitioners working in Mexico, both American-born and Mexican professionals. Of these, 23, or 59%, responded. Four of the 23 provided detailed answers. Further research with larger sample size and more respondents are needed.

Measurement

The same questionnaire was prepared and sent to both American public relations practitioners working in Mexico and Mexican public relations practitioners working in Mexico. The questionnaire has eight questions, with an introduction to invite subjects to participate in the study. These questions ask respondents to comment on the influence of culture on public relations practice and, specifically, the impact of *palanca* in shaping their practice and suggestions for those practicing public relations in a different cultural context.

Findings

Through the respondents' sometimes detailed answers, a nuanced understanding of *palanca* emerges.

Gene Bigler (personal communication, February 19, 2009), a former U.S. diplomat and a professor of international relations who has lived and worked in a dozen Latin American countries including Mexico during stays totaling approximately 20 years, describes his vision of *palanca* "in a socio-economic context, ...[as] leverage, influence, or the crucial resource, whether a tool, an approach, an argument, a strategic advantage, or some other mechanism that enables you to get some difficult work done or achieve the outcome you seek in working with other persons. It is definitely a concept that applies broadly to the conduct of interpersonal relations in a Latin American context."

According to Bigler (personal communication, February 19, 2009), "*Palanca* relates to a type of influence that is possible because of the achievement of a relationship that goes beyond

rapport or...professional courtesy typical of Anglo-American society and is rooted in a sense of obligation/duty/bonding to the other person."

But *palanca* is far more complex and potentially involves far more people than the American notion of "I'll scratch your back, you scratch mine," as "the service, kindness, favor, benefit that created the linkage often was not actually earned by the person asking the favor but by a third person to whom the asker and the prospective giver are both interrelated" (Bigler, personal communication, February 19, 2009).

Though "the relationship is a little along the lines of a friend of my friend is a friend of mine" (Bigler, personal communication, February 19, 2009), *palanca* is more than simple friendship with concrete benefits. In Mexico, *camarillas*--interlinked political cliques and social brotherhoods--can trace their roots to networks that developed in medieval Spain and Portugal and were brought to the Americas.

Zerene Kahan (personal communication, February 14, 2009), an executive vice president and director at the multinational Edelman Public Relations who oversees health and consumer practice operations in Mexico and throughout Latin America, maintains that "serious and ethical and largely international PR firms would not deal with *palanca*. However, many local boutique firms do."

According to Kahan (personal communication, February 14, 2009), locally based firms are often very successful, since they are headed by former government officials or those who have served government officials. Hence, they enjoy a significant network of contacts. But international firms doing business in Mexico, Kahan maintains, "are not affected by *palanca*, since processes are in place to be transparent and ethical.

As such, *palanca* may pose a disadvantage to companies that wish to uphold American business and ethical practices, as local firms tend to secure business based on who they know, thereby stifling competition. As an example, Kahan (2009) states, "You may go to a brief only to find out that it has been 'pre arranged' to a certain firm."

Diego Bonilla (personal communication, February 20, 2009), a Mexican national and professor of communication studies, says that, through an exchange of favors, past and present, *palanca* helps one avoid roadblocks and facilitates expediency: "If you have *palanca*, you have access; you can sit at the table."

Santiago Hinojosa (personal communication, February 17, 2009), president and CEO of public relations giant Burson-Marsteller's operations in Latin America, maintains that *palanca* is "different things to different people" and admits that it could have "negative monetary connotations," a.k.a. bribes.

Hinojosa (personal communication, February 17, 2009) is adamant that Burson-Marsteller "does business the same way in every country in which we operate, providing ethical PR in every country." For example, even though it is a common practice with some agencies to pay editors and reporters for favorable coverage, his company does not pay for stories to be published. Rather, it builds trust with journalists over many years and by so doing, accomplishes what it is setting out to do without compromising its ethics. "This makes it easy to conduct business," he contends, since the rules are set.

When it comes to lobbying, *palanca* has a deeper meaning, granting one a seat at the table if one knows the right people who know the right people. "*Palanca* is a relationship to get in front of someone." (Hinojosa, personal communication, February 17, 2009).

Discussion & Conclusion

Clearly, *palanca* is a key component of relationships, both personal and business, in Mexico. As such, any public relations practitioner working in Mexico must, at the very least, be aware of the importance of *palanca* and how it will come into play in the day-to-day business of relationship building and maintenance.

Fortunately, one does not have to formulate a code for behavior or decide matters on a case-by-case basis. Instead, 10 principles for conducting public relations in a foreign land have already been established by Hackley, Dong, and Howard (2007):

- Understand the local culture, language, customs, business protocols, and government relations.
- Develop cultural sensitivity.
- Respect others' cultures and practices while maintaining American public relations ethical principles.
- Overcome ethnocentrism.
- Increase knowledge of global cultures.
- Develop trust to establish and maintain relationships.
- Be open-minded to a new cultural environment.
- Adapt to and cooperate with the new culture.
- Practice empathy in other cultural environments.
- Assess what has been accomplished and what can be done better.

Though the above cognitive framework was designed for the practice of public relations in any country, these 10 principles may also be applied to the specific cultural phenomenon of *palanca*. By slightly rewriting these principles and focusing on *palanca* rather than on the entire

milieu of a foreign land, the American PR practitioner working in Mexico will have a solid foundation on which to build business relationships:

- Understand the local culture, language, customs, business protocols, and government relations as they relate to *palanca*.
- Develop cultural sensitivity to *palanca*.
- Respect others' views and practices of *palanca* while maintaining American public relations ethical principles.
- Overcome ethnocentrism in regards to *palanca*.
- Increase knowledge of global cultures, many of which practice some form of *palanca*.
- Develop trust to establish and maintain relationships, whether or not *palanca* is practiced.
- Be open-minded to displays of *palanca* in the business environment.
- Adapt to and cooperate with others who may practice *palanca*.
- Practice empathy, the highest expression of *palanca*.
- Assess what has been accomplished and what can be done better through the ethical use of *palanca*.

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Appendix: Cover Letter and Questionnaire

Dear PRSA Member:

As a team of three professors from two universities in northern California, we are conducting an international public relations study to examine how cultural phenomena affect the practice of public relations in Mexico. Specifically, we would like to investigate to what extent palanca shapes and influences public relations practice. We thank you very much for your assistance. The following are a few questions we hope you will answer:

1. Based on your international public relations experience and practice, how do you believe culture affects in Mexico?
2. Please share any examples you may have about cultural impact or influence on public relations practice?
3. Based on your international public relations experience and practice, please share 3-5 principles or guidelines to help those new to the practice in Mexico?
4. Please name the key principle for them to use in dealing with a different culture.
5. Please share examples of practicing public relations in different cultural contexts?
6. How do you view and identify palanca as a cultural phenomenon in Mexico?
7. Specifically, to what extent does palanca influence public relations practice? Examples?
8. What are your suggestions to get people prepared to practice public relations in a different cultural context?

Thank you very much. If you have any questions, please send them to Professor Carol Ann Hackley, Ph.D.: tchackley@yahoo.com

Table 5.5: Importance of Relationship Building (RB) as an Organizational Strategy and Length of Relationship with Donors/Volunteers

Importance of RB	Importance of RB	Length of relationship
		.035

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5.6: Summary of Linear Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting an Organization's View of Relationship Building

Variable	B	SE B	β
Annual Revenue	.173	.264	.173
Age	-.142	.098	-.147*
Number of Employees	9.230E-03	.086	.011

* $p < .05$

How multiple competitive organizations cope with the same crisis: A Case Study of Rice Cooker Explosion in South Korea

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Abstract

During the period of 22 months in South Korea, three major manufacturers' electric rice cookers exploded more than 10 times. Each manufacturer coped with this crisis. However, their crisis management strategies were totally different from each other depending on each organization's situation. As shown by this case, a crisis may emerge not only to a specific organization, but to the entire industry. Taking into account this explosion case, the present study attempts to explore how multiple competitive organizations cope with the same crisis and how an organization's crisis management influenced the others' crisis stances and strategies. Based on Coombs' crisis communication strategy, crisis communication theory, and contingency theory of conflict management (Cancel et al., 1999), this study suggests important contingency and situational variables. Implications are suggested in the discussion part.

Introduction

During a period of 22 months in 2004 and 2005, electric rice cookers exploded more than 10 times in South Korea. The explosions gained significant spotlights by the press because most Koreans used rice cookers every day and the possible damages could be serious because the cooker used pressured hot steam. Explosions happened in rice cookers produced by three major manufacturers (Samsung, LG, and CooCoo) which had more than 90% market share. Regardless of which company's rice cooker was exploded more times than others, people suddenly stopped purchasing any rice cooker. The public became highly interested in these sudden successive accidents and the entire rice cooker industry faced a serious crisis situation. Each company started executing crisis management to cope with the crisis. Although three major rice cooker manufacturers faced the same crisis, their crisis management strategies were different from each other. During the crisis, LG Electronics (LG) withdrew their rice cooker business after the crisis coincided eight months later the first explosion was reported. At the same time, Samsung Electronics (Samsung), and CooCoo Homesys (CooCoo) spurred up promoting their marketing activities in order to inroad the market. After a half year later from LG's withdrawal, Samsung eventually gave up their rice cooker business, too. As a result, CooCoo firmed up their market leading position. Each organization coped with the same crisis with different strategic choice depending on their competitive relationship.

As shown by this case, a crisis may emerge not only to a specific organization, but to the entire industry. In fact, the crisis covering an entire industry frequently happens in the real world. For example, the seriousness of the obesity problem threatened entire corporations in the packaged and fast food industries in 2000s (Darmon et al., 2008). Few studies, however, have

focused on the multiple organizations' different crisis management programs under the same crisis. Taking into account this explosion case, the present study attempts to explore how multiple competitive organizations cope with the same crisis and how an organization's crisis management influenced the others' crisis stances and strategies. For the analysis, this study adopts contingency theory of conflict management (Cancel et al., 1999) and Coombs' crisis communication strategy (1998) linking to situational crisis communication theory (Coombs, 2002).

Literature Review

Crisis and Competition

In order to analyze this rice cooker explosion case, this study defines the different meaning of the two terms; crisis and competition. Crisis is defined that a unique, unexpected, and uncommon event that raised a high level of ambiguity, improbability, and uncertainty that frighten the organization's existence and goal (Seegar, Sallow, & Ulmer, 1998). Crisis is also defined as important incidents with potentially harmful effects that influence the organization, company, industry, as well as its publics, products, services or good name (Fearn-Banks, 1997). Crisis can be erupted when an issue or imminent conflict of two or more organizations or the public reaches a critical level of impact (Cameron et al., 2008). Crisis comes without previous notice. Crisis doesn't have a standard form. Crisis is also unpredictable because it can happen at any place, at any time, and to any organization. The fluidity of crisis is due to the imperfections and vulnerability of the organization's environment (Ray, 1999). As a similar and broader concept, conflict is defined as "sharp disagreement or opposition resulting in direct, overt threat of attack from another entity" (Cameron et al., 2008). He also argued that conflict occurred "when two groups direct their efforts against each other, devising communications and actions that directly or verbally attack the other group." The conflict involves confrontation and attacks between organizations and various stakeholders or the public. They discussed that there was a difference between the definition of conflict and competition (Cameron et al., 2008). Competition is defined as "striving for the same object, position, prize, and so on, as others, while Public relations play an important role in making it possible for both profit and nonprofit organizations to compete for limited resources such as customers, volunteers, employee and donations (Cameron et al., 2008)." According to their assertion (Cameron et al., 2008, p 36), "Competition, a pervasive condition in life, occurs when two or more groups or organizations vie for the same resources. In business, these resources may be sales, market size, contracts, employees, and ultimately profits. In the nonprofit sectors, the competition may be for donations, grants, clients, volunteers, and even political influences." Admittedly, the difference between competition and conflict is relatively a matter of degree, but it also a matter of concentration (Cameron et al., 2008).

In some crisis situations between multiple organizations and the public, however, it is critical that striving for mutual benefit or struggling for an advantage among the competitive. When the organizations in the competitive relationship simultaneously strive for the good relationship with public in the conflict situation, their crisis management communications may influence each other because the public simultaneously process multiple messages from the multiple organizations. In the case of this rice cooker explosion, the same crisis happens throughout the entire industry, competitive organizations should cope with the same crisis at the

same time, but their strategies are varied depending on the situation. To analyze how each organization dealt with circumstances in which they confronted the claims and attacks from the given publics, this study adopted the framework of the contingency theory of conflict management.

Contingency Theory of Conflict Management

Contingency theory of conflict management suggested that there was no one ideal crisis management model which could explain all complicated conflict situations (Cancel et al., 1997). This model identified that all crisis strategy should be diversified depending on the situation, so called “it depends.” This approach has two basic principles. First, various factors influence the position of organization in dealing with conflict. Second, the position for dealing with a given public is so dynamic that it should be changeable throughout the time (Cameron et al., 2008). In specific, the contingency theory of conflict management suggested that an organization’s stance in crisis communication varied on a continuum from pure advocacy to pure accommodation. On the continuum from pure advocacy, which is characterized as an exclusively assertive argument for its own interests, to pure accommodation, which is then characterized as complete concession to the public, the organization’s stance toward its public shifts based on the circumstances around the organization (Cancel et al., 1997). From pure advocacy to pure accommodation, most organizations locate themselves somewhere in between the two extremes and move their position along the continuum (Cancel et al., 1997). Simultaneously, multiple publics are able to influence an organization’s stance toward a crisis and change their stances depending on the organization’s stance movement. The contingency theory of conflict management focuses on the stance changes of the organization in accordance with a given public at a certain time in order to understand the principle of “it depends” (Cancel et al., 1997).

Regarding the stance movement, the contingency theory suggested a matrix of 86 contingent variables influencing the stance on the continuum *at a given time* regarding *a given public* (Cancel, Mitrook, & Cameron 1999, p.172; Yarbrough, Cameron, Sallot, & McWilliams, 1998, p. 40). These factors are divided into categories on two dimensions of external and internal variables. The external variables include factors such as threats, industry environment, political/social/cultural environment, and external publics. The internal variables include the characteristics of an organization, characteristics of the PR department, characteristics of the management, individual characteristics, relationship characteristics, and internal threats. Another categorization for contingency variables is predisposing and situational variable distinction (Cancel et al., 1999). Predisposing variables affect an organization’s stance on the continuum before it interacts with the external public in particular circumstances. Among the predisposing variables, well-supported variables are corporation size, corporation business exposure, public relations access to dominant coalition, the dominant coalition’s decision power and enlightenment, and the individual characteristics of involved persons (Cancel et al. 1999). Meanwhile, situational variables include the factors influencing the organization’s stance shift toward the pure accommodation during the dynamic conflict situation. During the crisis situation, situational variables influence the distance of the organization from pure accommodation stance based on the organization’s willingness to interact with the external public. According to Yarbrough et al. (1998), situational variables have more impact on positioning the stance of the organization to change its predisposition to a different stance along the continuum during an

interaction with the external public. Several situational variables are well-supported: the urgency of the situation; characteristics of the external public; potential or obvious threats; and potential costs or benefit for the organization from choosing a particular stance (Yarbrough et al., 1998; Cancel et al., 1999; Cameron, Cropp & Reber, 2001). Based on the variables in the two categories (i.e., internal and external, predisposing and situational variables), the contingency theory of conflict management provides systematic understanding and practical application of the dynamics of crisis communication between accommodation and advocacy (Yarbrough et al., Cancel et al. 1999).

In order to understand a crisis situation and strategy, it is necessary to consider all four categorized variables in the contingency theory; predisposing and situational variables as well as external and internal variables. Thus, this study analyzed the 22 months of crisis case of Korean rice cooker explosions based on the stance movement on the continuum and the influence of four categories of variables of the contingency theory of conflict management. Specifically, this study analyzed organization's stance movement along the continuum based on the time frames because the organization's crisis strategies were implemented based on the position on the continuum depending on particular time phases.

RQ1. What were the rice cooker manufacturers' stance movements along the time phases of the crisis in comparison to other's stances?

RQ2. What contingent factors influenced rice cooker manufacturers' stance changes during the crisis?

Crisis Communication Strategy and Situational Crisis Communication Theory

The contingency theory of conflict management suggests that organizations undertake specific stances along the continuum between pure advocacy and pure accommodation based on its public driving strategies. Simultaneously, this strategy, in turn, leads stance changes based on the public's responses. Accordingly, a crisis strategy should be determined and implemented based on the position on the continuum at a particular time. Cameron and his colleagues (2007) called it as *the factor-stance-strategy conceptualization*. For the purpose of on the factor-stance-strategy conceptualization, this study adopts Coombs crisis response strategy and situational crisis communication theory (SCCT). Coombs (1998) postulated that an organization's crisis response might vary depending on a position from defensive to accommodative. Based upon this postulation, Coombs (1998) classified crisis strategy into the seven typologies: 1) attacking the accuser, 2) denial, 3) excuse, 4) justification, 5) ingratiation, 6) corrective action, and 7) full apology. Among the typologies, attacking the accuser, denial, and excuse are included in defensive strategies, while ingratiation, corrective action, and full apology are regarded to accommodation strategies. Coombs (1998) also argued that accommodative strategy was necessary to repair damaged image as the crisis situation was worsen, and defensive strategy became less effective as organizations were more responsible to the crisis situation.

In line with this concept, Coombs (2002) introduced the situational crisis communication theory (SCCT) which was an extension of his crisis response strategies applying on the crisis situation. According to the situational crisis communication theory (SCCT), an organization's reputation is important resource which can be damaged by a crisis. In order to protect the

organization's reputation from the damage of the crisis, SCCT suggested that strategic communication should consider the situation of the crisis and select the most appropriate strategy for the current crisis situation (Coombs, 1998; Coombs, 2006). As a result of assessing some factors of the crisis situation, a certain crisis communication strategy is applied while others can be removed (Benoit, 1995; Coombs, 1995). Thus, appropriate crisis communication strategies should be determined based on the assessments of crisis situation. The SCCT suggests several variables which influence the organizational reputation. One of the basic concepts is the *crisis responsibility*. Coombs (1998) argued that crisis responsibility was how much stakeholders attributed the cause of the crisis to the organization. Thus, the damage to the organization's reputation increases when the attribution of crisis responsibility strengthens. Specifically, the attribution of cause is varied according to the locus of control. Locus of control is defined as the degree to which the organization itself can control the crisis. According to Coombs (2002), the public attributes a high level of crisis responsibility to the organization which is perceived as having high locus of control since the public might consider the organization could have prevented the crisis occurred. Depending on the level of locus of control, public perceives the level of the crisis responsibility of the organization. Overall, the extent of crisis responsibility is the most important indicator of the extent of damage from the crisis (Coombs & Schmidt, 2000).

Severity and performance history are other important factors which influence crisis responsibility (Coombs, 1998; Coombs & Holladay, 1996, 2001). Severity refers how much the crisis generates harmful effects on crisis responsibility such as financial, environmental and human damage. Coombs (1998) explained that the severity of damage negatively affected the crisis responsibility because of the sympathy for the injured in case of severe damage. Performance history is the record of previous action and performance from the crisis history. Higher severity and lower performance history produce negative influential on the perception of crisis responsibility. After evaluating the degree of crisis responsibility, which is influenced by severity and performance history, crisis practitioners select an appropriate strategy to cope with the crisis, and then an organization will gain a reputation (Coombs, 2002). Overall, SCCT suggested that crisis responsibility, influenced by locus of control, severity of damage and performance history, should be integrated with an appropriate crisis response strategy in order to generate positive organizational reputation. Therefore, it is important to understand how each rice cooker manufacturer chose appropriate crisis response strategy for their stances and how it was integrated with crisis responsibility.

RQ3. What strategies each rice cooker manufacturer took in each shifting stance in comparison to other's strategies?

RQ4. What and how situational factors (i.e., organizational performance history, severity of damage, locus of control) influenced each rice cooker manufacturer's crisis responsibility which affected crisis strategy?

Methodology

The present study probed the research questions by conducting a case study involving a qualitative content analysis of media coverage surrounding the case of rice cooker explosion. Specifically, the present study employs the method of descriptive framing analysis. Contents of

major newspapers and television news were analyzed to understand how stance and strategy of each competitive organization influenced other's crisis strategies and what contingency and situational factors affect their reputations. News stories are good material to identify answers to the research questions because they document historical events and record details of the crisis. News media are believed to present and interpret news events through frames which are defined as central organizing ideas of news content through the use of selection, emphasis, and interpretation (Gitlin, 1980; Tankard et al., 1991). Entman (1991) suggested that the process of framing especially involved selection and salience which made some aspects of perceived reality as being significant in a communication context. This process encourages a problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation (Entman, 1991). Based on Entman's framing analysis, the present study used a modified framing model which consisted of problem identification, causal interpretation, stance analysis, and strategy analysis through the news coverage. By covering not only national newspapers, but also national television news clips, this study analyzed contextually important 15 news stories among the total 86 news stories from January 2004 to October 2005. The news stories were gathered from the KINDS (Korean Integrated News Database System) which was the largest news database that covered most of major news media in Korea.

Results

A chronological evolvement of rice cooker explosion case shows the identification of time frames concerning stances and strategies of the multiple organizations. The answer to the research questions are carefully considered and mentioned in the analysis of each time phase frame with the progress of crisis communication. The appropriate answer to the research question 1 and 3 are listed below within each time frame of crisis communication. Key points are in bold typed to highlight each company's stance and strategy in each time phase.

Phase 1: Before crisis begins

In May 2004, LG's rice cooker product recall was reported by a small newspaper at first. In this time, LG and Samsung announced a part recall in which they would change a damaged component because only a part was a problem. LG and Samsung silently stated about the recall that only a few consumers could change a part of the product. The product recall of LG and Samsung was limited to only three models with 8,310 devices and executed only for the consumers who voluntarily wanted to change. Most of rice cooker consumers did not recognize about the recall at this time because LG and Samsung did not announce it to the public. **Thus, in this pre-crisis phase, the stances of LG and Samsung can be identified as a relative advocacy because they did not actively announce a recall to the public. The strategy of LG and Samsung is identified as denial (i.e., insisting no crisis) and excuse (i.e., denying intention to do harm) because they tried to keep silence without considering that it was a serious problem.**

Phase 2: Crisis begins

In May 12, 2004, a nationwide broadcasting system, Korea Broadcasting System (KBS-TV) reported that a LG rice cooker was exploded and the exploding product had been recalled by

the manufacturer (“Recalling rice cooker exploded,” 2004). Continuously, another nationwide broadcasting company, MBC-TV, reported another LG rice cooker explosion (“Again, rice cooker explosion,” 2004). During the week, newspapers consecutively uncovered the exploding accidents of rice cookers. Some newspapers did not identify which company’s rice cookers were exploding ever since. On May 21, major newspapers reported that the recall was currently conducted not only for the LG product, but also for Samsung’s rice cookers, which meant that Samsung’s rice cookers had some problem (“In spite of recall, consumers are worried about another explosion,” 2004). Moreover, it was reported that Samsung already had started their recall since the 2003. However, before the news was reported, majority of consumers did not know about the recall because manufacturers did not actively announce it. On the same day, LG held a press conference to announce \$50 compensation for the each recalled product (“LG started a cash compensation for the recall,” 2004). According to the report on May 24, both LG and Samsung achieved 90% recall rate, but Samsung still had to recall more 50,000 pieces, compared with 10,000 pieces of LG (“How many rice cookers should be back? 2004). Even though Samsung had to recall more numbers of rice cookers than LG, LG was recognized as a manufacturer which was only responsible for the rice cooker explosion because most news articles were started with and focused on the case of LG. On June 4, the nationwide MBC-TV reported that Samsung’s rice cooker had exploded again (“Samsung Electronics’ rice cooker exploded,” 2004). With this news, a number of newspapers started reporting that consumers should beware of using any rice cookers because every rice cooker had a potential risk. At this stage, the total rice cooker industry was affected by the explosion crisis. Regardless of any manufacturer, the public started considering every rice cooker as having a possibility for explosion. On June 7, LG officially announced that they started the national coverage TV commercial ad campaign to promote the recall, and a nation-wide voluntary checking service to find more rice cookers with problems. At the same time, two more explosions of LG rice cookers had reported by newspapers, so a total of eight explosions of LG rice cooker had been reported. **During the time, LG move from relative accommodative stance to an almost pure accommodative stance with corrective action and full apology strategy. However, Samsung kept the same stance of moderate advocacy with denial and excuse strategy, even though the explosion of the Samsung was nationally reported.**

Phase 3: Crisis is aggravated

On June 10, another rice cooker brand, a rice cooker of CooCoo, exploded and was reported by the two nationwide broadcasting systems, KBS-TV and MBC-TV. Although CooCoo was a small company, their rice cooker was one of the leading brands in rice cooker market in Korea. So the explosion aroused more extensive concern from consumers (“CooCoo was exploded too,” 2004). However, CooCoo Homesys, the manufacturer of CooCoo, fully denied their fault, claiming that the explosion was due to consumer’s misusage. Although the crisis became more serious than before throughout the entire the rice cooker industry, CooCoo did not directly cope with the crisis and kept the position that they did not have any responsibility. **At this time, the stance of CooCoo was considered as pure advocacy with the simple denial strategy. Even though CooCoo’s reaction was too strict to be accepted by the consumer, newspapers did not seriously report CooCoo’s case because it seemed to be considered as another explosion of serial explosion of rice cookers. Since LG and Samsung**

are much larger electronic companies than CooCoo, its' explosion was not seriously focused on by the newspaper.

On June 14, the CEO of LG ordered all employees to start promoting the rice cooker recall, and even the LG labor union members voluntarily started visiting all consumers who bought LG rice cooker to gather all recalling products. It was an unusual event in Korea because employers and the unions had not been so mutually beneficial. LG spent large amount of budget on announcing their recall by television commercials, publicities, press releases, and all possible media exposures they could use. This was a signs of how seriously LG perceived the crisis. **At this time, the stance of LG can be identified as pure accommodation and their strategy was corrective action with full apology.**

On August 18, another Samsung's rice cooker explosion was reported that a pregnant woman lost her baby shocked by the explosion ("Abortion by Samsung rice cooker explosion," 2004). The woman who lost the baby sued Samsung for the damages, but Samsung officially did not respond to this news and did not compensate anything for her damage. However, it was not socially issued because a lot of rice cooker explosions had already been reported. **Samsung, at this time, still kept the beginning stance of relative advocacy with denial and excuse strategies.**

Phase 4: Crisis is sustained

After the consecutive explosions, the press started reporting how the rice cooker companies managed their sub-contract manufacturers to maintain their product quality. Even though these reports dealt with the structural problems of manufacturing small electronic devices such as rice cookers, it affected diluting the big company's responsibility: the news implied that the rice cooker explosions were due to the sub-contract manufacturers. Specifically news reported about Samsung's manufacturing system: Samsung did not produce rice cookers, instead they only sold it through the OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturing) system. **At this time, Samsung tried to avoid blaming. This strategy can be identified as a justification with shifting blames to others, but it was not the basic change of stances. Samsung still stayed at the relative advocacy stance in this time. LG and CooCoo were still located on the same stances with same strategies.**

Phase 5: After the crisis

A month later, LG announced that they decided to withdraw their products from the rice cooker business ("LG decided to withdraw from the rice cooker business," 2004). Before LG decided to withdrew, they tried to recover their rice cooker business. However, consumers did not buy their rice cooker any more, and distribution channels denied selling their rice cookers. In addition, LG did not want a negative image of their rice cookers to spill over to the entire company because rice cooker was a only small portion of their entire electronic business ("LG started withdrawing their rice cooker business," 2004). After withdrawing from the market, LG announced that they continuously kept recalling until the last product was retrieved. By the May 2005, they announced they achieved a 99% of recall rate of the applicable products. **LG kept having a concessive pure accommodation stance until consumers accepted their truthfulness.** Later, LG evaluated their crisis management was successful because they estimated that consumers understood their recovery effects for the damage of crisis.

After LG withdrew from the market, other competitors started aggressive marketing activities to occupy the empty market which LG left. CooCoo increased 10% of their production and introduced new product, while Samsung launched new rice cooker models. **However, both companies did not change their stance and strategies about the crisis: Samsung was still taking moderate advocacy with denial, excuse and justification. CooCoo was taking pure advocacy stance with simple denial strategy.** As a result of active marketing efforts of Samsung and CooCoo, the sales of CooCoo was raised, but that of Samsung was not (“After LG disappeared from the market,” 2004).

On May 2005, a half year after LG’s business withdrawal, Samsung finally pronounced a withdrawal from the rice cooker business. According to the report, the reason was that rice cooker business was not so profitable as to sustain production lines in spite of its negative image which was not compatible with a digital leader image of Samsung. Until the end of this crisis of business withdrawal, **Samsung kept moderate advocacy stance with denial, excuse, and justification strategies.**

Table 1. Stance and strategies of the organizations in the phases of the crisis

	Organization	Stance	Strategy
Phase 1. (Pre-crisis)	LG	Relative advocacy	Denial/Excuse
	Samsung	Relative advocacy	Denial/Excuse
Phase 2. (Crisis begin)	LG	Accommodation	Corrective action/Full apology
	Samsung	Relative advocacy	Denial/Excuse
Phase 3. (Crisis aggravated)	LG	Pure accommodation	Corrective action/Full apology
	Samsung	Relative advocacy	Denial/Excuse
	CooCoo	Pure advocacy	Denial
Phase 4. (Crisis sustained)	LG	Pure accommodation	Corrective action/Full apology
	Samsung	Moderate advocacy	Denial/Excuse/Justification
	CooCoo	Pure advocacy	Denial
Phase 5. (After the crisis)	LG	Pure accommodation	Corrective action/Full apology
	Samsung	Moderate advocacy	Denial/Excuse/Justification
	CooCoo	Pure advocacy	Denial

Research question 1 and 3 is related to the stance and strategy of each manufacturer’s rice cooker explosion toward its public. According to the analysis of time framework, LG moved along the stance from the relative advocacy to pure accommodation with appropriate strategy for each stance. At the relative advocacy stance, for example, they used denial and excuse strategy to reduce their responsibility. After the conflict became more serious, they moved to pure accommodation stance with the strategies of corrective action and full apology. Even though LG withdrew their rice cookers from the market, their conflict management was evaluated as a

successful case because the given public might have a good reputation about the entire company of LG electronics. On the other hand, Samsung did not move from moderate accommodation stance during the crisis, even though several damaging news, such as the abortion case, were revealed consecutively. In case of CooCoo, they kept pure advocacy stance with simple denial strategy. Although their product was reported to exploded, CooCoo kept their stance of pure advocacy. According to the result of the analysis, the major news reported more times about the LG than the Samsung, and CooCoo. From the beginning of the crisis, LG had been a center of the crisis. Under the shadow of LG's explosion news, Samsung and CooCoo could keep advocacy stance without any serious blames from the public. Stances and strategies, which each organization took, are shown in table 1 based on time phase frame. This table shows the comparative stances each company took during the crisis. All in all, each company took and shifted different stances and strategies depending on the situation.

Research question 2 is concerned about contingent factors (internal, external, predisposing, and situational) which influenced manufacturers' stance changes in the crisis. Among the external variables, the *number of competitors/level of competition* in the industry environment dimension may significantly affect each manufacturer's stance change. Since LG was the first and the most frequently reported manufacturer of rice cooker explosion crisis, Samsung and CooCoo did not gain much attention by the public. As one of the external variables, competition plays a critical role in determining crisis stance for each organization. Another significant external variable is the *level of commitment/involvement of the external public* in the external public dimension. Since every Korean uses the rice cooker everyday, external public's level of commitment might be extremely high. In terms of internal variables, the *stockholder's perception of the company* and *economic loss or gain from implementing various stances* significantly influence on the stance decision, specifically in the case of LG. Since the rice cooker business was only a small portion of the company's business domain, they seriously considered how much the explosion crisis affected their employees and stockholder's perception of the entire company and economic loss or gain from implementing various stances. With regard to the predisposing and situational factors, several variables were found. Among the well-supported predisposing variables, *corporate size* plays important roles in determining stance in the crisis. Public may categorize LG and Samsung into a same big corporate group, while CooCoo was a small but expert manufacturer. Among *situational variables*, the *threat* factor was found to affect in determining stances.

Research question 4 is concerned about how situational factors are described in the news. Among the three major situational factors, the *severity of damage* was found as a significantly influencer to the corporate responsibility. Since the damage of rice cooker explosion can be fatal enough to damage human body, the possible severity of damage could be significant for the public. From the news article analysis, *locus of control* and *history of performance* were not told as the significant factors in terms of crisis responsibility.

Discussion and Implications

This study shows that organizations' stances and strategies can vary within the same crisis situation. Within the same time framework, each rice cooker company located themselves on different position on the continuum and shifted along the time frame. Their location on the continuum is also influenced by the competitors' stances and strategies. LG changed their stance

and strategy along with the situations modified, from advocacy to accommodation. However, Samsung and CooCoo did not so much change their stance of advocacy even though they also were involved in the same crisis. However, we can evaluate that crisis management of Samsung and CooCoo were considerably successful in the short terms of view. Since LG coped with the crisis actively enough to cover whole crisis, Samsung and CooCoo could keep silence to minimize their responsibility and it succeeded. (In fact, LG had no choice but to take a pure accommodation stance because their explosion was the first reported and they recorded largest number of explosion). When the public thinks of rice cooker explosions, the first brand that came into their mind might be LG because LG actively communicated with the public. They did recall with compensation, spent huge budget on TV commercial for promoting recall, and their CEO along with all employees executed corrective actions. During the crisis, thus, most explosion related news was focused on LG. Most news articles talked about LG case either positive or negative point of view. Under the shadow of LG's news coverage, Samsung and CooCoo could maintain their advocacy stance without rigorous blames from the public. LG already played a leading role in the crisis, so Samsung and CooCoo did not have to directly cope with the crisis.

Psychologically, it can be explained by the repetition effect or incidental learning. When several different messages are delivered together from the various organizations, simply repeated message is easily recognized by the audience. In other words, audiences easily accept basic knowledge of the product features by the simple repetition, enhancing the strength and salience of their beliefs (Hoyer & MacInnis, 2003). In this situation, audiences did not try to process information actively, but constant replication increased recall through the effortless or incidental learning which occurred from the simple repetition rather than from conscious processing. When the given public is not seriously involved in the crisis, meaning that the level of involvement is low, the incidental learning can work because the public tends to minimize their efforts to recognize the situation. Since the explosion was reported first and most from LG, they were the most actively responded to the crisis. Although several explosion cases also reported from the Samsung and CooCoo, their responses were not so active compared to that of LG. The number of reported explosion of CooCoo was less than that of LG or Samsung, so they did not actively cope with the crisis. In this vein, the more an organization is exposed to the public in a crisis, the more people consider the organization is more involved in the crisis than others. All in all, when multiple organizations are involved in same crisis, their crisis communication can be diversified in terms of competitive point of view. When an organization actively copes with a crisis, other competitors should consider their crisis stance and strategy depending on how other organization copes with the crisis. Even though conventional way of solving the conflict is to take accommodation, in some cases, such as multiple organizations in same crisis, accommodation with public is not always the best way. During the crisis, Samsung and CooCoo could keep relatively unfavorable stances to the public because they managed their stances and strategies with a comparative point of view in the crisis.

After the crisis, Samsung failed to recover their rice cooker business. This result is analyzed in different way, but we can assume that the sales decline of Samsung was partly influenced by the LG's withdrawal. In Korea, Samsung and LG are considered as two representatives with manufacturing various products in big size companies. On the other hand, CooCoo was considered in different category from LG and Samsung: small size and only rice cooker producing company. Based in the news report, consumers could consider that big

company brands could not guarantee the quality of its rice cookers. Instead, consumers seemed to consider small but expert manufacturers as having the professional skill for producing rice cookers. According to the analysis of phase 2, Samsung tried to recover its reputation with aggressive marketing activities, but their sales continuously decreased after the crisis. It seemed that their effort for recovery was not enough to get over the impact of crisis. Although consumers still trusted Samsung, they did not trust any more about Samsung rice cookers. On the other hand, the sales of CooCoo were rapidly increased after the crisis. CooCoo was recognized as small but professional manufacturer which was only concentrating on the rice cooker manufacturing.

Among the external variables of 86 contingency factors, *number of competitor* and *level of competition* were found as the significant factors. Since the crisis situation is not only for a specific company, but also for entire industry, each company's stance and strategy can be differentiated depending on situation. Since their competitors were plural number, and the competition was very high, their crisis response strategy seriously affected their business. Since the heightened competition would influence an organization to be more willing to accommodate public (Cancel et al., 1999), LG shifted their stance from advocacy to accommodation when the explosion was reported. Among the internal variables, *stockholders perception of company* and *economic loss/gain from implementing stances* were found as significant variables for the crisis response. The major reason why LG gave up the rice cooker business was to consider the spill over effect of negative reputation from rice cooker to the entire business domain. Since rice cooker was only a little part of their entire business, withdrawal was the best way to keep stockholders negative perception from proliferation to their major business such as television, refrigerator and cell phone manufacturing. In this decision, their economic loss and gain was considered in term of strategic business management. *Corporate size* was found as significant predisposing variables in this crisis. LG and Samsung were more spotlighted than CooCoo because of their company size as a big conglomerate in the Korean economy. According to the previous study, the larger the company's size, the more visibility of the organization has (Cancel, Mitrook, & Cameron, 1999). Since the company size is big enough to gain much attention from the public, the given public might expect higher responsibility from LG and Samsung than CooCoo. *Threat* was a significant situation variable in this case, because rice cooker explosion could be fatal to its users and every Korean used it everyday. In terms of SCCT, *severity of damage* was considered to influence corporate responsibility. Since the damage of rice cooker explosion could be fatal enough to damage human body, the possible severity of damage might be significant for the public.

Coombs (1998) argues that crisis responsibility is associated to the public's perception about the organization's responsibility for the crisis, instead of the actual responsibility causing damage on the public. In this rice cooker case, actual responsibility for the explosion was not so different from the three manufacturers. However, public's perceptual responsibility seemed to be different depending on how each company coped with the crisis. If plural numbers of organizations are involved in the same crisis, public relations practitioners should consider the competitive situation in the crisis situation. In fact, serious crises may come simultaneously to the multiple organizations in the practical world. In that case, PR practitioners should consider other organizations' crisis stances and strategies because others' stance and strategies significantly can affect public's perception about the organization's crisis responsibility, which in turn, can influence the company's our stance and strategy. When an organization is considered

to have major responsibility about the crisis, other organizations are able to avoid public's attention if they use silence and denial strategies. Based on the result of this study, it can be suggested that pure accommodation is not always the ultimate stance, but advocacy can be an appropriate stance when the competitors' crisis responses are active enough to garner most of the attention from the major media. The result is consistent with what contingency theory has suggested: *it depends*.

For the future study, this study suggests to examine what the cause and reason of the advantages of competitive stance and strategy are because this study does not explain why public did not pay attention to the Samsung and CooCoo's explosion case. Although this study postulates that domination of LG's explosion took all the public's attention, it does not investigate why people did not criticize and blame Samsung and CooCoo. In addition, this study found that some external, internal, predisposing and situational factors influenced the organizations' crisis stances and strategies, but it did not produce the information of in what extent each variable influenced public's perception of the organization's crisis responsibility. Future study can examine the degree of their influences by manipulating the extent of each variable in order to take a look at the effect of each variable.

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Power and Public Relations: Paradoxes and Programmatic Thoughts

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“From Plato forward, philosophers have struggled to define power, which is at heart the capacity to bend reality to your will” (Meacham 2008, *Newsweek*, p. 34).

“The most important vehicle of reality-maintenance is conversation” (P. Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 152).

“Meaning structures are filled with privileged interests” (Deetz, 1982, p. 139).

Power is a problematic of public relations (and other professional communicators). Some critics charge that public relations exerts power through propaganda techniques that distort society to serve narrow and even dysfunctional interests. Defending, to an extent, public relations’ discourse role in society, Scott Cutlip (1994), in his prologue to *Unseen Power*, bracketed the good, the bad, and the ugly sides of this challenge:

only through the expertise of public relations can causes, industries, individuals, and institutions make their voice heard in the public forum where thousands of shrill, competing voices daily re-create the Tower of Babel. I did not and do not deny the harm done by the incompetent, the charlatan, and those who serve dubious causes. (p. ix)

To understand this unseen power, Cutlip directed attention to “weapons of power in our no-holds-barred political, economic, and cause competition in the public opinion marketplace” (p. xi). Cutlip invoked democratic responsibility to constrain the damage practitioners can produce as they create meaning and influence judgement.

Whether by dialogue or monologue, meaning is created and influences society as it defines power resources that are enacted at individual, organizational and societal levels. If meaning is the crux of power dynamics, then we need to investigate where power forces intersect in societal idioms. To do so, we call upon several streams of analysis: rhetoric, discourse analysis, social construction, and a constitutive view of language.

This line of analysis, broadly reasons that thoughts about things, identities and identifications, as well as institutional power relationships are shaped by the terms/idioms that drive and result from community discourse: By what is said, who says what about these matters, and how such meaning shapes thoughts and actions. This discourse has constitutive (Stokes, 2005) and social constructionist impact as words define matters to privilege certain views of reality (and marginalize others) bent to various interests, motives, actions, institutions, relationships, and choices.

In addition to meaning, power results from systems dynamics; systems theory (with its implications for structural functionalism and structuration) suggests that power resources arise from information flow and relationships that variously foster harmony or suffer disharmony. As this paper progresses, a systems view will be briefly discussed as a prelude to attending in detail to the power role of meaning. In this thematic development, this paper features the power resources public relations achieves through discourse generated meaning. It is reasonable to worry whether meaning is fully co-created through the discourse of many voices, or the product of one (or a few) voice, constructing social reality.

Theme: Power is a collective resource defined and enacted through discourse generated vocabularies, which can be applied to narrow or broad interests. This give and take, partially explainable by systems dynamics, may privilege some interests and marginalize others, but ideally society is more fully functioning when discourse does not distort the power resources to dysfunctional ends. The resources of power are fostered by the terministic bending of reality to fit cognitive/ideation, identity/self, and societal/relation needs as individuals, organizations, and societies variously and collectively manage risks. At its best, co-created meaning is a community power resource that maximizes individual and organizational efficiency rather than frustrates it.

Systems Overview

Viewed from a systems (subsuming structural/functionalism and structuration) perspective, public relations has been championed for its ability to help connect (or disconnect) organizations and individuals to power structures (or even dominate them as advocates of ethics), whether internal, local or global. As systems create, share and interpret information, such decisions build and exert power resources on behalf of various interests. This institutional view of power is not divorced from the influence of meaning and presumes that efficiency is a telling organizational quality.

Structural/functionalism addresses the power role public relations can play as it joins with and helps connect organizations as power structures to other such structures that together become society. Such systems may have many motives and feature compatible and competing interests: Profit, non-profit (including activist/NGO), or governmental.

According to this logic, practitioners bring information and ethical decision making into senior management and work with external systems to foster the kinds and qualities of relationships needed to achieve goodwill with key publics (J. E. Grunig & L. A. Grunig, 2008; see also, B. Berger 2005; 2007, B. Berger & Reber, 2006). Stacks (2004) applied part of this logic to address the challenges and responsibilities practitioners face as they strive to help organizations respond appropriately during crisis. Interested in leadership and rightfulness, B. Berger (2007; see also B. Berger & Reber, 2006)—much as did Cutlip (1994)—acknowledged the ambiguity created by “whether researchers seek to advance our understanding of these concepts within a relational and symmetrical perspective, or approach them or other power issues from alternative perspectives.” Either way, “the concepts themselves continue to be crucial terms in our vocabulary of public relations power” (p. 227).

Exploring systems of power, Monge and Contractor (2000; see also, Shumate, Fulk, & Monge, 2005) argued that social capital is created through the quality of organizations and relationships as well as the kind of communication that they allow or facilitate. Similar analysis

of global regimes, including NGOs (M. Stohl & C. Stohl, 2005) helped Taylor (2009) develop her analysis of the structural/functional and rhetorical resources needed for civil society.

Applying a structurational dominance theme to critique the institutionalization of the information age, Gandy (1992) examined how public policy systems can be manipulated to the advantage of some interests and the disadvantage of others. Baker, Conrad, Cudahy, and Willyard (2009) observed how companies such as pharmaceutical giant Merck gain approval of products, such as Vioxx, from the Federal Drug Administration through systems (and rhetorical positioning) that is largely developed by the drug industry to protect and promote its interest.

Mitchell, Agle, and Wood (1997), in one of the classic discussions of stakeholder analysis, reasoned that power resources are based on dependence and reciprocity among parties that are variously at risk of losing or not achieving desired and needed resources. Such process variables are interconnected by relationship factors of legitimacy and ethics (moral claims). Along this same line of analysis, Rowley (1997) reasoned that such analysis could not be wisely reduced to interest in dyadic ties, but required network analysis that featured concepts such as density and centrality.

By their nature, systems generate and facilitate power resources by the structuration of functions that yield to principles such as transitivity, uncertainty, control, openness/closedness, symmetry/asymmetry, complexity, turbulence (stability and randomness, even chaos), linkage, interdependence, adaptiveness, and hierarchy. As such, power results from connections, access, transparency, control, and other key variables that lead to or frustrate empowerment of various interests. As Clegg, Courpasson, and Phillips (2006) observed: “Power and discourses are equally intermingled in so far as they constitute the political structure of organizations through diverse circuits of power” (p. 17). However, devoid of the influence of meaning, some might argue, systems, relationships, and attributions make no sense as enactable processes independent of such meaning, which in all cases matters (Heath & Frandsen, 2008) as individuals and institutions co-create meaning and collectively manage risks.

Meaning Overview

The logic featured at the end of the preceding section underscores the argument that meaning defines and constitutes power resources and the systems (structures and functions) by which they are enacted. The central proposition of this paper is that in society words create shared meaning that serves as and consequently defines the power resources of the society. In that regard, and in keeping with the tenets of social construction, culture captures and expresses the power resources that can be forged, contested, and altered, but which are enacted as ways of thinking, believing, and acting. Whatever power resources are at play in any society results from key terms that essentially grant, frame, or deny power; they empower some and marginalize other people, actions, perspectives, and choices.

As such, power resources are socially constructed interpretations of facts, evaluations, policies, and systems/relationships. They become ultimate terms that form the bases of identity/identification, as well as define the nature and quality of relationships (See for instance, Courtright & Smudde, 2007). The power of public relations results from discourse generated meaning—a shared sense of social reality—formed and enacted at individual, organizational, and societal levels.

The nexus of power and meaning is not merely the influence—as traditionally defined—that one or more entities exerts on other entities, but the battle by various entities over the rationale of power to determine who are the legitimate participants in defining and brokering power resources. And, the logic continues, we then are interested to know and appreciate the specific terms that are forged through this process and serve as the rationale for power enactment.

Stressing this grounding principle of power, Barnes (1988) concluded, “Every society possesses a shared body of technical, manipulation-related knowledge, knowledge of nature, and a shared body of social knowledge, knowledge of a normative order” (p. 55). Power resources are the enactable norms and expectations that are captured in this collective view of knowledge, selves, social relationships, privileges and obligations. As interest groups and private-sector organizations contest assumptions and norms, they define and redefine power, “the structure of discretion” (p. 62). Power, in this sense, is the “capacity for action and the possession of power [is] the possession of discretion in the use of capacity for action” (p. 67). For these reasons, communication practitioners (including those identified as serving a public relations function) engage in the ebb and flow of social meaning (and its sense of preferred expectations) and the application of that meaning as means for obtaining and distributing stakes, the management of power resources. In this sense, public relations is not limited to the “wordsmithing” of businesses, but of all organizations, including activists.

The traditional definition of power features the ability X has to affect how Y achieves its goals. Barnes (1988) argued that this definition does not actually define power but merely indicates when it is present and legitimate. This logic forces us to separate the legitimacy various players enjoy to exert influence and the actual, and related, influence those players exert over decisions collectively made and as legitimate. The telling question asks what defined characteristics of X or the nature of the situation (Z) gives X the ability to affect Y? Meaning matters, Barnes reasoned as he directed our attention to this essential theme:

Whether we talk of rights and obligations, or of roles and institutions, or of patterned social relationships, the import is much the same: we are talking of a presumed structure and orderliness in social activity, and a need to understand the nature and the basis of such structure and orderliness is implied. (p. 20)

Power results from value premises and social norms—expected and accepted patterns of thinking and acting. This normative order results from symbolism: Societal relationships, ideation, and identity.

As understood through discourse analysis and social construction of reality, power comes through the meaning that defines its resources and the structures and functions that result from and enact those resources. This logic can be expanded and usefully explored by dwelling on what Mead (1934) called mind, self, and society and as Motion and Leitch (2007) characterized public relations: “a meaning creation process with ideational, relational and identity functions” (p. 264). In a parallel discussion, Bentele (2008) used the terms (perspectivity, selectivity, and constructivity) to feature what he called a reconstructive approach to public relations that deals eternally with hypothetical realism.

Clegg et al. (2006) forced attention to this meaning centric approach: “Discourses shape structures and provide the means for ordering the political structure. Thus, organizations and individuals use discourses purposefully to shape the political situation in and through which they can act and perform” (p. 17). Framed this way, power can be analyzed from a discourse perspective as a force within organizations and among the institutions in which participants make the meaning they and others enact their views of reality, their motives and interests, the various contexts that constitute each society, and the various purposes and ends to which they communicate and act. All of this discourse, and the exercise of power resources, serves collaborative and competing goals.

A discourse rationale reasons that power consists of influence achieved through meaning crafted via discourse enactors through processes of statement and counter statement. To engage in power may be feared, by this logic, because of the incentive some players have to manipulate meaning in a self-interested and narrow way to become or stay powerful. By this means, power can be unequally distributed rather than collaboratively used and therefore must be denied or mitigated if organizations and public relations are to be ethical. However, because it is created through discourse, power structures and their legitimacy can be contested by discourse: Statement and counterstatement.

Such circumstances and outcomes might lead us to dismiss or scorn the power role of public relations. However, we cannot usefully avoid the challenge of achieving a socially responsible theory to understand and guide the profession by merely criticizing what is an ongoing reality. We seek to understand the logics that explain how, through linguistic resources, public relations engages in power resource management in ways that can make society more (or less) fully functioning (Heath, 2006). We can better understand and set standards when we realize that power is created through discourse and the force it has in matters of the mind, self-identity, and societal relationships. Understanding the discourse nature of power can help organizational leaderships to be more reflective and therefore be more committed to and able to sponsor mutually beneficial public relations. This rationale grounds the understanding and criticism of the role public relations can and should play collaboratively in co-created meaning that results from and guides product/service promotion, reputation building, repair, and management, as well as conflict resolution, crisis communication and risk management.

Perspectives that Frame the Matter: Mead, Foucault, and Others

Power results from a blend of thoughts that point to the interplay of the private/personal and socio-political; neither makes sense or yields power independent of the other. Relevant to public relations, one extreme development of this logic, the case Bernays (1955) made in *Engineering Consent*, connected propaganda and manipulation which became the bete noire of public relations. He believed public relations practitioners had the power to engineer consent through clever campaigns that, for instance, could make a tobacco product appealing because its color was framed as fashionable. A peer of Bernays, John Hill (1958; 1963) warned his clients that power resides with the public (key publics) who have the right and ability to decide some matter based on the quality of arguments competing voices offer that can lead to enlightened choice.

By considering these overarching views of public relations, we conceptualize power as resulting from personal and socio-political idioms to which many voices, including those of

public relations contributes. Although some worry that business interests dominate this discourse, academics such as L. Grunig (1992) advised organizations, which need some public's goodwill to achieve their mission, to be attentive to the power any public can exert through issues it raises, perspectives it advances, and language it crafts and emboldens, especially in terms of giving life to issues.

From an issues management perspective, Heath (see Heath & Palenchar, 2009, for instance) features the power resources of the voices that jockey to produce and interpret facts, evaluate matter, recommend and contest public policy positions, and court others to adopt or abandon various identifications. In fact, issues management as he features it would not have come into existence in the 1970s if not for the rise in activist power, which included the framing and reframing of issues in ways that challenged the legitimacy of views preferred by businesses and the establishment government.

Whether at the personal or socio-political level, shared meaning is a necessary resource for thought, identity, and relationship. Rather than seeking to minimize or deny the role of power in organizational management and communication, Clegg et al. (2006) reasoned:

Organization requires power and, while not all power requires organization, most does. Power is to organization as oxygen is to breathing. Politics are at the core of public life and their expression is invariably dependent on organization, be it in government, business, administration, religion, education, or whatever. (p. 3)

This logic agrees with resource dependency theory; own interests are never achieved independent of other interests (Pfeffer, 1981, 1992).

However well aligned, interests can be seen as being individually controlled or allotted and used collaboratively through variously functional relationships. Elaborating on this point, Clegg et al. (2006) observed:

Power concerns the ways that social relations shape capabilities, decisions, change; these social relations can do things and they can block things unfolding. Power is ultimately about the choices that we make, the actions we take, the evils we tolerate, the good we define, the privileges we bestow, the rights we claim, and the wrongs we do. Power means finding the most effective leverage for particular relations. (p. 3)

This decidedly discourse oriented sense of power focuses on fundamental matters of understanding and enacting the sources of power and the resources that are managed through discourse to that end. In such matters, the crux of discourse rests on the essential theme: "the ultimate arbiter of what such interests are is not some external agency but the selves whose interests are at issue" (Clegg et al., 2006, p. 4).

This logic views power as central to ideation, identity, and relationship defined by the interaction of efficiency and the quality of the discourse that brings about aligned, mutually beneficial interests. At the heart of this problematic is not only the willingness to collectively and collaboratively solve problems, but the challenges to doing so given the discourse resources that can be and are brought to bear in ways that depend fundamentally on shared meaning making.

Nearly three decades after Hill's work, this rationale became a cornerstone for addressing issues management and public affairs. As Ewing (1987) concluded, "Issues management is about power" (p. 1). Heath (1997, 2008; see also Heath & Palenchar, 2009) featured power resources—

activism, NGO, governmental, intra-industry, and inter-industry—as tools in the battle to increase or narrow individual legitimacy gaps as the fundamental problematic of strategic issues management.

Viewed as a discourse challenge, personal and shared definitions, idioms, interests, values, and preferences are brought to life through discourse and the meaning that is strategically as well as idiosyncratically generated. One assumption, for the rationale of public relations, is that in such matters, individuals as well as organizations should be inspired and motivated to accommodate to others definitions and interests. However, as Roper (2005) argued, mere accommodation to external critics in order to make the organization less vulnerable, at least for the short-term, can reduce the likelihood that issues that need discussion actually receive appropriate attention. Accommodation can pre-empt full discussion and collaboration. Instead of discussing power as the essential focus of symmetry, we can feature the dynamics of competing issue positions, the wrangle of ideas, identities, and the welfare of society as the collective management of risk. This logic extends to marketing communication and related consumer decisions, as well as those more centered on issues, the contest of ideas even via advocacy (Heath, 2007).

Framing Power: Mind/ideation, Self/identity, and Society/relational

The discussion to this point has focused on three foundational themes: Mind/ideation, self/identity, and society/relational. Power and knowledge are interdependent, co-produced constitutive perspectives that are the foundation for cognition, self-identity, and societal legitimacy as conceptualized by George Herbert Mead's (1930). Mind is ideational, self is identity, and society is relationship following the logic laid out by Motion and Leitch (2007). They observed that public relations is “a meaning creation process with ideational, relational and identity functions” (p. 264). Drawing on Fairclough (1992) and Foucault (1980, 1982a, 1982b), they elaborated these three functions:

...the ideational function of public relations would be to influence the concepts and systems of thought that shape how we think about things. The relationship function of public relations would refer to the construction of power relationships between discourse actors or “stakeholders”. The identity function of public relations would refer to the creation and transformation of the subject positions available to actors within discourse. (Motion & Leitch, 2007, p. 264)

Power by the logics unfolded here as elsewhere is positive and negative. “From this perspective, discourse may be seen as providing the vehicle through which power/knowledge circulates and discourse strategies as the means by which the relations of power/knowledge are created, maintained, resisted and transformed” (p. 265). The meaning public relations practitioners help shape can become hegemonic “in that it becomes so pervasive that it is perceived as common sense” (p. 266).

This analysis parallels Castor's (2005) observation: “Social constructionism is an ontological perspective that views knowledge, identity, and social reality as human construction” (p. 482). Of related interest, van Ruler and Vercic (2005) reasoned that public relations exerts “soft power” because it is “engaged in constructing society by making sense of situations,

creating appropriate meanings out of them, and looking for acceptable frameworks and enactments” as the substrata of co-produced societal legitimacy (p. 266).

Critics as well as consumers are in varying degrees autonomous of their target in opinion and cannot singularly be defined only by that target but also define themselves, give themselves identity, and lay the foundations for higher or lower quality relationships (Leitch & Neilson, 2001). For this reason, Barnes (1988) reasoned, power is driven by the rationale that makes its enactment legitimate, a matter which is subject to contest and change. The resources, developed through discourse, are not only those supported by organizations but also those defined, forced, and yielded to by key publics of many kinds. How concern as well as compliance is expressed, the vocabulary of that concern or compliance, and the vocabulary against which it speaks is essential to the power dynamics that result through meaning driven management of power stakes.

Stakes, sought and yielded, constitute social capital as defined for the dialectics of mind, self and society. As Ihlen (2005) reasoned, “social capital can also be seen as one of the several resources used to obtain or maintain positions of power” (p. 492). Such capital arises from connections and memberships, the size and connectedness of various networks. Focusing on connections, Courtright and Smudde (2007) featured public relations as “the measured and ethical use of language and symbols to inspire cooperation between an organization its publics.” This theme, in tune with contemporary rhetorical inquiry, “concerns the means by which power constructs, regulates, and perpetuates itself through symbols and the individuals that use them” (p. 4). Such meaning-based logics can be used to examine the “power relations inherent in a corporation’s image restoration struggle” (Jerome, Moffitt, & Knudsen, 2007, p. 87; see also Foucault, 1972, 1980).

Power is exerted and granted by individuals and organizations in deference to the standards defined by any dominant hegemony and can attribute responsibility in matters of crisis, consumer marketing decisions, the logics of public policy issue debate, and the collective management of risk. A central logic of this analysis, according to Smudde (2007), rests on the premise that “people get used to how they think and do things” and therefore,

see those systems of thinking and doing as the ways that structure everything humans do, rather than as mere template for thinking, speaking, and acting. This perspective means that human discourse creates and recreates human reality, including that for organizations not the other way around. (p. 207)

Advancing this rubric, we are keenly interested in how such networks lead members to perceive and think about reality, their identities, and their networks of relationships. In this matter, meaning is the central power resource as members of networks work to bend reality to their wills (Meachem, 2008). As such, power is as necessary to society as breath is to living; inevitably, Clegg et al. (2006) reasoned, “power is not necessarily constraining, negative or antagonistic. Power can be creative, empowering, and positive” (p. 2). It is a resource the use of which and the ends to which it is used determine whether it is positive or negative. “The organizational media that form, condense, and distribute social relations shape power and they can shape it either way” (p. 2, italics in original).

Mind/Ideation

What do individuals think and know about reality that serves as power resources?

This question addresses the power that arises from the language (terminology/idioms) individuals singularly and collectively use to bend reality to various interests. Power results from the definitional and generative impact of language, whether informed by positivism, chaos, complexity or other theoretical underpinnings, that grants or gains power because of the fact that how people perceive reality conditions their reaction to it and to one another. Pressing this point a bit more, it is easy to argue that each philosophical stream of analysis is in itself an analysis of power because it explores how people do and should think and act.

Power flows from the pressure to achieve socially constructed knowledge and truth that in turn give society the collective ability to make decisions and enact those choices. How independent or interdependent is each individual in their sense of what they know and how they know it? Certain institutions, such as science and even the church, arise to power because they define reality that otherwise is an intolerable chaos or complexity. As such, mind/ideation depends less on some absolute positivistic truth to feature a shared and therefore enactable sense of truth that is captured in narratives (Heath, 1994) that frame rationale and expectations.

According to Motion and Leitch (2007), the ideational function of discourse focuses on “the concepts and systems of thought that shape how we think about things” (p. 264). This view can explain how definitional meaning shapes power resources leading to empowerment or marginalization. “From a Foucauldian perspective, one would argue that the attachment to truth is central to the power/knowledge relationship. Particular knowledges gain the status of truths by virtue of their relationship to power” (p. 266). Attached to the interests and strategic skills (as well as professional ethics), they observed that “Conceptualized from a power/knowledge perspective, public relations shifts from the discourse domain of business, where it is understood as a commercial practice, to the discourse domain of politics, where it is understood as a power effect that produces and circulates certain kinds of truths” (p. 268).

The most fundamental connection between discourse and reality is that between word and thing: concept/object (thoughts about reality and reality as perceived and approached). One version of this relationship, referentialialism, posits that experience with reality defines words, the meaning that results from that experience (Ogden & Richards, 1923). In contrast, linguistic relativity sees words as defining reality. As Burke (1966) reasoned: “things are the signs of words” (p. 363). Instead of reflecting reality, words define and attitudinize it. Such is the case, Burke argued, because “there will be as many different worldviews in history as there are people” (p. 52). This is true because our instruments for knowing are nothing but structures of terms and therefore manifest the nature of each terminology, vocabulary (Burke, 1969a). Each idiom or vocabulary is a reflection, selection, and deflection of how people see and act toward the world they name and experience. Language is not a microscope for fully understanding reality but a set of terministic screens that define and enact it as named (Burke, 1966). Consequently, Burke (1934) warned: “If language is the fundamental instrument of human cooperation, and if there is an ‘organic flaw’ in the nature of language, we may well expect to find this organic flaw revealing itself through the texture of society” (p. 330). (For a parallel view, see Bentele, 2008).

We cannot expect agreement to exist independent of disagreement. As defined by discourse, power as asserted, refuted, and accepted is defined by the dialectical responses that are encountered through statement/counter statement, advocacy/counter advocacy. The limits of any

one propositional thought are set by the counter response. Burke (1951, 1969, especially pp. 39-40, 306, 1973, 1983) wrote of the dialect of the act, the react and the lesson learned. Shared meaning facilitates, and even frustrates, shared understanding and enactment. “In any process of institutionalization, meaningfulness is never ‘given’ but has to be struggled for, has to be secured, even against the resistance of others” (Clegg et al., 2006, p. 8). “Thus, power has no essential qualities because power is not a thing but a relation between things and people as they struggle to secure ‘truthfully’ embedded meanings” (p. 10, italics in original). This discourse centered approach to power fits neatly with Entman’s (2007) views on framing; entities that frame news and issues achieve power because each frame exerts influence and predicts how salient facts will be perceived as they are debated and resolved into shared enactment.

Power and the Bending of Reality: Conceptualization of power necessarily addresses the influence people have over one another and their circumstances. For instance, humans lack the power to make the sun rise or not. Even the most powerful ruler cannot extend his/her life beyond what is allotted by forces of nature, but they can foster development (or yield to others influence on that matter) of a religion that leads to the creation of massive tombs in which they will spend the afterlife in stately luxury—even with humans sacrificed to be eternal servants. Faced with an unyielding reality, humans seek empowerment through conceptualization of the afterlife, creation, and the power of prayer, whereby careful and appropriate invocation of God’s will bends reality, such as the parting of a sea or the building of temples and pyramids. Doctrinal struggles (for instance religions or political party positions) are power battles. By the same token, no matter how much power an activist group or a government might have they cannot will the weather to be hotter or cooler or produce petroleum/hydrocarbon products at no cost or without environmental impact.

Gordon and Pellegrin (2008) featured interaction as the means for social construction of shared reality:

From the constructionist orientation, knowledge is itself a human product as well as an ongoing human production. Social constructionism, in short, contends that reality is a social construction that is created, maintained, altered, and destroyed through the process of human interaction. (p. 105)

Addressing the foundations of ideation, identity, and societal relationships, they observed: “Social constructionism does acknowledge a physical world independent of human interpretation” (p. 105). Operating vocabularies both increase/constrain and define limits of power in regard to reality as interpreted and enacted. Words define and thereby create power resources, such as leadership roles (king, priest, scientist, president, worker, teacher) and ascribe to each, variously constructed, the power and power limits that are societally operable at any time. These linguistic resources define how decisions are made in the face of complexity/chaos—by whom and what process.

Power Discourse as Account Vocabulary: As Castor (2005) defined this concept, “Accounts are linguistic devices used by actors to make action intelligible to others” (p. 483). Such action can reflect identity and relation, but also the interpretation of the physical realm. Such insights help diagnose, for instance, battles that fail or succeed to deal constructively with matters of diversity (Castor, 2005). As such, accounts are relevant to identity and societal

expectations and discussions of that which matters. They reveal how ideology and power are intertwined in discourse (Shotter, 1993; Shotter & Gergen, 1994). As such, “Account vocabularies are keywords and phrases that provide organizing principles to make sense of a given event or situation” (Castor, 2005, p. 481). Such vocabularies have substantial impact for the discourse of sensemaking whereby “By the very act of using language to describe a problem, one generates problems by giving meaning and definitions to situations” (p. 484). The account vocabularies that emerge during discussions of some problem (issue) in fact augment it as the terms used in the discourse are problematic interpretations of a reality that is relevant for identities and relationships.

Power Discourse and the Precautionary Principle: Such struggles create power resources through efforts to make decisions and engage in power struggles regarding how they will be made. Viewed through the lens of complexity/chaos, one can argue that human knowledge of reality is inherently faulty because of the difficulty, even impossibility, to fully understand and therefore name reality accurately. Thus, the challenge of human ideation is to achieve sufficient definition of the character and patterns of reality needed for the expedient collective management of risk. Even here, however, we encounter the power of science and with it the mental models approach to risk communication that is based on comparing what scientists have concluded against what various lay audiences believe.

Definitional and propositional battles over controversial interpretations and societal uses of reality necessarily produce power tensions. In recent decades, attempts to make collective definitions and decisions have struggled with risk challenges such as biotechnology (see Leitch & Motion, 2009), global warming, and GMO’s; scientists, activists, policy makers, and business leaders, have yearned for a decision heuristic that would facilitate systematic, responsible, and ethical decision making. To this end, proponents of what has become known as the precautionary principle reasoned, in cautionary statements, that changes in biotechnology and GMOs, for instance, should be conservative. But, what is conservative and when is it harmful rather than useful?

The precautionary principle is intended to empower societal risk decision making. It has struggled to do that because the question of what is caution, and how can a cautious move toward decision actually be harmful rather than beneficial. The logics of power enactment through dialogue become frustrated by such challenges (McGuire & Ellis, 2009; see Proutreau & Heath, 2009, for specific discussion of power paradoxes and GMO’s). Such quandaries are prone to social construction in terms that define relationships, ideas, and society in terms of quality of life and effective risk management (McComas, 2003).

The dynamics of such decision making, especially in matters of risk and uncertainty, are best conceptualized as occurring in infrastructures where many voices compete to influence decision outcomes—the Babel discussed by Cutlip (1994). The attributional and constitutive aspects of language give insights into how multiple voices co-define an enactable reality and shape the decision heuristics needed for shared perceptions and collective actions. Combining what we know, mind/ideation, and what we want to know, power derives from the ability to name and claim a sense of reality that is adopted and enacted by and with others, even to the extent that one perspective so instantiated can, and likely does, create some degree of alienation that fosters friction and disharmony all the while in pursuit of agreement and harmony.

Power words: Based on the logic of mind/ideation, several illustrative power terms easily come to mind: Sound science, myth, mystery, prayer, faith, product quality, product safety, product reliability, healthy, green (as in environmental), safe (for instance, engineering standards, 100 year storm, 1000 year storm, industry safety standards, test crash data, etc.), fair, equal, demographics, miracle, trends, estimations, predictions, certainty/uncertainty, beyond a shadow of doubt, reasonable doubt, highly suspicious, unshakable conviction, deep concern, probabilities (percentage chance of recovery, percentage chance of not surviving, recovery rate), reasonable, reservation, self-evident, confidential, top secret, private versus public information, secrecy, voodoo, speculation, doubt, conviction, caution, experimental, break through, certitude, wonderment, spiritual, unknowable.

Self/Identity

What do individuals think about themselves and others that foster empowerment/marginalization as power resources?

Conceptualized or symbolic power allows people to have rich, enactable, and externalizable definitions of themselves and others. How roles and identities are defined and enacted in turn relates to structural-functional relationships. The question relevant to social character or reputation (image, brand equity, and such) is what is identity and, from there, what is its attributional power, from which organizations or institutions does the individual derive identity, and what power resources do these attachments grant or deny based on such meaning generated identity and the forms of alienation so derived (Burke, 1973). Ever attentive to the role of language, rhetoric, and community, Burke (1965) cautioned, “Let the system of cooperation become impaired, and the communicative equipment is correspondingly impaired, while this impairment of the communicative medium in turn threatens the structure of rationality itself” (p. 163). This analysis builds on Mead’s (1934) view: “Our society is built up out of our social interests. Our social relations go to constitute the self” (p. 388). As Motion and Leitch (2007) explained, “The identity function of public relations would refer to the creation and transformation of the subject positions available to actors within discourse” (p. 264).

As humans take on the idioms of their society, they adopt enactable power resources through terms of image, identity and roles—with attendant empowerment and marginalization. Thus, in a monarchy, the sovereign’s sense of self/identity overlays that of the “loyal” subjects and defines the power, responsibility, and allegiance dynamics, often voiced as expectations. However, no sovereign can be such, even in a totemic manner, unless the assertion of monarch is reciprocated by the submission of subjects driven by appropriate symbolism; one need look no further than the French Revolution for evidence to support this conclusion. Is this reasoning any less for persons who take their identities from the conventionalized symbol systems into which they are born and which they enact through shared meaning?

Discussions of image (whether individual, organizational, and societal) address processes of identity development, adoption, rejection, and enactment. Attributions, privileges, obligations, expectations, and the other accoutrement of sociality derive from language and in that regard suggest what power and power limits people have because of their identity. Even the matter of relationship arises from identity. In fact, individuals (as well as organizations) create relationships to foster, maintain, and repair their identities and that of others. We have, then, matters of identification and association as embedded in the implications of self/identity.

Power words: Based on the logic of self/identity, we find these illustrative terms: Ruler (a huge array of terms, such as monarch) and ruled (another large set, such as loyal servant or subject), owner, employee, customer, professional (another large array of terms including academic and public relations practitioner), citizen, demographics (one of the largest array, including “people of color” which even if politically correct suggests that white is not a color), judge, jury, white collar, blue collar, management, labor, voters, sports fan, arts supporter, traveller, woman, man, child, elderly, senior, juvenile, terrorist, patriot, freedom fighter, insurrectionist, invader, occupier, first responder, health care provider, safety inspector, regulator, clerk, friend, foe, partner, spouse, alternative life style, illegitimate, alien, illegal alien, migrant, emigrant, British, Arab, Muslim, middle eastern, refugee, indigenous, conscript, convert, subvert, savage, loyal, tolerant, faithful, diligent, sloven, tribal, inferior, qualified, resolute, envoy, provocateur, sceptic, liberal, conservative, moderate, activist, red-neck, Wall Street, Main Street, community organizer.

Society/Relational

What do individuals think about societal relationships that fosters empowerment/marginalization as power resources?

Implications of what has been addressed and what will be addressed in this paper are important to the almost compulsive attention to the role of relationship development, maintenance and repair in public relations as the basis of stakeholder power resource management. Teministic screens create and empower/disempower structural-functional relationships so that they serve as power resources. For instance, the Constitution of the United States empowers three branches: Administrative or executive branch (featuring the president, VP, cabinet and departments), legislative (House and Senate), and Judicial. By law and tradition, the relationships and responsibilities of each is defined and prescribed—obviously sensitive to debate and often a matter of power resource management. The same is likely to be true in other organizations and between them. In families, the parents have more power, at least up to a point. As Motion and Leitch (2007) reasoned, the relational function of public relations features the construction of power relationships between discourse actors or stakeholders, as the rationale for legitimacy and power resource management.

Symbolism as Power-constituted Relationships: Viewed constitutively vocabulary guides human activities as undirected plays (Pearce & Cronin, 1980). This conception is very much the result of discourse—rhetorical forces, the logics of social constructivism and narrative enactment (Heath, 1994), as well as discourse analysis (See Edwards, 2006, whose discussion of this topic draws on Bourdieu, 1991). For this reason, a huge vocabulary exists that defines the nature, obligation, relationship quality, and expectations of the various relational entities. Some are political; others are commercial/financial. Still others are social.

Privilege may be legitimately enacted and reciprocated terministically. Edwards (2006) voiced concern that “public relations wields unjustified social influence on behalf of already privileged organizational interests” (p. 229) in ways that violate the tenets of democratic society. Discussion, when it occurs, of power and public relations is biased to “reflect largely agentic or structural perspectives” (p. 229) which define the quality of relationships. She recommends practicing and studying public relations “as a socially embedded profession” (p. 229).

Other agents exist, but often are defined in terms that privilege the established ways of thinking and distributing power resources. As a complex of several organizations arise and voice concerns and assert propositions, their collective efforts, however unified or diverse, comprise a social movement (Smith, 2005, Smith & Ferguson, 2001). Co-created, shared substance, viewed as conjoined and divergent zones of meaning, results in ideology, perspective, and identity/identification. “A social movement becomes a social actor at the point where such an organization takes form” (Leitch & Neilson, 2001, p. 133).

Organizations and the Problematic of Reflectiveness: Rather than denying the agentic bias, the challenge is to call on all agents to be reflective, considering the dialogic nature of power as discourse and meaning. Power develops discursively through many voices seeking to establish vocabulary that defines and reflects mind, self, and society as a coherent and unified concept with scripts, enactments, attributions, evaluations, obligations, benefits/losses, and defined relationships. In such matters, a fundamental concern is whether the assertion privileges one entity, failing to be reflective on such matters, in ways that marginalize others.

As agent, management theory focuses on principles of efficiency and the sociology of organization as power: “as the central terms of two opposing and antithetical discourses” (Clegg et al., 2006, p. 7). Efficiency is defined as productivity—the ratio of inputs to outputs: “Efficiency may be defined as achieving some predetermined end at the highest output in terms of the least input of resources” (p. 7). As Clegg et al., (2006) reasoned, “Power and efficiency are not two opposite sides of a continuum constituting the core problematic in organization studies. On the contrary, we claim power and efficiency should be simultaneously analyzed as fundamentally tangled up in the social fabric of power as both a concept and a set of practices” (p. 17). Systems thrive on and seek efficiency, but are also constrained by vocabulary. They come to life as enactable power resources. They result from definitions, and foster other sets of terministic views that privilege and empower some individuals, processes, choices, and organizations—perhaps while marginalizing others.

Organizations that have a reflective management seem more capable of working for a fully functioning alignment of shared interests and a constructive approach to power resource management (Van Ruler & Vercic, 2005). Comparing the dynamics of reflexivity and reflectivity, Holmstrom (2004) reasoned that reflexivity is mono-contextual whereas reflection (reflectiveness) is poly-contextual. At heart of reflectiveness is how well individuals and organizations as a collectivity become and stay aware of and in harmony with processes that “continuously differentiate, change and reproduce perceptions of legitimacy” (p. 121). The key to relational success rests with the assumption: “Reflection becomes the production of self-understanding in relation to the environment” (Holmstrom, 2004, p. 123). The key polarities that define the conditions of reflection offer substantial implications for power resources: Integration-dominance, interdependence-independence, not sharing-distributing, collaboration-unilateral decision making, and co-creation of social reality-manipulation through propaganda. More indicative than definitive, this list suggests the polarities that define the degree to which each organization embraces societal interests as part of its ability to be reflective in its efforts to achieve efficiency.

Power and the Paradox of Legitimacy: Public relations engages in battles for power through definitions of legitimacy; what Sethi (1977) called the legitimacy gap results from the difference between what specific organizations are thought to be doing (and what they are

actually doing) and how publics expect and prefer them to operate. Involved publics approve or disapprove of any organization as it is responsive to community interests (Kruckeberg & Starck, 1988), a fundamental principle of strategic corporate responsibility (Crouch, 2006).

Strategies of social construction, as Vaara, Tienari, and Laurila (2006) observed, define legitimacy as a power resource: Normalization, authorization, rationalization, moralization, and narrativization. "From this perspective, legitimacy means a discursively created sense of acceptance in specific discourses or orders of discourse" (p. 793, italics in original). "Legitimacy by normalization "seeks to render something legitimate by exemplarity" (p. 798). "Authorization is legitimation by reference to authority" (p. 799). This discourse authorizes claims and establishes recurring authorizations and authorities. "Rationalization is legitimation by reference to the utility or function of specific actions or practices" (p. 800). "Moralization is legitimation that refers to specific values" (p. 801). Narrativization is legitimation that occurs when "telling a story provides evidence of acceptable, appropriate, or preferential behavior" (p. 802). The potency of narrativization results from dramatic attributive and constitutive dimensions of language—the living of collective existence as undirected play, and organized for the collective management of risks.

Control and the Paradox of Power: Relational variables are negotiated and co-defined. As such, power results from control, however symmetrical, trust, and liking. As explained by Millar and Rogers (1987), control is the dominant variable in relationship development (maintenance, dysfunction, repair, and dissolution) and refers to the right and ability each participant in a relationship has to define, direct, and delimit the action that transpires during interaction. It varies by context and purpose of various relationships. It is exerted through commitments, norms, rules, promises, threats, and contracts. It is defined by three related variables: Redundancy (flexibility and willingness as well as ability of relational partners to vary control measures), dominance (amount of influence of party A relative to B), and power (ability to reward and constrain others' power moves).

Looking for the proactive center of power relationships, Clegg et al. (2006) asked "what is organization but the collective bending of individual wills to a common purpose?" (p. 2). Is it reasonable, by the extension of this logic as well as that provided in detail above, to similarly define society as the collective bending of individual wills to a common purpose, such as the collective management of risk (Douglas, 1984)?

The question goes to the next layer of analysis. What rationale grants to any entity the right of holding and using power resources as defined by symbolism (ideation, identity, and relation)? Power is a combination of rationale (including battles over legitimacy) and resource influence (the ability justified by rationale to shape outcomes). Operating vocabularies define the power sources, resources, and dimensions of the relationships.

Power and the Paradox of Risk Management/Communication: Whether for commercial or issue management purposes, organizations and individuals organize for the collective management of risk (Douglas, 1984; Heath & O'Hair, 2009) where is a rationale for public relations (Jones, 2002). Cooperation and competition are at heart power resources for observing, managing, and communicating collectively experienced risks.

Power and the Paradox of Empowerment: Power can be positive or negative, constructive or destructive. Within this fluidity, social construction of power gives public relations the rationale, incentive, strategies and tools to be a force for collaboration and co-created meaning

that shapes and reflects power in ways that brings societal empowerment. Such problematics force the question of whether power is a zero sum outcome, or something that can be magnified or diminished through collective engagement. To explore this paradox, some conceptualize empowerment as requiring key individuals (such as managers in an organization) or corporate entities (such as “powerful corporations”) to share power with others. In contrast, empowerment (especially as the mix of ideation, identity, and relationship) can best be viewed as a post hoc sense of what has been accomplished collaboratively through the collective assertion of power resources (Albrecht, 1988).

Power and the Paradox of Discourse/Dialogue as Shared Power: To co-create meaning, as a mix of relevant voices, public relations can work for individual advantage (as the engineering of consent) or seek a fully functioning society whereby individuals collaborate to manage risks. Is the emergence and enactment of any vocabulary driven sense of mind, self, and society best conceptualized as the empowering pursuit of one interest or the collective need for mutual benefit? Here is the rationale for a dialogic approach to public relations (Pearson, 1989; Kent & Taylor, 2002, Motion, 2005).

The central theme of societal power is not only what meaning prevails, but what rationale of power, whether a cacophony, a Babel as Cutlip (1994) worried, that can advance one interest or mutual empowerment achieved through co-created meaning. Edwards (2006) reflected the influence of Stewart (2001) to conclude:

Even if a norm has been reached, it is always open to future challenges based on the preconditions associated with a particular validity claim. These challenges are evaluated on the basis of Habermas’ criteria of truth, legitimacy and sincerity. (p. 230)

In keeping with the enriching rhetorical heritage of statement and counter statement (Heath 2001), Edwards (2006) discussed validity claims as either efforts to win a case, bring about a set of conclusions and definitions of reality of engineered consent, or to realize “when other evidence introduced into the communicative action process fails to support the argument being presented by practitioners and instead reveals the genuine and arbitrary interests underpinning those arguments” (pp. 230-231).

Giving rich insight into the enrichment of dialogue, Gordon and Pellegrin (2008) drew on social construction theory (P. Berger & Luckmann, 1966/1980; Blumler, 1969; Carrol, 1956; Gergen, 1985) to extract three central tenets especially relevant to public relations theory and practice.

One tenet is that conceptions of reality (including of ourselves) are created through social interaction. A second tenet is that human institutions are created through social interactions and cannot exist independently of human agreement. Finally, a third tenet is that the constructed world of everyday life is itself an important element in the maintenance and reconstruction of social reality, human institutions, and ourselves. (p. 105)

However foundational the first two principles are, the last is most centrally informative of public relations theory and practice, but the underpinning theme is the importance of ideation, identity, and relation.

Power words: Based on the logic of society/relational, we find these illustrative terms: Institutions (governments and other types framed in socio-political, and socio-economic terminologies), culture, religion, business(es), commerce, trade, public policy, competition, cooperation, collaboration, avoidance, accommodation, truce, treaty, contract (whether formal or

informal; legal or social), association, structures and functions, relationship quality, symmetry/asymmetry, dialogue/monologue, service, education, manufacturing, extraction, public health, walls and bridges (physical and symbolic), hierarchy, infrastructures, trust (as an organization, legal instrument, and relational quality), corporate social responsibility, public health/safety, communal, collective, isolated, emergency response, health care system, agriculture industry, efficient business/rational market, legislation, regulation, adjudication, capitalism, free market, local, national, global, independent, dependent, interdependent, constraint of trade, ruinous competition, socialism, fiscal conservatism, progressive, taxation, representation, subsidy, stimulus, regressive, progressive, intereffication, mutual benefit.

Conclusion

However constructively, power is disposed in the public arena, the public sphere, each political economy through meaning structures. The meaning that results from discourse based courtship and advocacy defines mind (how language construction and vocabulary shape thought, what we think about and how we think about it which in turn shapes how we talk about it and act toward it), self (identity and identification), and society (which consists of culturally enacted, relationship based narratives). Narratives, which are shaped by discourse but which also serve as the foundation for discourse, address power, power distribution, and legitimacy.

Mind, self, and society exhibit tensions of the paradox of efficiency and power, the problematics of organization. The power of one organization, or entity, is relative to that of others, including activists. In the introduction to *Activists Speak Out*, Marie Cieri (2000) observed that activists—or at least engaged individuals “are scattered throughout this country, coming from different backgrounds, walks of life, and points of view” (pp. 1-2) Activism is about the strategic use of the tools of change: “person-to-person organizing, employment of mass media, economic pressuring, public actions, skillful oratory, legal weaponry, quiet persuasion, education, steady vigilance, and even prayer” (p. 10). If we believe that the meaning, that as implemented becomes society, results from a wrangle of views collectively seeking order from chaos, then we can conceptualize all voices as activist. Influence exerted in the public policy arena results from the power resources activists acquire and use efficiently (Blalock, 1989). Voices of all types work to acquire and use stakes as a means for encouraging or forcing change. Power is traditionally defined as the ability to affect some outcomes within the limits and allowances of legitimacy.

Defined in terms of the acquisition and use of power resources, power is the product of three variables: resources, the degree to which they are mobilized, and the efficiency of that mobilization (Blalock, 1989). The incentive for creating and employing power resources entails the desire for gains through collective efforts. In such efforts, the likelihood is great that all entities share goals that can be the basis for reconciling differences (Blalock, 1989) through mutually beneficial relationships.

Are the voices of society brought together by some constructive ideal, or are they forced to compete for visibility, adherents and influence by denying other voices? “Organizations, above all, are means of constituting relations between people, ideas, and things, that would not otherwise occur. Organizations are performances of various kinds and power relations constitute the essence of these performances” (Clegg, et al, 2006, p. 17). Even in matters such as media relations, practitioners can deny information or frame it in self-interested ways or they can

engage in what Bentele (2008) called intereffication, a concept used to reason that reporters and public relations practitioners are wise (increasing the power of both) to work together to be empowered to communicate accurately and thoughtfully with key publics. Aligned interests and the bending of reality to collective wills become the rationale and substance of conversation guiding ideation, identity, and relationships. The rationale for understanding reality as socially constructed, as Gordon and Pellegrin (2008) reasoned gives rationale to the power of public relations: “An orientation that focuses on the making of meaning through human interaction offers routes to redefine, refine, reformulate, and restructure ourselves and our methods relating to both the practice and study of public relations” (p. 104).

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Scale Development for Measuring Health Consciousness: Re-conceptualization

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Introduction

From a public relations or social marketing perspective, audience segmentation is a primary step in designing effective interventions to improve health knowledge and to promote health attitude and behavior (Atkin & Freimuth, 1989; Donahew, 1990; Grier & Bryant, 2005; Grunig, 1989). However, regarding public health issues, scholars have pointed out that, by and large, only socio-demographic variables (e.g., gender, age, race, education, socioeconomic status, etc.) have been commonly applied in such segmentation procedures and previous research projects (Grier & Bryant, 2005; Kraft & Goodell, 1993; Slater, 1996). Although audience segmentation based on socio-demographic variables necessitates less effort and financial cost, it has definite limitations. For example, Slater and Flora (1989, 1991) found individuals in a similar demographic group might be different in terms of other health-relevant perceptions and/or behaviors.

Health consciousness is a particularly important psychographic variable in further developing audience segmentation pertaining to health issues because previous studies have shown that health consciousness predicts a variety of health attitudes and behaviors (Furnham & Forey, 1994; Gould, 1988, 1990; Iversen & Kraft, 2006; Jayanti & Burns, 1998; Michaelidou & Hassan, 2008; Schafer, Schafer, Bultena, & Hoiberg, 1993). It is also believed that an individual's level of health consciousness is closely related to how he or she seeks and responds to health information (Basu & Dutta, 2008; Dutta-Bergman, 2004b, 2005, 2006; Dutta, 2007; Dutta & Feng, 2007; Iversen & Kraft, 2006; Kaskutas & Greenfield, 1997; Shim, Kelly, & Hornik, 2006). Therefore, taking heed of individuals' health consciousness is important in designing health interventions and segmenting target publics, because it determines their responses to health information and sources of health information.

Specifically, Forthofer and Bryant (2000) explained why identifying individuals with high health consciousness is important in several ways. First, and most fundamentally, different approaches to groups with different levels of health consciousness are feasible, which in turn increases the effectiveness of health intervention. Second, according to Forthofer and Bryant (2000) individuals with high health consciousness are regarded as "targets of greatest opportunity" (p. 37) because they are more likely to be ready to undertake health preventive behaviors. By targeting health conscious individuals, health interventions have a better chance to achieve desirable outcomes (Forthofer & Bryant, 2000). Third, the attitudes or behaviors of health conscious individuals could be diffused among other people who are less likely to change their attitudes or behaviors (Forthofer & Bryant, 2000).

However, in spite of its potential to bolster effective health intervention, a review of previous literature revealed that few studies employed the concept of health consciousness, and, few, if any, conceptualized and operationalized the concept in a manner consistent with other

studies. Moreover, the measure of the concept tends to be limited; for instance, the measure either fails to capture the complexity of the concept or lacks reliability by using a single item.

Therefore, this research project attempts to (1) define the concept of health consciousness as a prominent predictor of individuals' health behaviors and behavioral changes, (2) identify major dimensions of health consciousness, and (3) suggest a reliable scale for measuring health consciousness. Thus, the following sections will be devoted to reviewing and critiquing previous studies on health consciousness and other health-related concepts as well as developing a preliminary scale of health consciousness.

Since the concept of health consciousness refers to individuals' comprehensive orientations toward health, rather than issue-specific orientations (e.g., smoking, weight control), it is expected that the scale will be widely used for strategic health interventions in addition to its conceptual and theoretical value. Specifically, it will help segment target publics for health-related campaigns (e.g., obesity, disease prevention, etc.) and create tailored messages in diverse health interventions.

Literature Review

Audience segmentation in public health interventions

Grunig and Repper (1992) defined segmentation as “divid[ing] a population, market, or audience into groups whose members are more like each other than members of other segments” (p. 129). By segmenting publics, the issue can be effectively managed with less cost. In the domain of public health, scholars contended that health intervention becomes more efficient and effective by segmenting audiences into homogenous subgroups (Atkin & Freimuth, 1989; Donahew, 1990; Forthofer & Bryant, 2000; Grier & Bryant, 2005; Grunig, 1989; Rodgers, Chen, Duffy, & Fleming, 2007; Slater, 1996). Individuals in the same subgroup are likely to share “needs, wants, lifestyles, behavior, and values” with regard to health and, therefore, tend to respond similarly to health interventions, including campaign messages (Grier & Bryant, 2005, p. 322).

Forthofer and Bryant (2000) explained two primary reasons why audience segmentation is important in health interventions that aim at changing individuals' health behaviors. By segmenting audiences, it is easier and more feasible to reach the specific subgroup (1) with limited resources and (2) through the best available channels of communication (Forthofer & Bryant, 2000). In other words, audience segmentation contributes to the identification of characteristics of target groups and subsequent health intervention designs (e.g., tailored health messages, selection of communication channels).

In general, the criteria for segmenting publics can be grouped into two variables: objective (e.g., demographics, media use) and inferred (e.g., cognition, attitude) (Berkowitz & Turnmire, 1994; Grunig & Repper, 1992). Cross-situational approaches with objective variables tend to be easy to implement but are likely to miss the dynamic nature of publics, while situational approaches using inferred variables provide greater utility with direct relation to individual orientation to an issue but need more time and effort (Kim, Ni, & Sha, 2008). In this regard, public relations scholars (Berkowitz & Turnmire, 1994; Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Grunig & Repper, 1992; Kim et al., 2008) recommended the combination of inferred and objective variables.

In terms of health-related issues, possible criteria for audience segmentation include behavioral intention, lifestyle, health value, and personality traits (e.g., Grier & Bryant, 2005). Forthofer and Bryant (2000) added additional variables, such as perceived benefits and costs as well as media use, which are variables that have been commonly used for audience segmentation to promote healthy behaviors.

On the other hand, Slater (1999) segmented individuals in relation to a specific health issue based on the transtheoretical model (or stages-of-change model), which is comprised of five stages of health behaviors: (1) precontemplation, (2) contemplation, (3) preparation, (4) action, and (5) maintenance (Slater, 1999). Once people are informed of the positive or negative consequences of health behaviors (precontemplation), they consider enacting the behavior (contemplation). They then carry out the behavior (action) after careful preparation (preparation). In terms of a specific health behavior, Slater (1999) argued that a health campaign can be designed to target a segment of people along these five stages.

Slater and Flora (1989) suggested a new method of audience segmentation called “health lifestyle,” which is an analysis that measures factors beyond demographics. To identify subgroups, Slater and Flora (1989) collected data about health knowledge, health attitude and cognition, perception of social norms, and health behaviors (e.g., dietary habits, exercise, smoking, and alcohol consumption). The analysis resulted in two major clusters (health-oriented vs. non-health oriented) and seven lifestyle patterns, four of which were included in the health-oriented cluster (i.e., healthful adults, healthful young adults, healthful talkers, and young athletes), and three of which were included in the non-health oriented cluster (i.e., unhealthful adults, unhealthful young adults, and worried older adults).

This study proposes the notion of “health consciousness” as a powerful segmentation criterion in diverse health interventions. In this regard, Slater and Flora’s (1989) division of health-oriented vs. non-health oriented audiences is closely related to the notion of health consciousness, and the health lifestyle analysis represents an early attempt to measure one’s level of health consciousness.

Dimensions of health consciousness

This section will discuss five major dimensions identified from previous research focusing on health consciousness. Different approaches to the concept of health consciousness have generated different definitions of the concept. However, five components have consistently appeared in studies over the previous two decades, which are (1) integration of health behavior, (2) attention to one’s health, (3) health information seeking and usage, (4) personal health responsibility, and (5) health motivation.

Dimension 1: Integration of health behaviors

Like Slater and Flora (1989), Kraft and Goodell (1993) equated individuals’ health consciousness to their orientation toward a wellness lifestyle. To Kraft and Goodell (1993), wellness is a “set of personal activities, interests, and opinions related to one’s health” (p. 18). Kraft and Goodell (1993) identified four sub-dimensions of wellness—(1) concern for hazardous environment, (2) physical fitness, (3) personal responsibility, and (4) nutrition and stress management—and concluded that health conscious persons are characterized as being sensitive to health hazards, responsible for their health, concerned about their physical fitness, and

concerned with managing their stress and nutrition. Except for four items that measure personal health responsibility, Kraft and Goodell's (1993) items are devoted to measuring individuals' actual behaviors. For example, the items include, "I try to exercise at least 30 min. a day, 3 days each week," "I avoid foods containing nitrites or preservatives," and, "My daily meals are nutritionally balanced." Likewise, many studies in consumer marketing have also approached individual health behavior and/or attitude from a "healthy (wellness) lifestyle" standpoint. Bloch's (1984) study was a pioneering work in this area and defined a healthy lifestyle as an individual health orientation toward preventing possible health problems and increasing personal wellbeing.

Such a trend in consumer marketing research has presumably stemmed from the field's interest in the food industry's marketing strategies to attract consumers' attention, which necessitated immediate or direct measures of potential consumers' behaviors rather than a conceptual explication of consumers' psychological states. Because of such purposes, in most of the research relating to this approach, the level of health consciousness was oftentimes understood and measured in terms of individual behaviors, such as food consumption and physical activities (Divine & Lepisto, 2005). Jayanti and Burns's (1998) definition of health consciousness—"the degree to which health concerns are integrated into a person's daily activities"—clearly demonstrated the behavioral aspect of the concept (p.10). For example, Divine and Lepisto (2005) noted that people who enjoy healthy lifestyles tend to prefer to exercise more often and eat white meat, fruits, and vegetables, while avoiding red meat, snack chips, and soft drinks. Similarly, Dutta-Bergman (2004a), referring to health consciousness as healthy activities, used four health-related actions to measure individuals' levels of health consciousness on a 6-point likert scale: healthy eating, exercising, alcohol consumption (negative correlation), and gambling (negative correlation).

Using a national survey, Tabacchi (1987) introduced four groups based on attitude and behavior solely in terms of food consumption: traditional, weight-conscious, health-conscious, and uncommitted. In Tabacchi's (1987) categorization, a health-conscious consumer is different from a weight-conscious consumer, who mainly cares about his or her calorie intake. The characteristics of the health-conscious group include frequent exercise, having a small-size family, and college education. Specifically, in terms of food consumption, the health-conscious group prefers vegetables and fruits, whole grains, broiled or baked fish, and non-fat milk, while avoiding butter/margarine, chemical additives (e.g., sugar substitutes), soda, and fried foods (Tabacchi, 1987). From another survey of Chinese females, Tai and Tam (1997) found that "weight consciousness," "health consciousness," and "environment consciousness" significantly influenced respondents' daily routines. In regard to the detailed items of the survey, the items designed for measuring weight consciousness and environment consciousness also contained health behaviors, including food purchase/consumption and exercise habits, which other studies claimed to be measures of health consciousness (See Appendix 1 for detailed questionnaires of previous research).

Dimension 2: Psychological/Inner state

Gould's (1998; 1990) viewpoint, however, is somewhat different from those presented in the aforementioned studies. Gould (1998) considered health consciousness solely as a psychological or inner status of a person, including health alertness, health self-consciousness,

health involvement, and self-monitoring of one's health. To Gould (1998; 1990), health consciousness is a psychographic variable that is not integrated with visible behaviors. Therefore, measures of attitude and behavior regarding health care and prevention as dependent variables are predicted by health consciousness as an independent variable (Gould, 1988, 1990). For instance, Gould (1990) found that health consciousness was positively correlated with one's dietary lifestyle, such as vitamin intake and calorie reduction, although it was not related to the amount of physical activity. It was also found that high health conscious people are more likely to talk about health and read health magazines (Gould, 1990) and more open to unorthodox medical alternatives while being less skeptical of medical authority (Gould, 1988).

Iversen and Kraft (2006) followed the Gould's (1988; 1990) contention of health consciousness, which focused on one's psychological or inner state. According to Iversen and Kraft (2006), health consciousness is defined as "the tendency to focus attention on one's health" (p. 603). However, Iversen and Kraft (2006) noted that health consciousness is different from health anxiety or fear of being sick or dead. By employing Gould's (1988; 1990) Health Consciousness Scale, Iversen and Kraft (2006) also found a positive correlation between health consciousness and preventive health behavior (e.g., fruit and vegetable consumption and exercise).

Dutta-Bergman (2004b; 2006) and Dutta (2007) also emphasized the psychological characteristic of health consciousness, and tried to differentiate it from three other indicators of health orientation, which were (a) health information orientation, (b) health beliefs, and (c) healthy activities. In this regard, Dutta-Bergman's (2004b; 2006) and Dutta's (2007) conceptualization of health consciousness corresponds to that of Gould (1988; 1990) and Iversen and Kraft (2006), while their general notion of "health orientation" (Dutta-Bergman, 2004b; 2006; Dutta, 2007) is more comparable to that of Kraft and Goodell (1993) and others who focused on actual health behaviors along with attitudes.

Dimension 3: Health information seeking and usage

There has been inconsistency in the definition of health consciousness in regard to whether or not health information-related actions are a part of the health consciousness concept or factors that can be predicted from one's health consciousness.

Some scholars argued that the manner in which an individual uses media or other sources for health information is a major element of health consciousness. For example, Rodgers et al. (2007) suggested individual media use as a health segmentation variable. They contended that including variables regarding media usage along with other traditional audience segmentation criteria (e.g., demographics, health evaluation) increased predictive power of individual health behaviors, and suggested media usage as a basis of effective audience segmentation (Rodgers et al., 2007). With the combination of traditional variables and media usage variables, Rodgers et al. (2007) identified four audience clusters: health uninformed, health autonomous, health conscious, and health at risk. Rodgers et al. (2007) used the term "health conscious cluster" to refer to individuals who are aware of health information and its sources, but who are not necessarily educated about health information or autonomous in information seeking. Therefore, the health conscious group turned out to be moderately engaged in health information seeking and health promoting behaviors, while individuals in the health autonomous cluster were more active in

seeking health information from diverse sources, including media channels, and also more active in engaging in health promoting behaviors.

Other scholars also demonstrated that health consciousness is related to audiences' attention to or involvement with health messages (Aldoory, 2001; Iversen & Kraft, 2006). Specifically, Iversen and Kraft (2006) argued that high health conscious individuals perceive health messages as being more personally relevant while processing the argument and recommendations in the messages more thoroughly. To Firnham and Forey (1994), health information seeking is an essential element of health consciousness, along with actual food consumption behaviors. Firnham and Forey (1994) defined health consciousness as one's ecological and self-awareness of lifestyles—including health information seeking, food consumption, concern for the natural environment, and perception of prescription drugs. In a similar way, Kaskutas and Greenfield (1997) also viewed health consciousness as being composed of concerns for nutrition and health information seeking.

On the other hand, as discussed earlier, a series of Dutta's studies (Dutta-Bergman, 2004b; 2006; Dutta, 2007) considered health consciousness as an important predictor of individuals' health information-related activities such as health information seeking and learning, and the use of communication channels. Therefore, to Dutta (Dutta-Bergman, 2004b; 2006; Dutta, 2007), such actions are consequences influenced by one's health consciousness, rather than health consciousness itself. Specifically, Dutta-Bergman (2005) showed that health consciousness is a positive predictor of individuals' search for additional health information beyond that provided by a doctor. It was also shown that individuals with high health consciousnesses tend to (1) learn more health information from the media (Dutta, 2007); (2) prefer newspapers, magazines, Internet, and interpersonal networks (e.g., family, friends) as primary sources of health information, as opposed to television and radio, which are preferred by less health conscious individuals (Dutta-Bergman, 2004b); and (3) better remember health content and incorporate it in their future behavior (Dutta-Bergman, 2006).

Dimension 4: Personal responsibility

Previous studies have shown that individuals who are health conscious are likely to take responsibility in managing their own health. Kraft and Goodell (1993) suggested that personal health responsibility is one of the four components that constitute health consciousness. Similarly, Dutta-Bergman (2004a) speculated that health conscious persons are more likely to feel responsible for their health, and closely equated a "health conscious" person to a "responsible" person. Because health conscious persons feel more responsibility to take care of their health, they tend not only to engage in preventive and health-maintaining behaviors in their daily lives but also actively participate in online and/or offline health communities (Basu & Dutta, 2008; Dutta-Bergman, 2004a; Dutta & Feng, 2007).

Dimension 5: Health motivation

Motivation is another dimension that has been commonly discussed in previous studies. Defining health motivation as "a goal-directed arousal to engage in preventive health behaviors," Moorman and Matulich (1993) argued that health motivation predicts a person's engagement in preventive health behaviors (i.e., health information acquisition behaviors and health

maintenance behaviors) (p. 210). According to Jayanti and Burns (1998), health motivation is a relatively stable psychological trait.

Dutta-Bergman (2004a) also regarded health motivation as a major part of health consciousness, and presented it in relation to the degree to which individuals value healthy conditions. In this regard, Dutta's studies (Dutta, 2007; Dutta-Bergman, 2004b; 2006) used an item stating, "Living life in the best possible health is very important to me." Dutta-Bergman (2004a) defined health consciousness as "an indicator of the consumer's intrinsic motivation to maintain good health" as well as "a reflection of his or her responsibility toward health" (p. 398).

Unlike Dutta-Bergman (2004a), however, Jayanti and Burns (1998) emphasized that health consciousness is distinct from health motivation. According to Jayanti and Burns (1998), "health motivation refers to the internal characteristic of a person, whereas health consciousness refers to the external characteristics of how a person's health is taken care of" (p. 10). Unlike Dutta (Dutta, 2007; Dutta-Bergman, 2004b; 2006), Jayanti and Burns (1998) differentiated health value from health motivation by defining health value as "an individual's assessment of benefits relative to costs in engaging in preventive health care behavior" (p. 8). Therefore, Jayanti and Burns (1998) measured health value by asking how much a specific behavior (e.g., avoiding tension, staying healthy longer, looking younger) is worth the benefit.

In summary, scholars have conceptualized and measured health consciousness differently. This literature review revealed five major dimensions that have comprised the concept of health consciousness: (1) engagement in health behaviors, (2) psychological attention to one's health, (3) health information seeking and usage, (4) personal responsibility, and (5) health motivation. Therefore, in general, health conscious persons are characterized as actively incorporating healthy behaviors in their daily routines, consistently being attentive to their health conditions, actively seeking and using health information from diverse sources, taking responsibility for their health, and being motivated to stay healthy.

Re-conceptualization of health consciousness

With different approaches to examining health consciousness and applying the concept to diverse health-related issues, previous studies have shown that health consciousness has great power in indicating health-related attitudes and behaviors. In spite of the various definitions and operationalizations of the concept of health consciousness, it holds true across studies that the concept is multifaceted. Given the complexity of the concept, a problem that may be caused by inconsistent use of its definition is that it is hard to comprehensively understand the true nature of the concept and its related phenomena. Because of this, researches perhaps have missed the bigger picture that much previous scholarly effort pertaining to health consciousness can provide.

As discussed, most previous research used actual behaviors, such as food consumption, exercise, and substance use, to measure health consciousness. However, the current study attempts to directly measure underlying psychological traits of the concept, rather than indirectly measuring the concept using visible behaviors. The main idea of this study is that, with the limited number of health behavior measures, the concept is limited in explaining diverse health issues. By understanding the concept of health consciousness as a personal attribute and measuring the psychological basis of the concept, it will have greater power in predicting diverse health behaviors. For example, compared to measuring how much someone cares about his or her health, measuring whether or not someone avoids high-sodium or high-cholesterol foods is

less likely to be related to his or her decision to quit smoking or to adhere to a medical diagnosis. By measuring psychological state regarding health, as opposed to measuring actual behaviors, this study presumes that the concept of health consciousness has greater construct validity. In this sense, health consciousness in this study may be a higher-level switch controlling multiple light bulbs in someone's brain at once while measuring specific health-related behaviors is a lower-level switch that possibly controls one light bulb at a time. Therefore, health consciousness should be understood as a psychological state predicting a variety of related variables (e.g., health attitudes and behaviors), rather than actual specific behaviors. Moreover, presenting the relationship between health consciousness and actual health behaviors will provide opportunities for supporting predictive and/or concurrent validity of the concept. By doing so, the concept of health consciousness can be utilized with greater predictive power regardless of health issues.

However, considering the concept of health consciousness as solely being psychological attention to or self-reflection on one's health, as Gould (1998; 1990) did, also has limitations. The scope of health consciousness is so biased in regard to a single domain that it cannot capture the overall orientation toward one's health. Although Gould (1998; 1990) tried to include the multifaceted nature of the concept with four sub-dimensions (i.e., health alertness, health self-consciousness, health involvement, and self-monitoring of one's health), the items seem redundant and, therefore, have less face validity in representing the complexity of health consciousness. This study agrees that consistent attention to and reflection on one's health is a significant aspect of health consciousness, but the concept should contain more than was suggested by Gould (1998; 1990). Based on previous studies, this study proposes that, along with psychological attention and reflection, health consciousness should include personal responsibility and health motivation, both of which have been less investigated by researchers. Therefore, health consciousness is regarded as a composite of self-health awareness (an alternative term referring to Gould's notion of health consciousness), personal responsibility for one's health, and health motivation. In other words, health conscious individuals are likely to be aware of their health condition by paying attention to and reflecting on their health, as well as being responsible for their health and motivated to improve or maintain their health given the high level of health value. According to this re-conceptualization, health consciousness refers to an individual's comprehensive mental orientation toward his or her health, being comprised of self-health awareness, personal responsibility, and health motivation, as opposed to being related to a specific issue (e.g., smoking, exercise, healthy diet)

A pilot test

To test validity and reliability of potential items to be used on a health consciousness scale, both news items and items used in previous studies regarding health consciousness were tested together (See Appendix 1 and 2 for details). 50 students at a large Midwestern University were recruited for an online survey.

Survey questionnaire

For previous items, the survey questionnaire included all items that have been used for measuring health consciousness in previous studies (Dutta-Bergman, 2004a, 2004b, 2005, 2006; Dutta, 2007; Furnham & Forey, 1994; Gould, 1988, 1990; Jayanti & Burns, 1998; Kraft &

Goodell, 1993; Michaelidou & Hassan, 2008; Tai & Tam, 1997), except issue-specific items (e.g., gambling in Dutta-Bergman, 2004a; prescription drugs in Furnham & Forey, 1994) (See Appendix 1 for details about the health consciousness scales from previous research). The health motivation scale (Jayanti & Burns, 1998; Moorman & Matulich, 1993) and health value scale (Jayanti & Burns, 1998) were added into the questionnaire for the current study because these two concepts (i.e., health motivation, health value) also relate to health consciousness according to its new conceptualization in this study. Items measuring environment consciousness and weight consciousness in Tai and Tam (1997) were also included, as they were closely related to the five major dimensions identified from the previous studies. For newly introduced items, several items were created to make up for weak points in the previous scales of personal responsibility and health motivation. For example, new items include, “I should take care of myself to prevent disease and illness,” (personal responsibility) and, “Living life without disease and illness is very important to me” (health motivation).

The manner in which individuals use health information has been discussed in relation to health consciousness. However, regardless of whether or not it is an element or consequence of health consciousness, this study points out that previous measures of health information usage were highly limited in that they relied heavily on measuring the use of mass media channels, such as television and newspaper. Therefore, for the purpose of preliminary exploration, this study included items measuring one’s use of health information from four key sources (i.e., mass media, the Internet, interpersonal communication, and medical experts) (See Appendix 2 for details about newly added items).

A total of 99 old and new items were all measured on a 7-point likert scale. Although some items were originally measured on a 5-point likert scale, this study used a 7-point likert scale for all items for comparison purposes. Also, according to DeCoster (2005), a likert scale with seven response options is more reliable than equivalent scales with greater or fewer response options. Respondents were asked to indicate how much they agree with each statement, between 1 (strongly disagree) and 7 (strongly agree), or how much each action was worth the benefit, between 1 (not worth the benefit at all) and 7 (very much worth the benefit). Some items were reverse coded to indicate that higher scores denote higher level of health consciousness. Ideally, the old and new items under the same conceptual sub-dimension should be a cohesive set of items (remaining together in a factor) as a result of factor analysis.

Data reduction: Factor analysis

A series of principal axis factor analyses using Varimax with Kaiser Normalization were used for data reduction. An initial analysis of a total of 99 items generated 22 factors by using Eigenvalues of 1 or higher. In each step of running a factor analysis, one-item factors, indicating the item does not form a cohesive sub-scale with any other items, and items with below .4 factor loading coefficient were deleted. Such a procedure showed interesting findings from the exploratory pilot test. The items that were first removed from the set were the items asking respondents about weight loss or weight control, which indicates that weight control is not a factor of individuals’ thoughts on their health, at least for college students. Next, many of the items measuring stress management and mental health were removed from the original set. Items about attractiveness (e.g., younger looking or a good body shape) were not cohesive measures with other items of health consciousness. Individual habits regarding food consumption or

healthy eating (e.g., cholesterol, preservatives, nitrites, vitamin intake, fat, sugar, salt, calorie, calcium, chemicals, ingredients, organic products, etc.) turned out to barely remain together with other health consciousness items. Behaviors regarding substance use (especially for drinking habits) and exercising did not closely correspond with other items. Items about one's awareness of environmental hazards (e.g., air pollution, global warming, alternative energy) were removed as a result of repeated data reduction processes. To some extent, such results of factor analysis supported that actual health behaviors, such as dietary and exercise habits and substance use, may not be valid and/or reliable measures of health consciousness, at least for college students, as has been argued in previous sections of this paper.

Finally, a total of 99 variables were reduced to 17 items with four factors. One of the factors was comprised of six items measuring individuals' health information use or health communication activeness, which refers to the attention and interest in health information as well as interpersonal communication about health. Actual items include, "I am generally attentive to health information from TV and radio" (new item), "I often talk about health with my friends, family or relatives" (new item), "I read more health-related articles than I did 3 years ago" (from Kraft & Goodell, 1993), "I'm interested in information about my health" (from Kraft & Goodell, 1993), "I often read about health in newspapers, magazine, books, etc." (from Furnham & Forey, 1994), "I take much notice of health care recommendations from TV, radio, etc." (from Furnham & Forey, 1994). However, in spite of strong internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha=.898$ with the six items of health communication activeness; Cronbach's $\alpha=.884$ with all 17 items), the six items were excluded in the final scale of health consciousness because they were more likely to target actual behaviors regarding health information, rather than capturing an individual's psychological trait regarding his or her health. As has been mentioned, this study assumes that how an individual uses and responds to health information is a behavioral outcome of health consciousness.

The other three factors with 11 items were closely related to the reconceptualized health consciousness focusing on either one's self-health awareness, personal responsibility, or health motivation (for the entire list of items, see Table 1). Most of the 11 final items turned out to be from previous studies (Item #1, 2, 3, and 5 from Gould (1988); Item #4, 7, and 8 from Kraft & Goodell, 1993; Item #6 from Michaelidou & Hassan (2008); Item #10 and 11 from Dutta (2007)), rather than the new items introduced in this study (Item #9).

Table 1 shows how the 11 items were loaded to three factors. Four items heavily loaded on factor 1 were mostly from Gould's (1988) items, measuring self-health awareness, or the tendency to focus attention on one's health. Another four items loaded on factor 2 pertained to personal responsibility. The remaining three items pertained to health motivation. The results of a pilot test supported the conceptualization of health consciousness, as consisting of three dimensions (e.g., self-health awareness, personal responsibility, and health motivation).

Table 1. Rotated Factor Matrix (N=50)

	Factor		
	1	2	3
I'm very self-conscious about my health.	.816		
I'm generally attentive to my inner feelings about my health.	.771		
I reflect about my health a lot.	.748		
I'm concerned about my health all the time.	.709		
I notice how I feel physically as I go through the day.		.888	
I take responsibility for the state of my health.		.813	
Good health takes active participation on my part.		.490	
I only worry about my health when I get sick. (R)		.405	
Living life without disease and illness is very important to me.			.800
My health depends on how well I take care of myself.			.546
Living life in the best possible health is very important to me.			.500

Table 2. Item statistics

	Mean	SD	N
HC1: I'm very self-conscious about my health.	4.94	1.544	50
HC2: I'm generally attentive to my inner feelings about my health.	5.06	1.185	50
HC3: I reflect about my health a lot.	4.70	1.344	50
HC4: I'm concerned about my health all the time.	3.98	1.622	50
HC5: I notice how I feel physically as I go through the day.	5.42	.950	50
HC6: I take responsibility for the state of my health.	5.50	.974	50
HC7: Good health takes active participation on my part.	6.12	.824	50
HC8: I only worry about my health when I get sick. (R)	4.96	1.484	50
HC9: Living life without disease and illness is very important to me.	6.22	1.148	50
HC10: My health depends on how well I take care of myself.	5.44	1.072	50
HC11: Living life in the best possible health is very important to me.	5.56	1.091	50

Item analysis

This section addresses the results of item analysis of the final 11 items of health consciousness. First, results of item statistics (Table 2 and 3) show that the mean scores of each item and the overall mean of the scale are generally above 4.0 (neutral), except item #4 (“I’m concerned about my health all the time”) with a mean of 3.98. Responses tend to be biased in a positive direction. However, standard deviation of each item, ranging from .824 to 1.622, supports acceptable response variances.

Table 3. Summary item statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	5.264	3.980	6.220	2.240	1.563	.405	11
Item Variances	1.511	.679	2.632	1.953	3.876	.425	11

Table 4 shows the inter-item correlation matrix of the 11 items. Scholars (e.g., Ferketich, 1991) believe that the correlation between items should be higher than .30. As Table 4 shows, most of the correlation coefficients are well above .30 or nearly close to .30. Two items seem problematic in terms of inter-item correlation: #1 (“I’m very self-conscious about my health.”) and #8 (“I only worry about my health when I get sick.” (Reverse-coded)). Item #1, which measures one’s self-health awareness, is not highly correlated to the items of two other dimensions. On the other hand, Item #8 is not closely associated with items measuring self-health awareness.

Table 4. Inter-item correlation matrix

	HC1	HC2	HC3	HC4	HC5	HC6	HC7	HC8	HC9	HC10	HC11
HC1	1.000	.604	.709	.619	.282	.183	.182	.079	.284	.288	.529
HC2	.604	1.000	.601	.595	.231	.097	.410	.083	.275	.220	.589
HC3	.709	.601	1.000	.690	.357	.304	.291	.086	.361	.306	.395
HC4	.619	.595	.690	1.000	.456	.381	.368	.245	.309	.334	.422
HC5	.282	.231	.357	.456	1.000	.739	.534	.403	.176	.336	.300
HC6	.183	.097	.304	.381	.739	1.000	.458	.367	.210	.293	.211
HC7	.182	.410	.291	.368	.534	.458	1.000	.204	.252	.309	.400
HC8	.079	.083	.086	.245	.403	.367	.204	1.000	.329	.152	.216
HC9	.284	.275	.361	.309	.176	.210	.252	.329	1.000	.517	.470
HC10	.288	.220	.306	.334	.336	.293	.309	.152	.517	1.000	.448
HC11	.529	.589	.395	.422	.300	.211	.400	.216	.470	.448	1.000

In regard to the reliability of the proposed scale, the score of Cronbach's Alpha for the scale was .851 (Standardized Alpha=.858), indicating highly reliable internal consistency of the scale. Table 5 shows the most important information for the item analysis. First, corrected item-total correlation denotes the correlation between an item and the rest of the scale items. Scholars recommend this score should have values of .20 or higher in order to insist that each item is measuring what the rest of the scale is attempting to measure. Other scholars even insist .3 or higher score of item-total correlation (e.g., Wang, Airhihenbuwa, & Nnadi-Okolo, 1990). In this scale, the corrected item-total correlation scores lie between .302 and .713. Second, squared multiple correlation indicates how much of variability in the responses to an item can be predicted from the other items in the scale. If the score of an item is (nearly) equal to 1, the item can be perfectly (or nearly perfectly) predicted by the remaining items, which indicates the item does not contribute to the variability of the scale and thus should be deleted. Given the score of squared multiple correlation ranging between .299 and .628, Table 5 shows that each item in this scale does contribute to the scale without significant redundancy. The last column (i.e., Cronbach's alpha if item deleted) shows that, except for Item #8, alpha score would decrease if items were deleted from the original alpha score of .851. In other words, having the items, except Item #8, contribute to the internal consistency of the scale. On the other hand, alpha score would be higher to .861 if Item #8 were deleted.

From the item analysis, some problems of Item #8 (i.e., "I only worry about my health when I get sick." (R)) have been identified. Nevertheless, the researcher insists on including this item in the scale for several reasons. First, this item has a face validity to point out how a person pays consistent attention to one's health as well as how he or she takes responsibility regardless of one's health status. Without this item, measures of personal responsibility would be less weighted in the scale. Second, in regard to the alpha score, deleting the item does not seem to make a large difference (i.e., .01), and the original alpha score with all 11 items still shows a strong internal consistency (alpha=.851). Third, other scores, such as corrected item-total correlation and squared multiple correlation, showed the item's contribution to the scale. Therefore, it is expected that, if the item is re-tested with different groups of populations, it may show strong or acceptable statistics in the item analysis.

Table 5. Item-total statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
HC1: I'm very self-conscious about my health.	52.96	56.937	.609	.628	.833
HC2: I'm generally attentive to my inner feelings about my health.	52.84	61.035	.598	.620	.834
HC3: I reflect about my health a lot.	53.20	58.000	.670	.660	.827
HC4: I'm concerned about my health all the time.	53.92	53.912	.713	.607	.823
HC5: I notice how I feel physically as I go through the day.	52.48	63.928	.572	.651	.838
HC6: I take responsibility for the state of my health.	52.40	65.102	.475	.590	.844
HC7: Good health takes active participation on my part.	51.78	66.134	.500	.447	.843
HC8: I only worry about my health when I get sick. (R)	52.94	64.139	.302	.299	.861
HC9: Living life without disease and illness is very important to me.	51.68	63.283	.488	.445	.842
HC10: My health depends on how well I take care of myself.	52.46	64.172	.477	.390	.843
HC11: Living life in the best possible health is very important to me.	52.34	61.658	.623	.552	.833

Conclusion

Summary

This study purported to re-conceptualize the concept of health consciousness and to propose a parsimonious yet effective measure of the concept. By reviewing the previous research on health consciousness and other related concepts, this study defined health consciousness as one's orientation toward overall health, rather than toward a specific health issue. Furthermore, this study conceptualized that one's level of health consciousness is comprised of three elements—self-health awareness, personal responsibility, and health motivation—as opposed to engaging actual health behaviors or relying on the tendency to focus attention on one's health. To support the contention of this study, a pilot test was conducted with pre-existing items measuring health consciousness and other health perception-related concepts. Overall, results of

the factor analysis generated 11 items of health consciousness scale that are corresponding to the reconceptualization of health consciousness, and item analysis supported that most of the items make a statistically meaningful scale of health consciousness.

Future research for scale validation

As is widely known, validating a scale is a project that cannot be done at one time. Rather, it requires a series of tests and re-tests and a number of editions or modifications in the long term. Therefore, it should be clearly addressed that this study was only a first step to encourage readers and other scholars in this area to recognize problems with regard to the concept of health consciousness and its previous measures. The researcher accepts that the pilot study employed in this study may not be even a block on which to build the validity of the proposed scale. Future research using the scale of health consciousness is necessary to validate the proposed scale. In each process of scale validation, the scale will be modified in the direction of improving the validity and reliability of the scale.

First, several surveys with diverse groups of population, ranging from a convenient sample of college students to a probability sample at a national level, should be conducted. With the repeated measures with different demographic groups, the results of factor analysis and item analysis, indicating the statistical validity and reliability of the scale, should be examined. In addition, to test predictive validity, the scale measures will be correlated to other aspects in relation to health, including health knowledge acquisition, individual attitudes, and behaviors regarding various health issues. Particularly, among many possible attitudinal and behavioral variables, examining the way in which individuals process and respond to health messages from media channels will help in understanding how people with different levels of health consciousness respond to health messages and presumably predict consequences of health messages depending on the health consciousness level. Referring back to the discussion on public health campaigns and audience segmentation, such a validation study will also help PR practitioners and health professionals effectively target the population.

Appendix 1. Health Consciousness Scales

Source	Sub-dimensions	Items
Kraft & Goodell (1993): p. 23	Health environment sensitivity	I worry that there are chemicals in my food. I'm concerned about my drinking water quality. I avoid foods containing nitrites or preservatives. I read more health-related articles than I did 3 years ago. I'm interested in information about my health. I'm concerned about my health all the time. Air pollution does not bother me. (R)
	Physical fitness	I try to exercise at least 30 min. a day, 3 days each week. I exercise more than I did three years ago. Exercise helps me succeed in all facets of my life. Good health takes active participation on my part. I spend time each day trying to reduce accumulated stress.
	Personal health responsibility	It is the doctor's job to keep me well. (R) My health is outside my control. (R) I believe that the "wellness" idea is a fad. (R) I only worry about my health when I get sick. (R)
	Nutrition and stress management	My daily meals are nutritionally balanced. I try to avoid high levels of cholesterol in my diet. I attempt to avoid stressful situations.
Jayanti & Burns (1998): p. 14	*Modified from Kraft & Goodell (1993)	I worry that there are chemicals in my food. I'm concerned about my drinking water quality. I usually read the ingredients on food labels. I read more health-related articles than I did 3 years ago. I'm interested in information about my health. I'm concerned about my health all the time.
Gould (1988): p. 102	health alertness	I'm alert to changes in my health. I'm usually aware of my health.
	health self-consciousness	I reflect about my health a lot. I'm very self-conscious about my health. I'm generally attentive to my inner feelings about my health.
	health involvement	I'm constantly examining my health. I'm very involved with my health.

	health self-monitoring	I'm aware of the state of my health as I go through the day. I notice how I feel physically as I go through the day.
Michaelidou & Hassan (2008): p. 170	Modified from Gould (1988)	I reflect about my health a lot. I'm very self-conscious about my health. I'm alert to changes in my health. I'm usually aware of my health. I take responsibility for the state of my health. I'm aware of the state of my health as I go through the day.
Dutta-Bergman (2004a): p. 402	Healthy Eating	Try to avoid foods that are high in fat. Try to avoid foods that are high in cholesterol Nutrition information determines what I buy Make a special effort to get enough fiber Am concerned about how much sugar I eat Try to avoid foods with a high salt content Try to select food fortified with vitamins Use a lot of low calorie products Try to avoid foods with high additives Careful what I eat to keep weight in control Am concerned about getting enough calcium
	Alcohol Consumption	Had a cocktail or drink before dinner Went to a bar or tavern Had wine with dinner Had too much to drink
	Gambling	Bought an instant or scratch-off lottery Bought a state lottery ticket Participated in a sweepstakes, game etc. Gambled in a casino
	Exercising	Exercised at home Walked more than 1 mile for exercise Jogged Rode a bicycle
Dutta-Bergman (2005): p. 8	Healthy eating	I try to avoid foods that are high in fat. I try to avoid foods that are high in cholesterol. I try to avoid foods with a high salt content. I am concerned about how much sugar I eat.

		<p>I make a special effort to get enough fiber in my diet.</p> <p>I use a lot of low calorie or calorie reduced products.</p> <p>I try to select foods that are fortified with vitamins and minerals.</p> <p>I am careful about what I eat in order to keep my weight under control.</p> <p>I try to avoid foods that have additives in them.</p> <p>I am concerned about getting enough calcium in my diet.</p>
<p>Dutta-Bergman (2004b): p. 281</p> <p>Dutta-Bergman (2006): p. 15</p> <p>Dutta (2007): p. 5</p>		<p>Living life in the best possible health is very important to me.</p> <p>Eating right, exercising, and taking preventive measures will keep me healthy for life.</p> <p>My health depends on how well I take care of my self.</p> <p>I actively try to prevent disease and illness.</p> <p>I do everything I can to stay healthy.</p>
Furnham & Forey (1994): p. 465	Health information seeking	<p>Do you often read about health in newspapers, magazines, books, etc.?</p> <p>Do you take much notice of health care recommendations from TV, radio, etc.?</p>
	Food consumption	<p>Do you monitor the nutritional value of your food?</p> <p>Do you adjust your diet to suit your state of health?</p> <p>Do you exclude the use of additives and preservatives in your food?</p> <p>Do you look for environmentally friendly products when shopping?</p> <p>Do you exclude animal product from your diet?</p> <p>Do you shop in health food shops?</p>
	Environment awareness	<p>Do you think the government should spend more money on cleaning up the environment?</p> <p>Do you think more money should be put into research for alternative forms of energy (e.g., wind, water)?</p> <p>Do you think that global warming is a priority concern?</p>
	Perception of prescription drugs	<p>Do you think that prescription drugs are always suitable?</p> <p>Do you prefer to avoid taking prescription drugs?</p> <p>Do you inquire about the drugs prescribed (including side effects)?</p>
Tai & Tam (1997): p. 297	NA	<p>I'm more health conscious than most of my friends.</p> <p>I frequently purchase "health food"/"natural food."</p>

Note. Items in this table were adopted (copied) from original studies.

Appendix 2. Scales of related concepts

Source	Scale	Items
Jayanti & Burns (1998), p. 14 adapted from Moorman & Matulich (1993), p. 221	Health motivation	<p>I try to prevent common health problems before I feel any symptoms.</p> <p>I am concerned about common health hazards and try to take action to prevent them.</p> <p>I don't worry about common health hazards until they become a problem for me or someone close to me. (R)</p> <p>Because there are so many illnesses that can hurt me these days, I am not going to worry about them. (R)</p> <p>I don't take any action against common health hazards I hear about until I know I have a problem. (R)</p> <p>I would rather enjoy life than try to make sure I am not exposing myself to a health hazard. (R)</p>
Jayanti & Burns (1998), p. 14	Health value	<p>(Not worth the benefit at all (1) to very much worth the benefit (7))</p> <p>Avoid tension</p> <p>Stay healthy longer</p> <p>Stay fit longer</p> <p>Look younger</p>
Tai & Tam (1997): p. 297	Environmental consciousness	<p>I am willing to pay a little bit higher prices to buy green products.</p> <p>I frequently purchase products which claim to be environmental friendly.</p>
	Weight consciousness	<p>No matter how busy I am, I always find time each week to do a few hours of exercises</p> <p>I'm careful in what I eat in order to keep my weight under control</p> <p>To maintain a nice figure, exercise is very important</p>
New addition	Responsibility	<p>I should take care of myself to prevent disease and illness.</p> <p>I am responsible for maintaining a healthy body weight.</p> <p>I can prevent ill health results if I am careful.</p>
New addition	Motivation	<p>Living life without disease and illness is very important to me.</p> <p>Living life with a nice body figure is very important to me.</p>
New addition	Health information	<p>I often read about health in print media (e.g., newspapers, magazines, books, etc.).</p> <p>I am generally attentive to health information from TV and radio.</p> <p>I often search health information on the Internet.</p> <p>I try to find information in the Internet when I notice unusual symptoms.</p> <p>I often talk about health with my friends, family or relatives.</p>

		<p>I ask my friends, family or relatives about health information when I notice unusual symptoms.</p> <p>I regularly talk with my family doctor.</p> <p>I ask my family doctor about health information when I notice unusual symptoms.</p> <p>I ask any health care providers about health information when I notice unusual symptoms.</p>
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Production Processes Go South, Plant Closure Processes Underway, Remediation in Progress: Relationship Management Theory Applied to a Potential Crisis Situation

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Abstract

Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier (2002) established the core of excellence theory as “building long-terms relationships with strategic publics (p. 57). The nature, scope, functions and constructs identified with healthy relationships has been the focus of academic investigation in recent public relations scholarship. This case study highlights the communication practices associated with the constructs of relationship management an international chemical manufacturing company with production sites in Germany and the United States employed during a ten year time-frame to develop and maintain a covenantal relationship.

Introduction

Deetz’s (1995) multiple stakeholder model, Grunig & Hunt’s (1984) two-way symmetric model, and Habermas (1984, 1987) “proceduralist” view of communication espouse a common theme: corporate behavior is judged by the interactions it shares with stakeholders in face-to-face forums that promote relationship building. The ability to more accurately identify and maintain niche stakeholder groups was promoted by Heath & Coombs (2006) in the markets, publics and audiences (MAP) analysis. Haas (2003) suggests the “form of corporation-stakeholder interaction should be commensurate with the anticipated effects of the corporation’s actions on stakeholders” (p.612). In short, his work was influenced by Beck (1992, 1999), who suggests that the industrial society of late has created current and future effects on humans and nature. He cautions us to be more concerned with future rather than co-present circumstances; to comprehend a “duality of risk” (p. 33) which can be identified as short-term and long-term. The negative impacts are labeled distributional conflict over risk, or “bads” that correlate to chemical waste, nuclear contaminants, toxicity, air, water, and food contamination. This paper explores “bad” generated from the manufacturing of kepone and mirex in the late 1960’s and explores how a specialty chemical company established a relationship with publics in the community and grew to focus on relationship-building with community members to alter the one-way ineffective flow of information. Ferguson (1984) injected the public relations research agenda with a shot of adrenaline: a call for the study of relationships and relationship management. Her call infected numerous researchers to design and execute studies generating critical research findings for use in applied public relations settings. This paper provides an orientation to the scholarship on

organization-public relationships and moves to an analysis of a chemical plant management team's effort to maintain a relationship with the public during its Superfund site closure.

The data used for the analysis in this case study was secured from multiple sources: *Neighbors Newsletters*, Community Advisory Council meeting minutes, personal interviews with the Manager of Remediation, Plant Managers, *Centre Daily Times* news stories and community advisory council members' annual audits, nomination synopses, and interviews.

Relationship Management Theory

A plethora of research on relationship management in the organizational-public context has spawned since 1984 with several prominent researchers devoting considerable effort to enhance academics and practitioners' understanding of the definition (Ledingham, 2003; Broom, Casey and Ritchey, 2000), antecedents, consequences (Broom, Casey and Ritchey, 2000), and relationship indicators (Huang, 1997; Hon & Grunig, 1999).

Definitions

Much like the evolution of the field of study, the definition has changed with time. Ledingham and Bruning (1998) built on J.Grunig (1976) and J.Grunig & Hunt's (1984) systems theory of public relations to define a relationship as "the state which exists between an organization and its key publics in which the actions of either can impact the economic, social, cultural or political well-being of the other (p. 62). Broom, Casey & Ritchey (2000) enhanced Ledingham & Bruning's interpersonally-focused interdependent systems definition to include a call for the quantification of relationship components and promoting a social exchange perspective:

Organization-public relationships are represented by the patterns of interaction, transaction, exchange, and linkage between an organization and its publics. These relationships have properties that are distinct from their identities, attributes and perceptions of the individuals and social collectivities in the relationships. Though dynamic in nature, organization-public relationships can be described at a single point in time and tracked over time (p.18).

Hung (2005) suggests that the interdependence between the organization and its publics creates an outcome and is not the outcome itself. The definition crafted from this perspective is: "O(rganizational) P(ublic)R(elationship)'s arise when organizations and their strategic publics are interdependent, and this interdependence results in consequences to each other that organizations need to manage constantly" (Hung, 2005, p. 396). Hung suggests that the interdependency generates a competitive or collaborative relationship based on survival and selects interactions appropriate to goal attainment. Heath & Coombs (2006) promote the acronym "MAP" which represents the fluid interdependent groups of markets, audiences and publics (p. 123) for which public relations practitioners identify, establish, maintain and manage relationships. In their MAP analysis, the public relations practitioner identifies how "people connect with an organization" (p. 123), which leads to "segmentation or a familiar strategic tool to understand how to divide like-minded people". Heath & Coombs promote MAP analysis as a method to narrow the focus of segmentation:

MAP analyses narrow the segmentation and make the segments more precise. MAP analysis should lead you to note that some persons are aware of your product, service, or policy issue but might not have a well-formed opinion (attitude) about it. Thus, they would not likely take action for or against the product, service, or issue without additional information and opinion (p. 125).

Hung developed a continuum of types of relationship that are described below.

Relationship types

Hon and J. Grunig (1999) promote the type of relationship influences the relationship outcomes while time was considered to influence relationship type (Ledingham, Burning and Wilson, 1999). Building on the work of Clark and Mills (1993), who identified the similarities as voluntary benefits with diverse intentions and differences between communal (one works for the other even if no return) and exchange (future benefits based on past exchanges) relationships, J. Grunig and Hunt (1999) stated that organizations need both exchange and communal relationships. Exploitive relationships exist when obligations or norms are violated. Covenantal relationships, according to Bennett (2001) exist when relationship participants have mutual agreement regarding outcomes. Hung (2005) identified manipulative (asymmetrical communication for goal attainment), contractual (agreement despite inequities with both earning something), one-sided communal (detrimental to giver) and covenantal (work for common good of all) relationships in her research and developed a continuum of types of relationships spanning from concern for self interest to concern for other's interest. Ledingham's (2005) differentiation between the context, audience, and type of communication led to the identification of three types of relationships: 1) interpersonal relationship where "personal interactions between the organizational representatives and the public members" occurs (p. 741). The professional relationship focuses on how the organization executes professional services to the relationship participants while community relationships focus on organizational response to community concerns.

Dimensions

Ledingham and Burning (1998) identified five dimensions of relationships: trust, openness, involvement, investment and commitment. J. Grunig (1999) developed six relationship outcomes: control mutuality, trust, commitment, satisfaction, communal relationships and exchange relationships. Huang, 1997; 2001 and Bortree, 2007 identified relationship constructs as control mutuality or balance of power; satisfaction or relationship participants' positive feelings about one another; commitment or resources allocated to sustain the relationship are meaningful and expended wisely; trust which encompasses integrity, dependability and competence; and admiration. All of the aforementioned theorists espouse the social exchange perspective and have tweaked definitions and terminology.

The following section identifies an organization, Rutgers Organics Corporation as a participant in a one-sided communal relationship, and over time, transformed its communication practices to participate in a covenantal relationship which will be described after the company description. The relationships in which Rutgers participated were first interpersonal: community

advisory council members interacted with company management and grew to a community relationship based on the communication efforts to involve markets, audiences and publics in dialogue which will be demonstrated through exploration of specific events mentioned below.

Ruetgers Organics Corporation

In 1977, Ruetgers AG, purchased a manufacturing operation from Aubrey Nease, PhD in State College, PA for \$5.5 million. The privately-held company was headquartered in Germany and expanded its operations in the United States, Italy, and Canada. United States operations were located in Cincinnati, Ohio, Augusta, Georgia, and State College, Pennsylvania. At the State College site, more than 100 townspeople were employed at a plant situated on the outskirts of a borough in which the Pennsylvania State University was centered. The Borough boasted a population of approximately 30,000 full-time residents; the number swelled to more than 70,000 during the academic year (<http://www.city-data.com/city/State-College-Pennsylvania.html>). The company enjoyed numerous market relationships in that they employed more than 100 residents who earned strong wages in the community, supported numerous organizations through financial and personnel contributions (Special Olympics, underwriting Public Broadcasting programming) and plant operations support numerous other businesses in the area (catering, clothing, office supplies, grounds keeping, fuel, waste disposal (trash and chemical), etc. Numerous publics were identified during a study conducted by Jabro (1993). For the purposes of this discussion, the key publics can be described as environmentally active, environmentally inactive and uninformed. The uninformed public or individuals with a potential to become involved with the organization due to an issue were considered the audiences in the MAP analysis. The issue is described next.

Remediation Activities - Center County Kepone Site

On September 13, 1988 the State College plant earned a National Priority Listing (www.scorecard.org; www.epa.gov) and was identified as “The Centre County KEPONE Site”. The batch chemical manufacturing plant manufactured Mirex in 1973 and 1974, and Kepone in 1958, 1959, and 1963.

A spray irrigation field and lagoon collected process wastes which were later stored in drums. Employees removed the drums and contaminated soil, treated the material in the lagoon to harden it, and buried it on-site. The material from the lagoon failed to harden properly, and contaminants leached to ground water and surface water. In 1982, the company excavated and removed the material and started efforts to treat contaminated ground water.

Several areas have been impacted: various Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCS) and Kepone and Mirex have been detected in on-site and off-site ground water, soil, sediments, and surface water. Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHS) have been detected in on-site sediment and soil, and petrochemicals have been detected in off-site drainage ditch sediment. Threats to human health include accidental ingestion of or direct contact with contaminated surface water, soil, ground water, and sediment, as well as eating contaminated fish. Since 1988, the company has been embroiled in remediation efforts through its efforts to generate and execute a remediation plan:

Remediation Plan

There are seven steps to remediate a site that involve interaction with government regulators, community residents, expert scientists and numerous other audiences, markets and publics. The steps include:

1. Remedial Investigation (RI) or a detailed study to identify type and extent of contamination and threats to the environment and community. Clean up options are suggested.
2. Feasibility Study (FS) where screening and evaluation of potential clean up methods are conducted.
3. Proposed Clean up Plan describes the various clean up options under consideration and EPA's preferred methods. It is also during Step 3 that the community is offered at least 30 days to comment on the Proposed Plan and is invited to a public meeting.
4. Record of Decision (ROD) delineates the methods to clean up the site and is binding by the EPA.
5. Consent Decree describes the formal agreement between the EPA and ROC and established the legal, administrative and technical framework for the clean up.
6. Remedial or clean up design documents the clean up method was designed to address site conditions with specific work areas and methods.
7. Implementation or Remedial Action where clean up commences and work is executed.

At any point in time, the aforementioned publics have access to all information about the site and are invited to comment at public meetings or written, electronic or oral communication (<http://www.epa.gov/reg3hwmd/super/centcnty/menu.htm>).

More than 20 years into the process and approximately \$17 million dollars later, the site is still in the process of remediation with the actual effort divided into two distinct locations: OU1 and OU2. The need for this division stemmed from a process called soil vapor extraction, which as a remediation processes takes significant time to complete to government satisfaction. The clean up plan was implemented in two phases as well. Phase 1 focused on groundwater remediation and phase 2 dealt with soil remediation. ROC awarded a contract to USFilter to implement the key components of the plan for Phase 1, which was supervised by the U.S. EPA and the PaDEP. Phase 2 dealt with soil remediation. ROC proposed an innovate alternative, Soil Vapor Extraction, which according to Pederson and Curtis (1991) is a well known clean up method that applies a vacuum to the unsaturated soil or soil that is groundwater free to induce the controlled flow of air and remove VOC's from the soil. A vacuum blower and a system of vertical or horizontal extraction wells installed to a desired depth is how the typical SVE system is installed. The vacuum induces a controlled flow of air and removes volatile and semi-volatile organic compounds. Gas leaving the soil containing contaminants may be treated to recover or destroy the contaminants. Rutgers performed SVE field tests from 1995 through 1997 and prepared a focused Feasibility Study (FFS) comparing the effectiveness of SVE vs. soil extraction. The work was reviewed and approved by the EPA, PaDEP and EPA's Office of Research and Development. SVE was determined to be more effective and cost efficient. Rutgers formally requested a change in the Record of Decision to allow for SVE and limited excavation that had Kepone and Mirex concentrations exceeding the EPA's clean up standards.

Transitioning from one-sided communal relationship to a covenantal relationship

The Chemical Manufacturers Association required member companies to comply with the Codes of Responsible Care®, which focus on the safe and environmentally conscious manufacture, transport and exposure to chemicals. One of the recommended activities of the Community Awareness and Emergency Response Code was an effort to effectively communicate with the public. In 1993, the company pursued forming a community advisory council. Prior to the launch of the council, the facilitator recommended conducting a study to ascertain the community's perceptions of its business practices. Jabro (1993) executed a mixed-methods investigation encompassing mail, telephone, and face-to-face interviews. One of the findings reported 830 respondents indicated they knew “little to nothing” about the company but perceived it as “polluting, killing fish and dangerous”. Jabro (2003) urged plant management to consider numerous public relations strategies to orient the community to its products, environment, health and safety, and business practices. The company adopted a more public centered communication effort. The results of the study were distributed to the community in the company's annual newsletter, *Neighbors*. The newsletter was published annually, thereafter, and featured contact information for questions, concerns, scheduling plant tours and joining the community advisory council. The Chemical Manufacturers Association recognized Rutgers communication efforts with the community by awarding them a CAER award in 2001. “CMA was impressed with our effort and dedication to effectively communicate with our neighbors and has asked to share the Newsletter with other member companies. They believe the *Neighbors Newsletter* should be a template for other companies who interact with the community” Jim Gazza, ROC Environmental Manager.

Formation of a Community Advisory Council – Commitment

Commitment has been studied in diverse contexts and most research agrees that participants have the intent and demonstrate behaviors that support a desire to maintain a relationship. The following passage supports the CAC's and company's commitment and trust-building efforts.

Jabro's report confirmed the need for on-going sustained dialogue with the community. Plant management supported the development of a community advisory council and allocated financial resources and personnel to the effort. The *Centre Daily Times* ran announcements about the formation of the advisory group and ads offering contact information for a member were listed. Rutgers launched the CAC in 1994 in an effort to better understand how and what to communicate to townspeople and to address community members' concerns in a face-to-face forum. The CAC was composed of 12 community residents from diverse sectors of the community who served 3-year terms. After the initial group was seated, the company continued to invite all community members to serve on the CAC by placing ads in the local newspaper. Members of the CAC also nominated community members for service. ROC management began to depend on the feedback from the CAC and used the information they conveyed in problem solving and decision making processes. One plant manager explained the impetus for the change in the relationship.

We simply focused our energy on making products safely and in a timely manner. We didn't spend much time thinking about the community because the folks over in the

public relations area took care of those things. I am learning so much about what the community doesn't know about us from Dr. Jabro's report as well as our CAC meetings. People are really afraid of us and we need to work on helping them understand that the vapor coming from the pollution prevention control device isn't a raw chemical, but steam. It's safe, clean and environmentally friendly.

- *ROC plant manager personal communication.*

The CAC operated for short of ten years and management contacted members to convey information that would directly impact the community, such as environmental releases, remediation efforts, labor issues and participation in community public relations activities, such as Earth Day.

Another plant manager explained that the "community gives us the right to operate in this neighborhood. We need to do our best to meet their expectations of being a socially and environmentally responsible neighbor".

- *ROC plant manager comments during a CAC meeting.*

Plant management was aware that residents had the opportunity to report suspected air, water or ground releases to the Department of Environmental Protection for investigation. Neighbors also had the right to hold the company accountable for business practices. This delicate sense of power was initially negotiated in the relationship with plant management providing telephone numbers for community residents to call them if they suspected a problem, to tour the plant or to simply get access to data. As a plant manager told the CAC,

Don't hesitate to call us and ask if we are producing something that smells. If we are, we'll tell you. If we aren't, you need to find out who is. We follow a strict process whenever there is a complaint. If there's an odor complaint, we'll send an employee to collect an air sample that will be sent out for analysis at an independent lab. The results will confirm or refute that we are responsible for the release.

- *ROC Plant Manager comments during a CAC meeting*

Manufacturing operations are scrutinized by government regulatory agencies that visit the sites unannounced and announced for inspections. Audits for certifications for the International Standards Organization will often include interviews with employees and townspeople. Aside from insuring manufacturing practices promote safety and environmental sustainability, uninformed neighbors can sabotage any growth efforts.

Public Hearing – Control Mutuality

Control mutuality is critical to relationship stability and interdependence and although unequal during cycles of interaction, according to L. Grunig (1992), the unequal distribution of power can be managed to maintain quality relationships if reciprocity exists. The next scenario supports the relinquishing and retaining of control in this relationship.

A public meeting was called by EPA for August 28, 2000 to discuss the proposed change in the Record of Decision for Phase 2 of the clean up activities. EPA's presentation was highly technical and appeared more persuasive than informative, which concerned attendees. A content analysis of written, oral, and electronic comments during and after the EPA public hearing was conducted. Five themes emerged and are presented in Table 1: Analysis of EPA Public Hearing Feedback.

Table 1. Analysis of EPA Public Hearing Feedback

Classification	Example Comment
Health	Keponone is what's it's all about. They can't get rid of it.
Environment	SVE won't remove Kepone. It is a chemical that resists treatment.
Political	EPA caved in; they've loosened their standards for the company.
Economic	Yeah, I'll be this technique saves the company a lot of money at the expense of public health.
Technological	SVE has been used internationally, but not a lot of evidence to support it can work in this situation.

CAC members indicated their on-going attendance at CAC meetings privileged them to "insider information" or bi-monthly reports about the operation of SVE equipment and its ability to reduce VOC's in the affected soil. The community did not engage in this on-going dialogue, but read about remediation updates in the annual company newsletter.

Nominal Group Technique to Design an Information Dissemination Plan: Building Trust

For the purposes of this paper, J. Grunig and L. Grunig's (1998) definition of trust will be used. The researchers define trust as "the extent to which both management and publics express willingness to make themselves vulnerable to the behavior of the other – confidence that the other party will take its interests into account in making decisions" (p.4). The next scenario supports the participants willingness to trust each other in the relationship.

It was determined that a plan of action must be designed and implemented in order to rectify public perception of the remediation process, health impact, technology, government influence, and economic impact to the company. There was very little time to act before a decision would be rendered. An effective plan needed to be developed. The members of the Community Advisory Council agreed to participate in a Nominal Group Technique to brainstorm specific audiences to address and key messages to promote.

The Nominal Group Technique (Delbeca, Van de Ven and Gustafson, 1975; Cummings, 2004) is a method utilized to maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of teams in decision-making and problem solving tasks. The CAC identified the problem as miscommunication and misinformation about SVE. The facilitator implemented the six step NGT process to determine how to proceed. Table 2 extrapolates the key points of each step of the process.

Table 2. Steps in Nominal Group Technique Process

NGT Process Step	Outcome
1. Silent idea generation	Task: Identify stakeholder groups; key message to communicate about SVE
2. Round-robin sharing of ideas	Groups: political, social, neighbors, schools, universities, civic and environmental groups, daycare facilities, Chamber of Commerce, local government, media Key Message: SVE is more effective; SVE more efficient; testing, used nationally. Use layman's terms, visualize process and distribute information everywhere.
3. Feedback to group	Narrow focus and prioritize stakeholder groups; EPA must certify area is clean long term.
4. Explanatory group discussion	CAC members presented their rationale for the group and key message that ranked first. Discussion and reflection period.
5. Individual re-assessment	Revisit Task to identify key stakeholder groups; limit to four. Key Message: limit to two.
6. Mathematical aggregation of revised judgments	Majority of responses favored stakeholder groups: public officials, community groups (schools, universities, civic and environmental groups), neighbors residing within a mile radius of the plant and media. Key message: EPA monitored and approved SVE; Kepone and Mirex removed with soil excavation; VOC removed with SVE; site won't be cleared until all impacted areas are clean.

After the majority of responses were presented, discussed, and refined, the group brainstormed possible distribution venues. There were limited funds available to create multiple brochures. The Nominal Group Technique provided an impetus for the company to proceed with information dissemination to four stakeholder groups and three strong key messages. Plant management concurred with the CAC's findings and began the arduous process of implementing their plan. The following actions were performed:

- a. Information letters were sent to elected public officials detailing the history of the site and the present request for SVE as a remedial alternative.

- b. Presentations and discussions of the clean up effort and Rutgers' proposed SVE effort were made all over the county.
- c. The manager of remediation projects, Rainer Domalski, PhD, enjoyed public speaking and welcomed any and all opportunities to discuss the clean up effort.
- d. A special edition of the *Neighbors* newsletter was devoted to the entire clean up effort. It stated in a message to the neighbors, "the CAC has advised us that we need to better explain the clean up process underway at our plant (Jabro, 2000, p.1). To ensure that all newsletter readers would contextualize the information, it offered the following discussion areas: 1) the history of the National Priority List designation to the present status of the remediation effort at the plant; 2) Visualization of the soil vapor extraction procedure and a narrative to explain how SVE works; 3) Contact information for the Department of Environmental Protection and the Environmental Protection Agency.
- e. Tours were provided for the media and Dr. Domalski was available for interviews on demand.

The CAC members trusted the plant management and the information provided during these sessions and agreed to be identified in numerous letters, news stories, etc. demonstrating their support of the effort. ROC trusted the information shared by the CAC and used it in designing brochures and newsletters for the community. This interdependent behavior supports both participants in the relationship were competent, dependable and demonstrated integrity.

Satisfaction

Research on satisfaction in relationships is rich. In short, the findings support the cognitive and behavioral contentment experienced in a relationship as satisfaction. In the following scenario, both the organization, CAC and community were satisfied with the outcome of their relationship.

The Department of Environmental Protection attempted to provide the appropriate forum for the community to better understand soil vapor extraction as a viable alternative to soil excavation. However, the manner in which the information was presented to the community was highly technical and somewhat confusing. Community residents indicated EPA was biased which created uncertainty and disbelief for some participants. The results of the content analysis of written, oral and electronic communication regarding the presentation strongly supported miscommunication and misunderstanding about the remediation effort and SVE. The Nominal Group Technique empowered the community advisory council to aid Rutgers management in determining the critical stakeholder groups, key messages and distribution outlets to promote the effectiveness of SVE specifically and the remediation effort generally. The company received accolades for their outreach efforts. In March 2001, the Environmental Protection Agency issued an amendment to the 1995 Record of Decision, which allowed soil vapor extraction as a clean up alternative at ROC. The vacuum system was installed in February of 2003 with 27 wells aerating the ground consistently and transforming the contaminants to the vapor state, which are

then burned at 1,600°C. The Community Advisory Council was briefed about the progress of the extraction effort and toured the wells in the spring.

Admiration and the Journey to a Community Relationship

Known for custom synthesis and chlorination in the chemical industry, the company's reputation was dwarfed by a series of reorganizations, union debacles, environmental issues, and urban sprawl. Once situated on the outskirts of town, the company found itself in the center of a housing and retail district and experiencing difficulty adapting to the volatile changes in the chemical marketplace; customers were taking business out of the country where products were produced for less. When profit margins were slipping and domestic sales continued to decline, consolidation of the US manufacturing sites was necessary. An August 30, 2003 *Center Daily Times* article foreshadowed the fate of the State College plant when it announced a consolidation study was underway.

Plant management was accustomed to sharing information with the community and soliciting feedback. They made strong efforts to communicate more often with the public and to respect that employees should know any information first. Ruetgers management maintained the CAC for more than one year after the announcement that the plant was closing. Plant management met with representatives of local government to explain the plant's situation and seek counsel. Management also granted extended interviews with members of the media to explain plant closing processes. The CAC was kept abreast of all the plant closing details in order to facilitate communication about the event with community members.

Ultimately, the State College plant was shutdown in May of 2004. Employees were provided incentives to conclude their careers at the plant and assist with the disassembly of the facility. The Community Advisory Council was maintained to aid management with communicating the status of the Superfund remediation process and plant closure procedures at the insistence of the plant manager. Corporate management strongly urged the plant management to disband the CAC to save costs, but the plant manager was adamant. "I need this group now more than ever. Their insights and advice are extremely valuable to me as I determine how to relinquish ties with this community"

- Plant manager comments to the Community Advisory Council.

Plant management sought to identify and manage community concerns regarding the plant closure. The following study results support that the company had developed and maintained a relationship with the community that grew from the interpersonal relationship management enjoyed with CAC members. At the recommendation of the CAC, a survey instrument was created and distributed using snowball sampling technique. A cost savings was realized by using electronic mail and billboards to post the survey. The facilitator guided the CAC to consensus on the identification and prioritization of the issues to be addressed on the survey as well as crafting questions. The survey featured 20 questions using three question types: Likert, open-ended and forced response. Using the Likert-scale question formulation described in Stacks (2002), respondents were provided with ten statements to which they had seven attitude options. There were three open-ended questions and seven forced response questions. CAC

members reviewed several draft questions and draft surveys before agreeing of the final instrument.

The questions focused on four areas: 1) community perceptions of the company and its environmental performance, 2) perceived environmental impact of manufacturing operations, 3) perceived health impact, and 4) respondents' demographic profile and environmental activism. A cover letter was devised that explained the purpose of the survey and a request for completion by one member of a household.

Of the 12 CAC members, six were males, three of whom worked in higher education (two Ph.D's in environmental science and one Ph.D. in adult learning), one was employed in Public Defense, one worked with Local Emergency Planning and was an Environmental Consultant, and one was a University Safety officer. The six females represented the following stakeholders: a Conservancy group, the medical profession, community health, financial planning, an environmental recreational group, and a history center.

While other sampling techniques were discussed to best identify a suitable population for this study, due to lack of funds and time restrictions, the convenience sampling method was used. The survey was distributed both electronically and manually. Each CAC member distributed the survey via electronic communication to 25 colleagues from the State College vicinity. Additionally, each CAC member received ten hard copies of the survey with stamped self-addressed return envelopes at the May CAC meeting for distribution to those without e-mail. All involved in the process agreed that the results were more likely to represent environmentally active residents because of the members' personal and professional interests. CAC members agreed to attempt to send the survey to colleagues outside their peer group to compensate for the perceived bias.

Respondents were given three options for returning the survey: 1) provided with a mailing address in the event they didn't wish to have their e-mail identity disclosed; 2) return the survey to the sender who would print the survey and return it to the facilitator; or 3) send the survey to the facilitator via e-mail. All members reported via electronic mail that they sent the survey to a minimum of 25 community residents. Thus, the total number of *potential* respondents was approximately 300 or more.

Responses were acquired within an 18-day timeframe because the results had to be input to the computer, analyzed and interpreted for the next CAC meeting just six weeks after the surveys were distributed. The facilitator had agreed to undertake this task at for no compensation.

Results

Assuming a minimum population of 300 potential responders, 84 surveys were returned, of which 79 were complete which accounted for a 13% response rate. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, version 13. The frequency distribution revealed that the respondents' average time spent living in the community was 29.1 years with the longest resident boasting 49 years and the shortest 2 years. More than 50% of respondents resided in the community in which the plant operated and were male (62%), while 38% were female. Of the 84 respondents, 51% graduated college, 26% completed graduate degrees and 33% graduated high school. The majority of respondents had never attended a public hearing on the Superfund site's remediation efforts while 39% had done so in the past.

The majority (62%) of respondents described their level of environmental activism as “concerned about the environment and involved with recycling” while 38% described their environmental activism as “concerned about the environment and actively engaged in activities to protect the environment, such as being a member of an interest group, providing financial support, or a member of an environmental organization.

The demographic profile is skewed in favor of environmental awareness, but as identified earlier, many of the CAC members were involved with preservation, conservation, and recreational efforts in the community. Another interpretation of the data is that the results suggest that less than 50% of the respondents were truly “active” environmentalists; but the majority focused on recycling efforts and minimal preservation of the environment. All of the respondents expressed concern about the demise of the manufacturing sector in America. “These are good paying jobs that are moving out of the country. What will happen to our middle class?” One respondent commented that “due to the demise of manufacturing, environmental laws and regulations take the back seat.” Others were concerned about unemployment and unfair business practices.

Interestingly, approximately 65 potential respondents decided not to complete the survey. They e-mailed the facilitator or a CAC member with their concerns about the plant closure. The key theme that emerged when the responses were content analyzed was “how will we know that the site is being cleaned up?”

Table 1 provides the distribution of responses for the Likert-scaled questions designed to identify fears associated with the plant closure. While the majority of respondents never supported a chemical company operating in the community, the closing of the plant didn’t appear to bring comfort to more than 40% of the respondents who indicated their environmental concerns hadn’t been lessened. A similar amount of respondents also indicated they would still have health concerns. There had been a number of plant closures in the neighboring communities and even in the Borough, so it was no surprise that the majority of respondents were concerned about the welfare of the workers and their families, loss of good paying skilled jobs in the region and the fate of the community.

The results also suggest that although the plant’s closure lessens the environmental and health concerns of some community residents, many are still worried that the remediation work won’t be completed. This quote summarizes the general mood of the respondents regarding the plant’s closure: *“I am saddened and worried about local workers, but I also won’t miss potentially dangerous chemicals in our town.”* Another respondent captured the common theme with respect to the remediation situation, *“I wonder who will manage the clean up of their site now that they are closing. They can’t leave their work as unfinished business. This community needs to know that they have restored our community to its original environmental health and vitality.”*

Table 1: Identification of Community Fears (N = 79)

Statement	S	D	Disag.	Neutral	agree	S	A
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Environmental impact concerns lessened.	12.6	25.3	12.6		40.5		8.8
2. Rutgers complies with government regulations and runs a safe plant.		22.7	6.3		65.8		
3. Plant's closing is a loss for the region.		11.3	37.9		39.2		
4. Concerned w/completion of remediation.		39.2	26.5				46.8
5. CAC members share information with me.	26.5		25.3		36.7		3.1
6. Never supported a chemical co. in this area.		67.0	22.7		11.3		11.3
7. I won't miss Rutgers.	31.6	11.3	34.1		11.3		11.3
8. As a result of plant's closure, I won't be concerned about health issues from chemicals.	42.0		10.1		10.1		26.5
9. The plant's closure will have an impact on the community.	40.5	7.5	8.8		7.5		35.4

From the time the plant started operation in State College to the present, the population of the community more than tripled and housing, retail and light manufacturing surrounded the plant. Many of the residents were concerned that without appropriate documentation that the site was cleaned up their property values would decrease. Others just wanted to know that the company had done due diligence and lived up to its commitment.

Respondents were asked to discuss what the first thought or image that came to mind when Rutgers Organics was mentioned. The open-ended responses were content analyzed and fell into four major categories: 1) *Pollution* of Spring Creek; 2) *Fear* regarding clean up; 3) *Superfund* site; and 4) *Failed business* on the outskirts of town. To support that the company had reached a broader populations with respect to community relationship building, many of the comments credited the company with the time and effort they expended to garner community input and send periodic newsletters.

After the results of the study were presented to the CAC and ROC's management team, resources to strategically plan communication and identify personnel to respond to the

community's concerns were identified. In order to avoid the costs associated with design and distribution of another *Neighbors Newsletter*, the plant manager met with the Regional Director of the US Environmental Protection Agency to discuss the possibility of a government produced communication about the long-term remediation effort after the plant closure.

The US EPA agreed to send a letter to all residents explaining how the remediation work would be conducted in the absence of the company. The company agreed to leave the Manager of Remediation Projects in State College to monitor clean up progress and be available to the public and media to address concerns. On a warm and sunny October day, 11 of the 12 CAC members met with Rainer Domalski, Ph.D. to tour the empty lot where the plant once stood. Dr. Domalski explained what equipment had been shipped to Augusta, what equipment had been sold and what the future plans for the site entailed. He thanked the CAC for assisting the company through this difficult process. He was proud that the majority of former employees had found gainful employment; those who hadn't were eligible to collect unemployment. Dr. Domalski stated:

Thank you for all you have done during our years together. I have learned so much about this community and have valued your input, insights, honesty and integrity in dealing with me, my colleagues and this company. We have been lucky to work with you and have the expertise of our facilitator who has been with us since the start. I will be here until the site is clean and approved by the EPA. Please feel free to call me with questions, concerns, discuss the remediation effort or invite me to talk to a group or class. This is very difficult for me. Thank you.

- *Rainer Domalski, ROC meeting minutes(10/04)*

CAC members shook hands, hugged one another, the facilitator and Dr. Dolmaski. The statement shared by one CAC members summarized the feelings of many.

I never thought I'd feel this sad. It's ironic, I never supported a chemical plant in this community, but I learned that they were producing chemicals safely and in an environmentally conscious way. I am now skeptical of those companies that haven't opened their doors, books and hearts to our community. This has been phenomenal experience and I learned more than words can describe. – *CAC member*

June 29, 2005, the In-Pharma technologist.com posted a news release that stated, "Rutgers plans sales of five business units." Within a matter of months, Rutgers Corporation was no longer a producer of any chemical product. The Manager of Remediation Projects resides in State College and oversees the remediation effort. It is likely that he'll retire from this position. The remediation should be complete somewhere around 2012.

Conclusion

This paper started with an exploration of the definitions, types, constructs and attributes of relationships in public relations. Hung (2005) suggests that the interdependence between the

organization and its publics creates an outcome and is not the outcome itself. The definition crafted from this perspective is:

“O(rganizational) P(ublic)R(elationship)’s arise when organizations and their strategic publics are interdependent, and this interdependence results in consequences to each other that organizations need to manage constantly” (Hung, 2005, p. 396).

Rutgers Organics Corporation enjoyed numerous market relationships in that they employed more than 100 residents who earned strong wages in the community, supported numerous organizations through financial and personnel contributions (Special Olympics, underwriting Public Broadcasting programming) and plant operations support numerous other businesses in the area (catering, clothing, office supplies, grounds keeping, fuel, waste disposal (trash and chemical), etc. The key publics can be described as environmentally active, environmentally inactive and uninformed. The uninformed public or individuals with a potential to become involved with the organization due to an issue were considered the audiences in the MAP analysis. An analysis of community advisory council nomination reports, meeting minutes, newspaper articles, press releases, interviews with plant management and the remediation manager, reports prepared for the company and government reports provided the data for analysis to support ROC transformed its relationship with individuals and the community to engage in a covenantal community relationship that supported control mutuality, trust, commitment and satisfaction from the participants.

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Ethical Conflict and Job Satisfaction among Public Relations Practitioners

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This study attempted to explore the linkage between ethical conflict and job satisfaction, causes of ethical conflicts, and consequences of job dissatisfaction among public relations practitioners. The findings show that many practitioners confirmed the existence of ethical conflict in their workplace and suggest that ethical challenges are largely triggered by top management's ethical standard. Although practitioners resolved conflicts by leaving their companies, they also recognized the hope in resolving the ethical challenges that they had faced. Participants emphasized the importance of an environment of open communication, the support of internal stakeholders, and a high professional standard.

Job satisfaction has been a considerable organizational research topic that is generally used by scholars as an index to measure the desirability of certain work conditions (Pincus, Knipp, & Rayfield, 1990). Indeed, job satisfaction is important because it reflects the quality of work life and psychological well-being of workers (Pugliesi, 1999), which may be closely related to the steady prosperity of a profession.

Job satisfaction is composed of various dimensions, e.g., payment, relationship with co-workers and supervisors, societal recognition, the work itself, and so forth (Spector, 1997). Many scholars (e.g., Hamermesh, 2001; Spector, 1997) have explored factors of job satisfaction. As one of those factors, ethics has been investigated in job satisfaction studies of business ethics, medical studies, and public service studies (Bullen & Flamholz, 1985; Saks, Mudrack & Ashforth, 1996; Koh & Boo, 2001). Since a high ethical standard is required in any kind of profession, it is meaningful to investigate the linkage between ethics conflict and job satisfaction in a particular profession.

Public relations scholarship has given intermittent attention to job satisfaction. For instance, scholars investigated job satisfaction to examine public relations professionalism (Shin, 1989; McKee, Nayman, & Lattimore, 1975; Pratt, 1986), practitioners' roles and participation in the decision-making process (Broom & Dozier, 1986), organizational communication structure (Grunig, 1992; Pincus, 1986; Pincus & Rayfield, 1989), public relations models (Karadjov et al., 2000; Grunig & Grunig, 1992; Kim & Hon, 1998) and the gender gap (Rentner & Bissland, 1990). However, the ethics issue has not been a focus of any previous studies on job satisfaction among public relations practitioners. Thus, this study is one of the first to examine voices from real workplaces. This research depicts the types of ethics concerns or distresses that public relations practitioners experience and how the experience affects the quality of work life in the public relations profession.

The results of this study have the potential to contribute to the field of public relations in several ways. Assuming that both ethics and job satisfaction are important for the prosperity of a profession, the findings shed light on the importance of ethical public relations practice. The

results of this study also address the organizational factors triggering ethical distress and dilemma.

Literature Review

Public Relations and Job Satisfaction

Although public relations scholarship has been concerned with job satisfaction issues since the 1970s, scholars consistently focused on the job satisfaction among public relations practitioners to advocate the values and status of public relations as a unique profession (Shin, 1989; McKee, Nayman, & Lattimore, 1975; Pratt, 1986). As vocational prestige is gained from its professionalism, scholars and practitioners in the 1970s and 1980s were especially eager to define the public relations role as a professional role for society. McKee et al. (1975), in what is perhaps the first study on job satisfaction in the field of public relations, found that public relations practitioners are more satisfied with professional jobs rather than craft jobs such as message production through publicity. Olson's (1989) survey of San Francisco Bay Area public relations practitioners and journalists reported that public relations practitioners are more satisfied with their job than journalists, and their job satisfaction is closely related to the autonomy of their jobs. Broom and Dozier (1986), in their role study, found that practitioners taking on managerial roles are more satisfied with their jobs and that the level of participation in the decision-making process is a link between managerial roles and job satisfaction. Renter and Bissland (1990) reached similar results from their nationwide survey, indicating that public relations practitioners are more satisfied with a managerial role and autonomy in their work.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, Kim and his colleagues (Kim & Hon, 1998; Karadjov, Kim & Karavasiley, 2000) found that practitioners pursuing the two-way symmetrical public relations model, with a high professional orientation, are more satisfied with their profession. These studies noted that a general relationship between job satisfaction and professionalism exists in the international setting. Those streams of research demonstrate that job satisfaction study of public relations was conducted to defend public relations' occupational progress as a profession.

Meanwhile, the linkage between ethics issues and job satisfaction has not yet been explored, although ethics is regarded as an essence of professionalization. Professionalism is frequently used to provide a rationale for ethical behaviors in public relations (Pratt & Rentner, 1989; Day, Dong, & Robins, 2001).

Public Relations and Ethics

Public relations practitioners work in a world full of complexity, uncertainty, competition, and contradiction. As Pearson (1989) noted:

Public relations practice is situated at precisely that point where competing interests collide. Indeed, public relations problems can be defined in terms of the collision or potential collision of these interests. Serving client and public interests simultaneously is the seemingly impossible mission of public relations practitioners. (p. 67)

Indeed, ethics is important in public relations, for several reasons. First of all, the public relations industry already has a tarnished historical reputation as a “spin doctor” profession; thus, it needs to show a new standard to society. Second, the complexity of a business environment requires public relations practitioners to make careful ethical decisions among conflicting interests. Lastly, the personal conduct and beliefs of public relations professionals can have an impact on a societal level (L’Etang, 1996). Therefore, ethics is the nexus of public relations practice and its professionalization.

In spite of the importance of ethics, empirical research in public relations ethics is still fairly minuscule, and public relations ethics has not yet addressed empirical studies from various perspectives. Almost 20 years ago, Pratt (1991) noted that there was a paucity of empirical evidence on the ethics of public relations practitioners. However, the situation does not seem to have improved much.

Scholars have conducted several empirical studies on public relations ethics. Most of the empirically investigated studies examined practitioners’ moral values (Ryan & Martinson, 1984; Wright, 1985; O’Neil, 1986; Boynton, 2003; Kim, 2003) or some ethical decision-making process (Bowen, 2004b; Lieber, 2008); but little to no research viewed and measured ethics as a part of practitioners’ actual behaviors. Kim (2003) explored how Korean public relations practitioners’ ethical ideology is related to their ethical standards regarding current ethics issues among the profession, and Bowen (2004a; 2004b; 2005) investigated how organizational culture affects the ethical decision-making process in issue management. However, research has not yet addressed the impact of ethical practice on the work life of public relations practitioners, even though the impact of ethical practice on the profits of businesses and shareholders and on society is more important than the impact on public relations professionals’ lives.

Ethics and Job Satisfaction

Scholarship in business ethics research has conducted numerous studies to investigate the determinants of ethical behaviors. These factors commonly include personal attributes (e.g., religion, nationality, gender, age), education, personality, employment background (e.g., work experience, tenure in current job), belief system (e.g., Machiavellianism, locus of control, ambiguity), reference groups (e.g., peer group influence, top management influence, reward system), and others (e.g., codes of ethics).

Organizational factors of ethical behavior/ethical decision-making are also a focus in business discipline (Koh & Boo, 2001; Chen, Sawyers, & Williams, 1997; Cowton & Thompson, 2000; Schwartz, 2001; Trevino et al., 1998; Loe, Ferrell, & Mansfield, 2000). Generally, seven organizational factors that influence ethical decision-making were found: ethical climate (Ambrose, Arnaud, & Schminke, 2007; Deshpande, 1996), code of ethics/ethical policy (Chen et al., 1997; Cotton & Thompson, 2000; Schwartz, 2001; Trevino et al., 1999), reward system (Trevino, 1986), ethics training program (Delaney & Sockell, 1992), organizational structure (Ferrell & Skinner 1988), and peer group influence (Ferrell & Gresham, 1985). The existence of both code of ethics and top management’s use of rewards and sanctions for code adherence increases ethical decision-making, as opposed to the existence of ethics codes only. Company ethics training programs have a positive effect on ethical behavior (Delaney & Sockell, 1992). Ferrell and Skinner (1988) reported that higher levels of organizational structure formalization

are related to greater perceived ethical behaviors. Reference groups or interaction with significant others also affect ethical decision-making (Ferrell & Gresham, 1985).

On the other hand, very little research has investigated business-ethics consequences, such as employees' job satisfaction, stress, motivation, commitment, and job performance, in comparison with the many studies to explain organizational factors of ethical behaviors in business (Bullen & Flamholz, 1985; Saks, Mudrack, & Ashforth, 1996; Koh & Boo, 2001). Among the consequences, job satisfaction has mainly been explored in business and organizational behavioral sciences because the satisfaction that workers derive from their jobs might be viewed as "reflecting how they react to the entire panoply of job characteristics" (Hamermesh, 2001, p. 2). Thus, the linkage between ethics distress and job satisfaction among public relations practitioners will account for the importance of ethics in the public relations profession.

Research Questions

RQ1: Do public relations practitioners face an ethical challenge?

RQ2: To what extent are practitioners' perceived ethical conflict and their job satisfaction linked?

RQ3: In what cases do public relations practitioners perceive ethical conflict?

RQ4: What are the primary consequences of practitioners' perceived ethical challenges and job dissatisfaction?

Methodology

An open-ended question was adapted to collect qualitative data, for three reasons. First, open-ended questions allow researchers to closely explore the different dimensions of respondents' experiences (Sproull, 1988). Open-ended survey responses also can capture the diverse reality of the participants, which numeric data do not demonstrate (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Second, open-ended survey questions offer greater anonymity to respondents and often elicit more honest responses than individual in-depth interviews or focus group interviews (Erickson & Kaplan, 2002). Participants may feel more comfortable answering questions about ethical conflicts in an anonymous setting. Lastly, it is generally more cost-effective to collect participants' rich descriptions and opinions, in comparison to in-depth interviews or focus groups. For those reasons, the open-ended question survey would be more helpful in collecting data for the purpose of this study.

Online survey data were collected using a random sampling from the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) membership database. Independent PR consultants, firm owners, and educators were excluded from the sample. The first email invitation to the survey was sent on August 19, 2008, and the data collection continued until September 28, 2008, through the Web site www.surveymonkey.com. The response rate was about 5.6% (343 out of 6,126), and 30.6% (105) of the total participants answered the open-ended question. Thus, 105 answers became the total sample for this study.

The question asks participants when it is they perceive ethical conflict and to what degree is it related to their satisfaction with their work. The unit of analysis for the current study was

survey participants' text answers – experience and opinion, as described in their own words, which were categorized and analyzed as data (Harding, 1986; Hon, 1995).

Regarding the profile of practitioners who responded to the open-ended question, most (79.3%) of the respondents were women, and the average age was 43.56. Respondents in their 20s accounted for 15.4%, while 14.4% were in their 30s, 44.2% were in their 40s, 18.3% were in their 50s, and 11.2% were in their 60s. While 46.2% had a college degree, 50.9% had a master or higher degree. This is compatible with the profile of the total sample of 343 participants, presenting that 62.4% have a college degree, and 36.7% have a master or higher degree. Average experience in public relations industries was 15 to 16 years.

Results

Categories		Frequency	
Experience of ethical conflict N=105 (100%)	No: I have <u>rarely</u> faced ethics conflicts.	34.3%	(36)
	Yes: I have experienced ethics conflicts.	65.7%	(69)
		100%	(105)
Consequence of the conflict N=69 (100%)	1. I left the employer (turnover).	21.7%	(15)
	2. Ethical conflict is very closely related to my job satisfaction.	34.78%	(24)
	3. Ethical conflicts hurt my workplace well-being.	11.6%	(8)
The causes of ethical conflict N=69 (100%)	1. When the bosses or top management make and enforce ethically inappropriate decisions	21.7%	(15)
	2. Being forced to be silent.	10.14%	(7)
	3. When I was not given the option to discuss the ethical issue	10.14%	(7)
	4. Lack of professionalism	4.35%	(5)
	5. Feeling of unfairness or injustice	10.14%	(7)
	1. It is hard to get ethical things done.	4.35%	(5)
	2. Miscellaneous	5.80%	(4)

Table 1. The linkage between ethical conflict and job satisfaction

RQ1: Do public relations practitioners face an ethical challenge?

RQ2: To what extent are practitioners' perceived ethical conflict and their job satisfaction linked?

While only 34.3% (36) respondents answered that they rarely faced ethical conflict, 65.7% (69) respondents said they had experienced an ethical conflict. Participants who have not experienced the ethical dissonance simply said, e.g., "I have rarely been in that situation." However, people who suffered from such conflict sometimes emphasized their feelings with capitalized characters in the text, such as "VERY" and "EXTREMELY." The ethical concerns seem, at times to be so serious that practitioners undervalue what the respondents find satisfying in their work. One participant said:

I see so much potential for satisfaction, but the reality is that my boss thinks that they can pull wool over the eyes of the public when something is not flattering to the company's self-image ... It creates dissatisfaction and discomfort for me with my peers.

Although it is not easy to say that adherence to ethics can increase the level of satisfaction in public relations practice, an ethical challenge seems to clearly lead to job dissatisfaction. One person said:

There is a very strong relationship between ethical organizational standards and my job satisfaction. In situations where I took issue with the ethics of the organizations, I was extremely dissatisfied with my work and my organization, to the extent of having medical and emotional ailments as a result of the dissatisfaction.

RQ3: What are the primary consequences of practitioners' perceived ethical challenges and job dissatisfaction?

Participants said that they left their former employers to avoid ethical conflicts. The conflicts mainly occurred when public relations practitioners' individual moral standards conflicted with the employers' style of running the business. Practitioners in this category preferred to leave their workplace rather than go along with what they perceived as unethical practices. One respondent explained his/her case as follows:

I have recently left the company. One of the reasons I left my former employer was because I didn't feel they behaved ethically. This wasn't linked specifically to my PR work, but more to the way to management was running the organization, how they were making decisions, and how they were treating staff. I felt their behavior was not always professional and ethical. It became frustrating to the point where I was no longer happy there.

However, this does not mean that practitioners are passively dealing with the ethical conflict; in fact, turnover might be the very last choice to PR practitioners, who try to do something to change their organizations, but, if unsuccessful, they leave. As one respondent noted, "When I have felt ethical conflict, if I felt I could not change it or felt it was a core part of the business and corporate beliefs, I found new employment."

On the other hand, eight practitioners substantially described how the ethics conflict had a negative impact on their workplace well-being and job satisfaction. They experienced mental and emotional suffering from the conflict. Practitioners expressed the suffering using words such as “stress,” “unhappy,” “anxiety,” “discomfort,” and even “having medical and emotional ailments.”

As many of the job satisfaction studies have reported in the previous literature (Pugliesi, 1999), dissatisfaction may affect the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of public relations practitioners. The stress from workplace dissatisfaction might even threaten their personal lives.

RQ4: In what cases do public relations practitioners perceive ethical conflict?

In spite of the wide variety of factors triggering ethical conflict, the respondents generally described five causes of ethical conflict. Fifteen (21.7%) respondents frequently mentioned that the lack of ethicality in their bosses and top management affected ethical concerns. Practitioners said that they experienced ethical conflict when their bosses forced them to behave unethically. Supervisors’ unethical thoughts and decisions can definitely challenge employees’ ethical standards in the workplace. In particular, this problem limits public relations’ input in strategic decision-making. It is difficult for public relations practitioners to offer advice to the top management, if CEOs ignore the value of public relations and are not willing to listen to advice or adhere to ethical business practices. This issue may also be directly related to the level of ethical influence on public relations practitioners:

I feel like, in some organizations (ones with little communication among the staff), the role of the communicator is looked down upon. I do my best to be strong ethically, but feel pressure from top management to shut up; and if I do chime in, I’m discounted. I always find a way to stick my voice ... I don’t think they (top management) listen to me; and on some projects, I let them crash and burn, as I no longer take ownership of things I can’t control.

Seven (10.14%) respondents said that they had struggled to tell the truth because they are sometimes forced to keep silent, to only partially disclose information, or even to lie. Although telling the truth is emphasized in public relations ethics education, the challenges that practitioners actually encounter are complex. The line between being ethical and being unethical is sometimes unclear; e.g., keeping silent is regarded as proper by some public relations practitioners, while others think that it is definitely unethical. This complexity in telling the truth is one issue in public relations ethics. For example, one practitioner explained that, regarding a merger and acquisition, “[the] (new) reporting relationship” and “the level of public disclosure” kept him/her up at night. The stress was directly linked with job dissatisfaction and exhaustion.

Seven (10.14%) respondents also emphasized an open communication environment as offering hope in resolving the ethical conflict. Respondents believed that candid discussion of their ethical concerns with their bosses would resolve the conflicts because top management’s support for organizational ethicality is related to the open communication environment. Unethical or less ethical top management seldom listen to employees’ dissents, which

respondents said are based on (professional) knowledge. Thus, such open communication makes it possible for public relations practitioners to influence dominant coalitions. One respondent emphasized the importance of an openly communicative environment, as follows:

My ability to resolve ethical situations is very much impacted by job satisfaction ... If I worked in a situation with open and flexible management, we could discuss and make shared decisions based on what is right for the client (based on industry knowledge, not gut feelings). So ... the communication concerns make it more difficult to make ethical decisions.

Although public relations practitioners may want to exert an ethical influence on top management, 4.3% (3) respondents mentioned that it is a complex process to do so. Furthermore, obtaining internal support from other departments within the organization (i.e., legal department) is difficult, as is gaining access to top management.

Additionally, 7.5% (5) practitioners stressed that ethics should be at the heart of the identity of the public relations profession because ethics come from knowledge of what is right or wrong, appropriate or inappropriate. They said that ethical performances would make their practice professional and enhance the professional image. One shared his/her experience in terms of professionalism:

At my previous job, I worked at a small privately owned PR agency. Sometimes the owner/president would have me work on her personal affairs instead of for our clients. I felt that I was being taken advantage of and that it was unfair to our clients. She also used her “connections” to get new business ... Sometimes I felt as if PR were more of a hobby for her than a profession and that she wasn’t serious about it. She was not a member of PRSA. I never told her how I felt and only worked there for a year and a half.

Conclusion and Discussion

According to Maslow’s (1943) theory of human motivation, a human being’s highest need is self-fulfillment or to become actualized in what he or she is potentially. This is the final stage in which people want to achieve through their job. Ethical issues in workplaces may function as a critical standard by which a person estimates the quality of self-actualization in what he or she is doing. Thus, ethics and job satisfaction are inherently related in the public relations profession, which emphasizes ethics as its professional responsibility.

This research contributes to the body of knowledge of public relations in two ways. First, the proven linkage between ethics and job satisfaction indicates that the public relations profession cares about ethical concerns; many of the respondents make an effort to tell the truth and help their supervisors to make ethical decisions. Second, the qualitative data depicting causes of ethical conflict would be good resources from which further research can be generated. The findings of this study suggest a causal linkage between an organizational environment and ethics issues in public relations. Ultimately, this data suggest how to solve ethical conflicts and foster ethical practice in the public relations profession.

These findings illustrated that the ethical dilemmas or conflicts that practitioners confront in the workplace are numerous. More than half of the respondents answered that they have felt ethical conflict in their workplaces. They noted that the ethical distress was closely related to their satisfaction with their work. The results indicate that the ethics issue needs to be seriously addressed in both the industry and academia of public relations. The findings are unique in that they depict how ethical concerns influence the work life and well-being of public relations professionals.

Respondents noted that the ethicality of top management was the main cause of ethics conflicts, and problems might have been resolved if the issues were openly discussed and employees' input were valued. This suggests the importance of an open communication environment. The findings are consistent with the perspective of the Excellence Study, in which scholars argued that a horizontal and openly communicative structure is necessary for organizational effectiveness (Grunig, 1992; Pincus, 1986; Pincus & Rayfield, 1989). The findings also demonstrated that the open communication structure is indispensable in helping organizations make ethical decisions because employees' input is valued in this type of organization. By neglecting to value employees' or public relations practitioners' input, the public relations' role as a corporate conscience would not function well.

Meanwhile, practitioners who have recognized ethical conflicts were more likely to leave their companies because the conflicts affected their mental and even physical well-being in the workplace. This finding provides a rationale as to why ethics should be emphasized within the profession and public relations professionals' job satisfaction levels need to be considered along with ethical conflict. Ignorance to negative outcomes could result in a collective debility in the public relations profession. Although the practitioners who face ethical conflicts move to other employers, turnover is not an ultimate remedy to solve ethics issues in the long run.

In conclusion, the answers not only suggest the clear linkage between ethical issues and job satisfaction, but also demonstrate the complex relationship between ethics conflicts and job satisfaction among public relations practitioners. This is an area where future research is needed.

Limitation and suggestions for future studies

This study has revealed several limitations, which leads to future studies within this area. First, only 30.6% of the survey participants answered the open-ended question. This is because the question was a part of the large questionnaires, and answering the question was not mandatory. The online survey allowed participants to more easily skip the question, and it was not possible to ask for further description of their answers, which might have offered richer information. That is one of the inherent downsides to open-ended questions. Thus, future studies must center on open-ended questions in the survey design. Otherwise, other methods, such as a focus-group interview or an individual in-depth interview can be adopted. Second, the cases in which practitioners experience ethical distress were not specifically identified for the purpose of observing their relation to job satisfaction. It would be interesting, for future research, to collect the cases in which public relations practitioners experience ethical conflicts, dilemmas, and distress.

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Sailing through the Port: Does PR Education Prepare Students for the Profession?

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Abstract

Creating and maintaining a public relations curriculum that reflects industry changes and growth is a continuous task for university PR programs. In order to assess how well university PR programs are preparing future practitioners, this survey study asked beginning PR practitioners to rate themselves and employers to evaluate their new hires on PR-related knowledge and skills. Findings indicate that beginning PR practitioners believe that they are knowledgeable and skilled in many areas, whereas employers are skeptical of their new hires' confidence. Implications for PR educators are discussed.

Introduction

Many academic majors such as engineering, business, journalism and others that are producing industry professionals make great efforts to ensure that their curricula reflects changes and growth in the industry. Public relations is in the same boat. One of the most pressing questions for public relations educators has been whether or not university public relations programs are providing future practitioners with adequate training reflective of changes of the industry (CPRE, 1999, 2006). And, this question has become increasingly important in the past few years, as the communication media environment becomes more and more complex with technological advances (Alexander, 2004).

The public relations industry has experienced remarkable growth and changes in the past 20 years. Public relations companies have enjoyed continuous revenue growth (Council of Public Relations Firms, 2008), and the industry projects that employment will grow from 18 to 26 percent between 2004 and 2014 (Bureau of Labor, 2006, cited in the Commission on Public Relations Education Report, 2006). In responding to this growth, the public relations industry has become much more professionalized and specialized. Increasing numbers of universities train future public relations professionals with their specialized majors and minors, and the number of Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) chapters has increased to 284 with 9,600 students participating as members.

This study intends to assess how well university PR programs are preparing future practitioners by asking practitioners to rate themselves and others on PR-related knowledge and skills. The Commission on Public Relations Education (CPRE) has issued the Port of Entry reports (1999, 2006) with suggestions for undergraduate and graduate PR curriculum, and we used their list of knowledge and skills that PR majors should possess.

Findings indicate that beginning PR practitioners tend to believe that they are knowledgeable and skilled in many of the CPRE-recommend areas, whereas industry employers are skeptical of their new hires' knowledge and skill levels.

Public Relations Education

Public relations educators and professionals have made significant efforts to ensure that university PR programs reflect current changes in the industry. Since the CPRE's 1999 Port of Entry report, several influential studies were conducted (e.g., Neff, Walker & Creedon, 1999; Stacks, Botan & Turk, 1999; Turk, Botan & Morreale, 1999), and the findings of these studies were applied to PR curricula to ensure PR practitioners meet the demands of the industry.

While educators and practitioners often agree on what they want and need at both the entry level and the advanced level of practice, both agree that keeping up with the changes is a challenge and more improvement in this process can and should be made. In addition to keeping up with technology, some surveys found students need additional preparation in some other areas including crisis planning and business skills and concepts (Gower & Reber, 2006; Sriramesh & Hornaman, 2006).

Studies in the past have determined the skills and knowledge students need (CPRE, 1999, 2006; Sriramesh & Hornaman, 2006) and what level is actually found, but these studies must continue since the skill sets and the knowledge areas are changing and growing rapidly. Web and social media skill needs are rapidly changing as new uses for new media emerge and as new types of media adaptation occur. New theory is evolving about how Web 2.0 and social media are affecting communication and public relations campaigns and the goals and objectives the campaigns are in place to reach.

Public Relations and Web 2.0

Advances in communication technologies seem to be one of the most significant changes in the PR industry. PR practitioners today produce print news releases, newsletters, and brochures using InDesign and edit audio and visual materials with Avid. In addition, they seek out multiple communication venues using blogs, virtual worlds, wikis, and online social networks.

Recent developments including online social networks and PDAs expand the parameters of communication and provide PR practitioners a wide range of options for reaching the public. At the same time, Web 2.0 technologies enable audiences to become active participants of the communication process, and thus, challenge PR practitioners to re-think their relationship with the audience. More specifically, many PR practitioners welcome the potential of new media as technological advances enable them to directly communicate with their audiences without going through traditional media gatekeepers (Gillin, 2008). On the other hand, PR practitioners have to give up control over their messages and allow audience feedback and participation while determining the most effective way to reaching their target audiences.

Whether PR practitioners are ready to embrace new media technologies for their practices or not, technologies seem to advance at a faster rate than ever and the PR industry's adoption of technologies are widespread. A survey of working PR practitioners found that although the rate of adoption varies, new communication tools are continuously being adopted by practitioners (Eyrich et al., 2008). Some of the more established tools such as e-mail and intranet, the study

found, have been widely adopted, and the newer tools such as blogs and podcasts are adopted at an increasing speed. Practitioners, however, seem to be a little slow in adopting the more complicated and unfamiliar technologies such as virtual worlds and text messaging, the authors found.

In another survey conducted recently, Wright and Hinson (2008) found that a large number of practitioners (61%) believed that the emergence of social media including blogs has changed the way their organization communicated. About 66 percent of participants of this study also believed that blogs and social media have enhanced public relations practice.

Although the adoption of some of the new technologies is clearly happening, it is too early to predict the implications of this adoption. Many PR practitioners believe that some technologies such as podcasting, blogs, and video sharing will be prevalent as strategic tools in a few years (Eyrich et al., 2008). However, practitioners are not sure about the potential of other technologies such as gaming, virtual worlds, and micro-blogging (Eyrich et al., 2008). Yet, an overwhelming number of practitioners in one survey (94%) agreed that PR programs in colleges and universities should include instructions on blogging and social media in preparing future PR professionals (Wright and Hinson, 2008).

Because today's new technologies are developed and evolved so rapidly, the PR industry is still trying to figure out the most effective way to incorporate new technologies. Systematic research on this topic is rare but much needed.

Research Questions

RQ 1a. In what areas do beginning PR practitioners find themselves knowledgeable?

RQ 1b. In what areas do the PR industry's employers find their new hires knowledgeable?

RQ 2a. In what areas do beginning PR practitioners find themselves skillful?

RQ 2b. In what areas do the PR industry's employers find their new hires skillful?

RQ 3. In what ways is employers' evaluation of their new hires similar to or different from new hires' self-evaluation?

Method

A survey study was conducted among PRSA members, IABC members and other public relations practitioners in two Mid-western states. Researchers created an online survey and sent all members of PRSA and IABC in Indiana and Illinois (N=354) an e-mail request to participate in an online survey about public relations education. The authors explained the potential risks and voluntary and anonymous nature of the study and included the link to the survey site in the request e-mail. Of those who received the e-mail request, 117 participated in the survey, reaching the response rate of 33.1 percent. E-mail reminders of the survey were sent out three times during the months of February and March 2009, and the relatively high response rate is likely to be resulted from this.

Both PR practitioners who are new hires and employers answered a series of questions regarding PR practitioners' level of experience in the industry, courses taken at college,

perceived competence with conceptual and technical skills, and perceived competence with technological tools. The Commission on Public Relations Education's (CPRE) 1999 report suggested a set of knowledge and skills that undergraduate public relations majors should master, and these knowledge and skill sets were incorporated in the survey. Perceived competence with public relations knowledge¹ areas was measured by asking participants to indicate how knowledgeable they believe they are in 12 knowledge areas on a five-point Likert scale (not at all, barely, somewhat, quite, completely).

Perceived competence with the public relations-related skills² was measured by asking participants to indicate how competent they feel with 24 skills specified in the CPRE's 1999 report and with two technology-related skills on the same five-point Likert scale (not at all, barely, somewhat, quite, completely).

The study compared new hires' self-evaluation and employers' evaluation of new hires in terms of knowledge and skills. All participants were asked to self-rate their competence with PR-related knowledge and skills, but those who have been involved in hiring or evaluating their organizations' new employees in the past three years were also asked to rate their new hires' conceptual knowledge level and skills competence on the same categories.

Findings

As mentioned earlier, the study had a high response (33.1%) with 117 of 354 people participating the survey. Sixty-six percent of the participants were female and 32 percent were male. Among those who indicated their age, the age of participants varied from 23 to 79 with the average age of 43. Participants' years in the industry varied as much as their age reaching from 9 months to 40 years. Average work experience of the participants was 16.3 years.

¹ Communication and persuasion concepts, communication and public relations theory, relationships and relationship building, societal trends, ethical issues, legal requirements and issues, marketing and finance, public relations history, uses of research and forecasting, multicultural and global issues, organizational change and development, and management concepts and theories

² Management of information, mastery of language in written communication, mastery of language in oral communication, problem solving, negotiation, management of communication, strategic planning, issues management, audience segmentation, informative writing, persuasive writing, areas specialty (such as community relations, consumer relations, employee relations), technological and visual literacy, development of new media/message strategies, design and layout of messages using new media, managing people, programs and resources, sensitive interpersonal communication, fluency in a foreign language, ethical decision-making, participation in the professional, public relations community, message production, working with a current issue, research methods and analysis, public speaking and presentation, and applying cross-cultural and cross-gender sensitivity

Beginning public relations practitioners in the sample showed different statistics. There were more women (70.6%) than men; the average age was 29 (mode = 26); and the average work experience was a little short of three years (mean = 2.8 years).

In what areas do beginning PR practitioners find themselves knowledgeable?

Distinctions in areas in which PR practitioners find themselves knowledgeable and where they feel that they lack expert knowledge were found. As table 1 indicates, relationships and relationship building was the area where beginning PR practitioners felt they knew the most (mean = 3.79; 1 being not at all knowledgeable and 5 being completely knowledgeable). More than 7 out of 10 practitioners answered that they are either quite (4 on a scale of 1-5) or completely (5 on a scale of 1-5) knowledgeable in relationships and relationship building.

More than 60 percent of those with 5-years-or-less work experience in PR said that they are quite or completely knowledgeable in communication persuasion concepts (64.3%, mean = 3.66), followed by the area of communication strategies where almost equal number of people (63.6%, mean = 3.65) indicated that they are quite or completely knowledgeable. Slightly over half of the practitioners in this study also rated their knowledge with ethical issues above average (57.1%, mean = 3.64).

In some other areas, however, beginning PR practitioners in this study expressed their lack of knowledge. Fewer than 2 out of 10 practitioners felt that they are quite or completely knowledgeable in public relations history (16.1%, mean = 2.86) and multicultural and global issues (16.1%, mean = 2.91). Legal issues and requirement (mean = 3.12), research and forecasting (mean = 3.21), and organizational change and development (mean = 3.25) are the other areas where beginning practitioners felt that they are not at all, barely, or somewhat knowledgeable.

In what areas do the PR industry's employers find their new hires knowledgeable?

Perhaps not surprisingly, employers in the PR industry have high expectations of their new hires. There was not one knowledge area where majority of employers rated their new hires' knowledge good or very good. A varying number of employers in this study said that their new hires have good or very good knowledge in CPRE-recommended 12 knowledge areas (8.3% -- 43.1%), but the percentage never exceeded 50 percent.

To be more specific, table 1 shows that about four out of every 10 employers indicated that their new hires have good or very good knowledge in communication and persuasion concepts (43.1%, mean = 3.80), communication strategies (40.0%, mean = 3.79), and relationships and relationship building (38.9%, mean = 3.89). Only a small percentage of employers was very satisfied with new hires' knowledge in public relations history (8.3%, mean = 3.05), management concepts and theories (11.3%, mean = 3.45), and legal issues and requirements (13.9%, mean = 3.30).

Examining from the mean score clearly showed that employers find new hires' knowledge in these areas only acceptable. A good number of employers appear to believe that their new hires have an "acceptable" amount knowledge in almost all areas. Overall mean of 12 items was 3.5, right between acceptable (3) and good (4), with the lowest mean of 3.0 (Multicultural & global issues) and the highest mean of 3.9 (relationships & relationship building).

When we included the percentage of those who rated new hires' knowledge level acceptable, over 80 percent of employers indicated that their new employees have at least "acceptable" knowledge level in relationships and relation building (83%), societal trends (89%), ethical issues (89%), communication and persuasion concepts (90%), and communication strategies (91%). More than 60 percent of employers rated their new hires' knowledge at least acceptable in management concepts and theories (63%), organizational change and development (65%), marketing and finance (67%), multicultural and global issues (67%), public relations history (68%), and research and forecasting (68%). However, even when acceptable responses were included, only 43 percent of employees were satisfied with new employees' knowledge in legal issues and requirements, leaving more than half of employers rating their employees' knowledge in this area poor or very poor.

In what areas do beginning PR practitioners find themselves skillful?

As table 2 shows, beginning PR practitioners believed that they were more than somewhat competent with 24 skills areas examined in this study (22 CPRE-recommended areas plus 2 new media-related areas). On the scale where 1 indicated not at all competent and 5 indicated completely competent, practitioners with 5-years-or-less experiences rated their competence level in skills areas, at least acceptable (3), with the exception of "fluency in a second language" (mean = 2.0). Overall average on all of the 24 items was 3.7.

Beginning PR practitioners indicated that they were at least quite competent with 12 skill areas out of 24 skill areas. More than seven in every 10 PR practitioners with 5-years-or-less experiences said that they are quite or completely competent with written communication language mastery (89%), writing and production of specific communication messages (88%), management of communication (86%), problem solving (84%), informative writing (82%), ethical decision making (82%), area specialty (82%), management of information (80%), working within a current issue environment (73%), oral communication mastery (73%), persuasive writing (72%), and sensitive interpersonal communication (70%).

Beginning PR practitioners indicated that they are "not at all" or "barely" competent in only one of the 24 skill areas examined: fluency in a second language.

In what areas do the PR industry's employers find their new hires skillful?

Judging from the mean score, PR industry's employers in this study rated their new employees' skills "acceptable" rather than "good" or "very good," with the mean score varied from 2.0 to 3.7. Employers rated their new hires' competence level at least acceptable in 14 of the 24 skills areas. Those included: management of information (3.4), mastery of written communication language (3.5), mastery of oral communication language (3.4), problem solving (3.2), management of communication (3.2), informative writing (3.3), persuasive writing (3.1), area specialty (3.1), technology and visual literacy (3.7), new media message strategies (3.3), design and layout (3.3), writing and production of specific communication messages (3.4), working within a current issue environment (3.2), and applying cross-cultural and cross-gender sensitivity (3.1).

However, there were many areas where employers rated their new hires' skill competence less than acceptable. In 10 of the 24 skills areas, new employees' skills were rated "less than acceptable" and those included: strategic planning (2.8), issues management (2.8),

audience segmentation (2.96), managing people, programs and resources (2.8), sensitive interpersonal communication (2.9), fluency in a second language (2.0), participation in the professional PR community (2.8), and public speaking and presentation (2.9).

Although employers evaluated new hires' competence with various skills as only slightly beyond "acceptable," few employers believe their new employees' skills competence is poor or very poor. Regarding 18 of 24 skills areas, at least 70 percent of employers rated new hires' competence acceptable, good, or very good. Only in five of 24 skills areas 30 to 40 percent of employers rated new hires' skills competence as poor or very poor. Those were: managing people, programs, and resources (33%), issues management (34%), participation in the professional PR community (35%), strategic planning (40%), and negotiation (41%). Fluency in a second language was the only area where a large number of employers said that their new employees are not competent (73%).

In what ways are employers' evaluations of their new hires similar to or different from new hires' self-evaluation?

Perhaps not surprisingly, new employees' evaluation of their own knowledge and skill levels seems to be more generous than employers' evaluation of their new hires' knowledge and skill levels. However, the comparison between new employees' self-evaluation and employers' evaluation of their new hires presents both similarities and differences. First, both beginning practitioners and employers similarly evaluated beginning practitioners' knowledge of communication and persuasion concepts, communication strategies, and societal trends. Forty to 60 percent of beginning practitioners stated that they are quite or completely knowledgeable in these areas, and about forty percent of employers rated their new employees' knowledge level in these areas good or very good.

However, the two groups' evaluation differed greatly in some knowledge and skills areas. For example, while more than half of new employees stated that they are quite or completely knowledgeable in ethical issues, only 26 percent of employers said that their new employees' knowledge in ethical issues is good or very good. Knowledge levels in relationships and relationship building are another area. More than 75 percent of beginning practitioners said that they are quite or completely knowledgeable in this area, whereas only 39 percent of employers rated their employees' knowledge level the same way.

Discrepancies between beginning practitioners' self-evaluation and employers' evaluation of new employees also exist in several skills areas. Negotiation, management of communication, command in written language, ethical decision making, and writing and production of specific communication messages are the areas with sharpest discrepancies. For example, about 9 of 10 beginning practitioners (88.2%) stated that they are quite or completely skillful in negotiation, while only one of 10 employers (11.0%) stated that their new employees' negotiation skills are good or very good. Beginning practitioners indicated that they are skilled in management of communication (76.4%), but employers tended to disagree (24.7%). Similar discrepancies were observed in command in written language (94% vs. 45%), ethical decision-making (82% vs. 34%), and writing and production of specific communication messages (88% vs. 40%).

The comparison of the two groups also reveals knowledge and skills areas to which public relations educators might need to pay attention. Both beginning practitioners and

employers expressed new employees' lack of knowledge and skills in several areas. The knowledge areas where both groups rated poorly included: legal issues and requirements (5.9% of beginning practitioners & 13.9% of employers), marketing and finance (17.6% & 17.8%), PR history (5.9% & 8.3%), research and forecasting (17.6% & 22.2%), multicultural issues (11.8% & 17.1%), organizational changes and development (11.8% & 16.9%), and management concepts and theories (23.5% & 11.3%). The skill areas where both groups rated poorly included: issue management (5.9% & 12.4%), audience segmentation (23.5% & 21.9%), strategic planning (35.3% & 19.5%), design and layout using new media (23.5% & 40.2%), managing people, programs, and resources (41.2% & 11.1%), fluency in 2nd language (5.9% & 8.2%), professional organization participation (47.1% & 22.2%), public speaking and presentation (41.2% & 21.9%), and cross-cultural and cross-gender sensitivity (41.2% & 25.3%).

Discussions & Conclusion

By examining beginning public relations practitioners' perceived competency in the CPRE-recommended knowledge and skills areas and by comparing it to employers' evaluation of new hires' knowledge and skill levels, this study intended to shed light on public relations education.

The findings of this study indicated that beginning public relations practitioners and employers in the industry do not necessarily agree on the competence levels of PR practitioners new to the field. Public relations practitioners with five years or less experience seem to believe that they are knowledgeable and skilled in many CPRE-recommended areas, whereas the industry's employers are rather skeptical of their employees' knowledge and skill level.

The findings also revealed that both beginning practitioners and the industry employers are not confident in several of CPRE-recommended areas. Beginning practitioners and employers agreed that knowledge in legal issues, research and forecasting, and organizational change and development should be strengthened and that skills in issue management, strategic planning, and managing people, persons, and resources should be honed. Public relations educators should pay attention to this finding and provide more education and training to increase students' competence in these areas.

One of the interesting findings of this study came from qualitative inquiry. Employers expressed their concerns about new hires' writing skills in the survey's open-ended question. More than half of employers who indicated other areas in which they wish their new employees had more knowledge stated better command of English language, writing and editing ability, and knowledge of AP style. More than 70 percent of employers wrote in writing and editing skills when asked to indicate the areas where they wished their new employees had further skills. This finding tells us that the most important communication skill for public relations practitioners and perhaps other communication professionals to possess is the most basic communication skill – clear writing for intended audiences. This finding is particularly poignant as many of us mistake the use of the newest technologies and techniques available for the most effective way of communication.

Public relations educators should be mindful of this study's findings in training of future PR practitioners and strive to better prepare students for knowledge and skills that can help them succeed in professional field.

Table 1. Evaluations of PR Practitioners (self-evaluation vs. evaluation by employers): Knowledge/Conceptual Understanding

Knowledge Areas	Beginning PR Practitioners' Self-Evaluation	PR Employers' Evaluation of New Hires
	% ^a of "Quite" or "Completely"	% ^b of "Good" or "Very Good"
Communication and persuasion concepts	58.8	43.1
Communication strategies	58.8	40.0
Relationships, relationship building	76.5	38.9
Societal trends	41.1	37.5
Ethical issues	53.0	26.4
Legal issues and requirements	5.9	13.9
Marketing and Finance	17.6	17.8
Public relations history	5.9	8.3
Research & Forecasting	17.6	22.2
Multicultural & global issues	11.8	17.1
Organizational change & development	11.8	16.9
Management concepts & theories	23.5	11.3

- a. Percentages represent those who answered "quite" or "completely" to the question, "How knowledgeable do you believe you are in the following areas? The scale categories were not at all, barely, somewhat, quite, and completely.
- b. Percentages represent those who answered "good" or "very good" to the question, "How would you rate your new hires' knowledge in the following areas? The scale categories were very poor, poor, acceptable, good, and very good.
- c. Percentages represent those who answered "quite" or "completely" to the question, "How competent are you with the following skills? The scale categories: Not at all, barely, somewhat, quite, and completely

- d. Percentages represent those who answered “good” or “very good” to the question, “How would you rate your new hires’ competence with the following skills? The scale categories: Very poor, poor, acceptable, good, and very good

Table 2. Evaluations of PR Practitioners (self-evaluation vs. evaluation by employers): Skills

Skill Areas	Beginning PR Practitioners’ Self-Evaluation	PR Employers’ Evaluation of New Hires
	% ^c “Quite” or “Completely”	% ^d “Good” or “Very Good”
Management of information	70.6	35.6
Mastery of language in written communication	94.1	45.2
Mastery of language in oral communication	56.3	38.4
Problem solving	70.6	32.0
Negotiation	88.2	11.0
Management of communication	76.4	24.7
Strategic planning	35.3	19.5
Issues management	5.9	12.4
Audience segmentation	23.5	21.9
Informative writing for various audiences	82.4	39.7
Persuasive writing for various audiences	53.0	29.1
Area specialty (community relations, investor relations, etc.)	58.9	26.0
Technology & visual literacy	53.0	57.6
New media message strategies	41.2	38.3
Design & layout of messages using new media	23.5	40.2
Managing people, programs, or resources	41.2	11.1
Sensitive interpersonal communication	56.3	18.1
Fluency in a second language	5.9	8.2
Ethical decision making	82.4	34.2

Participation in the profession PR community	47.1	22.2
Writing & production of specific communication messages	88.2	40.3
Working within a current issue environment	70.6	30.6
Public speaking & presentation	41.2	21.9
Applying cross-cultural & cross-gender sensitivity	41.2	25.3

Table 3. Top 5 Strong and Weak Knowledge Areas

	Beginning practitioners' self-evaluation	Employers' evaluation of their new hires
Strongest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relationships and relationship building Communication & persuasion concepts Communication strategies Ethical issues Societal trends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication & persuasion concepts Communication strategies Relationships & relationship building Societal trends Ethical issues
Weakest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal issues PR history Multicultural & global issues Organizational change & development Research & forecasting Marketing & finance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PR history Management of concepts & theories Legal issues Organizational change & development Multicultural & global issues

Table 4. Top 5 Strong and Weak Skill Areas

	Beginning practitioners' self-evaluation	Employers' evaluation of their new hires
Strongest	Command over written language Negotiation Writing & production of specific comm. messages Ethical decision making Informative writing	Technology & visual literacy Command over written language Writing & production of specific comm. Messages Design & layout of messages using new media Command over oral language
Weakest	Issue management 2 nd language Audience segmentation Design & layout of messages using new media Strategic planning	2 nd language Negotiation Issue management Managing people, programs, or resources Sensitive interpersonal comm.

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An Integrated Model of Media Selection in Strategic Communication Campaigns

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Abstract

This study offers an integrated model of media selection in strategic communication. The model builds on ideas of the media richness theory (Daft & Lengel, 1984) and the channel expansion theory (Carlson & Zmud, 1999). The proposed model offers more opportunities for researchers and practitioners to accurately predict in what cases what type of communication channel should be used in order to achieve an efficient communication. This study argues that the efficient communication is possible through the use of both rich and lean channels, as well as less efficient communication is also possible through the use of both rich and lean media. The model consists of two dimensions: rich media - lean media continuum and efficient communication – inefficient communication continuum.

Public relations profession is often viewed as a form of strategic communication, which assumes planned communication campaigns (Botan, 1997). Grunig and Repper (1992) called for a strategic approach to public relations, where public relations practitioner would determine strategy and tactics of the campaign. According to Pfau and Wan (2006), strategic communication sees public relations practitioner as a troubleshooter, who identifies the problem, researches it, sets the objectives, and determine what needs to be done and how.

Public relations as a strategic communication is used for many purposes: corporate communication, health communication, public diplomacy, investor relations, community relations, international public relations, crisis communication, and many others. Botan (2006) argued that strategic communication essentially builds on three levels of planning: grand strategy, strategy, and tactics. A grand strategy can be described as an organization's worldview or vision. A strategy in public relations is a campaign-level decision making that involves mobilizing and arranging resources and arguments for implementing company's grand strategy. Tactics are "the doing or technical aspect of public relations" (p. 226) activities through which strategies are implemented (Botan, 2006).

While many theories and models offer a wide variety of tools for identifying problems and crafting communication strategies, fewer, if any, theories help public relations practitioner to choose an appropriate communication tool or tactic to achieve a certain strategic goal. For example, a number of theories and models help public relations practitioner to identify a problem and a public, and to set objectives. Among them issue managements (Cable & Vibbert, 1985), excellence theory (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002), public relations roles (Dozier, 1992), situational theory of publics (Grunig and Hunt, 1984). There are also a number of theories that help to choose strategies, such as Situational Crisis Communication Theory (Coombs, 1998).

The reality is, existing public relations scholarship failed to pay attention to how and why strategic communication chooses media channels for its strategic purposes. The art of choosing an appropriate audience or public achieved exceptional heights, yet no literature talks about how strategic communicator (public relations practitioner) needs to choose an appropriate channel in order to effectively reach the identified public. For instance, in order to make any strategic communication effort efficient, public relations practitioner needs to understand with the help of what media channel it can be achieved. Should a public relations practitioner use e-mail? Phone? Fax? Press-conference? The answer is: it depends.

It depends on the goal of strategic communication, on the task itself, on previous experiences with the media, the communication partner, and discussed topic. These are the variables that need to be accounted for when a public relations practitioner chooses a media channel for a certain purpose. To answer the question of how and in what order these variables need to be entered into the equation, this study offers an integrated model of media selection in strategic communication. This proposed model combined the ideas of media richness theory (Daft & Lengel, 1984) and channel expansion theory (Carlson & Zmud, 1999).

The proposed integrated model of media selection in strategic communication can provide a useful framework for understanding how public relations practitioners should choose an appropriate communication channel in order to achieve an efficient communication. This model might also provide a valuable insight on what influences the efficiency of communication. It can be useful to both public relations practitioners and theoreticians.

Public relations practitioners can use this model in strategic communication campaigns. By using the guidelines provided by the model, practitioner will be able to improve the efficiency of their communication by choosing a medium of the right richness. Moreover, through integrating several variables, this model ensures its descriptive and predictive validity. This can move forward public relations scholarship by improving our understanding of the process of media selections by professionals.

Theoretical Foundations of the Model

The proposed integrated model of media selection has been developed out of two related organizational communication theories: media richness theory (Daft & Lengel, 1984) and channel expansion theory (Carlson & Zmud, 1999). Both of these theories attempt to explain characteristics of a media channel in terms of its richness. Media richness refers to a channel's relative ability to convey messages that *communicate rich information*, and therefore explains how and why people choose a particular medium to communicate with others. The concept of information richness was first introduced by Daft & Lengel (1984) in order to explain how organizations meet the need for information and reduction of equivocality in communication. Authors explained equivocality as "the existence of multiple and conflicting interpretations about an organizational situation" (Daft, Lengel, & Trevino, 1987, p. 357).

Daft and Lengel (1984) also proposed that communication media vary in the richness of information processed. Moreover, communication media were proposed to fit along a 5-step continuum. Initial classification of this media continuum included face-to-face discussion, phone calls, letters, written documents and numeric documents. According to this continuum, the face-to-face medium conveys the richest information while formal numeric documents convey the least rich information. The media richness theory (Daft & Lengel, 1984) also offers a set of

objective characteristics that determine each medium's capacity to carry rich information, with rich information being more capable than lean information of reducing equivocality in a message received (Carlson & Zmud, 1999). Richness is traditionally defined in terms of a medium's ability to: 1) send multiple cues through multiple channels of communication, 2) support the use of language variety, 3) provide immediate feedback, and 4) support a high degree of personalness.

Daft and Lengel (1984) theorized that rich media are needed to process information about complex (equivocal) topics. According to the authors, managers will turn to rich media when they deal with the difficult and equivocal topics. Whereas media low in richness are suited to simple topics, because they do not provide means to convey personal feelings or feedback. At the same time Daft and Lengel argued that extensive face-to-face-meeting for simple communication task might also be inefficient. Face-to-face discussion sends a variety of cues, which may not always agree with one another. Facial expression may distract from words. Multiple cues can distract the receiver's attention from the routine message. Thus, Daft and Lengel (1984) argued that certain media work only for certain communication tasks.

Criticism of the Media Richness Theory

The prescriptive manner of the theory and conflicting findings of the multiple studies on media richness has generated a lot of discussion and criticism of the theory. For example, it was originally thought that *richness* was an inherent characteristic of a communication medium that is invariant across different uses of medium. However, many researchers did not agree that richness is an inherent property of the media. In fact, they argued that richness is an emergent property of the media and its context (Ferry, Kydd, & Sawyer, 2001).

Markus (1994) also pointed to some weaknesses of the theory. First, she suggested that media richness scale may be inaccurate. Markus challenged the theory's ability to explain media choices with "newer" media such as e-mail. The researcher argued that the richness scale "may be irrelevant, because there are more important determinants of individual behavior than personal perceptions of media appropriateness as defined by information richness theory" (Markus, 1994, pp. 506–507). Therefore, she reasoned, media richness theory could not accurately predict when people would use e-mail.

Another criticism of the theory was that media richness theory has generally been supported when tested on so-called traditional media, such as face-to-face communication, telephone, letters, and memos (Russ, Daft & Lengel, 1990). However, inconsistent empirical findings have resulted from the introduction of so-called new media, such as e-mail and voice mail (Fulk & Rye, 1994; Markus, 1994). For example, some studies (Rice & Love, 1987) have shown that e-mail enable reasonably rich communication, but other studies have indicated that users perceive such channels as relatively lean (Schmitz & Fulk, 1991). These inconsistencies have encouraged a reconsideration of the descriptive and predictive validity of media richness theory for the new media (Carlson & Zmud, 1999).

Among the approaches taken have been efforts to more systematically examine the task characteristics that motivate communication behavior (Fulk & Boyd, 1991; Rice, 1992), symbolic and situational influences (Rice, 1992; Trevino et al, 1987, 1990), and social influences (Fulk, 1993; Rice, 1993; Schmitz & Fulk, 1991). However, research examining the effects of social influences on richness perceptions has itself proven inconsistent. In some circumstances,

social influences are not predictive of richness perceptions (Fulk, 1993; Rice, 1993), and some studies found no significant role for social influence in prediction of perceptions or selection (Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1989).

Channel Expansion Theory

Carlson and Zmud (1999) went further to examine the effect of social influence on perceptions of media richness. They identified social influences that can potentially change or expand the capability of a medium being rich – previous experience with the medium, previous experience with the communication partner, and previous experience with the topic. They argued that as individuals develop experience communicating, this increases their ability to communicate effectively in various situational contexts through a particular channel, and people tend to perceive the channel as becoming increasingly rich (Carlson & Zmud, 1999). These individuals are also likely to interpret messages received on this channel more richly because they can interpret an increasing variety of cues. In other words, as people become more familiar with the medium, their perceptions of a communication medium are likely to change. This idea represents the main assumption of the channel expansion theory.

Carlson and Zmud (1999) argued that by measuring prior knowledge-building experiences related to use of a medium, the prediction of media selection would be more precise. In particular, experiences with a communication partner, medium, and topic would allow organizational members to develop their own unique perceptions of a medium (Timmerman & Madhavapeddi, 2008). It would also provide the users with previous experiences to develop mechanisms that would allow them to utilize seemingly inappropriate media but still generate positive communication outcomes.

Carlson and Zmud (1999) conducted a study and found relationships between knowledge-building experiences and perceptions of the richness of electronic mail. The data revealed that experiences with a communication medium, partner, and organization were positively related to perceptions of e-mail richness and that these variables accounted for more variation than the frequency with which the medium was used. As users' levels of knowledge-building experiences with a medium and communication partner increased, so did perceptions of e-mail richness (D'Urso & Rains, 2008). Timmerman and Madhavapeddi (2008) also conducted a study to see whether knowledge-building experiences operate similarly for more advanced technologies or even traditional media, and whether inherent features of a medium may constrain the degree to which a channel may "expand." They also tested whether relatively "lean" media (e.g., written documents) can expand to the degree that they may be used as effectively as objectively richer media. Timmerman and Madhavapeddi's study (2008) supported channel expansion theory's claims that knowledge-building experiences with a medium, communication partner, and topic are positively related to perceptions of a medium's richness and that these relationships are fairly consistent across e-mail, telephone, and face-to-face media.

Limitations of Existing Theories

Prior studies (Daft & Lengel, 1984; Fulk, 1993; Markus, 1994; Rice 1992) have treated media richness perceptions as fixed for a given individual. Original work on media richness (Daft & Lengel, 1984) argued that *richness* is an inherent characteristic of a communication medium that is invariant across different uses of medium. According to channel expansion theory,

however, this may not be the case. Depending on previous experiences, perceptions of a communication medium are likely to vary across users. In fact, several researchers argue that richness is an emergent property of the media and its context (Carlson & Zmud, 1999; D'Urso & Rains, 2008; Ferry, Kydd, & Sawyer, 2001; Timmerman & Madhavapeddi, 2008). Timmerman and Madhavapeddi (2008) even argued that the medium remains constant across users and tasks; it is the experience that appears to have impact upon users' beliefs about the potential effectiveness of the medium.

Although significant work has been done investigating how media richness affects media selection (Daft & Lengel, 1984; Fulk, 1993; Markus, 1994; Rice 1992) and use, and how richness perceptions are developed (Carlson & Zmud, 1999; D'Urso & Rains, 2008; Ferry, Kydd, & Sawyer, 2001; Timmerman & Madhavapeddi, 2008), little attention has been given to the question of *what is actually being measured*: is it the richness of a channel or the richness of communication itself? Although media richness theory (Daft & Lengel, 1984) and channel expansion theory (Carlson & Zmud, 1999) provide a good explanation of media selection process based on the media richness perceptions, both of these theories failed to distinguish between the channel or medium and the communication itself. Both theories interchangeably use the terms "medium", "channel", "media channel", and "communication channel" (Carlson & Zmud, 1999; Daft & Lengel, 1984)

Rasters, Vissers, and Dankbaar (2002) were one of the first researchers to distinguish between the communication channel and communication itself. Rasters et al. offered to use the terms of rich and poor communication in addition to rich and lean media, implying that the medium itself cannot be rich or lean, but it is the communication that makes it rich or poor. According to Rasters et al. (2002), rich communication happens when those who are communicating are able to convey what they think needs to be conveyed. Thus, if the communication enables interactants to exchange the messages they want to exchange, this medium does allow rich communication even though it is lean according to the definition of media richness theory.

This study proposes the model of media selection that integrates most important concepts of media richness theory (Daft & Lengel, 1984) and channel expansion theory (Carlson & Zmud, 1999). In particular, the model uses rich and lean media continuum along with the concept of the need for reduced equivocality in communication as proposed by Daft and Lengel (1984). The model also utilizes the concept of knowledge building experiences proposed by Carlson and Zmud (1999), which includes previous experience with the medium, communication partner, and topic. The proposed model of the media selection also makes a distinction between the medium and communication as proposed by Rasters et al. (2002). The following section presents all integrated concepts in detail.

Description of the Model

First of all, this study must distinguish between channel/medium and communication. Thus, a *channel* or a *medium* is defined as being a physical means to facilitate communication (a device). The criteria for determining medium's richness or leanness were identified in the original work by Daft and Lengel (1984): 1) ability to send multiple cues through multiple channels of communication, 2) ability to support the use of language variety, 3) ability to provide immediate feedback, and 4) ability to support a high degree of personalness.

The study also separates *communication* and defines it as a process to impart information from a sender to a receiver through the use of a medium (Severin & Tankard, 2001). This study argues that communication process can fluctuate from being efficient to less efficient to inefficient. The level of communication efficiency is an outcome of the individual's use of channel. The efficient communication is considered as communication that has achieved its goal, the less efficient and inefficient communication is the communication that failed to attain its goals partially or completely.

Dimensions of the Model

Therefore, building on ideas of Daft and Lengel (1984), Carlson and Zmud (1999), and Rasters et al. (2002) this study offers an integrated model of media selection in strategic communication that consists of two dimensions: 1) rich media - lean media continuum and 2) efficient communication – inefficient communication continuum (see Figure 1).

Rich media – lean media continuum. The proposed integrated model of media selection builds on the assumptions that the richness is an inherent characteristic of a channel, and can be measured by capacity for immediate feedback, high concentration of cues, personalization, and language variety (Daft & Lengel, 1984). Consequently, lean media are static and do not provide additional information for the interactants. Richness or leanness is a physical characteristic of a channel. Thus, face-to-face communication will always be considered as a richer channel or medium because it fits all four criteria of richness, whereas e-mail will be considered as a leaner channel because of its lack of cues and lower capacity for immediate feedback.

Efficient communication – inefficient communication continuum. The efficiency of communication is an emergent characteristic of communication and can be measured by its ability to facilitate meaning and information exchange. However, when communication interactants are unable to exchange the messages they want to exchange (regardless the medium that is used), communication is inefficient. Thus, efficient communication in strategic communication campaigns can be considered as the one that accomplished the objectives of a communication task, whether it is a simple dissemination of information or a co-creation of meaning. For example, the objectives of a communication task were to explain the advantages of a new product. By measuring to what extent the objectives were fulfilled, we can also measure how efficient a strategic communication was.

Determinants of Media Selection

The channel expansion theory (Carlson & Zmud, 1999) argued that previous experiences with the channel, communication partner and topic influence the perception of the channel's richness. The proposed integrated model of media selection argues that previous experiences influence the perceptions of communication, not of the channel.

Previous experience with the medium. Previous experience with the medium can build confidence in a communicator that the medium, indeed, support efficient communication. Experience with a medium also allows users to learn about the features of a medium in addition to its limitations. For instance, evidence indicates that as a user's experience with e-mail grows, this medium is seen as increasingly appropriate for difficult tasks such as those involving the resolution of disagreements and important decision-making activities (Carlson & Zmud, 1995; Timmerman & Madhavapeddi, 2008). On the contrary, if a communicator is lacking previous

experience with a medium, any channel or medium may not allow for efficient communication. For example, if a communicator never participated in a news conference (a form of face-to-face communication) s/he may fail to produce efficient communication using rich communication channel. Channel experience can be measured in terms of how long a channel has been used, the number of messages sent, how comfortable a user with this particular medium, et cetera.

Previous experience with the communication partner. The same can be true for previous experiences with the communication partner, which consists of the shared interactions and mutual learning that takes place between two individuals (Timmerman & Madhavapeddi, 2008). As two communication partners interact, they learn the characteristics of one another as well as each others' communicative practices, including language patterns and expectations for message construction. Thus, if a communicator had previous experience with his communication partner, then s/he knows what to expect and how to construct communication in order for it to be efficient. For example, for a public relations practitioner who has acquaintances in the media it is enough to communicate with them via e-mail or by phone in order to reach efficient communication. Whereas for those public relations practitioners who do not have previous experience working with the media representatives, communication might be more efficient if s/he would use a richer channel, such as face-to-face communication. Experience with the communication partner can be measured in terms of how often communication occurs, for how long communication partners have been communicating, and et cetera.

Previous experience with the topic. Just as public relations practitioners' experiences with the channel and communication partners, their level of knowledge about typical topics of discussions also influences the efficiency of communication. By learning the meaning behind various technical terms and concepts, the efficiency of their communication might be improved. For example, a public relations practitioner who is well-acquainted with a topic of the new insurance policy can provide more efficient communication using a channel of any richness. Consequently, those practitioners that are not familiar with the topic may not provide efficient communication using even the richest channel of the face-to-face communication. Experience with topic can be measure in terms of how well a communicator knows technical terms, whether s/he had previously discussions on the topic or whether a communicator was trained in the area of the topic discussed, et cetera.

As indicated by the model (see Figure 1), the media selection process in strategic communication is multidimensional and depends on several factors discussed earlier in this section. Multidimensional process of media selection means that when a public relations practitioner wants to choose a communication channel, s/he needs to think simultaneously about the desired level of efficiency in communication and previous experiences with communication channel, partner, and topic. Thus, this model proposes that the efficient communication is possible through both rich and lean communication channels, as well as less efficient communication is also possible through both rich and lean communication channels.

According to the model in order for communication to be efficient through the use of rich channel, strategic communicator must posses the knowledge of how to use the channel, to know his or her communication partner, and to have an understanding of the topic. An example of efficient communication through the use of rich medium can be an in-store demonstration of the product. If a promoter has previous experience of in-store demonstration, possesses the necessary knowledge about the product and relatively acquainted with the characteristics of the audience,

s/he would be comfortable with doing it. In this case, the communication will be considered efficient if the information about the product that needed to be communicated was communicated. However, it is possible for communication to be equally efficient through the use of a lean channel (see Figure 1.). For example, when communicator has experience with such lean channel as an e-mail, is well familiar with the topic and acquainted with his or her communication partner the communication can easily achieve its goal, i.e. become efficient.

At the same time, if the communicator does not possess all necessary knowledge that builds through previous experience, the communication might be less efficient even with the use of rich channel (see Figure 1). For example, communicator that has not previous experience holding news conference, communicating with the media, and is not familiar with the topic cannot provide efficient communication. The same is true for communication through the lean channel. For example, when a communicator does not have previous experiences with such lean channel as an instant messenger, and his or her communication partner, this communication can turn into a disaster. An imprudent use of an ambiguous icon (smiley) in instant messenger can cause misunderstanding and fail the communication goal.

Summary and Implications

Strategic communication literature has been lacking research on what drives the media choice in strategic communication campaigns. Therefore, this paper presents an integrated model of media selection in strategic communication. The proposed model offers an opportunity for researchers and practitioners to accurately predict in what cases what type of media can be used. Daft and Lengel (1984) argued that based on the situation, the members of organizations, and in our case those members are public relations practitioners, would deliberately choose a proper media. According to existing richness imperative, in cases when an organization wants to avoid misinterpretation of a message, it would choose a richer medium. Yet, the proposed integrated model of media selection takes into consideration the desired outcome (efficient versus inefficient communication) and social influences (previous experiences) as well. Thus, if a public relations practitioner wants to avoid ambiguity in communication (meaning s/he strives for efficient communication), s/he should first think about how well s/he is familiar with the channel (e-mail or conference), communication partner (media representatives or other publics), and the topic that needs to be communicated. Based on these characteristics, a practitioner should choose a media channel. When a communicator possesses previous experiences with a communication partner, medium, and topic, than public relations practitioner can use a leaner channel without sacrificing the efficiency of communication. Whereas, when a communicator is lacking this knowledge, s/he should consider using a richer channel to achieve efficient communication.

It is now necessary to conclude this study with by identifying several implications of the model for research and practice of public relations. First, to provide a first step in advancing the body of knowledge in media selection, future research should test this model in various organizational settings verifying how it works and refining if necessary. Data collected from public relations practitioners would help to accept or reject the proposed model. Perhaps, other variables need to be incorporated or existing ones should be removed.

Second, the assessment of existing media selection practices may provide valuable qualitative data and further insight on the model. For example, what are the current determinants of channel selection in organizations? Are there preferences among public relations practitioners

between new and traditional media channels? What media channels get selected most often and, most importantly, why?

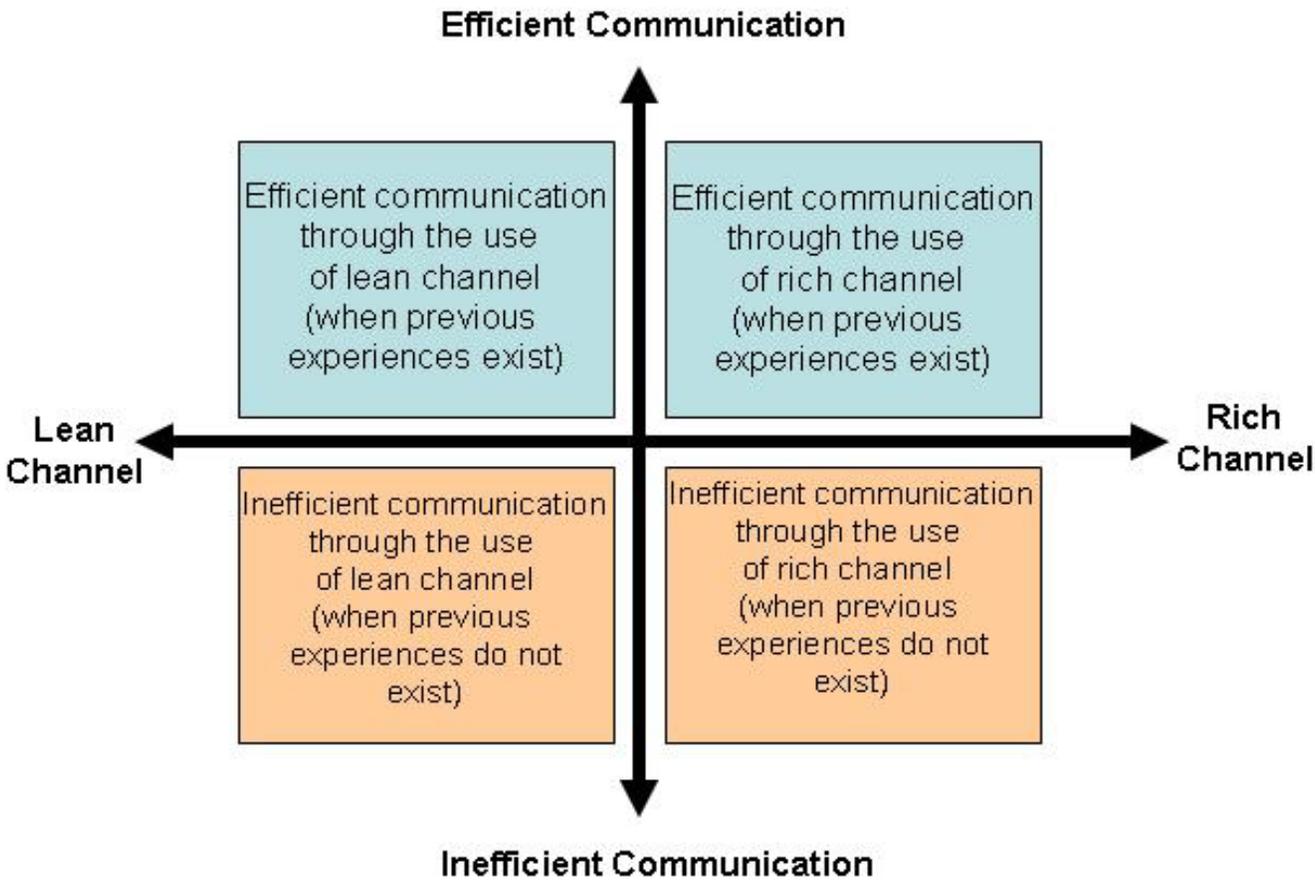
Finally, the proposed integrated model provides a basis for encouraging communication managers to be aware of social influences on communication that may influence communication outcome. This knowledge can guide practitioners in their selection of a channel for communication in order to achieve efficient communication and desired outcome. By using the guidelines provided by the model, practitioner will be able to improve the efficiency of their communication by choosing a medium of the right richness. Moreover, through integrating several variables, this model ensures its descriptive and predictive validity. This can move forward public relations scholarship by improving our understanding of the process of media selections by professionals.

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Figure 1. Integrated Model of Media Selection



Examining Usefulness of Model of Resource Assessment as a Possible Tool for Gaining Public Relations' Influence

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Abstract

Purpose – This study examines possible uses of a Model of Resource Assessment (MRA) created by the authors as a basis for developing strategic communication plans as part of an effort to extend research on public relations strategy. MRA conceptualizes PR strategy as the planning process of narrowing disconnects between stakeholders' perceptions of an organization's resources (See figure 1). The fundamental premises of the model were previously tested and supported. The current study investigates 1) whether stakeholders recognize the effectiveness of the public relations strategy model (MRA) and 2) whether the internal members' professional status is related to acceptance of the model by key stakeholders such as upper management.

Approach/methodology – The excellence theory and situational theory have both focused on the role of public relations in strategic management and provided the basic directions of how public relations function could contribute to an organization's strategic management (Grunig, 2006; Bowen, 2006). In the same vein, Dozier (1992) also contends that public relations function should move beyond technique to defend its organizational stature against encroachment. However, public relations professionals have not fully gained their influence in strategic management because of a lack of tools to integrate organizational goals into public relations strategies (Chang, 2000). Therefore, it is critical for public relations research to provide more tools and knowledge related to public relations strategy development. The present research focuses on exploring stakeholders' acceptance of the newly introduced public relations strategy building model (MRA) through a web survey (n = 312) of members of an agriculture college (students/staff/faculty/alumni) at a large Midwestern university. Regarding the research question of how the internal members' professional status influence the acceptance of the model, a part of web survey data (n = 118) of administrative staff and directors was analyzed. Interviews with the college's communication director were also conducted in order to obtain deeper understanding of the underlying dynamics and implications.

Findings – The results support possible use and effectiveness of MRA. There is general agreement that MRA can be effective for realizing the organizational goals. However, there is a significant difference of accepting MRA among two groups of different professional status. Administrative directors are more willing to accept MRA compared to administrative staff.

Practical implication/Originality – This research provides important theoretical and practical values. Communication managers should actively utilize more theory-based public relations

strategy development tools such as MRA. The findings show that having more strategic tools for planning might help public relations function to prove itself worthy of being included in the dominant coalition.

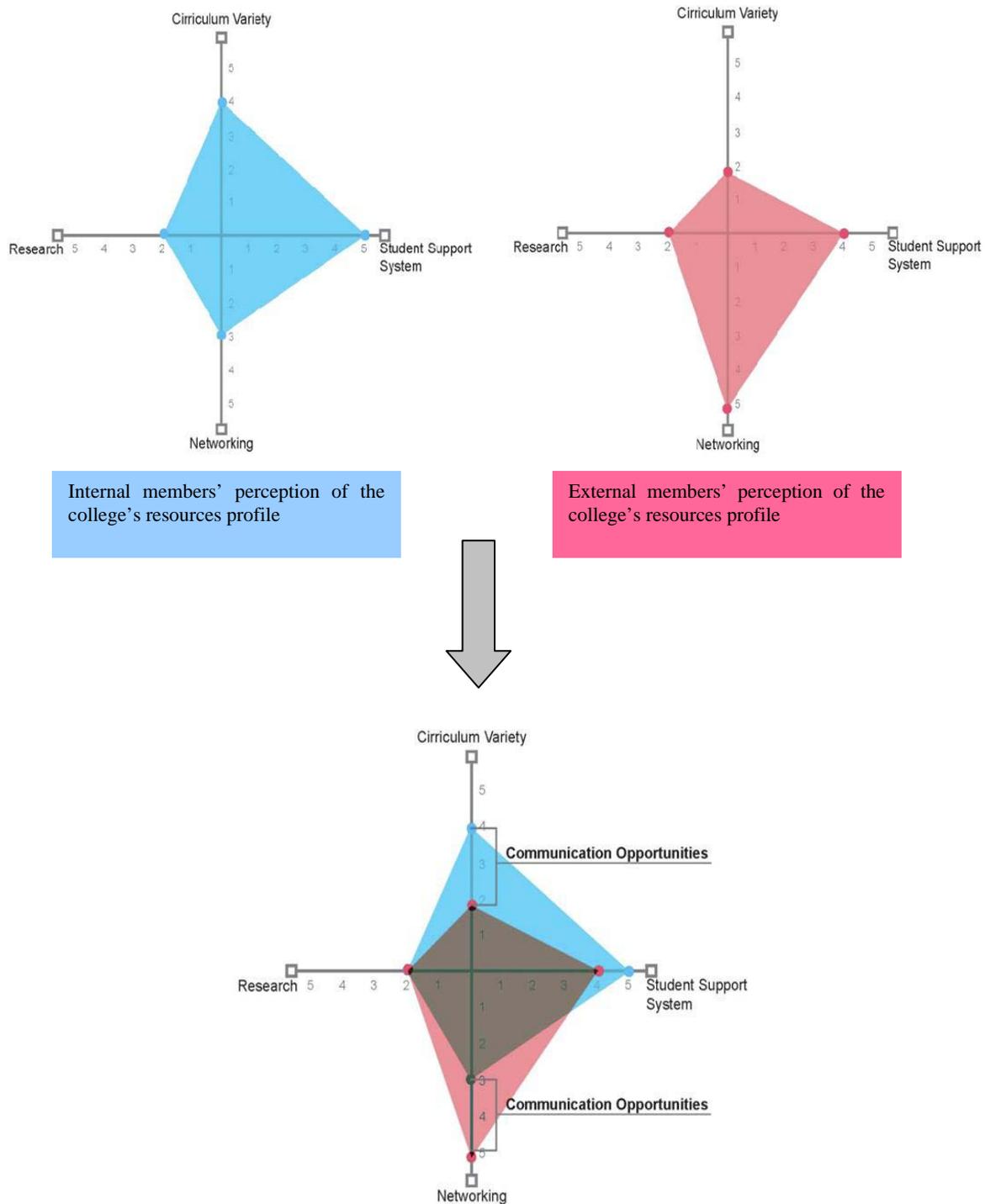
Attaining power and gaining influence has been the center of ongoing conversation among public relations practitioners and scholars. According to the survey conducted by Berger and Reber (2006), the most important issue in public relations listed by professionals was “to gain a seat at the decision-making table” (p.5). The failure of securing a seat at the decision-making table has negatively affected, not only, an individual public relations professionals’ self-esteem but also the profession’s legitimacy as a strategic management function. The excellence theory and situational theory have both focused on the role of public relations in strategic management and provided the basic directions of how public relations function could contribute to an organization’s strategic management (Grunig, 2006; Bowen, 2006). In the same vein, Dozier (1992) also contends that public relations function should move beyond technique to defend its organizational stature against encroachment. Research findings suggest that public relations professionals have not fully gained their influence in strategic management because of a lack of emphasis on manager’s role and the skills to promote them. Therefore, it is critical for public relations research to provide more tools and knowledge related to manager’s role and competences, such as public relations strategy development. Some studies suggest that public relations professionals’ limited access to the dominant coalition is the result of the narrow view of communication strategy research, which only describes the operational planning process of public relations campaign strategy (Steyn, 2003; Moss & Warnaby, 2000). In management and marketing literature, many theory-driven and applicable models for strategy development have been provided. Managers equipped with these theory based models and skills for strategy development have been acknowledged by their organizations to be effective. Thus, there should be many tools and models that can be used for PR practitioners in public relations strategy development.

This study examines possible uses of a Model of Resource Assessment (MRA) created by the authors as a basis for developing strategic communication plans as part of an effort to extend research on public relations strategy. MRA conceptualizes PR strategy as the planning process of narrowing disconnects between stakeholders’ perceptions of an organization’s resources (See figure 1). The fundamental premises of the model were previously tested and supported. The current study investigates 1) whether stakeholders recognize the effectiveness of the public relations strategy model (MRA) and 2) whether the internal members’ professional status is related to acceptance of the model. In order to investigate stakeholders’ acceptance of this newly introduced public relations strategy building model (MRA), the present authors conducted a web survey (n = 312) of members of an agriculture college (students/staff/faculty/alumni) at a large Midwestern university. Regarding the research question of how the internal members’ professional status influences the acceptance of the model, a part of web survey data (n = 118) of administrative staff and directors was analyzed.

Model of Resource Assessment

Model of Resource Assessment aims to help public relations practitioners perform better with a broader and more accurate directional guide when they develop a communication strategy. According to the resource-based view in management research (Barney, 1991), resources are valuable, rare, not easy to imitate, and non-substitutable organizational assets (capabilities, organizational processes, information, knowledge, etc.). In this model, resources are defined as an organization's core strengths that become sources of effective public relations campaigns. This Model of Resource Assessment defines a Resources Profile as a unique set of an organization's resources, that shows the subset of its resources, and the area in which the organization can focus to enable further improvements in communication efforts (See figure 1). Based on these key concepts, of Resources and Resources Profile, We suggest a Model of Resource Assessment as a technique to build strategic directions for an annual or multi-year public relations plan for an organization. This Model of Resource Assessment involves the following two phases for public relations strategy development: (1) identifying the list of resources of an organization among key decision makers, (2) examining schema incongruity (the perception gap about an organization's resources between internal and external members) and its impact.

Figure 1: Model of Resource Assessment, A conceptual Matrix



Note: This model involves the following two phases of public relations strategy development: (1) identifying the list of resources (core strengths) of an organization among key decision makers, (2) examining schema incongruity (the perception gap about an organization's resources between internal and external members) and its impact. In this conceptual matrix, 'curriculum variety', 'research', 'student support system' and 'networking' have been identified as a college's resources, The different perceptions about the resource profile have been identified as the area where communication opportunities exist.

Conceptualization

Gaining influence through enhancing public relations manager roles and competences

Power has been described as a capacity to influence organizational activities and resource allocations while influence as the process of how power is exercised (L.A. Grunig, 1992; Pfeffer 1981; Plowman, 1998). Berger and Reber (2006) propose that power and influence should be treated as the same thing, or as “the ability to get things done by affecting the perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, opinions, decisions, statements, and behaviors of other” (p.5). This study will use power and influence interchangeably while stressing the exercise of power through professional competences and strategies.

The multiple sources have been identified as the basis of power and influence. For power, studies have shown that it comes from formal authority, problem-solving expertise and relationships, and enactment of the managerial role, etc (Berger, 2005; Dozier, 1992; Yukl, Guinan, & Sottolano, 1995). Professionals usually consider public relations experts as powerful when they are active participants in strategic planning and decision making process (Berger & Reber, 2006). Also, it has been recognized that influence might come from having the persuasive power to convince the upper management at the decision making table (Coombs, 1998; Serini, 1993). More specifically, the public relations suggestions should be based, not on subjectivity or compulsion, but on rational arguments from research in order to be recognized as a strategic constituent of the organization (Bowen, 2006).

As gaining influence in public relations has become challenging due to many organizational and individual restraints, there have been growing concerns over encroachment – the assignment to non-public relations professionals control of the public relations function (Dozier, 1988). Encroachment has been considered critical because it could adversely affect the advancement of public relations function in a great deal. Despite overall acceptance of the organizational value from the public relations function among upper management, it is less visible at a strategic level and often without a specific budget due to encroachment (Ruler & Lange, 2003). When public relations function is under control of a management department, it is less likely that public relations perspectives will be well presented at the decision-making table.

In addition to the structural issues related to encroachment, some scholars pay attention to the public relations professionals' roles and competences. Dozier (1992) contended “Encroachment is an inevitable byproduct of a calling that fails to rise above technique” (p.352). Recent roles research has widely quoted Dozier's manager-technician role typology, while focusing on the manager role. This implies that there is a general consensus among scholars and professionals about the needs to emphasize the strategic dimensions of public relations roles. The roles studies based on strategic contingencies theory have suggested that strategic power is rooted in a public relations professionals' manager role because there are positive relationship between manager roles and being an active participant in decision making process (Fiske & Larter, 1983).

Furthermore, Lauzen (1992) suggests that increased manager role competencies and manager role enactment could help public relations function to win the intra-organizational power struggle and positively guide an individual professional's perception about the function. Recent developments in studies about manager role inventory that specifically outlines the competencies required for the task provide meaningful insights for further advancement of public relations function. Initially, Dozier (1987, 1988) contended that professionals could attain a manager role through research based environmental scanning. More recently, the skills of strategic planning has been recognized as the major competencies of the manager. Lauzen (1992) suggest that practitioners undertake strategic planning and policy formation when they pursue the manager role. Upper managements value decision making and problem-solving skills of their public relations managers more than others (Wakefield & Cottone, 1987). According to Turk and Russell (1991), ninety-six percent of the respondents highlighted strategic planning skills as important or very important. Also, public relations managers must be able to attain the skills and knowledge about organizational management essentials including business model, key performance indicators and the operating system at a level of Board peers (Murray & White, 2005). Gregory further identified the specific competence inventory that is required for effective public relations managers across the industry and strategic dimensions including (2008): strategic/long-term view of thinking broadly and strategically; investigating and analyzing complex issues based on clear analytical thinking; formulating strategies and concepts to provide solutions, etc.

Logic and previous research suggest the importance of attaining manager role competence especially in strategic planning dimension. Thus, we posit that public relations manager should be able to provide strategic public relations plans based on understanding of the organization's business model and goals in order to gain influence in the organization.

Strategy in public relations studies

PR professionals are now expected to provide more insight and leadership in the areas of communication that deal with "management, trends, issues, policy, and corporate structure" (Smith, 2002, p. 1). However, researchers acknowledge a lack of research focused on public relations strategy, as well as a limited view of current research focused only on describing operational planning process of public relations campaign strategy (Steyn, 2003; Moss & Warnaby, 1998). It is evident that public relations research should widen its perspective of strategy from a mere description of the strategy development process to a systematic framework that is applicable to public relations strategy content development.

There is a school of thought emphasizing the formulation of public relations strategy. Some of the members and examples of their work are listed here: Marston (1963) suggested the RACE system (research, action, communication, evaluation), Hendrix (2002) used ROPE (research, objective, programming, evaluation), Kendall (1999) offered RAISE (research, adaptation, implementation strategy, evaluation), Smith (2002) called his strategic planning process the nine steps of strategic public relations (formative research, strategy, tactics and evaluative research). These frameworks have provided a basis for more structured and coherent guidelines of PR planning, while it is often the case that these apparently straightforward processes "do not provide enough information on which to base the plan" (Gregory, 2000, p. 45). The current strategy frameworks offered by public relations research depend heavily on the personal judgment of PR professionals' for incorporating research data into the general strategy

and tactics. Thus, it is often hard to claim the public relations strategy was formulated through scientific and rational analysis. In order to enjoy the benefits of strategy in public relations, a more refined approach of strategy and a better tool is needed. There should be a theoretical model that offers an implementation strategy closely connected not only to communication campaigns but also to the organizations' business plans. The current public relations strategy studies are confined to "what" and "how" to communicate the message without providing a broad framework from organizational point of view. Cutlip, Center and Broom (1994) posit a strategy phase after a situation analysis phase, which proposes to answer the question of "what should we do and say, and why?" Smith (2002) defines the strategy as "the process making decisions dealing with the expected impact of the communications, as well as the nature of the communication itself" (p.10). Despite the benefits of PR strategy emphasizing the link between organization performance and public reputation, most of the strategy development process frameworks and tools have focused only on organization image and message promotion, without delineating the ways to connect organizational objectives and public relations objectives. Public relations research should offer more tools and frameworks to identify the linkage between organizational performance and communication strategy; using the necessary methodology to empirically prove them effective.

The resource-based view from management literature is useful for strategy development and clearly shows how excellent organizations utilize their strengths in their strategy. Barney (1991) defines resources as an organization's internal strengths. These strengths enable an organization to succeed at environmental opportunities through better response. Hitt, Nixon, Clifford, and Coyne (1999) highlight the role of resources in a firm's success by presenting evidence of direct relationships among a firm's resources, strategy, and performance. Building on the assumptions that resources are heterogeneous and idiosyncratic, researchers have identified their prominent features; such as value, rareness, uniqueness, and non-substitutability. After analyzing a variety of research done by many other researchers, Barney (1991) proposed a convenient means of classifying resources into three types (p. 101). Physical capital resources include physical assets; such as the technology used in a firm, a firm's plant and equipment, its geographic location, and its access to raw materials. Human capital resources include the capabilities of organization members; such as training, experience, judgment, intelligence, as well as the insight of individual managers and workers. Finally, organizational capital resources encompass organizational process capabilities; such as a firm's formal reporting structure, its formal and informal planning, controlling, and coordinating systems, and informal relations both inside and outside the firm.

Many of the concepts derived from analysis of the resource-based view are useful in explaining how public relations strategies should work to incorporate different resources.

This is because public relations efforts also employ the wide variety of an organization's resources for setting communication goals, drafting the content of its messages, and implementing public relations campaigns. Ni (2006) made the first notable effort to incorporate the resource-based view into public relations research. Ni examined whether or not an organization's relationships with publics can be regarded as resources, and whether or not relationship development contributes to the implementation of organizational strategies through a qualitative research method. Ni concludes that relationships possess the key features of resources; such as value, rareness, uniqueness, and non-substitutability. Ni's research is

meaningful as it provided the first empirical evidence proving the link between public relations research and the resource-based view.

The resource-based view provides useful guidelines not only for business but also for public relations strategy development; the resource-based view touches upon the universal question of “with what” and “how to develop a successful strategy.” The resource-based view suggests that finding and choosing the right resources has a very close connection to formulating a successful strategy. If resources drive some successful strategies, then the process of identifying, choosing and matching the right types of resources are critical for developing a successful public relations strategy. Specifically, by adopting the resource-based view that provides analysis of an organization’s internal strengths, PR strategy can be more closely connected to an organization’s business plan. Unlike PR strategy based on situational factors, and external factors such as the target public’s overall perception of the organization’s image, PR strategy based on the target public’s perceptions of an organization’s resources (internal strengths) will provide an explicit and easy way to evaluate both the directions and the goals of a public relations strategy. Furthermore, the resource-based view provides the practical strategy development process of auditing the interaction between key publics and organizations; the resource-based view sees that the interaction between information from consumers and the usage of resources decides the direction of strategy development (Wilson, 1999). Thus, it is an important phase of building PR strategy to investigate both how key public groups perceive an organization’s resources, and an organization’s reaction to the key publics’ perception of its resources. We posit MRA as possible tool for public relations strategic planning and the basic assumptions and propositions have been tested by previous study. Recognizing the gap between the roles research that emphasizing manager roles and competences in strategic planning and the theoretical models offered in public relations literature for strategic planning, it is necessary to test if MRA can be accepted as possible solution for public relations strategy development.

Factors related to acceptance of MRA

The findings from persuasion theories provide meaningful insights and fundamental rules for explaining the acceptance of MRA by an organization’s key stakeholders. The relevant psychological theory will help to explain how key public’s acceptance of MRA will differ according to one’s group identification and professional status.

Personal relevance Roser (1990) suggests that the high involvement with the information leads to more attention to the message and people will translate thoughts about the message into either favorable attitudes or negative attitudes. Liberman and Chaiken (1996) propose “personal relevance directly affects attitudes in the absence of any persuasion attempt” (p. 275). According to their study (1996), high-relevance subjects were either more positive or either more negative depending on the issues.

Based on the findings from the aforementioned research, We suggest that internal members will evaluate MRA higher than external members, because internal members have high involvement with the college’s communication activities in comparison to external members. In addition, internal members are more likely to be frequently updated about the changes of the college’s resources. The proximity of internal members with the college will likely lead to positive evaluation.

Professional status Tjosvold (1987) posits that people at different professional status are

likely to have different perspectives for information processing and evaluation. Research findings indicate that the people at different professional status have different expectations and prior knowledge regarding the issues and those gaps result in different attitude (Eysenck and Keane, 1990). Thus, We expect to find different levels of acceptance of a Model of Resource Assessment dependant on participants' professional status.

Research Questions

The following research questions were asked to see if a Model of Resource Assessment can be accepted and utilized as a tool to build public relations strategy. Based on the findings about the needs to develop more strategic planning models and the relationship between personal relevance and professional status (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Lee and Schumann, 2004; Tjosvold, 1987), We propose following research questions:

RQ1: Do the evaluations by organization's internal members (students and staff/faculty) and external members (alumni) differ regarding the effectiveness of a Model of Resource Assessment for better communication results?

RQ2: What is the relationship between internal members' professional status and their acceptance of a Model of Resource Assessment?

Method

Interviews and web survey are the two primary methods for this research project. Many researchers have agreed that triangulation strengthens the total research project (Morgan, 1997). Web survey is the main research method that answers the primary question of where disconnects lie between actual resources and perceived resources, and how it should be understood for better communication planning. An agriculture college at a large Midwestern university is the research subject. Besides the college's need to have a strategic approach for public relations campaigns, it is a ideal research subject as the college has dynamic set of resources and various target populations. The college is a leading agriculture college with long history, various academic programs and dynamic internal and external key publics. The communication director of the college was interviewed five times in order to identify and understand the organization's key populations. In the web survey, around 200 internal members (students, staffs and directors) and 76 external members (alumni) were recruited. The Web survey was conducted over three weeks, from March 10 to March 28 in 2008. The URL for the Web questionnaire was distributed to CAFNR students, staff, directors, and alumni. The URLs were https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=aLuHoN11fS_2biGGRfBMk5Mg_3d_3d (for alumni), https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=_2btBHVR43fRPDRSSDSP5pZQ_3d_3d (for students, staff, directors). Two follow-up emails were sent a week after the first emailing to CAFNR internal members, while three follow-up emails were sent for CAFNR external members. Of the 541 internal members (students, staff/directors) and 450 external members (alumni), the survey yielded 312 total responses for a 31 percent response rate. Among the total responses, 94 responses were students, 142 responses were staff/directors and 76 responses were alumni.

Table 1

Demographic Statistics (N=312)

		INTERNAL (Student/Staff /Directors)		EXTERNAL (Alumni)		TOTAL	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Age	Under 20	10	4.8	0	0	10	3.9
	20-29	87	33.6	2	4.1	89	34.4
	30-39	26	10	3	6.1	29	11.2
	40-49	38	14.7	12	24.5	50	19.3
	50-59	35	13.5	12	24.5	47	18.1
	60 and older	14	5.4	20	40.8	34	13.1
Gender	Female	95	45	10	40.4	105	59.6
	Male	116	55	39	59.6	155	40.4
Education	High school	85	40.1	0	0	85	32.6
	College graduate	31	14.6	0	0	31	11.9
	Master	41	19.3	26	53.1	67	25.7
	Ph.D	44	20.8	20	40.8	64	24.5
	Law or Medical degree	1	.5	3	6.1	4	1.5
	Other	10	4.7	0	0	10	3.8
Contact	Very often	103	49.5	8	16.3	111	43.2
	Often	44	21.2	17	34.7	61	23.7
	Sometimes	21	10.1	18	36.7	39	15.2
	Rarely	32	15.4	5	10.2	37	14.4
	Never	8	3.8	1	2	9	3.5

Notes: Some respondents did not verify their demographic information. Thus, there is some variance per item.

Results and Discussion

Results

Of the 312 participants, only around 260 people provided their demographic information. Among 210 internal members, about 46% (N=97) are under 30 years old as this group includes student participants. In contrary, of the 49 external members, 40.8% (N=20) are older than 60. Among 260 participants who identified their gender, 59.6% (N=155) are male and 40.4% (N=105) are female. For education, 40.1% (N=85) of internal members are with high school

diploma as internal group includes undergraduate students. The 93.9% (N=46) of external members are with either master's or doctoral degree. Overall, most of participants reported that they contact the college very often or often. (N=177, 66.9%).

Analysis of RQ1

RQ1 is to examine if there is difference in evaluating the effectiveness of a Model of Resource Assessment between internal and external members. Three different questions were asked to measure the effectiveness of a Model. The Cronbach's Alpha test result ($\alpha=.767$) has shown that the 3 variables were reasonable to be considered as the same category measuring the effectiveness of a Model of Resource Assessment.

A one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted on 3 dependent variables (three different questions to measure participant's evaluation of the effectiveness of a Model of Resource Assessment) with the type of group (internal members, and external members) as the independent variable. The results of the MANOVA and univariate ANOVA are shown in Table 2. There is no significant multivariate effect of different group types on the set of dependent variables, $F(3, 260) = .654, p < .581$. In addition, there are no significant univariate effects of different group types on the dependent variables. Means and standard deviations are presented in Table 3.

In conclusion, RQ1 of examining internal and external member's evaluation of a Model of Resource assessment was not supported. However, for both internal and external members somewhat agreed that a Model of Resource Assessment can be effective.

Table 2
Multivariate Analysis of Variance for Group Types (Internal vs. External members)

<i>Source</i>	<i>Wilk's Lambda</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Hypothesis df</i>	<i>Error df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Partial Eta Squared</i>
Group types (internal vs external members)	.993	.654	3	260	< .581	.007
<i>Univariate Analysis of Variance for Group Types (Internal vs. External members)</i>						
<i>Source</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Partial Eta Squared</i>
The more that the internal members and key public groups are "ON THE SAME PAGE" regarding RESOURCES, the more FAVORABLE will be the attitude toward the college expected						
(EFF1)						
Group type	1.429	1	1.429	.961	.328	.004
Error	389.602	262	1.487			
If internal members and key public groups are "ON THE SAME PAGE" regarding resources, it is primarily the result of SUCCESSFUL COMMUNICATION EFFORTS by the college						
(EFF2)						
Group type	.169	1	.169	.096	.757	.000
Error	460.070	262	1.756			
IF the internal members and the key public groups are "ON THE SAME PAGE" regarding RESOURCES, more UNDERGRADUATE APPLICATIONS to the college can be expected.						
(EFF3)						
Group type	.221	1	.221	.117	.733	.000
Error	495.900	262	1.893			

Table 3

Mean Scores on Dependent Variables for Group Types

Source	Group	Mean	SD
EFF1	Internal members	5.856	.085
	External members	6.036	.163
EFF2	Internal members	5.635	.092
	External members	5.696	.177
EFF3	Internal members	5.303	.095
	External members	5.232	.184

Analysis of RQ2

RQ2 was to investigate if there is a relationship between participants' professional status and their acceptance of a Model of Resource Assessment. Among participants, only the college's administrative staffs and directors were selected for this RQ. An independent samples *t*-test was conducted on one dependent variable (acceptance of a Model of Resource assessment) with participant's professional status (administrative staff or director) as the independent variable. The results of an independent samples *t*-test are $t(116) = -1.976, p < .05$. There is a significant difference of accepting a Model of Resource Assessment among two groups of different professional status. Administrative directors are more willing to accept a Model of Resource Assessment compared to administrative staff.

Table 4

Independent t-Test for Group Types (Staff vs Director)

Source	t	df	Sig (two tailed)	Mean difference
Equal variance assumed	-1.976	116	.050	-.371

Mean Scores on Dependent Variables for Group Types (Staff vs Director)

Source	N	Mean	SD
Administrative staff	68	5.81	1.040
Administrative director	50	6.18	.962

Discussion

This study offered an initial assessment of a proposed Model of Resource Assessment as a

useful technique to build a one-year or multi-year organizational communication strategy. Despite our optimistic view about the potential applicability of the model, our focus in this study is on the initial basic research designed to test and validate the framework.

No group difference (staff vs director) was found in the evaluation of MRA's usefulness as a model to build effective communication strategy. It is encouraging that regardless of group type, most of the participants recognized MRA as a productive model to identify key audiences' favorable attitudes and to provide directions for successful communication campaigns. In the current case, strategic shifts based on MRA results might lead to bottom line outcomes such as more applications from prospective students whose perception of the organization better match reality as perceived by management.

Roles research findings centered around promoting and enhancing the manager role and competencies such as formulating strategic planning. The pattern of findings suggested a possible means to fill the virtual void in public relations research to develop applicable tools and models for public relations professionals to undertake strategy development globally for their organizations. Based on the generally positive assessment by both internal and external publics who recognize MRA's usefulness, we posit that MRA can be a possible option for professionals in strategy development.

Building a communication strategy is a political process as well as a scientific process. It involves political decisions about communication direction and resource allocation. Thus, it is interesting that administrative directors are more willing to accept the model than administrative staff. Management literature indicates that people at different professional levels are likely to have different attitudes because of different expectations and prior experience. We assume administrative directors, who are more familiar with visioning and planning for the college, are more willing to embrace a theoretical model that could create broader, yet still clear, directions for the college's communication efforts. By employing this model, professionals will be able to attain more support from upper management, as they accept the usefulness of the model and understand what MRA suggests. However, in order to fully benefit from the model, it will be necessary to explain what the model can do for an administrative staff when they implement public relations campaigns.

The understanding and acceptance of the model among communication managers and staff is critical. When the incongruity (different perception of the organization's resources) is identified, it is the responsibility of the key decision makers to lessen the incongruity by emphasizing resources that can alter perception or to present alternative schema with new resources that can be better perceived by the public.

In summary, the analysis from the series of interviews and the web survey supports the Model of Resource Assessment as an effective tool of strategy development. An organization using this model can benefit in many ways. Especially, participants recognized MRA's usefulness in the understanding of public relations strategy as the planning process of narrowing the gap between organization's resources and the key public's perception of resources. As Gregory (2000) says, it is important for a public relations strategy model to provide substantial information to guide the communication plan. Arguably, this Model of Resource Assessment provides enough information and direction to guide the communication programs and messages. In addition, the model has some practical implications. Users of this framework will find it easier (1) to share the analysis with the dominant coalition as the model shares the managerial perspectives of

organizational core strengths, and also (2) to manage the strategy formulation process with dynamic, yet structured, phases of continuous reality check, organizational consensus making, and strategy reformulation.

Using a different research methodology with another sample at the next stage of model development will further validate the model. For example, experiments or intensive interviews will present more information concerning acceptance of MRA as well as its application in the strategic planning process. In addition, there is a need to test the model with more variant groups. In this research, alumni were defined as the external group. Alumni differ from students and employees, however, because alumni likely have considerable loyalty towards the college. Thus, it was difficult to find meaningful divergence in their attitudes and perceptions. Further research should include groups with greater variance in loyalty, prior knowledge, and involvement with the organization conducting the MRA assessment.

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“From Terrorism to Tornadoes: The Roles of P.R. and Media in Crisis Communication

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Abstract

“Tried and true” communication rarely works during today’s crises, as seen in the aftermath of 9 / 11, Hurricane Katrina, and recent school shootings. This paper analyzes how key opinion leaders, PR practitioners, and educators are attempting to reach many internal and external audiences, including media and the community. Using K-12 schools as a focal point of case studies, the authors use a modified standard model for public relations and communications assessment -- the RACE (Research, Action, Communication, Evaluation) framework – to expand theory development. This is “research that supports and advances the practice” through analyses of over 100 case studies and we present findings and recommendations in an accessible language directed at those in K-12 audiences. Our research design includes: An institutional analysis of public relations, K-12 schools and communities; qualitative and quantitative analyses of news stories and press materials produced by media, school districts, and government agencies; website analyses of media, school districts, and government agencies; and, an extensive survey (with follow-up interviews) of key opinion leaders in education and communication. Results indicate that although crisis communication plans are increasingly embedded in school environments, leaders do not usually follow the oft-repeated edict to tell it all, tell it fast, and tell the truth. Well-designed plans are often buried under other notebooks and new faculty are not trained about basic procedures. Findings demonstrate that groups which view public relations strategies as essential communication more often overcome crises and quickly restore credibility and reputation.

What counts as a crisis in today’s schools? And how are you going to talk about it?

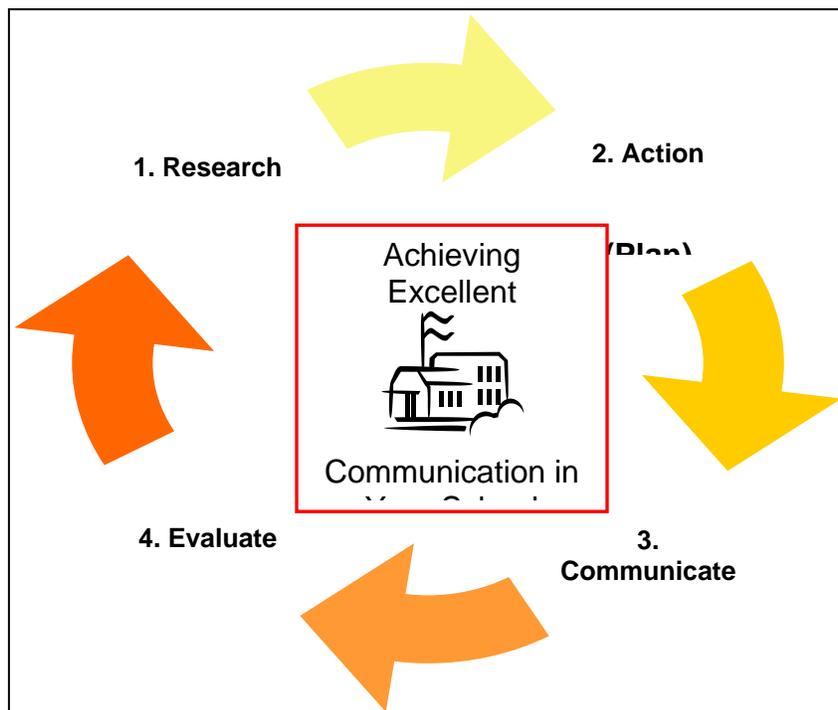
“Tried and true” communication rarely works today’s crises, as seen in the aftermath of 9 / 11, Hurricane Katrina, and recent school shootings. This research-based project explores how schools can best deal with today’s crises, with practical tips on how to deal with the growing fear that campuses are no longer safe havens. Examples of on-campus “crises cases” include:

- Human crises: violence and shadows of terrorism (such as shootings, death threats, and gangs);
- Natural crises: tornadoes and hurricanes (plus arson and other facility damages); and,
- Abstract crises: structural changes in families, politics, and security (including confidential and legal issues such as crime, punishment, and equity)

Though grounded in theory, this project focuses on the real-world practice of crisis communications. It is not a scholarly dissection of case studies and academic theories; rather, it goes from theory to practice, beyond the usual analyses about school teams and crisis-preparedness. It offers tips and templates for how to communicate before, during, and after a crisis, with evaluation samples that turn “lessons learned” into best practices. **By following this project’s approach, a school leader could divvy out responsibilities and involve a team of people in creating an entire communication plan tailored for multiple audiences.** The case studies and recommendations answer the current questions as identified by surveys of key opinion leaders. Through analyses of existing products, campaigns, and plans, we demystify the mystery of how schools can act and react in emergencies.

Knowledge Base

We are interested not only in the content and effects of crises upon education, but also in the power relationship between the community, media and schools. Our basic assumption – that communication theories must regularly be tested and adjusted to suit specific environments – seems especially relevant as colleges and K-12 districts deal with new security mandates. We build upon existing literature by recommending a crisis inventory and an “open and honest” policy – in school communication with its audiences; as sampled in the reference section, we include an annotated bibliography for foundational research and resources. We also modify a standard model for public relations and communications assessment: the RACE (Research,



Action, Communication, Evaluation) model, depicted below, with a continuous monitoring step.

The illustration at left depicts the communication planning process through essential steps – **Research** of existing policies, **Action** of creating a new plan, **Communicating** the plan; and **Evaluating** the process. Thus, not only does this book lead school leaders toward an embedded crisis communication plan, but they are also left with a continuous evaluation piece that updates their plan. One of the basics of effective crisis communication is an evaluation of how

information flows between schools and target audiences. Media covering schools, for instance, usually exhibit a top-down hierarchy of information flows. Simply, media receives information, then “frames” it for readers/viewers so that it flows down from the source. In contrast, public

relations efforts are communications between specific publics and organizations, often with a give-and-take of information rather than a top-down flow of media. Finally, interpersonal communication between different publics may seem to be an equal flow of information; however, even an in-service workshop displays hierarchies that depict how different leadership roles and opinions shift.

Our research design includes: An institutional analysis about public relations, K-12 schools, educational communities, and crisis communication; Qualitative and quantitative analyses of news stories and press materials produced by media, school districts, and government agencies; Website analyses of media, school districts, and government agencies; A survey of 30 superintendents that forms the basis of this prospectus; And a survey of key opinion leaders in the field of education, communications, and crises that builds upon the initial survey findings.

Findings

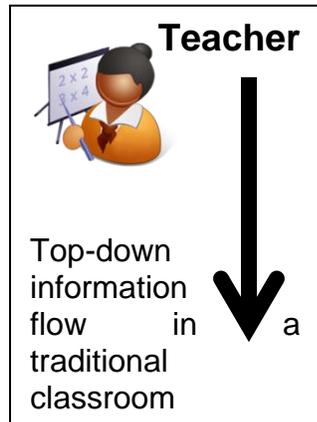
It's a slippery slope: What should a leader say to the press about a crisis?

On one hand, you need to get information out as quickly as possible when rumors are afloat and reporters are knocking down your door. On the other, you run the risk of being misquoted or set up as a cause of the crisis, with increased media coverage that focuses on your school's shortcomings.

It's true: Journalism is greatly changed from old-school traditions and definitions of what's newsworthy and objective. You're racing to disclose news that's honest, reduces tension, and also restores public faith. The press is racing for readers and headlines. Bad news travels fast, and the press loves bad news. Today's shrinking newsrooms and budgets have ushered in a new model of information, one that forces you to question whether staying silent is ever the best way to go. But before we talk about what you should say to the press, let's look at how today's media operates.

HOW MEDIA WORKS, so you can make sure your voice is heard

Unless you use the press to push out your information, others will grab your space. In fact, any silence may be taken as an admission of guilt by the bellowing voices that take up your air time and press ink. Perhaps the most important media tip, besides the usual advice about body language and word choice (see pages ----), is to realize exactly how a flow of information works today in our media.



First, think about a classroom: Information flows from a teacher to the students in a top-down model with occasional modifications. A history teacher might lecture about the Civil War, or a mathematics instructor demonstrates board problems while students take notes. Although students may ask questions or add opinions, rarely does the information change. The Civil War lesson content remains the same, and the multiplication tables don't change when students propose another version of truth. It's a top-down flow of information that is uncontested and unchanged.

Media used to work much this way. A reporter would interview a source, write up the story in a way that readers and viewers would

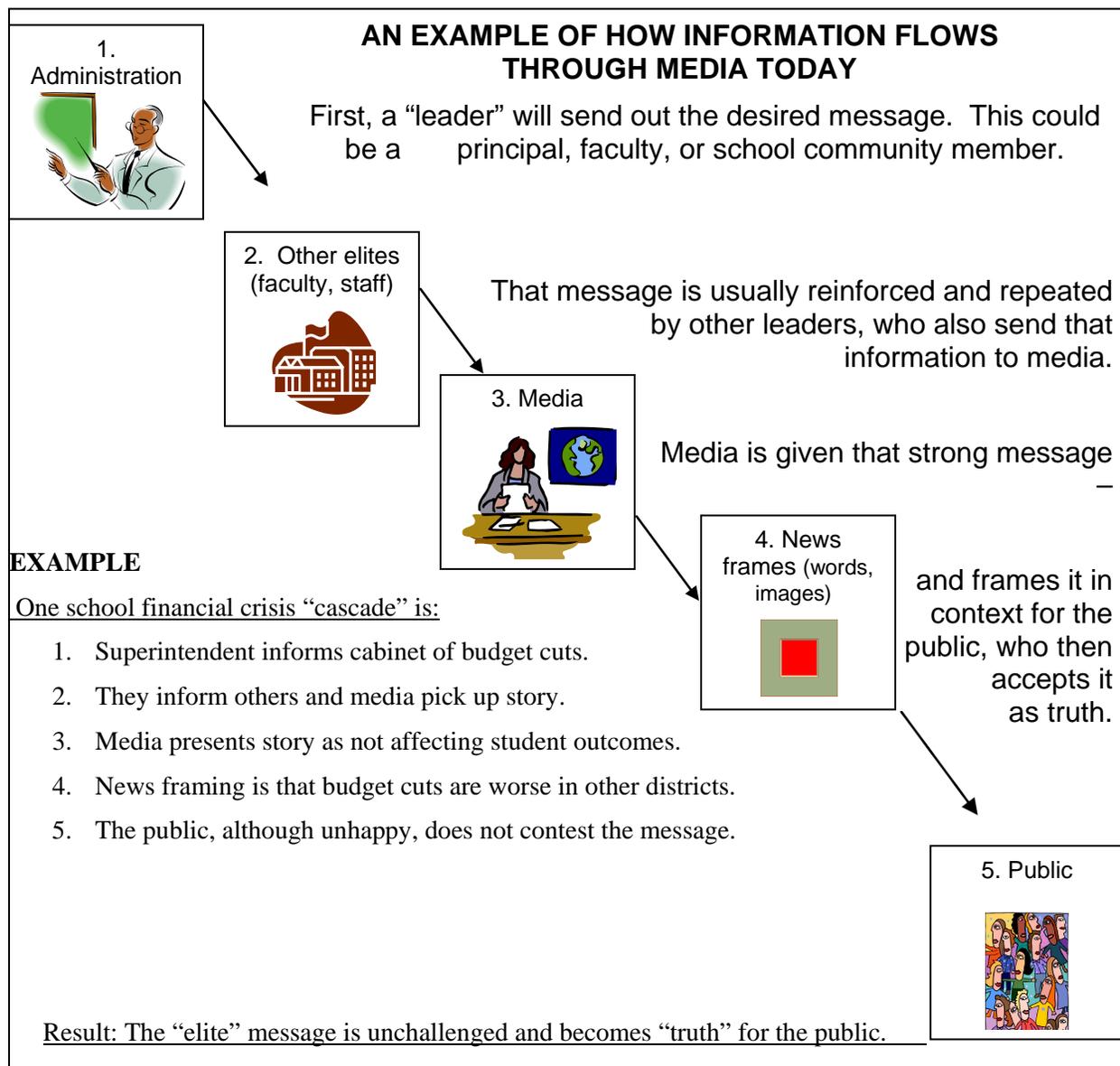
receive, and public opinion would form truth. However, times have greatly changed, especially media's reliance on "elite" sources for information and "framing" stories that resonate with readers in terms of accepted definitions of culture, news value, and other strategies. Not only do your audiences actively search for information – via the Internet and cell phone texts and photos – they also expect you to maintain transparent, continual communication that demonstrates strong leadership and credibility.

ONLINE NEWS @ SCHOOLS

In this era of FaceBook, blogs, Twitter, and other social media, anybody can be a reporter and create information that may be believed. People will quickly turn elsewhere if they can't get news from you, so make sure you're addressing specific audience needs and quash rumors via the Web. Always monitor your website, during times of crises and calm, for easy access to positive information about your school.

Tip: Most visitors in search of information rely on first impressions, especially during a crisis when they're frantic for news. You'll cut down on phone calls if a designated webmaster adds continual news and timeframes for future updates on your school's home page. This strategy also lessens suspicions that you're tongue-tied or stonewalling. You might even consider building a "dark" website to activate only in the case of emergencies.

Whether you're dealing with online or traditional media, today's information isn't flowing from the top down like it used to. Instead, it flows like a waterfall, flowing down like a cascade rather than shooting from the top down to various audiences (Entman, 2003), demonstrated here:



As seen above, media receives news from “elite” sources and then “frames” it; in this case, media chose to emphasize the lesser impact of budget cuts on students. And, because the public received a message and did not respond, the news stopped there, until the next budget crisis.

BUT...suppose the cuts WERE serious enough to affect students. In 2008, a number of districts, including the 1600-student Monson Public School District in Massachusetts, announced that faculty positions would be cut, as would “extra” services such as sports and library programs. The district faced angry parents demanding funding restoration, even though cuts were deemed unavoidable. Eventually, the bad news was accepted and the news cycle ended.

REAL LIFE: New York City Department of Education's Budget Cuts, 2008

However, when New York City Mayor Bloomberg released plans in February 2008 to cut the Department of Education's budget by over \$450 million, few could have expected the massive protests over the elimination of literacy, tutoring, and afterschool programs, and reduction of assistant principal positions. In comparison to the Monson District's model of information about budget cuts, the cascade of news about NYC schools looked like this:

1. MESSAGE FROM THE ADMINISTRATIVE ELITE (Mayor)

Blaming a worsening economy, Bloomberg proposed a city-wide cut to principals that was announced via email stating that their school would immediately lose 1.75% of their budgets. Stating that the cuts would have "no impact whatsoever," the Mayor said that he knew "of no organization where you couldn't squeeze out 1.7% or even a lot more."

2. SENT TO PRINCIPALS, WHO SENT OUT A DIFFERENT MESSAGE

Principals were told via email to consult their school's computerized budget system the next day to learn how much money they would lose. Rather than enforcing the Mayor's planned financial strategies, the principals turned to their media, faculties, staff, families, and communities to contest the message and demand the restoration of funds for important services.

3. TO MEDIA, WHO DID NOT EMPHASIZE THE MAYOR'S MESSAGE

Media coverage – from the *New York Times* to foreign newspapers – focused on the growing protest movements springing up around the city, and liberally quoted the growing chain of email complaints from school principals.

4. AND FRAMED STORIES OPPOSING THE ELITE SOURCE

News stories were framed in an anti-Bloomberg context, describing the budget cuts as a "draconian" and "irresponsible" mid-year action. So, instead of using words and images to support Bloomberg's message, media frames supported the principals' reaction.

5. FOR THE PUBLIC, WHO CONTESTED THE INFORMATION
(and resent a different news frame, effectively eliminating the Mayor's communication).

After receiving the news, the public reacted with fury, eventually launching protests (including a tech-savvy Facebook group and Kids Protest website) that received national and foreign press coverage. Thus, an elite (Bloomberg) set off a cascade of information without solidifying the message with the second tier of other leaders (school principals). And, because those principals were doubly insulted by receiving the news via email, and publicly shamed for not "squeezing out" money, they passed a different message to media and the public that did not reinforce Bloomberg's news.

In this case, the cascade of information did not trickle down with the elite message; rather, the news landed in the laps of an irate public who protested rather than accept the cuts. This set off a

counter-cascade against Bloomberg, with multiple groups gathering global publicity against the New York City Department of Education. Bloomberg was not widely quoted again as an elite source, with the public and school staff voices drowning out the Mayor's message.

By the end of June, Bloomberg withdrew his proposal and school funding was restored.

His critical errors: Perceived silence, plus the strength of opposing viewpoints that received media attention and succeeded in switching the message.

This model of “cascading” news has been tested on many issues, ranging from political and global issues (President Bush and the Iraq War) to school district news (fired principal drums up community support to win reinstatement) and illustrates two concepts.

First, the most successful communication is approved through each level of the cascade; if Mayor Bloomberg, for example, had approached the principals and won a consensus about the need for budget cuts, rather than impersonally emailing them and then publicly scoffing at their reaction, the message might have been better received. Even though they would not have liked the news, they might have gone along with the message and strategy.

Second, “No comment” is rarely the best route to take. Whenever media approaches, think before NOT issuing any reaction to a request. As shown in the cascading model, if information is not contested --- if you choose to remain completely silent – the media has no choice but to frame it according to the initial source and can possibly label you as uncooperative. And, in the midst of a crisis, you want to maintain a spirit of cooperation with all audiences to maintain their trust and support.

So, that's how media works. Now let's turn to exactly what the media wants to know when a crisis hits. You'll then be able to anticipate how to answer their questions in a way that manages the crisis and controls any bad news. And, since there is always print and air time to fill, it might as well be filled by your message.

WHAT EVERY JOURNALIST WANT TO KNOW and will ask you about a crisis

Journalists nearly always ask the following questions. They follow the five Ws and an H: What, When, Where, Why, Who, and How. In the case of a crisis, here is what you'll be asked:

WHAT?	What exactly happened? Were there any deaths, damage, or injuries?
WHEN?	When did it happen? Is it still going on? If so, when will it be over?
WHERE?	Where did it happen? Could the danger or damages move elsewhere?
WHY?	Why did it happen? Has it happened before?
WHO?	Who or what was involved? Who or what is responsible?
HOW?	How was this not predicted? How will you prevent this from happening in the future?

How you answer these questions sets the tone for your credibility and leadership during this and future media dealings.

REAL LIFE: Student suicide at Mira Loma High School (Sacramento, CA)

Here is an example of how an early and honest flow of information from your school can control a situation; in this case, a tragic suicide attempt by a high school during school hours. Within 24 hours, Mira Loma High School and the San Juan Unified School District provided information that was clear, timely, compassionate, and which suited multiple audiences.

The following timeline of school communications shows a common thread: Clear, straightforward language that focused on the incident, how it affected people, and its remedy. By answering the five Ws and an H, the San Juan Unified School District also moved the issue forward without waiting to be asked for answers.

These are the statements posted on the district and school websites.

September 15, 2008) (Reprinted with permission of San Juan Unified School District)

Posted on the school website within hours of crisis:

Good Morning: This is Rich Nichols, Vice Principal, Mira Loma High School. I want to inform you about an incident that happened on campus today. At approximately 10:30 this morning there was an apparent suicide attempt by a student in a bathroom on campus. A handgun was involved and has been recovered by the Sheriff's Department and we are confident it was an isolated incident and all other students are safe. The student's family has been notified. Classes will remain in session

for the remainder of the day. Crisis counselors are on site and will be available to students, staff, and parents. Please check the district web site at www.sanjuan.edu for further information and updates.

**SAME-DAY UPDATE on district website: Incident at Mira Loma High School
Classes have resumed as normal.**

Counseling staff is on hand for all students, staff, parents.

Update: 2:59 p.m.

No after school activities have been cancelled. Today's scheduled water polo game will continue as scheduled. Counselors remain available on campus today and will also be available tomorrow for students, staff, and parents as needed. Today's event was a tragic incident. The Mira Loma High School and San Juan Unified communities extend their sympathies to the family of the young man.

NEXT-DAY UPDATE on school website:

Accident Update

UPDATE ON THE TRAGIC INCIDENT OF SEPTEMBER 15

A student was critically injured by a self-inflicted wound on campus yesterday morning, September 15th. The student is currently on life support at San Juan Mercy Hospital. On Monday and Tuesday Counselors were available to assist students in addressing their needs as a result of this tragic incident. We will continue to offer assistance to students as needed. As of the end of the school day today September 16, we have received no news as to any changes in the student's medical status. We extend our thoughts and prayers to the family as they face this very difficult situation. Each day we will update the website with any new information available to us.

The final note was announcing a public celebration of life for the student, serving as a traffic advisory and note to parents about sensitivity for the situation.

Now let's take a look at what was said and how the media received this information and framed this real-life crisis. This communication flow illustrates how the major newspaper in the area, the *Sacramento Bee*, continued the district's messages about the isolated incident being no threat to school safety.

- **FIRST DISTRICT/SCHOOL STATEMENT:** Readers learn that the crisis was isolated and all other students are safe; they also know to check the district's website for messages.
- **SAME-DAY BEE COVERAGE:** "APPARENT SUICIDE ATTEMPT AT MIRA LOMA HIGH."

District quote: The boy had been in class this morning and excused himself to go to the restroom, San Juan Unified School District spokesman Trent Allen said.

- **SAME-DAY DISTRICT UPDATE:** The district repeats its emphasis on "safety" by stating that no classes or activities are cancelled; however, counseling is available.

- **NEXT-DAY DISTRICT UPDATE:** The message focus moves from school safety to recovery and healing. By promising daily updates, the district also keeps down rumors.
- **NEXT-DAY BEE COVERAGE:** “Mira Loma student apparently shoots self on campus.”
District and law enforcement quotes: "We view this as an isolated incident. There was no danger to others," Allen said. "We were never in a lockdown situation."
"There is no criminal investigation. There doesn't seem to be any reason for one," said Sgt. Tim Curran, the Sacramento County Sheriff's Department spokesman. "We don't believe anybody was targeted. No students were targeted or threatened."

This is an example of clear, quick, and transparent crisis communication: By responding quickly and compassionately, the district and school district's message helped to “contain” the crisis and alleviate community fears about school violence spreading.

However, it is never easy. “This is an example of an office's worst fears,” commented Allen while still monitoring the news and public reaction. “We had to respond quickly with the facts, but also be respectful of the family.”

How to deal with media

WHO'S TALKING? While speaking for the district, Allen also fulfilled a crucial role in any crisis communication plan: that of spokesperson. As mentioned in earlier, each school should designate a primary spokesperson to rely on during a crisis, somebody who can speak before media and the public with confidence and credibility. The highest-level administrator should speak first to the media and public after a crisis, with subsequent reports coming from others.

WHERE ARE YOU TALKING? A nervous community doesn't want to hear about a crisis from a suited spokesperson sitting behind a formal desk. Go close to the crisis scene, with rolled-up shirtsleeves, and you'll prove to your viewers and readers that you're not detached from the crisis.

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? Before you get into any specifics, know the best responses to media requests:

1. We know what happened and here is all the information we have. OR
2. We don't know everything at this time but here's everything we have right now. We'll let you know as soon as we learn anything more. OR
3. We don't know yet but we'll find out and tell you as soon as we learn anything.

(Fearn-Banks, 2007)

Those three responses will buy you time to get a handle on the crisis; and, while the journalists won't be thrilled with having to wait, you'll hand them pre-assembled press kits about your school. (See pages ---) As for content, your information to media must echo your key messages to other audiences, so make sure they are unified and focused.

Choosing a Spokesperson:
Anybody in the hot seat must commit to be the first and best source to keep bad information from pouring into a reporting vacuum.
(Heath, 2006)

WHY ARE YOU TALKING? Communication about a crisis works to disclose information and also reduce rumors and negativity. Before you call a press conference or talk to media, make sure that your message is helpful and needed.

- Are you updating the public with new information or resources?
- Are you presenting a new perspective that replaces TV shots and photos of the crisis scene?
- Are you sympathetic toward victims and supportive of any heroes?
- Finally, are you assuring the public that you are continuing your efforts to remedy the crisis?

HOW ARE YOU SAYING IT? You probably won't have time for anything but email or phone calls during a crisis. However, newsrooms are accustomed to a certain format, so use these guidelines when you send out any media alerts.

FOR INTERNET-READY NEWS RELEASES: Follow this order (and never send an attachment)

1. Write a succinct subject line that quickly sums up the situation.
2. Follow with your contact information (name, email/fax, plus 24/7 phone number during crisis).
3. Write no more than five paragraphs, with no more than three short sentences in each, and no more than 200 words in the entire release.
4. Refer readers to your website for more information (and make sure it's there).

FOR FAXED OR MAILED RELEASES: Follow this order and use letter head or white paper, double-space with 1.5" margins, with 12' Times New Roman font; follow this order beginning at the left-hand top corner:

1. CONTACT: (Name of media contact, with email / fax plus 24/7 phone number)
2. FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (Leave space for an editor to pencil in notes)
3. A BOLDFACE HEADLINE (Your key message at a glance)
4. A dateline (e.g. Las Vegas, NV: April 15, 2009)
5. The story, with a clear summary lead paragraph that is no more than five lines of text.

FOR MEDIA ALERTS: To signal a news conference, this one-pager follows the five Ws:

1. WHO: Name of your school/district, with a few background sentences
2. WHAT: Exact reason for the information session about the crisis
3. WHY Reason for news media to cover this information
4. WHEN: Time of the event
5. WHERE: Location of the event
6. CONTACT: All information above; note that the phone number is the event-day cell

Reminder: Proofread all releases and double-check your information.

Media will recognize the above formats as coming from a source that respects their traditions and needs. And, if you present a clear, easy-to-understand message that's free of jargon and emotion, the newsroom will continue to pass along your faxes and emails as

REAL LIFE: FORMING PARTNERSHIPS WITH LOCAL MEDIA

Richard Simpson, Conejo Valley Unified School District

"The unique and perhaps most challenging case in CVUSD was the famous 'Hitler speech' given by a fifth grader at Westlake Elementary as part of the Public Speaking Celebration. Fall-out from that was on all the TV stations and in the media throughout the world. It was a three-month control and healing process."

TIP: Follow Simpson's lead and work closely with local reporters toward a close working relationship. Then, when crises hit, there is a trusting protocol such as school sources returning calls in a timely manner and media requests with clear questions and deadlines.

Some educators, such as administrators at Louisiana State University, set up "code words" with media to identify official spokespeople in case of a crisis, such as a school closing. This helps protect a school against false information being publicized, and also assures the reporter about source credibility.

newsworthy items.

CASE IN POINT: Murder in the 8th Grade (Newsweek's cover story, July 28, 2008)



Students gather around a makeshift memorial at E.O. Green on the day they learn of Larry's death, Feb. 14, 2008. Reprint permission pending from *Newsweek*.

E. O. Green Junior High School, Oxnard, CA

On February 12, 2008, 8th grader Larry King, 15, was allegedly shot by a classmate, Brandon McInerney, 14, after Larry spread rumors about them being a couple. Initial media coverage focused on the crisis as a hate crime, given that Larry was openly gay and sometimes wore makeup, high heels, and jewelry. By the time he was taken off of life support and died on Valentine's Day, E.O. Green and the Oxnard community were

entering one of the worst nightmares of crises, a tragic event that brought up the decades-old ghosts of the Matthew Shepard murder as well as the Columbine school shootings.

Published four months later, a *Newsweek* cover story reads as a superb feature, drawing in readers with attention to reactions and causes rather than the shooting itself. Messages from the school are nearly ignored in this and other media coverage, with major emphasis on reactions from the students and gay activist groups.

Information flow: The crisis received global media coverage, including *The Sun* (England); *Sunday Mail* (Australia); *Boston Globe*; *Los Angeles Times*; *Washington Post*; *New York Times*; and many other outlets. A review of media coverage at the start of the crisis (February 12, the day of the shooting) until a month after the July 28, 2008, publication of the *Newsweek* article shows gaping holes in communications from the school. For instance, several stories mentioned faculty seemingly confused about how to handle the issue of student sexuality, with one teacher giving Larry a prom dress, another enforcing a no-makeup rule, and others concerned about the boy being a classroom distraction.

Stories about the Larry King shooting mostly quoted fellow students, followed by community members, church spokespeople, and parents. While stating that school teachers were commanded not to speak to the media, some faculty members were quoted about receiving mixed messages from administration.

Media framing of school district as responsible/ not responsible:

- Superintendent Dannenberg: “School officials definitely were aware of what was going on, and they were dealing with it appropriately.” Under long-established case law, the student was legally entitled to wear makeup, earrings, and high-heeled boots.
- Carolyn Laub, executive director of the Gay-Straight Alliance Network: “The tragic death of Larry King is a wake-up call for our schools to better protect students from harassment at school.”
- Deputy Public Defender William Quest: “Educators were so intent on nurturing King while he explored his sexuality that they overlooked the turmoil caused on campus. Teachers were ‘repulsed’ by administration’s failure to take action.”

Media framing of Larry King as the victim/perpetrator:

- “They teased him because he was different,” Marissa Morena, 13. “But he wasn’t afraid to show himself.”
- “If Larry had flirted with the other boy, that can be very threatening to someone’s ego and their sense of identity,” said Jaana Juvonen, a psychology professor at the University of California.
- Headline in the *Advocate*, bimonthly gay newsmagazine: “Who’s to Blame? We told Lawrence King he had the right to express his sexuality. Did we send him to his death?”

The Larry King shooting underlies the ultimate challenge of crisis communication: What do you do when you can't say anything – for issues of legality or sensitivity – and are instantly blamed for the tragedy?

This case was a horrific tragedy involving many issues – sexuality, violence, and miscommunication, to name a few – and the media jumped to frame the issue as the school's indecision and fault, citing an email sent to all faculty just before the shooting which called for increased tolerance. And, because the administrators had to abide by legal rules of confidentiality, *Newsweek* noted Principal Joel Lovstedt denied requests for interviews, yet unnamed teachers were quoted about how school leaders refused to intervene. There is also a photograph of the vice principal who mentored Lawrence and is described as the public defender as, “a lesbian vice principal with a political agenda.”



Columbine, Crisis Communication, and Today's Schools:

It's been over 10 years since two students in Littleton, CO, carried out a planned campus assault that left 15 dead and 28 injured. Whether your school has 100 or 10,000 students, prepare for a media onslaught in case of violence; in the case of Columbine, national media were already in the area awaiting a murder trial verdict and quickly ran to Littleton when the news broke.

Time and *Newsweek* magazines are examples of the national media that Dr. Glenn Muschert, sociology professor at Ohio's Miami University, analyzed after the 1994 Columbine High School shootings.

His study finds that media coverage bred a culture of fear nationwide that defies logic.

Muschert said the fear created from Columbine fuels a misperception of how violence affects the country's youth.

(Purdue News Service photo/David Umberger, reprinted with permission)

Wrapping It Up

Proactive media relations build credibility before, during, and after a crisis. If you tell it all, tell it fast, and tell it truthfully, your message will be favored. Help the media with their job: Remember the five Ws and an H that creates a story. Choose your message and how you deliver it carefully: A news release posted to your website will inform the media and reassure the community better than a mailed one.

TO DO FOR YOUR SCHOOL'S CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLAN:

1) Review your current media strategy.

- Do you work through the district's Public Information office or does press regularly visit your school for stories?
- Hidden resources: Who on your faculty or staff already have relationships with media?
- What is the protocol for visiting media? If, for instance, all visitors go to the front desk upon entering schoolgrounds, do not change that policy during a crisis.

2) Compile lists of key media, unless your district's office already has one.

- Ask staff and faculty for recommendations about media they trust for information.

3) Prepare your identified media spokesperson(s) by arranging a one-hour meeting to go over:

- Guidelines for spokespeople;
- Briefing for interviews and news briefings;
- Types of news releases and for the news media during specific types of crises;
- Processes for contacting the spokesperson(s) in the event of a crisis.

Talking points: How would you talk to the press?

(Harrold Independent School District, Texas, 110 students)

teachers to carry guns at school. A global media blitz ensued -- including Reuters (U.K.) – with multiple quotes from Superintendent David Tweatt, who linked gun-free zones with an increase in recent school shootings. Relevant snippets:

“When you make schools gun-free zones, it's like inviting people to come in and take advantage,” he told FOXNews.com. “When the federal government started making schools gun-free zones, that's when all of these shootings started,” he said to the press. “Why would you put it out there that a group of people can't defend themselves? That's like saying 'sic 'em' to a dog,”

Some states are moving toward allowing classroom firearms with a school's permission. If a reporter calls to ask if your school allows teachers to pack heat, what would you say?

Key words:

Gun-free school zones; Homeland security; 2nd Amendment; campus proximity to police and sheriff offices; student safety; gun-caused injuries.

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Love, hate and surviving stakeholder emotions

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Abstract

The opinions and attitudes of publics have always been important in public relations, as they shape the interaction that can take place between the organization and its publics (Grunig & al. 1992, Ledingham & Bruning, 2000). In the changing environment and pressures of real time media, it is the function of public relations to monitor different publics and guide the organization to adjust and evolve with changes. As services get faster and reality TV and viewer votes introduce the idea of having a say in almost everything, stakeholder expectations toward organizations are also on the rise: good deeds of today quickly become expectations of tomorrow.

No longer are organizations treated as neutral structures, but they can be targets of emotion. With these changes in mind, traditional forms of interaction with publics are no longer enough, and organizations are finding it difficult to stay in touch with publics that express their opinions and emotions via different real-time media. Also the level of public involvement in organizational affairs is changing. Publics today do not only want to participate, they also show and express emotion for better and worse. It could be argued that we have moved into a time of emotional publics, where feelings toward organizations range from love to hate, and the different stakeholders have several ways of showing their emotion and recruiting others to join in and comment on their feelings, for example through social media and different hate-sites and fan groups. These displays of emotion may threaten organizational legitimacy, as organizations are faced with the question of how to maintain organizational functions and good relations to the different and sometimes even opposing emotionally involved publics. Organizations, however, can still affect their behavior and through it the stimulus they give to stakeholders' emotions.

It has been suggested that we live in a reputation society, where social networks and shared experiences take central stage (Pizzorno 2004, Luoma-aho 2005). Organizational survival in reputation society requires better understanding of stakeholders, as well as new strategies of dealing with stakeholder emotions. The whole concept of organizational legitimacy is under change; interaction with stakeholders has become norm and predicting different scenarios and stakeholder reactions and emotions will become a precondition for survival. Little Public Relations research thus far has concentrated on the emotions and feelings of stakeholders, probably due to their changing nature. Emotions, however, have become ever more important as the amount of existing information is overwhelming and even important decisions may be based on feelings.

The paper approaches the neglected area of stakeholder emotions and focuses on the reasons behind the arising of feelings toward organization, as well as their possible consequences for organizational legitimacy. Trust becomes a key concept (Kramer & Tyler 1996, Bentele 2005, Fukuyama 1995), when organizations aim to deal with public displays of emotion. The paper suggests that publics with negative emotions and distrust toward the organization can be described as "hateholders", whereas those feeling trust and even love could be described as "faith-holders". To conclude, the paper proposes these concepts to describe the new kinds of

relationships organizations today face, and discusses how organizations should navigate the changing waters of stakeholder emotions.

Introduction

Stakeholder expectations toward organizations have changed. As services have improved in speed and the entertainment industry has embraced formats that play up emotions and participation, stakeholders are beginning to express feelings toward organizations as well. No longer are organizations considered neutral structures, but good ones receive fan mail whereas “badly behaved” organizations get their own hate-sites. Whereas a few decades ago boycotts and demonstrations were merely mentioned in the media, new technology has enabled both support and complaints to spread both far and fast. With information moving real time, situations and issues may take dramatic turns: mere rumors can harm reputation and paralyze the whole organization. The new social media (Facebook, MySpace) make it easy to create “I love” and “I hate” –groups around individuals, products, brands and even countries.

The classic Freeman (1984) definition of stakeholders sees that organizations simply exist to serve the different stakeholders and their needs. Stakeholders are simply individuals and groups that enable organizational functions (Carroll 1989, Näsi 1995, Rawlins 2006, Rheingold 2002), such as employees, customers, competitors as all these affect organizations through their own expectations, needs and stakes. The definition of stakeholders becomes more difficult when the speed and amount of available information today and the fractured nature of publics are considered. This poses a challenge to organizational legitimacy: how to maintain relations with the strong stakeholder groups while enabling organizational functions?

We are living in a time of heightened emotions, a time of “hateholders” and “faith-holders”, stakeholders that feel strongly and are not afraid to express these emotions through blogs, discussion forums and RSS feeds. The decline of traditional journalism and increasing financial pressures (Miel & Faris, 2008) further contribute to the importance of the individual opinions and rumors, as fact-checking and investigative journalism become things of the past, and real-time reporting is becoming the norm. Controversy and airing of emotions make for interesting stories, and collect much attention. For organizations this opens up a new threat as search engines dig up stakeholder outbursts even from days gone by.

This paper looks at the changing role of stakeholders today, and focuses on stakeholder emotion. First, previous research on emotions is addressed. Second, the rise of new types of stakeholders, here called “faith-holders” and “hateholders”, is described. Third, the implications of the rise of emotions for organizational legitimacy and practice of public relations is discussed, and future areas of study are mapped.

Feelings, nothing more than feelings

Communicating to unidentified masses seldom yields certain results, and organizations today monitor and map their various stakeholders and target groups. Knowing who your stakeholders are and what they think are no longer on the “things to do if there is time left over” –list, but many organizations have understood the strategic value of stakeholder relations. Stakeholder assessments affect organizational reputation, and these assessments contribute to

organizational legitimacy (Bromley 1993, Deephouse & Carter, 2005; Fombrun & van Riel 2003, Kramer & Tyler 1996).

It has been suggested that we live in a reputation society (Pizzorno 2004, Luoma-aho 2005), where social networks and shared experiences play a major role, and information acquired from peers or “people like me” is more trusted than advertising or even the media (Edelman Trust Barometer, 2008). Emotions matter in the reputation society, though previous research has not much focused on feelings of stakeholders. Emotions and feelings are difficult to study as they are subject to change and individuals themselves even have a hard time describing why they feel like they do.

Emotions are here understood as something distinguishable from moods, though they both involve affect. Emotions and feelings are directed at someone or something, whereas moods may be more diffuse and less intense. There is a clear contextual stimulus for emotions, and hence the target can be understood to play a role in creation and maintenance of feelings (Mossholder et al. 2000; Nelson 2005, Plutchik 2001). Mossholder et al. (2000, 223) note that “...emotions that individuals harbor or express may have potential to reveal how they feel about ongoing events in the organization and how they may react to these events”. Russell (1980, 1989) draws a circumplex model of emotions and names two bipolar dimensions of emotion, pleasantness and arousal, where the former ranges from very positive to very negative, and the latter describes the level of intensity of the emotion. These basic ideas of emotions studies can be applied to the world of stakeholders, as the feelings can also be targeted at organizations.

Stakeholders are constantly assessing the organization, and together these assessments shape the emotional environment in which the organization operates. Though these assessments are formed whether the organization wants to or not, strategic communication can shape the way the organization is perceived or not perceived. If the reputation of the organization does not match its deeds, a publicity risk is formed (Grunig 1992, Grunig & Hunt 1984, Bromley 1993, Fombrun & van Riel 2003, Pharoah 2003). Influencing the stakeholder opinions however, has become more difficult as new media enable various voices, publics have fractured and diverged in interest and the traditional business model of brokering attention is breaking down (Miel & Faris, 2008).

Stakeholder relations as social capital

Trust refers to anticipation of suitable behavior (Sztompka 2000), expecting the best, taking a risk that the interaction will proceed as expected (Seligman 1997, Hosmer 1995). Seligman (1997) describes trust as an ideal form of coexistence, as a society requires trust both on the individual as well as the general level. Trust takes time to form (Kramer & Tyler 1996) and it is future oriented, and as such, vital for organizations that exist to serve their stakeholders (Freeman 1984).

Trust and reputation are intertwined, as trust turns into reputation when present turns into past (Luoma-aho 2005). It is rational to prove worthy of trust and hence create a good reputation for future interaction to be built on (Hosmer 1995). If social capital is defined as resources available through social relations, (Lin 2001, Kumlin & Rothstein 2005) a good reputation and the trust stakeholders feel toward the organization can be understood as social capital, which in turn supports organizational legitimacy (Deephouse & Carter, 2005; Hill 1990, Petrick ym. 1999; van Riel & Fombrun 2007). Trust and reputation can be understood as capital when, and only

when they become valuable and useful for the organization. On the other hand, a bad reputation and distrust eat up even existing social capital, and they make organizational survival difficult.

Love and Faith-holders

Stakeholders that view the organization positively can benefit the organization in several ways. They will recommend the services and products, they are willing to pay a higher price, they ignore minor problems and are committed to collaboration and development (van Riel & Fombrun 2007). In fact, commitment and support have become good business: there are more and more available support-related products from navigators to online support communities (Zuboff & Maxmin 2002). Services and products are becoming more tailored and meeting more specific needs than before.

A positive approach can take some extreme forms from faith to love. Confessing love toward some specific product has become normal both among publics as well as in the media: targets of sponsor money may declare their love and gratitude, but also organizations themselves are declaring to stand for and adore specific things from innovation to trees. TV-shows are built around fighting for love (The Bachelor, The Bachelorette), and certain brands and products have their loyal followers that are willing to not only stand by, but also fight for the target of their love, such as the cult build around the Macintosh product families. Advertising is also picking up on the trend with confessions such as McDonald's 2003 "I'm loving it" or the fight between Macs and PCs. The fact that these campaigns have caused very little controversy seems to prove that the use of emotions has become widely accepted.

Stakeholders that feel high trust toward the organization can be described as faith-holders (Luoma-aho, 2005). The concept originates in religious contexts, and some of this faith is still visible in the relationship that some stakeholders have with organizations. Faith-holders are formed when the trust and positive emotion that stakeholders feel toward the organization is strong enough to be a beneficial resource for the organization. Sometimes the faith-holders surprise organizations, and the positive emotions and high trust are not taken advantage of to the degree that they could be.

Faith-holders are formed around products (i-pod, Manga-culture, Coca-Cola), sports (Real Madrid, LA Kings), TV programs (The Sopranos, Friends) as well as around Internet services (Google) and gaming communities (Hattrick). Faith-holders are a resource, as they act as reputation ambassadors without the organization ever having to ask for it. Faith-holders often use the products or their affection to build or strengthen their own identity, but at the same time they bring free visibility and distribute positive experiences in a way that even the best advertisers can not copy. The value of peer experiences is globally acknowledged: the Edelman Trust Barometer (2008) has listed "a person like me" as the most credible source already several years in a row.

Faith-holders make life easier for organizations, and they reflect the positive potential of stakeholder relations. When resources are tight and cutbacks have to be made, stakeholder support built over long periods of time is vital (Luoma-aho 2006, van Riel & Fombrun 2007). When a strong group of loyal supporters exists, it might not make sense to invest heavily on following new marketing fads. The faith-holders are social capital for the organization, as they share their experiences and recommendations in their social networks raising the amount of general trust felt toward the organization. This trust in turn may shape industries and radiate

toward the society at large (Rothstein & Stolle 2002). Moreover, faith-holders are often satisfied with the organization functioning the way it has thus far, and do not require new tricks to keep them interested.

Organizations should, however, monitor also the faith-holders and take their recommendations seriously, and perhaps better enable forums for the faith-holders to collaborate in the corporate functions. There is an inherent threat among the faith-holders, as well: strong emotions rise high expectations. Life with faith-holders is not always easy as sometimes they expect special treatment. Furthermore, if the organization is not aware of the faith-holders and ignores this important group, consequences might be huge. The line between love and hate is thin, and often it is up to the organization what the stakeholders end up feeling. The good news is that social capital is best maintained when it is in active use (Ojala ym. 2006), and faith-holders are more than happy to engage in a dialogue.

Hate and hateholders

Whereas faith-holders may be accidentally ignored, hateholders are usually too loud to not be noticed. Though the concept is new, there have always been negative groups that suspect the organizations of different things. Feelings of anger range from arranged conspiracy theories to individual inconveniences, but stakeholder anger is destructive to most organizations. Moreover, the angry stakeholders are often louder than the happy ones, and their negative experiences may in turn affect the other stakeholders (Coombs et al. 2007; Read 2007). Though all stakeholder demands cannot be met, they can neither all be ignored.

Negative approach can easily go into extremes. Despite cultural or geographical hurdles, a common enemy is the best unifier, and the group spirit is well maintained among the members of different hate-sites. Showing hate toward certain targets has become an important part of identity building, especially if the group is supported by influential individuals or groups. Traditionally the strongest displays of emotion come from the actors of non-profit sector, where groups are often formed around some ideology or problem to either support it, hate those threatening it (NIMBYs) or even directly hating some person or organization (Former US President George Bush, Microsoft). Hate-sites have become a typical outlet for stakeholder anger, and there have been some efforts to regulate them (UN efforts against racism etc.). In advertising hate is often used indirectly showing people in situations they hate (Pedigree Adopt a dog, 2009). In Europe, where the laws often prohibit talking bad about competitors, advertisers have fewer tricks to use. In Finland, a fun example of this can be found in a Valio 1997 milk commercial, where a dirty, fat old man stands outside a diner and states "I have never drank milk. And never will"- the negative emotion in the ad was so loved that people started using the line in many situations unrelated to milk.

Stakeholders that feel strong distrust or even hate toward an organization can be described as hateholders. The concept originates in computer gaming, referring to a level or a role that a character can fall into (skullmonkeys.com). Hateholders are formed when the distrust and negative emotion that stakeholders feel toward an organization are strong enough to hinder the organization. The hateholders seldom surprise the organization, as these groups are seldom formed without some reason or obvious warning signs. Hateholders are formed around brands (Exxon, Walmart, Lidl), individuals (Osama Bin Laden, Britney Spears), countries (France, USA) as well as ideas and industries (globalization, fur industry) and organizations (EU, WTO).

Hateholders are harmful to the organization, as they harm the organizational reputation in all their social networks. Led by the books of Naomi Klein (2000, 2007) groups of concerned citizens have also joined together to stand against the power of larger entities of brands and the idea of neoliberalism, though these groups do not always match the description of hateholders as their central emotions is more concern than hate.

On the other hand, hateholders embody a valuable opportunity for the organization: the organizational shortcomings raised by the hateholders are often neglected areas of improvement for the organization. In fact, development collaboration with hateholders may turn out to be very fruitful, as those viewing the organization more critically are able to see things others might miss. This trend is emerging in global markets, as organizations are starting to collaborate for example with aggressive environmental activists (Businessweek 2007). As change takes place in the right areas, hateholder anger may also diminish, as anger is often a reaction to negligence. Stakeholders involved in decision making seldom change collaboration into anger and hatred.

Surviving in the emotional jungle

Stakeholder relations are no longer what they used to be: in reputation society we have entered into a time of strong emotions and organizations have become targets of emotion, both love and hate. New technology has catalyzed this by enabling quicker information sharing, and the various social media help and support community formation around issues. Stakeholders today have more information, skills and easy access to show their emotion and collect supporters for their ideas, both good and bad. These changes have also resulted in some stakeholder groups to become more demanding and powerful, and maintaining stakeholder relations is taking a larger amount of organizational effort and time than before.

Most theories of stakeholders are based on the assumptions that the organization should have some kind of relationship with the stakeholders, and that the nature of that relationship affects organizational legitimacy (Deephouse & Carter, 2005; Jones & Wicks 1999). Literature talks of relationship management (Ledingham & Bruning 2000) as a way to build long term relationships with the stakeholders. The idea behind this is that in the long term, trust and loyalty will also reap financial benefits (Grunig & Hon 1999, Ledingham & Bruning 2000, Grönroos 2000.) To maintain legitimacy, the organization has to ensure that the different stakeholders approve or at least do not hinder its function. This can be achieved for example by providing good experiences of collaboration and in practice listening to feedback. Relationship management should start on the strategic level, as in the new complex environment good relationships are often not possible with all stakeholders and choices have to be made.

For organizations it would be better to have more faith-holders than hateholders, but stakeholder emotions are multifaceted. Sometimes the mere existence of the organization sparks emotions in some groups, and some industries are more often targets of anger (fast food, nuclear power) while others are generally adored (technology, cancer research, development aid). Culture also plays a role assigning certain emotions to places and industries (innovation and silicon valley, entertainment and Hollywood). Mapping the stakeholders is no longer enough but organizations need to monitor and scan their environment for upcoming trends and opinions. Fixing broken relationships is always messier than maintaining them, especially as the collective memory of internet stores it all for easy access later on. What is needed is some kind of interaction, as stakeholder emotions seem to run wilder when ignored by the organization.

There are both ethical and unethical means that organizations are trying to survive in the emotional jungle. It is already common to have employees infiltrated into the organization's hatesites' discussions to provide an additional point of view. Some organizations have even purchased their own hate sites to keep a better eye on the discussion. Search engine optimization is getting so usual that it is no longer considered unethical: who would not like to have their better sides most visible? New means of monitoring stakeholders and their discussions are searched, but stakeholder emotions seem to be getting stronger and they seem to be here to stay.

The role of public relations has never been breezy, but identifying stakeholders seems to be getting easier, as they leave signs of their existence behind in both cyberspace and the tangible environment. As stakeholder emotions cannot be done away with, organizations and public relations practitioners should discover how to make the best of the existing situation. Public relations should in the future focus more on involving the different stakeholder and harvesting the benefits they embody. Faith-holders could be called upon to take part in open innovation and advertising, and special interest groups could provide beneficial testing and feedback on both products and services. Hateholders could be invited to strategy sessions and workshops for worst case scenarios, as playing the devil's advocate at an early stage of an innovation or product design could save the organization serious funds and resources (Estrin, 2009; Fox, 2008). These opportunities would probably be accepted by the different stakeholders as good challenges to make a difference, as stakeholders know that "if you can't beat them, join them".

Future studies should examine the role of stakeholder emotions and their effect on stakeholder behavior. Studies should also examine organizational emotions toward the media or individual bloggers, as traditional source-media relationships are changing (an interesting story: blogger Michael Arrington of TechCrunch leaves his job January 2009 for death threats). Moreover, the levels of activity and involvement in different groups should be further studied as they might not be the same in all cases (for example several Facebook groups remain mere lists of names and nothing more). This article hopes to serve as a start to mapping this new trend that is likely to affect organizations even more in the future as digital media come of age (Miel & Faris, 2008).

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**Lessons on the Big Idea and Public Relations:
Reflections on the 50-Year Career of Charlotte Klein**

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*“To honor in perpetuity those women,
citizens of the United States of America whose contributions to
the arts, athletics, business, education, government,
the humanities, philanthropy and science,
have been the greatest value for the development of their country.”*

-----National Women’s Hall Fame mission statement, Seneca Falls, New York

Introduction

Although public relations practice arguably can be traced back to the days of Aristotle and the practice of persuasive rhetoric, the profession itself is generally recognized to have come of age in the early 20th century. It was then, in 1923 to be exact, that Edward Bernays coined the term “public relations counsel” in his book *Crystallizing Public Opinion* and taught the first college course devoted to the field at New York University.³ As a relatively young profession not yet a century old, scholars have documented in textbooks and literature a number of public relations practitioners of the mid-twentieth century.⁴ Not surprisingly, the majority of these histories have been about the men who dominated the era’s executive suites.⁵

³ Hanson, R.E. (2008). *Mass communication: Living in a media world* (2nd ed.). Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

⁴ See, for example, Wilcox, D.L., Cameron, G.T., Ault, P.H., & Agee, W.K. (2005). *Public relations strategies and tactics* (7th ed.). Boston: Pearson Allyn and Bacon

and Heath, R.L. (2005). *Encyclopedia of public relations*. (Vol. 1). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

⁵ Of the 37 practitioners highlighted in The Plank Center’s *Legacies from Legends in Public Relations* series, which provides insights and tips for students from living practitioners, only seven are women. The two publications were printed by the University of Alabama Printing Services in 2007 and 2008 and can be accessed from The Plank Center Web site, www.plankcenter.ua.edu. The center was started by the first woman head of PRSA, Betsy Plank.

However, in a newly published paper, Suzannah Patterson “encourages scholars to join the development of the history of women using public relations. . . .”⁶ This charge can be challenging, given the scarcity of early women PR executives in the profession’s first decades and the nature of the business itself, where practitioners project the limelight on their clients, but remain in the background.⁷ In this paper, we help answer Patterson’s call by bringing to light one woman’s history through personal interviews⁸ and secondary documents and by discussing the societal contributions she made through public relations and her strategic, big ideas.

Journalist and Publicist

The early 1940s were an interesting time for young women coming of age in America. With multitudes of men away at war, opportunities that likely would not have been available to them only a few years’ prior, now were possible. Charlotte Conrad Klein, a sociology and psychology major at University of California-Los Angeles (UCLA) in 1944, is a case in point. She was among a group of three women editors of UCLA’s college newspaper, *The Daily Bruin*, in 1943–1944—only the second time women had served in that position at any of the school’s newspapers, dating back to their origin in 1919.⁹ But it seems for Klein that such leadership was not unusual, for she had long been primed for a man’s world.

Born June 20 in Detroit to Jewish parents Joseph and Bessie (Brown) Klein¹⁰ in the same year as Bernays’ book and public relations course were introduced, Charlotte was the last baby

⁶ Patterson, Suzannah A. (2009.) “A History of the Development of Public Relations.” *Journal of Public Relations, Journal of Public Relations*. Other works about women’s public relations efforts include Miller, Karen S. (1997). “Woman, Man, Lady, Horse: Jane Stewart, Public Relations Executive,” *Public Relations Review* 23(3): 249–169; Lamme, Margot Opdycke. (2007). “Outside the Prickly Nest: Revisiting Doris Fleischman.” *American Journalism* 24(3): 85–107.

⁷ Karla Gower reviewed articles in the *Public Relations Journal* from its inception in 1945 through 1972, when Betsy Plank became the first woman chair of the Public Relations Society of America, she found that of 2,260 by-lined articles, just 100 were written by women. See Gower, Karla. (2001). “Rediscovering Women in Public Relations: Women in the *Public Relations Journal*, 1945–1972,” *Journalism History* 27(1): 14–21.

⁸ Personal interviews with Charlotte Klein were conducted at her apartment on East 36th Street, New York City, in June 2007 and 2008. Telephone interviews were conducted October 24, 2008 and February 14, 2009. E-mail and fax correspondence ranges from mid-2005 to February 2009.

⁹ According to “Editors of UCLA Student Newspapers, 1919–1955,” Klein shared the editorship that year with two other women: Adele Truitt and Gloria Farquar. Josephine Rosenfield had been the first woman editor the year before and served with two men: Tom Smith and Robert Weil. Retrieved: January 2009, from www.ulwaf.com/Daily-Bruin-History/index03.html#Anchor-EDITORS-23240.

¹⁰ *Marquis Who’s Who*. (2008). New Providence: NJ.

of her Canadian-born homemaker mother,¹¹ who gave birth to her when she was 31. Klein's two sisters, Adelaide and Beatrice, were 13 and 10 years older than she, respectively. Her mother told Charlotte she had felt guilty and apologized to her father after Charlotte's birth because the baby had not been the longed-for son. But Klein's father had not been disappointed, Klein said. An auctioneer who owned his own business, he often traveled around the city and took his youngest daughter with him.

"That's the kind of man he was," Klein said. "I really loved him." Still, "I became a tomboy," she continued. "I tried my best, you know, to be the kind of person that they were looking for. And so I was always setting myself up to compete with boys."

When she was 11, her family moved to Los Angeles, where her sister Beatrice, a talented tap dancer, had moved to try to get into the movies. Instead, she met and married the eldest son of the Schwab's Pharmacy¹² family, Jack, when she was 21, the same legendary place where Charlotte later worked while in college. According to Klein, Beatrice was her father's favorite, and she would call crying that she was homesick. So, Klein said, the father moved the family to be close to her. Klein received a scholarship to and was graduated in 1941 from a private school,¹³ where she wrote for the newsletter. She enrolled in UCLA the same year.

At this time, Klein said, UCLA did not offer a journalism major, and she'd never even heard the term public relations.¹⁴ Instead, she started as an English major and focused her energies on the college newspaper. As editor of the *Daily Bruin*, she wrote an editorial every day and also served as a campus correspondent for *The Los Angeles Herald Examiner*. It was this experience, she said, that helped her get work as a United Press International (UPI) correspondent upon graduating in 1945. Of course, countless other early PR practitioners, both

¹¹ Charlotte's mother had seven sisters, and two of Charlotte's aunts lived with them for a time in Detroit.

¹² According to a Hollywood tourism Web site: "In the movie 'Sunset Blvd,' William Holden's character calls Schwab's Drug Store 'headquarters; a combination office, coffee klatch, and waiting room' for Hollywood writers. And so it was. F. Scott Fitzgerald (author of "*The Great Gatsby*") had a heart attack here in 1940, while buying a pack of cigarettes. Songwriter Harold Arlin wrote 'Over the Rainbow' (from 'The Wizard of Oz') by the light of the Schwab's neon sign. Charlie Chaplin and Harold Lloyd used to play pinball in the back room. And the rumor still persists that Lana Turner was discovered at Schwab's, but it isn't true. Alas, Schwab's was closed in 1986," <http://www.seeing-stars.com/Streets/SunsetStrip.shtml>, accessed Feb. 20, 2009.

¹³ Klein reports that the school, called the Cumnock School, no longer exists.

¹⁴ However, Bernays' wife, Doris Fleischman, a skilled public relations practitioner in her own right, edited and published *An Outline of Careers for Women: A Practical Guide to Achievement* in 1928, in which she included public relations. (See Lamme, 2007.)

men and women, also began their professional careers as writers, including Ivy Lee,¹⁵ Doris Fleischman,¹⁶ and Lorena Hickok.¹⁷

“At UCLA, just before we would graduate, they would tell us how to behave when we were looking for a job,” Klein remembered.

And the instructions to women were that you must wear your gloves—little white gloves—and you must wear your hat. And I wanted a journalistic job, you know. And they wouldn’t hire me at any of the newspapers. And so I went to United Press with my little white gloves and my little hat, and of course they never wore clothes like that. . . . They were really hard working and so forth. And he [Mr. Switzer, the head of UPI in Los Angeles] looked at me . . . and he said, ‘You know, I would like to hire you, but just by looking at you, I really don’t feel that you would be that comfortable here. We just wear any old clothes. . . .’ And I had to beg him to hire me. I tore off my gloves and said, ‘I’m ready to work!’

Starting at \$27 a week and still living at home, Klein would have to leave very early in the morning to get to work by 6 a.m., traveling through downtown Los Angeles, where she would often encounter winos in the streets. Being a woman alone on the dark city streets made her feel vulnerable, she said, and she carried a knife. But she never shared this with her mother, for fear her mother would worry or want her to quit. This early work at UPI involved giving the farm report and the price of eggs for the Egg Council, but she soon began writing news for the print and radio wire service.

Although she regularly reported news about the war, she recalled she could not use the word “blood” in her radio copy, for radio announcers were not allowed to say it on the air. In addition, she said, “In those days, when crime was written about, they would always say, ‘Joe Jones, black, ‘a black’ or ‘a Negro did such and such,’ but they never did it for any other type [person]. So I used to omit that. I would just say, ‘Joe Jones.’ I felt, you know, because I was a sociologist, I felt that that was a very unfair thing to do, which probably a lot of people wouldn’t agree with. I was conscious of profiling, I guess, very early.”

The gravity of reporting on President Roosevelt’s death also is etched in her mind. However, she also remembers receiving news releases. “I’d throw them right in the wastebasket,” she said. “I would hardly even look at them. . . . We covered the news; so that was my first opinion.” Little did she know then that it would be PR—not journalism per se—that would dominate her life, and that through it, she would help build institutions and propel social causes.

¹⁵ Hanson, Ralph. (2008).

¹⁶ Patterson. (2009.); Henry, S. (1997). “Anonymous in Her Own Name.” *Journalism History* 23(2): 51–71.

¹⁷ Martinelli, D. K., & Bowen, S. A. (Fall 2009). The public relations work of trailblazer and first lady confidante Lorena Hickok, 1937-1945. *Journalism History*. (In press).

Klein left UPI after a year, in 1946, to write for a CBS radio show called “Ona Munson in Hollywood.” Although Munson had played Belle Watling, the madam who was a friend of Rhett Butler in “Gone with the Wind,” she had never become a star; instead, she interviewed stars. Klein would secure the guests and write the background material for Munson. This job gave Klein more insight into the ubiquitous world of Hollywood publicity, and when the show ended in 1947, she left to join Selznick Studios in Culver City, California.¹⁸ It was here, Klein said, that she learned to pursue big ideas.

“It was great because you had almost an unending budget to develop all kinds of ideas for movies,” she said. “That was a fascinating time, and I was a junior publicist. So I got to brainstorm all these wonderful kinds of things for movies. . . . We had complete open possibilities for any kind of PR and stunts, publicity of all kinds because they had such big budgets. So you could dream. And, you know, they could make your dreams come true.”

During this time, before television, special events were used to get word and name recognition for one’s clients, she continued. When she was assigned to publicize the new Selznick film “Duel in the Sun”¹⁹ in 1946, she thought of the intense rivalry of the UCLA–University of Southern California (USC) football game—itsself a “duel in the sun.” She approached the schools’ athletic departments, which organized student placard cheers, and suggested they hold up placards to say “Duel In the Sun” during the game. A *Life* magazine photographer snapped the photo, which ran nationwide in the popular publication.

While at Selznick, Klein also had an idea for another early kind of product placement. When she was assigned to promote the 1948 movie “Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House,” starring Cary Grant and Myrna Loy,²⁰ Philip Morris had an advertising campaign that showed people telephoning for Philip Morris, Klein said. “And so I thought of the idea of, in those days, in the hotels, there were staffers who would shout the name of a person who had a telephone call. So I suggested that we call different hotels at dinner time and other times and ask for Blandings. So all throughout the city they were paging Blandings and, of course, the movie was opening and it was Mr. Blandings. . . .

“After that was successful, [the head of PR at Selznick] asked that I do a column to be bylined by Shirley Temple. At this time, she was in her twenties and Selznick had the rights to her appearances,” Klein said. So Klein ghost wrote a column for the famed actress. It appeared in the *Los Angeles Examiner* and was called “What Every Young Bride Should Know.” Being a pregnant young wife herself, Temple seemed a win for both the studio and William Randolph Hearst, who owned the *Examiner*, Klein said.

¹⁸ Selznick Studios was run by David O. Selznick, who had produced “Gone with the Wind.”

¹⁹ The film’s stars included Gregory Peck, Joseph Cotton, Jennifer Jones (who was nominated for an Academy Award), and Lillian Gish (who was nominated for an Academy Award for best supporting actress). According to a film Web site, “The publicity campaign for *Duel In The Sun* was immense and it paid off. Audiences flocked to see it and waited in long lines to buy tickets. The film made 17,000,000 on it’s first release and subsequent releases would bring in even more,” accessed March 1, 2009, <http://home.hiwaay.net/~oliver/duel.html>.

²⁰ The movie was nominated for a Writers Guild Award for best written American comedy. Accessed from the Internet Movie Database site March 1, 2009, [ww.imdb.com/title/tt0040613](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0040613).

“So I would go over to Shirley’s house and interview her,” Klein recalled. She would travel a lot; she would tell me about her adventures and experiences, and I would write it up as a column.” However, the column was not long-lived. Once Temple had her baby in 1948,²¹ she was not considered to be a “young bride” anymore.

After Selznick Studios went out of business in 1949 (with Selznick and his then-wife star Jennifer Jones relocating to London, where they continued to make movies), Klein continued her work as a publicist at Maury Foladare and Associates, a firm that promoted actors, actresses, producers and writers—including radio star Danny Thomas—in part by giving information to gossip columnists. She also got to work at the Academy Awards, identifying for reporters the stars who were coming down the red carpet. Klein said that it was common practice to make up information about and quotes for their entertainment clients, who would read and approve them prior to release. But with her journalistic training, Klein said she felt uncomfortable with this practice.

Luckily, she didn’t have to feel uncomfortable for long. By 1951, the new technology of television was gaining popularity, and it was based in New York. Thomas was leaving for New York, as were many other previously West Coast–based entertainers who looked to break into the new business.

Although still in her 20s and having never lived away from home, Klein convinced her boss at Foladare and Associates to allow her to open a branch office in New York City. But it was not really television that interested Klein. Instead, she was a self-proclaimed Francophile, who had long harbored a dream to move to France and write, and New York was a lot closer to France than California. After she’d sold her car and settled in the City, Klein said her boss had second thoughts about the costs of such expansion and told her to return. She refused, instead obtaining a job with Edward Gottlieb & Associates in 1951, a firm with no connection to Hollywood.²²

“The Clean Side of PR”

Although her prior PR work had been pure publicity, Gottlieb, who’d begun his agency three years prior,²³ liked her sociology degree and her newspaper and radio experience, Klein said. He too had worked for a news service, INS, from 1934 to 1940, before joining Carl Byoir and Associates as an account executive. Klein was pleased to be out of the entertainment business and in the “clean side of PR,” she said. More importantly, Gottlieb taught her to think strategically for clients over a longer period—six months to a year—to facilitate longer term client business, and her view of public relations changed. No longer was it about a quick stunt or

²¹ Shirley’s daughter, Linda Susan Agar, was the child of her first husband. They divorced in 1949. Accessed from NNDB, March 1, 2009, <http://www.nndb.com/people/089/000023020/>.

²² Gottlieb also helped launch the career of Amelia Lobsenz, who was a freelance writer and book author that joined Edward Gottlieb & Associates in the early 1950s, before starting her agency, Lobsenz PR in 1956. She was the first woman president of the international Public Relations Association in 1986. She died in 1992. *Encyclopedia of Public Relations*, p. 493.

²³ *Who’s Who in America*. (1988). 45th Ed.

mere publicity. It became about servicing her clients well, helping them to achieve their objectives, and also making a difference. She would remain with Gottlieb for 11 years, until 1962, and rise to the level of vice president.

Although she'd left the world of films some 3,000 miles away, Klein's studio work nonetheless continued to serve her in terms of big ideas. For example, one of her first accounts at Gottlieb and Associates was the Ideal Toy Corporation.²⁴ In the early 1950s, Klein said, "a fiery, red-headed white woman" in Florida named Sara Lee Creech was disturbed that black children had to play with white dolls. Only "mamie" or "pickanniny" dolls were available then, or white dolls that had been painted brown.²⁵ In response to Creech's activism, a respected sculptor named Sheila Burlingame, who had created a number of black statues, was enlisted to develop an anthropologically correct prototype for the toy company.²⁶

A natural PR practitioner, Klein did her research. She took the prototype on the New York subway through Harlem with her, carrying the doll in her arms to gauge people's reactions. A black woman approached her, curious to get a closer look at the doll, Klein said. When the woman saw it, she said the doll looked dead because of its grayish color. Klein rushed back to Ideal's management to suggest they enlist experts to decide on a more natural-looking color. Still thinking big, she approached Eleanor Roosevelt, who was a well-known civil rights advocate, and the former First Lady agreed to participate. Roosevelt convened a "color jury," by inviting a number of famous African Americans of the day, including the first black player in major league baseball, Jackie Robinson, and his wife, Rachel Isum,²⁷ to her home for a reception.

Despite these efforts, Klein said she had to continue to urge Ideal's president to proceed with the doll's production because he believed blacks would not have the money to purchase it. Klein persisted. With the support of the president's brother-in-law, Klein helped convince the company head by saying she could obtain a lot of good publicity for Ideal based on Roosevelt's involvement. As she knew from her Hollywood work, celebrity activity and prominent persons make newsworthy copy.

Articles about the doll's development appeared in *Life Magazine*,²⁸ *Time*, *Newsweek* and *Ebony*, as well as in newspapers around the country. Roosevelt wrote about the doll in her column, "My Day": "At 5 o'clock a number of people were kind enough to come in to tea with me to see a Negro doll, made by the Ideal Toy Corp. ... Certainly, any child would love one of these baby dolls. They have the loveliest expressions and are beautifully made."²⁹ *Time*

²⁴ Ideal Toy Company was founded as Ideal Novelty and Toy Company in New York in 1907 by Morris and Rose Michtom, who invented the Teddy bear in 1903.

²⁵ *Life Magazine*. (December 17, 1951). Vol. 31: 61–62.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Jackie Robinson was the first African American to play major league baseball and was a civil rights advocate. Accessed from the Biography Web site March 1, 2009, <http://www.biography.com/search/article.do?id=9460813&page=3>.

²⁸ *Life*, December 17, 1951. Photocopy provided by Charlotte Klein; page number unknown.

²⁹ Klein reports that Saralee is scheduled to be placed in Eleanor Roosevelt's cottage Val-Kill, where she was "born," along with some of Eleanor's other favorite things.

Magazine carried a photo of Roosevelt with the doll and said, in part: “In Manhattan, after a period of long and careful study, a panel of judges including Dr. Ralph Bunche³⁰ selected a model for what will become the first ‘anthropologically correct Negro Doll.’”³¹

And the doll, named Saralee after its creator, was popular: “Stores reported it was selling unusually well and noted that the doll is so cute that it is enjoying a brisk trade not only among Negro children but among white children as well,” says a *Life Magazine* article of the day.³² A November 1951 *Newsweek* issue featured a photograph of Roosevelt holding up the doll, and said, in part: “‘They are a lesson in equality for little children,’ said Mrs. Roosevelt, who has ordered 500 for Christmas.”³³

However, despite this campaign’s success and personal rewards, Klein’s persistent desire to make a difference by working on meaningful accounts caused her to consider leaving Gottlieb and Associates in 1955 to take a job at the United Nations.

Realized Dreams

“I didn’t want to keep pushing products,” Klein explained. “I wanted something more socially significant.” Gottlieb, knowing her Jewish background and that she had been president of the Junior Hadassah, enticed her to stay by asking: “Is the government of Israel socially significant enough for you?” Indeed, it was.

“The image of Israel [in the U.S.] at that time [1955] was a little country with its hand out, and they really needed funds to continue their country,” Klein said. “And so we set out to change that image.” Klein approached *Life Magazine*’s editorial board to convince them to hold a meeting with Israel’s prime minister. It was a bold move, given the hostilities between the new state and Egypt, where *Life*’s correspondent was based.

“They had to get to know him, and it was very hard to do,” Klein said. “I had to say to the Prime Minister, ‘When they say this is off the record, they do mean it; it will be off the record.’ And that was true in those days,” she added. “So he agreed to answer any question they asked as long as it was off the record.” As a result, the magazine sent its first correspondent to Israel and wrote a favorable editorial. The agency also sent people across the country on media tours to speak on behalf of Israel.³⁴

Shortly before Klein departed, on April 13, 1955, Gottlieb sent her a memo:

³⁰ Dr. Bunche is well known for his service to the U.S. government and to the United Nations. In addition, he was the first African American to win a Nobel Peace Prize. Accessed March 1, 2009, from http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1950/bunche-bio.html.

³¹ November 5, 1951, *Time Magazine*. Taken from a photocopy provided by Klein; page number unknown.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Newsweek Magazine*, November 1951. From a photocopy provided by Klein; page number unknown.

³⁴ Klein reported she also worked on the Jerusalem Foundation account around this time; it’s a nonprofit group that provides activities for both Jewish and Arab children.

On the eve of your departure for Israel I want to take the occasion again to tell you that I think you are doing an outstanding job and that you continue to amaze me with your capacity for thought, planning and work all in one coupled with a strong sense of loyalty and responsibility.

Keep in mind that your trip to Israel should be not be entirely devoted to business. Nothing is so important on occasions of this kind as the need for one to take some time away from work to relax and to clear ones [sic] brain in part of the responsibilities in favor of fun and the needs of a social life.³⁵

Later in her career, in the early 1980s, Klein would work for the Jerusalem Foundation, which seeks to unite Jews and Arabs. For that organization, “We set up our own agency people in Israel to feed us photographs and material [for news stories],” she explained.³⁶ Also in later years, Klein said, “he [Gottlieb] apologized to me. He said, ‘I feel that I’ve interfered with your personal life.’ And that’s what he meant: that I had never married. I mean, I had plenty of dates. I did have to travel a lot in my PR career. Oh, when I went to Israel, I got more marriage proposals than I could count. And the reason I didn’t marry was because none of them were from love.” She continued: “And, you know, there were men studying to be doctors, lawyers, or so forth, and they wanted to get to the U.S. And they said it was my *duty* to marry them. But that finished that. . . .”

Still, Klein’s longstanding desire to go to France was realized through her work. Gottlieb had started looking for new clients in other countries, Klein explained, while French companies were looking to enter new markets. As a result, the firm had four French accounts by the late 1950s: cognac, champagne, leather gloves, and couture fashions. Gottlieb kept the cognac account for himself, but gave the others to Klein, and she finally traveled to France.

It was also during this time—in 1959—that Gottlieb’s life changed forever, and life at the firm was altered as well. On Feb. 4, just before midnight, Gottlieb was on an American Airlines Chicago to New York business flight, when his Electra turbo-jet plane crashed in New York’s East River.³⁷ Sixty-five people perished; only 8 survived.³⁸ Although Gottlieb was among the survivors, he was hospitalized for months at Bellvue Hospital in New York with severe leg injuries, Klein said. However, he didn’t stop for a minute, she said, and they held their staff

³⁵ April 13, 1955 memo to Klein from Ed Gottlieb, on Edward Gottlieb and Associates letterhead. Photocopy provided by Klein.

³⁶ One angle they used, Klein said, was equating the new country, with its cattle ranches, to the Wild West of the U.S. a century before.

³⁷ *The New York Times*, Feb. 4, 1959, pp. 1, 18.

³⁸ *Ibid.* Feb. 5, 1959, pp. 1, 20.

meetings in his hospital room. Although he learned to walk again, Klein said he relied on a wheelchair and a cane for the rest of his life.³⁹

Klein credits Gottlieb for her own successful approach to clients, one that she would employ with confidence when opening her own firm some years later. “It was a calm approach, a humble approach, but with outstanding results,” she said. “He was always my destiny,” she continued. “He kept turning up [in my life].” If not for Gottlieb’s efforts, she said she would have left the public relations profession. “He had very high standards,” and I was able to “practice my journalism in doing PR.”

Gottlieb’s charm—“the French loved him,” Klein said—no doubt combined with her understanding of the power of celebrity and big ideas, paid off for the firm and its clients. For example, she used a former U.S. Olympic swimming champion, who was then married to a Frenchman and living in France, as the model and spokesperson for their client’s novel washable leather gloves. She brought in television cameras to film the former Olympian swimming in a hotel pool in the morning with her gloves on, then had them return later in the day when the gloves were dry.

She partnered her French clients with another Gottlieb client, Cheseborough Ponds, which wanted to elevate the stature of its cosmetics line. Klein suggested they do that by sponsoring the first U.S.–televised French couture fashion show. The sponsor and the mystique of French elegance interested CBS, and the firm secured actor Yves Montaine to serve as the show’s host.

Klein adeptly identified both her clients’ target audience—upper income Americans—and how to reach them: charitable organizations. She also organized what we’d today call Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities by partnering with community groups, such as the Junior League and the Damon Runyon Cancer Fund, in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago to host charitable fashion shows that paired the one-of-a-kind fashions with French champagne to raise money for their respective causes. Klein traveled from France with a designer and models on the new U.S.S. France, and the New York charitable event was held aboard the ship to benefit the French American Friendship Fund. First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy served as honorary chair of the fund and was honored at the event. Klein also employed a beautiful French baroness as a spokesperson for the products and events, and Klein said her beauty and perfect English made their television media tour a great success as well.

Klein’s career was rich indeed. She owned her own agency, not once, but twice: Charlotte Klein and Associates, the first iteration of which was purchased by Porter Novelli in 1984. She served as an early woman President of the New York Chapter of PRSA, and headed an early women’s professional networking group in New York, called Women Executives (WE) in PR. She’s championed diversity in the workplace, established the PRSA Task Force on sexual harassment, and has been active politically.

She was a member of the International Women’s Forum,⁴⁰ serving in leadership roles from 1993 through 2001. As part of this work, she co-chaired a task force on violence against

³⁹ Despite the trauma of the accident, Klein said he remained foremost a PR man: Following the crash, a garbage barge reached him and pulled him aboard, and the crew asked if they could get him something to drink. “Yes,” he replied, said Klein. “I’ll have cognac.”

women globally. Part of this effort included creating a “hospital brigade to make heads of private NYC hospitals aware of the urgent need to make indentifying and treating battered women a priority,” says an entry in the book *Feminists Who Changed America*.⁴¹

While a senior vice president at Harshe-Rotman & Druck, Inc.⁴², for whom she worked from the mid-1960s until 1978, she represented the United Negro College Fund and the First Women’s Bank, among other minority clients.⁴³ She was a lecturer at Boston University and Pace College, and taught a course called “Making It In a Man’s World” in 1971 at the New School for Social Research in New York. According to an article written about it at the time, the course dealt with “women’s ambitions in their careers and ways in which to deal with the obstacles they must face in human relations.”⁴⁴

“We’re in a low bargaining position,” Klein says in the article. “Corporations will say a man has a family and needs more money. Or they will say they are afraid you’ll have a child and leave.” The piece ends with the following paragraph:

“There’s nothing militant about Charlotte Klein regardless of her success in business. She’s attractive, feminine and realistic—and the ideal person to be giving a course on how without bitterness and with honest self-appraisal a woman can make it in a man’s world.” Klein later taught public relations as an adjunct at New York University; her final course there was public relations ethics in 2001.

An Enduring Legacy

It’s clear that Klein made a difference to her clients, her profession, and society. With all of her accomplishments, however, one of Klein’s most enduring has been the work she started while a senior vice president for a woman-owned PR agency, Flanley and Woodward, in 1965.

⁴⁰ According to its Web site, the International Women’s Forum is advancing women’s leadership across careers, cultures and continents by connecting the world’s most preeminent women of significant and diverse achievement. Through this global organization, IWF members come together across national and international boundaries to share knowledge and ideas, to enrich each other’s lives, to provide a network of support and to exert influence. Through the Leadership Foundation, IWF helps prepare future generations of women leaders. www.iwforum.org/, accessed February 22, 2009.

⁴¹ Love, B. J. (Ed.). (2006). *Feminists Who Changed America, 1963-1975*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

⁴² Klein joined the agency in 1965, and Druck was one of PRSA’s founders in 1948. Betsy Plank directly succeeded him as PRSA President in 1973.

⁴³ Fleischman also worked for minority clients, including the NAACP.

⁴⁴ Hennessy, Helen. “Making It in a Man’s World: New School Teaches How to Do It,” *Newspaper Enterprise Association/New York-Cleveland*, Dec. 6, 1971.

Although her time at the agency was relatively short-lived, only about three years before she was fired,⁴⁵ it was her work here that would create a national institution.

It's likely a woman-owned agency particularly appealed to client Purex in 1965, for the company branded itself with the slogan: "Products with a woman's touch."⁴⁶ However, unbeknownst to the agency, the company had invested heavily in the 1965 New York World's Fair, creating a Hospitality Center for women's clubs and the like to meet while visiting the event. But women weren't going to the Fair for meetings, and the company was not getting the traffic—or return on investment—it sought. Around this time Klein remembers seeing New York University's Hall of Fame and noticing there were no women in it. This prompted her to suggest creating a women's Hall of Fame for Purex to sponsor and display at the Fair.

Once again, Klein thought large. She enlisted the daughter of former President Harry Truman, Margaret Truman Daniel, to head the nominating committee and let 200 women editors and broadcasters nationwide (media representatives who would want to cover the eventual inductee story) vote for the first 20 inductees—10 living and 10 deceased women of the 20th century who had made a contribution to society. The first inductees included Margaret Bourke-White, Edna Ferber, Dr. Frances Kelsey, Margaret Chase Smith, Jane Addams, Ethel Barrymore, Evangeline Cory Booth, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Dr. Florence Sabin, Eleanor Roosevelt (who secured the most votes), Helen Keller, Marian Anderson, Margaret Mead, Rachel Carson, Margaret Sanger, Pearl Buck, Grandma Moses, Amelia Earhart, Babe Didrickson Zaharias and Helen Hayes.⁴⁷ Six of the ten living inductees attended the reception of more than 200 invited guests and print and broadcast media.⁴⁸

"Thirty-seven of the nation's major newspapers ran the story on their front pages, most with photos of all 20 inductees," Klein later wrote in a news release.⁴⁹ "Many ran editorials, some ran color. All three TV networks ran interviews; AP and UPI covered the story more than once. . . . Traffic [in the Purex hall] increased by 400 percent."⁵⁰

"The Women's Hall of Fame actually, in a way, was a catalyst of the women's revolution," Klein said. "And of course I am proud of that. And I became a very big feminist myself, even marching down 5th Avenue with Betty Friedan⁵¹ and Gloria Steinem⁵² and Bella

⁴⁵ Klein believes her resignation was hastened by her desire to add a man to the team—which the principals refused to consider—and by Klein's vocal concerns regarding client dissatisfaction, which perhaps was perceived as undermining her superiors.

⁴⁶ Klein personal interview, June 12, 2008.

⁴⁷ Photocopies of original ballots provided by Klein. Complete list of inductees taken from a "Women and Society" section front page of the *Minneapolis Tribune*, May 30, 1965.

⁴⁸ From a news release issued Feb. 14, 2005, by Klein for publication in PRSA's publication *PR Tactics* in response to her National Women's Hall of Fame-issued Keeper of the Flame Award, Feb. 3, 2005.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Author of *The Feminine Mystique* (1963).

Abzug⁵³. I was very active in all that, and I helped found the New York branch of NOW [National Organization for Women] organization.”

Four years later, while working for Harshe-Rotman and Druck, Inc.,⁵⁴ where she stayed until 1978 and rose to senior vice president, Klein was approached by Seneca Falls, NY,⁵⁵ asking if Purex would continue their sponsorship of the Hall there. Purex declined, so Klein, who had originated the hall, gave Seneca Falls permission to take it over. Since then, they’ve added key suffragists and inducted outstanding women each year. Today, there are 226 women in the Hall.

The National Women’s Hall of Fame honored Klein in 2005 with its first Keeper of the Flame Award for being the creator of the initial hall. The award ceremony was part of a fundraiser for the institution and featured Gloria Steinem, a 1993 inductee into the hall, as its keynote speaker.

Klein said, “My career has been toward servicing a client but can show how PR can benefit society. . . . You know, public relations can be so broad and it can accomplish such terrific things.”

Klein worked during her vacation time to set up the Women’s Political News Service through the National Women’s Political Caucus at the Democratic National Convention in New York in 1976. “We had most of the copy in the paper because there was very little to talk about other than what we were sending out, and we were giving the press information and got them some of the delegates to be interviewed,” she said.

Jimmy Carter went on to be elected President. “This gave Bella Abzug and others ammunition to demand 50/50 female/male delegates to future conventions,” Klein is quoted as saying.⁵⁶

Klein would interact with Carter again when she represented the American Arbitration Association. She came up with the idea of presenting then-President Carter with a special award

⁵² Steinham was founder of *Ms. Magazine* and, according to a January 13, 2005, news release by the National Women’s Hall of Fame, is “considered by many to be one of the most influential leaders of the late twentieth century women’s movement.” Accessed February 3, 2005 at www.greatwomen.org/news.php?action=view&id=42.

⁵³ Bella Savitsky Abzug (July 24, 1920 – March 31, 1998) was an American lawyer, Congresswoman, social activist and a leader of the Women's Movement. In 1971 Abzug joined other leading feminists such as Gloria Steinem and Betty Friedan to found the National Women's Political Caucus

⁵⁴ Harshe-Rotman and Druck, Inc. was founded by Kalman Druck and Morris B. Rotman in 1961 and based in Chicago. It became the sixth largest PR firm in the U.S. and was acquired by Ruder Finn.

⁵⁵ Seneca Falls contains a historical preserve to recognize it as the site of the first Women’s Rights Convention in 1848.

⁵⁶ Love, B. J. (Ed.). (2006).

from the organization for his mediation in the Middle East peace talks.⁵⁷ He accepted the award in the White House Oval Office, and, as a result, Klein has a photograph of herself with him there. More importantly, her client's name was associated with his in the resulting outlines and news stories.

She worked for PBS promoting a new Annenberg project, and—despite being an active Democrat—she obtained First Lady Nancy Reagan's⁵⁸ commitment to tape a televised introduction to the program and was invited to a White House reception besides. She had worked in public broadcasting previously, as the director of press and government affairs for WNET, the nation's largest public broadcasting station from 1978 to 1980. Klein said she had a staff of 33 and was eager to do something for the community through her work. But her boss, a woman vice president of communications, had a different management style, one that Klein said demeaned the staff.

On Her Own

“This was a pretty low time in my career,” she said. However, this low point served as the impetus for Klein to leave and start her own agency in 1979, where she got a lot of public television stations as clients. And although her experience with Gottlieb had given her a lot of confidence, she was still asking people for advice, turning to the Women Executives in Public Relations, to which she had belonged for some time.

One of the founders of the group, Denny Griswold, herself an accomplished and well respected woman practitioner,⁵⁹ cautioned Klein to get a male partner. “Well, what do you mean?” Klein said she responded to the advice. “You won't be successful unless you have a man helping you to be the head of it,” she recalled Griswold saying. Klein said she responded by saying, “Well, I'll think about that.” But she didn't think it necessary, and she started Charlotte C. Klein and Associates without a male partner in 1979.

Yet Griswold's advice came back to Klein soon afterward, when she went after a large Japanese account. She was advised by another colleague to bring a man with her to the presentation, and this time, she heeded the recommendation. “And we made the presentation,” she recalled, “and the PR head came to talk to us afterward, and he said, ‘You've done a great job, really great job. Only one thing, would you change the name of your company? A man's name would have to be the head of it or they won't hire you.’” “And so I said, ‘Goodbye!’” Klein said.

Such continued discrimination was disheartening, she recalled. When she served as president of the NY Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America, she remembered

⁵⁷ Although Carter was instrumental in the peace talks, which were held at Camp David in Maryland, he did not receive the Nobel Peace Prize many expected. This led Klein to think of the mediation award, she said.

⁵⁸ The First Lady was well known for her “Just Say No” anti-drug campaign.

⁵⁹ Griswold was the co-founder and nearly 50-year editor of *PR News*, which she started with her husband in 1944. It was the first weekly publication about PR in the world.

making a speech and held up one of the chapter members as an example of a man who hired mostly women.

“So I gave him plaudits and he was sitting there. And I questioned him: ‘Steve, why was it that you were so interested in hiring women? Did you think that they did a better job?’ And he said, ‘No, they come in cheaper!’ But that was a long time ago. We have so many women who own their own agencies now. But, boy, they were sparse [then]. You just couldn’t make it.”

But Klein and a few others did make it. “I had all of the photographs from the Women’s Hall of Fame set up in my office, all the original pictures. Every day I could look up there for all these role models,” she said. Eventually, her former boss Gottlieb, who’d sold Gottlieb and Associates to Hill & Knowlton and went into the mergers and acquisitions business, helped Klein merge her agency in 1984 with Porter Novelli, who was looking for a New York presence. Even at the high level of senior vice president, Klein wasn’t happy. Her rule of serving clients with excellence was being compromised by the firm, she believed. Because Porter Novelli was owned by an advertising agency, “getting accounts was the most important thing ... and service began to go down because everybody was selling—had to sell,” she said. “It [service] was a very strong point with me.”

So she quit after five years with the firm and, because of her contract, was able to take a large client with her. That’s when the second incarnation of Charlotte Klein and Associates began, in 1989, which she maintained for five years before deciding to retire.

A Rich Career

During her career, Klein, as Fleischman,⁶⁰ worked for diversity issues, and for women’s rights,⁶¹ and she mixed with other prominent men and women public relations practitioners. Some of these colleagues included the man who was most influential in her career—Gottlieb—as well as Druck, a former PRSA president and someone whom Klein called “wonderful” and “a very impressive man.”

“He had a way that was very different from Gottlieb,” Klein said. “In fact, it was just the opposite—big talk, big show, big promises that we couldn’t always live up to.” Klein prided herself on customer service and preferred Gottlieb’s approach, she said.

She was not alone: Another successful New York practitioner of Klein’s era, Barbara Hunter, said she lived by one rule during her 42 years of agency work: “Do not overpromise results to your client and make certain you deliver the promises you do make.”⁶² Gottlieb, Klein, and Hunter knew the importance of credibility.

Klein networked with other influential women who also served as WE PR presidents: Griswold, Dorothy Gregg, and Caroline Hood—all of whom are included in the *Encyclopedia of*

⁶⁰ One of Fleischman’s most rewarding accounts was that of the NAACP in 1920 (Patterson, 2009.); Klein hired an African American man to help with her National Negro College Fund account and worked with black PRSA members to help develop minority PRSA programming in the 1970s and 1980s, respectively.

⁶¹ Klein also did work to combat domestic violence for a group called The Women’s Forum.

⁶² *Encyclopedia of Public Relations*, p. 399.

Public Relations.⁶³ But most importantly, public relations helped her fulfill her earliest dreams of contributing to society, of going to France, and even of having her name in *The New Yorker*.

Although the publication's editors had sent her numerous rejection letters over the years, her name did eventually appear in the magazine, but not in the byline she'd imagined. Instead, it was part of a feature story about one of her client's campaigns that chronicled her pushing comic strip characters Dick Tracey and Tess Trueheart's baby, Bonny Braids, down 5th Avenue as part of a publicity event for Macy's,⁶⁴ the same street where she marched for women's rights with feminist leaders Friedan, Abzug, and Steinem more than a decade later.

"Miss Klein informed us that Ideal Toy [Corporation] went into action the moment Chester Gould, the cartoonist who draws Dick Tracy, indicated in print that Tracy and Miss Trueheart were finally going to get hitched," *The New Yorker's* July 7, 1951 issue reads. ". . . Benjamin Franklin Michtom, chairman of the board of Ideal Toy, perceived at once that a Tracy marriage could mean a Tracy baby, which could mean a Tracy doll, which could mean a gold mine for Ideal. . . . Now Ideal is keeping a sharp lookout for the first local baby to be named Bonny; this baby will be given a free Bonny Braids doll. . . ."⁶⁵

Reflecting more seriously on her 50-year career, Klein said, "Everything you ever do in your life at some point will have a meaning in your public relations career. . . . What I really tried to do in my career was things that would last, not just stunts or campaigns. . . ." Indeed, her desire to do good through both her paid and volunteer PR work, her desire for more inclusive workplace environments and her campaign "big ideas"—those that David Ogilvy called ones that get noticed, remembered, and inspire action⁶⁶—included "bundling" clients together for greater collective benefit; early product placement and CSR activities; and the involvement and support of a Prime Minister, one U.S. President, three First Ladies, and a President's daughter.⁶⁷

Unlike Fleischman, who worked largely in the shadows of her husband, Klein was among the first generation of women to become accredited by PRSA and recognized by their peers, both men and women, as leaders in the profession. Following in the footsteps of PRSSA "godmother" Betsy Plank,⁶⁸ who was the first woman to head PRSA in 1972 and was also the head of her own PR agency, which she still operates, Klein headed the Woman Executives in PR

⁶³ Heath, R.L. (2005). *Encyclopedia of Public Relations*. Another contemporary of Klein's was Phyllis Berlowe, who was born months before Klein, also to a businessman father and homemaker mother, and who also spent time with Harshe-Rotman and Druck and Gottlieb and Associates (although in that order) and who lived in New York and eventually started her own firm, The Berlowe Group, in 1986. She too was a member of WE in PR; she won the PRSA Silver Anvil award the year before Klein did: and she also received the John Hill Award. *Encyclopedia of Public Relations*, pp. 77–78.

⁶⁴ *The New Yorker*, July 7, 1951, p. 15.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Hanson (2008).

⁶⁷ Klein also received a letter of reference from Hillary Clinton.

⁶⁸ Heath (2005). *Encyclopedia of Public Relations*, p. 622

in 1965 and the NY Chapter of PRSA in 1985. Klein received the New York Women in Communications Matrix Award in 1975,⁶⁹ won the PRSA Silver Anvil Award in 1978 for her work with the Aerosol Packaging Council in educating consumers about fluorocarbons,⁷⁰ and was given the New York Chapter's John Hill Award ten years later.

Also similar to her contemporary Plank, who was born less than one year after Klein and also has more than 50 years' experience in the field, neither had children. However, Plank was married for many years; Klein remained single. Although she had offers, she said, "I was married to my work. . . . You know, the men that I would meet wanted me to be there [for them]. And I always wanted to have children. I adopted, just by mail, really, an Israeli child. And, you know, I was involved with that child for about 10 years."

Klein, as Plank, continues to stay active. She serves her Murray Hill Homeowner's Association in NYC, editing their 20-page, four-color quarterly newsletter that includes local advertising, in the same apartment where the second Charlotte Klein and Associates operated. She looks back with great pride on her public relations work and accomplishments. "I learned that you could do almost anything in PR if you had the budget and the idea," Klein said. "But I was really interested in establishing things that lasted."

Patterson writes: "History left too long unrecorded will eventually be lost."⁷¹ This paper adds to our knowledge of 20th century public relations practice through the experience of one woman's lengthy and noteworthy career. In addition, it is history recorded from multiple personal interviews and the benefit of reflection and hindsight, rather than solely from primary and secondary documents and third-party recollections, which dominates our literature about women practitioners.

⁶⁹ According to the New York Women in Communications Chapter Web site, "The Matrix Awards recognize exceptional women who have made distinguished contributions to the fields of advertising, books, broadcasting, film, magazines, new media, newspapers and public relations." Klein's award is listed on <http://www.nywici.org/archive/matrix/fame.html#1975>.

⁷⁰ According to PRSA's Web site, "Silver Anvil Awards recognize complete programs incorporating sound research, planning, execution and evaluation. They must meet the highest standards of performance in the profession," accessed March 1, 2009, <http://www.prsa.org/awards/silveranvil/index.html>. The council was part of the Chemical Specialties Manufacturers Association; Klein worked for Harshe-Rotman & Druck, Inc. Winning entry accessed at <http://prcsearch.prsa.org/dbtw-wpd/exec/dbtwpub.dll>, March 1, 2009.

⁷¹ Patterson (2009).

Can You See the Writing on My Wall? A Content Analysis of the Fortune 50's Facebook Social Networking Sites

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Introduction

According to the Facebook website (as of March 9), there were more than 175 million active users. More than half of Facebook users are outside of college. The fastest growing demographic is 30 years and older. More than 3 billion minutes are spent on Facebook each day (worldwide). More than 18 million users update their status at least once each day. More than 4 million users become fans of pages each day. Weber Shandwick and KRC research (2007) surveyed Fortune 2000 companies and found 69 percent currently used social networking sites, while 37 percent planned to use more of them over the next five years. Similarly, social media, such as Facebook, are not only becoming commonplace in large corporations and nonprofits, but are also frequently utilized by journalists, thereby demonstrating its importance in public relations (Melcrum, 2007; Nursing Standard, 2007; Poytner Institute, 2008).

Methodology

A content analysis was conducted between February 21, 2009 and March 7, 2009. The Facebook pages (N=55) of the 2008 Fortune 50 were coded. Disclaimer: Some companies have died (Lehman Bros.) and others have been bought out by other companies (Wachovia by Wells Fargo). A criterion for inclusion was the member page and/or fan page had to have at least 100 members or fans. Regardless if the site was for members or fans, the one with the most was coded.

The following Fortune 50 companies did not qualify: ConocoPhillips (#5), Berkshire Hathaway (#11), American International Group (#13), Valero Energy (#16), Cardinal Health (#19), CVS Caremark (#24), AmeriSource Bergen (#28), Wellpoint (#33), Wachovia (#38), Dow Chemical (#43). While all these sites had groups, they were typically internship, or "conversation on" groups, etc. In addition, some sites linked to the brands within the company such as CVS Caremark rather than the corporation itself. Fifty-two (94.5%) out of 55 sites were positive. Twenty-seven sites were member sites and 28 were fans sites.

Top six sites in terms of members/fans:

1. Target (#31): 191,071
2. Verizon (#17): 154,420
3. Microsoft (#44): 68,408

4. Ford (#7): 25,106
5. Dell (#34): 24,757
6. Costco (#29): 19,459

Only one site, Procter & Gamble, had a disclaimer about the content on the site. The majority of the sites did not have any recent news posted (80%) or a minifeed (76%), indicating a lack of activity on the site.

Wall Posts

A wall post is a blurb that can be posted by anyone visiting the site and may be posted by a current employee, a former employee, a fan, a potential job applicant, a consumer having an issue with a product, a headhunter for the competition, or someone seeking more information, such as a journalist. The wall post can be publicly viewed by anyone visiting the site and the administrator of the site can remove the wall post. Regarding wall posts, Verizon had the most (1,620) followed by IBM (469). The last 40 wall posts were also coded for positive, negative, and neutral tone. Ford had the highest number of positive wall posts (40), followed closely by General Electric (39), and Chevron (38).

Discussion boards

Similar to a traditional web discussion board, member and fan pages also have discussion boards where anyone can post and reply. Microsoft dominated the other companies with 1,097 discussion board topics, followed by Target (206) and Verizon (158). Discussion board topics may also be deleted, but unlike wall posts, leaves a “discussion board item deleted” note in the empty space.

Social Responsibility

Only 21 percent of sites, whether in the wall or minifeed, had a discussion or mention of any area of corporate social responsibility, indicating corporations are not taking advantage of Facebook as a medium for CSR message dissemination.

Conclusion

Overall, most companies in the Fortune 50 are taking advantage of the opportunities of Facebook, but not utilizing this medium to its fullest extent. Some sites have a strong fan base such as Ford, and others such as Dell and Microsoft respond to customer issues and offer product deals on their Facebook page. But, these companies are more exceptions to the rule. In fact, in many cases, when customers had product complaints, there was a lack of response on the sites. While some corporations posted news releases and mission statements, most sites are not using the site to disseminate news and information about the organization, especially in terms of corporate social responsibility. AT&T did have a “work with me” section with job postings for potential employees. Companies should also spend more time developing and maintaining employee sites on Facebook. Also, few organizations had links to YouTube or videos posted on

the site. Finally, there needs to be more in terms of engagement and giving reasons for members or fans to go back and revisit the site.

Measuring Excellent Leadership in Public Relations: A Second-Order Factor Model in the Dimension of Self-Dynamics

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Abstract

This research examined the construct of excellent leadership from the perspective of senior public relations practitioners by using the trait approach. As a key dimension in excellent leadership in public relations, the perspective of self-dynamics indicated that public relations leaders' self attributes, visionary ability, and team collaboration ability are key factors at the individual level. A structural equation modeling approach was used as the analytical tool to assess the hypothetical hierarchical confirmatory model. The results indicated the multidimensionality of the construct itself as well as the predictive power of the measurement model. The authors evaluated the results and discussed the findings, as well as concluded with suggested implications for theory construction and measurement development in the field of public relations leadership research and a suggestion for future research directions.

Introduction

The study of leadership has been an important and central part of the literature on management and organization behavior over the past 40 years. Researchers of leadership have historically developed a number of complex concepts and theories in the attempt to explain and predict leadership effectiveness and organization performance. Major theories, topics, and controversies in this area have encompassed leader traits and skills, leader behavior and activities, leader power and influence, situational determinants of leader behavior, and leadership as an attributional process (e.g., Bass, 1985, 1990; Conger, 1999; Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975; Fiedler, 1978; House, 1971, 1999; Kouzes & Posner, 1987; Stogdill, 1948, 1974; Yukl, 1989). However, relatively few studies in the field to date have explored the qualities, values, and dimensions of excellent leadership in public relations. Specifically, leadership in public relations has not been subjected to quantitative measurement. Measurement issue has particularly perplexed public relations researchers in their efforts to construct theory and to test theory.

Therefore, this research paper is a first systematic step toward such an exploration—to discover what leadership means to senior-level public relations professionals and the role of personal attributes in terms of leadership development. By reviewing emerging concepts and approaches in leadership research, the researchers are interesting in gathering experienced public relations professionals' opinions about the key and important attributes/skills/qualities a successful public relations leader should have and exhibit. The importance of personal attributes and qualities is strongly associated with its impact on the achievement a public relations leader

could obtain and the establishment of the mutual relationship between the leaders and their subordinates.

The focus of our research is on leader attributes that are reported to be effective in communication management. The trait approach in leadership research and public relations leaders' widely recognized traits are discussed briefly, focusing on important findings and controversies. Next the research project is introduced, which involved the participation of more than 200 experienced public relations professionals nationwide. The findings regarding perceived effective leader attributes and behaviors are summarized and presented. The perception of essential personal attributes and qualities among senior-level public relations practitioners will help researchers specify effective leader attributes and behaviors in succeeding in communication management. Finally, the implications for theoretical development, practical training, and future research are discussed. In short, the anticipated theoretical and practical contributions of this paper will be reflected in its efforts in filling a substantial knowledge gap concerning excellent leadership relevant to the success of public relations practice and organizational effectiveness.

Literature Review

Managerial leadership: the trait approach

Although leadership has been little explored by public relations scholars as an essential component of excellence in communication management over the past decades, we cannot ignore the fact that the assumption of excellence in public relations has its roots in leadership and organizational studies. More valid evidence of how public relations management contributes to organizational effectiveness has been identified. At the same time, more public relations scholars have recognized the importance of applying leadership skills to develop successful communication professionals, the importance of applying appropriate leadership style in public relations practice, and the importance of leadership effectiveness in helping public relations professionals successfully influence organizational decisions, actions, and values and, eventually, in gaining stature and respect inside organizations (e.g., Aldoory & Toth, 2004; Berger & Reber, 2006; Berger, Reber, & Heyman, 2007; Choi & Choi, 2007; Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002; Holtzhausen & Werder, 2008).

As one of the most comprehensive research projects that has been done in the field of public relations, the IABC Excellence Study provides not only a conceptual framework for understanding the functions of public relations; but more importantly, the theoretical advances revealed by research findings have indicated the necessity of discussing leadership and its application in the scope of excellence in communication management (Grunig, 1992; Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002). The theory suggests that, to achieve excellence in public relations and communication management, public relations managers (leaders) should be able to explain “*why* public relations contributes to organizational effectiveness and *to what extent* by asserting that public relations has monetary value to the organization” (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002, p. 10). The magnitude of this influence is likely to depend both on public relations professionals' leadership skills and empowerment process.

Factors influencing public relations executives to achieve professional success and maintain their leadership positions inside organizations have been another area related to the leadership research in public relations (e.g., Berger, Reber, & Heyman, 2007). Generated from

interviews with 97 senior public relations executives in the field, Berger, Reber and Heyman (2007) have identified diverse factors and patterns to be crucial in terms of contributing to the success in gaining influence, including communication skills, proactive nature, relationships and networking, and interpersonal skills.

To further advance the leadership research in public relations, Choi and Choi (2007) adopted a behavioral approach to explore what leadership means in public relations and identified six distinct public relations leadership behaviors that would influence the value of public relations in an organization, including providing organization members with a clear vision about the organization's public relations policies and strategies, exerting upward influence in the organization, acting as a changing agent, and creating alliances inside and outside of the organization. Similarly, Holtzhausen and Werder (2008a) also investigated how leadership styles have been presented in public relations practice. Based on a national survey of PR professionals (N=885), their research findings indicated the prevalence of transformational leadership style and inclusive leadership style in public relations environments. More importantly, the researchers argued that, although the two prevalent leadership styles have different focuses in application (e.g., transformational leaders focus on inspiring followers through communication, while inclusive leaders engage in participative practices), they are strongly related. The application of inclusive leadership style would make a great contribution to the transformational leadership behaviors, which eventually will affect the effectiveness of public relations strategies.

Self-dynamics: a three-dimensional construct

Clearly, the quest to move beyond technical functions and into the realm of communication management is a complex undertaking involving the development of leadership skills that allow the public relations practitioners to recognize, create, transform, and envision communication objectives not only at the individual level but also at the organizational level. Importantly, public relations practitioners may not be equally predisposed for successful launching and maintenance of strategic communication initiatives. Therefore, a key to understanding the success and failure of public relations practitioners' communication management within organizations is the identification and assessment of preconditions that are necessary for the effort to flourish. These preconditions are described broadly as "traits" or "personal factors" within the managerial leadership literature (e.g., Bass, 1990; Stogdill, 1948, 1974; Yukl, 1989). Utilizing the theoretical foundation, the objective of this research is to provide a definitional and empirical context for assessing key personal capabilities that directly impact a public relations leader's drive toward excellence in communication management.

Based on previous leadership research and some specific functions associated with public relations practitioners, we theoretically termed personal capabilities "self-dynamics" in our study, which refers to the extent to which excellent leadership is perceived to be an inherent part of the leaders' personal attributes, which include the leader's personality, skills, styles, and envisioning ability. Moreover, three sub-dimensions, self-insight, shared vision, and team collaboration, enable maximization of leaders' self-dynamics (Bass, 1990; Northouse, 2007; Stogdill, 1974; Yukl, 1989).

This dimension of leadership in PR has been incorporated into many definitions and research trends in leadership literature. Since it emerges as one of the most important facets of

leadership throughout the history of leadership research, it is necessary to keep the dimension when discussing excellent leadership in public relations. The traditional trait approach, skills approach, and style approach of leadership research have identified certain qualities, personalities, and attributes associated with successful leaders (e.g., Bass, 1990; Stogdill, 1948, 1972; Yukl, 1989). Consistent findings are also identified in limited research on public relations leadership. For instance, Choi and Choi (2007) identified a number of personality and skills, such as assertiveness, commitment, confidence, and responsibility, as important features in defining leadership in public relations. Berger, Reber, and Heyman's (2007) study also acknowledged the importance of positive personal traits to professional success in public relations. Some of the most desired characteristics in hiring PR professionals include enthusiasm, energy, confidence, and flexibility. The consistent findings across the literature support the conclusion that the personal attributes cannot be ignored when we define dimensions of leadership in PR. The qualities and attributes associated with PR leaders are a diversity of dynamic forces in defining excellent leadership in PR.

First Sub-Dimension: Self-insight

Self-insight refers to the extent to which leaders know their strengths and weaknesses and understand public relations environments in order to adapt strategies and achieve organizational goals (London, 2002). To communicate effectively, public relations leaders must leverage their existing capabilities that favorably position themselves within organizations. Self-insight comprises a crucial element of the self-dynamic dimension needed to transform and transport communication initiatives throughout the organization. Through the linkage of self-insight and communication systems in an organization, fragmented flows of information and strategies can be integrated. These linkages can also eliminate barriers to communication that naturally occur between different parts of the organization, even inside the communication team. Leaders who do not understand themselves are unlikely to have an accurate view of the situations or to be sensitive to the environments. Self-insight is derived from leaders' personality traits and general intelligence, but it focuses more on the managerial motivation and specific skills and role requirements for excellent communication management.

Second Sub-Dimension: Shared Vision

Shared vision refers to the extent to which organizational members are inspired by a shared vision which specifies organizational values and personal beliefs in making things happen and personal desires to change things (Leonard, 1995; Kouzes & Posner, 2002). As an important feature of being a leader across different professions, a vision can incorporate not only a vision statement that conveys a clear view of the future and desired direction of the organization, but it can also incorporate a system of organizational values (Gold, Malhotra, & Segars, 2001). More importantly, only creating a compelling vision is insufficient to significant changes: leaders should have the ability to visualize positive outcomes in the future and communicate them to followers, which is to enlist followers into that shared vision (Kouzes & Posner, 2002).

Third Sub-Dimension: Team Collaboration

Perhaps one of the most significant hurdles to effective communication management is team collaboration. Team collaboration is important in leveraging the compelling visions and communication efforts. It refers to leaders' abilities to support the PR team and the organization to execute public relations strategies and to achieve excellence in communication management. Working together as an intellectual effort describes the feature of team collaboration for PR leaders. By recognizing leadership as a team effort, PR leaders have the responsibility to foster collaboration. Kouzes and Posner (2002) interpreted collaboration as "the ability to lovingly cooperate that will determine success" (p. 242). Thus, it is the PR leaders' role requirement to create a climate of trust and flexibility within the team, to facilitate positive interdependence among team members, and to support face-to-face interaction between team members and leaders. Thus, team collaboration works as an essential part to support self-dynamics of PR leaders. In the next section, we develop the measurement scales based on the elements of self-dynamics and then formally test the model.

The Hypothesized Hierarchical Model

Therefore, based on the discussion in previous sections, we proposed a theoretical framework to assist the empirical investigation and quantitative measurement of leadership in public relations. The conceptual model consists of three first-order factors and one second-order factor. The three first-order factors represent the three dimensions of Self-Dynamics conceptualized for this study: Self-Insight; Shared Vision; and Team Collaboration. The second-order factor subsumes all the three first-order factors and is termed Self-Dynamics as we discussed in the conceptualizing process (See Figure 1 for the hypothesized hierarchical model). To assess the validity of the research model, measures of the single second-order factor Self-Dynamics and its three sub-dimensions (Self-Insight, Shared Vision, and Team Collaboration) are developed. The item measures are listed in Table 1.

Method

Research Design

This study is exploratory in several ways. First, it draws on past leadership research in which three sub-dimensions have been identified as key factors in forming the leadership construct but without consistent operationalization. Second, the process of item development reflects unique communication functions and values associated with public relations practice, which have not been subjected to quantitative measurement. Third, multi-item scales are developed to capture the full meaning of the construct "Self-Dynamics" and determine its relative importance in excellent leadership in public relations. Multiple-item measures are generally thought to enhance confidence that the constructs are being accurately assessed (Churchill, 1979; Nunnally, 1978). Thus, the reliability and validity of the measures for each variable of interest can be improved. In addition, each statement involving scales in the questionnaire is used on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (a little bit) to 7 (a great deal), which provides the advantage of standardizing and quantifying relative effects.

Sampling Design and Strategies

Overall, a stratified sampling strategy in which three different strata (i.e., gender, job position, and organizations type) was used in this study. To ensure the representativeness and generalizability of this study, the sample was deliberately selected to more or less match the current characteristics of the public relations industry in the United States. The sampling strategy requires the respondent from the public relations industry in the U.S. meets the following criteria: (1) respondents must be key organizational informants, residing at a senior position in public relations and/or communication in the organization; (2) the distribution of organization type has to be considered to match the public relations industry; (3) the distribution of gender has to be considered to match the current status in public relations industry, and (4) multiple respondents can be obtained from organizations. By administering these criteria to separate samples from different organizations, we aimed at eliminating response bias concerning gender-related and organizational barriers. Table 2 shows the strata the researchers used to draw the sample.

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection was completed through an online survey of senior-level public relations professionals nationwide through Zoomerang online survey service. The online questionnaire included the measurement items for proposed constructs as listed in Table 1. Other variables of interest tested included demographic features such as years of professional experiences in PR, type of organization, organization size, size of PR employees in organization, and educational background.

Heyman Associates, a PR executive search firm in New York City, helped deliberately draw participants from their database of more than 50,000 public relations professionals. Eventually, 1,000 senior public relations executives nationwide with valid and active email addresses were selected and invited to participate in the study. Of the 1,000 invitations, 338 visited the survey link and 257 public relations executives subsequently participated in the online survey, resulting in a retention rate of 76.04%. After the initial screening, 222 completed questionnaires were deemed usable (35 questionnaires with partial answers were dropped), yielding a response rate of 22.2%. In sum, the data collection process yielded assessments of 222 senior public relations executives' knowledge and perceptions of excellent leadership in public relations. More detailed summary of respondents' demographic information is exhibited in Table 2.

Analytical Tool and Results

As developed in the previous sections, each of the item clusters in Table 1 represents an *a priori* measurement model of the theoretical construct, Self-Dynamics. Given this theory driven approach to construct development, the analytical process of confirmatory factor analysis provides an appropriate means of assessing the efficacy of measurement items and the consistency of a pre-specified hierarchical measurement model. In essence, the expectation is that each of the developed scales will uniquely measure its associated factor and that this system of factors will represent the factor relationships illustrated in Figure 1.

A structural equation modeling (SEM) approach, specifically maximum likelihood, was employed to test statistical assumptions and to estimate the predictive power of the measurement model. Therefore, the researchers used LISREL 8.8 to process data. The reliability and validity

of the measurement model were assessed in terms of individual item reliability, construct validity, convergent and discriminant validity.

Check for Statistical Assumptions

An initial analysis of the data was done to evaluate the normal distribution of the variables. To test the normality of each item, the researchers analyzed skewness and kurtosis values of each variable and observed that each variable was distributed normally. Establishing univariate normality among a collection of variables can help gain multivariate normality (Bollen, 1989; Gold, Malhotra, & Segars, 2001). Giving the strong underlying assumption of multivariate normality associated with confirmatory factor modeling, the sample statistics bear significantly on the interpretability of the findings. SEM is also known to be very sensitive to outliers, so we verified the presence of outliers by analyzing standardized residuals (SR). We observed that there was no extreme value.

Reliability and Validity Analyses

Before starting the SEM analyses, a series of tests were run on the variables to improve the reliability of the self-dynamics construct. Using the SPSS program, the data on each of the three dimensions were separately analyzed based on the values of coefficient reliability and item-total correlation (see Table 3 for detailed reports). Because the coefficient alpha of individual scales indicated that the reliability estimate of items SI2 and CT2 were marginal, a secondary analysis was conducted by dropping SI2 and CT2. It was found that the reliability estimates and item-total correlations of the remaining five items under the self-insight dimension and team collaboration dimension were improved after dropping the two items (e.g., coefficient alpha = .801, range of item-total correlations = .652 to .831). Thus, the researchers decided to delete SI2 and CT2 to enhance Cronbach's coefficients. All other item-total correlations were reasonably high, giving support for the validity of respondent ratings. Similarly, all the Cronbach's alphas were greater than 0.70 (ranging from 0.712 to 0.801), satisfying Nunally's (1978) minimum criterion for internal consistency.

Estimation Method and Fit Criteria

Hierarchical confirmatory factor analysis (HCFA) was conducted to establish the measurement of the constructs in the proposed model. As indicated before, scale items showed small skewness and kurtosis. Thus, all parameters were estimated using maximum likelihood estimation and the data satisfied the assumption of multivariate normality. The parameter estimates for the proposed model were provided in Table 4. The overall goodness of fit of the *a priori* model was judged by the value of fit statistics such as the root mean square error of approximation and comparative fit index. The selected model fit indices showed that the model fitted the factor structure of the *a priori* HCFA model: the minimum fit function Chi-square is 302.28 (df=99, $p < .001$); NFI=.887; NNFI=.899; CFI=.917; SRMR=.072; RMSEA=.104 with the 90% confidence interval of (.092; .116). These values constituted an indication that the three-dimensional model represents a marginally acceptable fit to the data.

Convergent and Discriminant Validity

In addition, the adequacy of the measurement model is also evaluated based on the criteria of convergent and discriminant validity of the constructs. Construct validity was assessed using the composite reliability (CR). According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), composite reliability is a measure of the overall reliability of a collection of heterogeneous but similar items. It estimates the extent to which a set of latent construct indicators share in their measurement of that construct. Nunally (1978) suggested that a cut-off value of .70 is appropriate for checking the internal consistency of the construct. In our study, all the constructs displayed satisfactory levels of validity, as indicated by composite reliabilities ranging from .692 to .807.

To evaluate convergent validity, the average variance extracted (AVE) was calculated. As suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981), the average variance extracted estimates the amount of common variance among latent construct indicators; and a variance extracted of greater than the minimum value of .50 will be supportive for the convergent validity check. However, the calculation of AVE in this study did not meet the minimum value of .50, which could be explained by the existence of several indicators with lower factor loadings. Although it might be an indicator of weak convergent reliability, previous researchers still argued that it is possible to have a poor variance extracted, yet have a high construct validity (e.g., Bagozzi, 1991; Hair et al., 1998). Moreover, all the factor loadings were significant (t-values greater than 4.62). Therefore, the researchers would like to confirm the convergent validity of the constructs (see Table 4).

To demonstrate discriminant validity, the suggested cutoff of .90 was used as implied distinctness in construct content (Bagozzi, 1980; Bagozzi & Fornell, 1982; Gold, Malhotra, & Segars, 2001). Table 5 presented the estimated correlations between all constructs pairs as shown in the phi matrix. Almost all estimated correlations were significantly less than .90 except for one pair. The highest correlation coefficient (.98, between the dimension of self-insight and the dimension of shared vision) indicated certain degree of conceptualization overlapping. However, to be consistent with the theoretical framework we have proposed, we decided to keep the two constructs as distinct factors instead of collapsing the two dimensions into a single factor and testing a respecified model. Furthermore, the examination of the residual matrix and modification indices also supported that the two latent variables were not perfectly correlated and that discriminant validity has been achieved (Bagozzi & Phillips, 1982). Therefore, we argued that the hierarchical measurement model provided an acceptable fit to the data, and the modification did not result in a significant degradation in model fit as suggested by the residual matrix and modification indices.

In addition, to assess the ability of the second-order model to explain the covariation among the first-order factors, target coefficient was also computed (Marsh, 1987b). Target coefficient is defined as the ratio of the chi-square of the first-order model to the chi-square of the hypothesized HCFA model. It has a maximum value of one, which implies all the covariances among the first-order factors explained by the second-order factor structure (Marsh, 1987b). In our study, the target coefficient was equal to 0.93, indicating that the second-order factor explained 93% of the covariation among the 3 first-order factors. Correlations among the 3 first-order factors were all consistently high, which also indicated that all the 3 first-order factors made major contributions to the second-order factor (Table 6). The standardized second-order factor loadings were showed in Figure 2. Their values ranged from .826 to .995. The high second-order factor loadings implied that the three factors were strongly influenced by the

second-order factor. Therefore, the hierarchical factor structure consisting of a single second-order factor was marginally supported. Further efforts need to be added in terms of model trimming.

Conclusions and Implications

This study was motivated by a desire to understand how leadership has been defined in the field of public relations and the key dimensions an effective public relations leader should possess. Our findings offered initial insights into the construct and provide concrete directions for future research and managerial guidelines.

This article has demonstrated the application of structural equation modeling to the study of higher order factor structure in public relations practitioners' ratings of leader attributes. Based on a conceptual framework for evaluating the importance of personal attributes to the excellence in public relations leadership, the hypothetical self-dynamics construct was operationalized in terms of three dimensions (self-insight, shared vision, and team collaboration). As an exploratory study, this paper shed more light on the self-dynamics construct by confirming its multidimensionality and suggesting its importance to the success of public relations practitioners as individuals, as well as leaders in the organization.

The results of the hierarchical confirmatory factor model have provided clear support for the following two conclusions. First, personal attributes and some superior qualities are essential to effective leadership in public relations. Specifically, the discussion of the range of personal attributes and qualities are multidimensional. The feature of multidimensionality has determined that the role of traits in effective leadership is comprehensive. Basically, the breadth of traits related to the effectiveness of leadership in public relations encompasses three sub-dimensions as the conceptual model suggested. By knowing the strengths and weaknesses of themselves, effective public relations leaders should be able to leverage their existing capabilities that favorably position themselves and inspire team members and other organizational members about the value of communication efforts, as well as the desired direction of the organization. Through analysis of theory and empirical testing, this research strongly supports the notion that public relations practitioners may possess a predisposition for successful communication management through the development of key personal attributes and qualities.

Second, the results of the analysis suggest that public relations leaders' capabilities are complex not only in definition, but also in operationalization. In the present context, theory construction dictated a confirmatory approach, and care was taken to operationalize key dimensions through multiple rounds of item purification. As a result, for self-dynamic capabilities, a second-order factor structure provides the best empirical model for capturing the variances among the collect measures. The item measures developed in this research exhibited good qualities of reliability and validity and should provide a useful tool for further inquiry into the trait-perspective of leadership effectiveness in public relations.

However, similar to many emerging concepts in the field of public relations and leadership research, the excellent leadership construct itself and theory surrounding knowledge in terms of its content and application within the organization is complex. Due to the page limitation, this paper only investigated one important aspect of the construct, which is related to public relations leaders' personal attributes and qualities. However, as a part of theory construction process, we also proposed that excellent leadership in public relations encompasses

not only the self-dynamic capabilities but also other essential dimensions such as ethical consideration, relationship building capabilities, the acquisition of communication knowledge and expertise, the capabilities of getting involved in the strategic decision-making process, and the capabilities of influencing the culture and value of an organization. We believe it is important to investigate the leadership construct in an integrated and more comprehensive approach. It is valuable to note that the construct itself encompasses leader traits, behaviors, styles, and leader-follower relationship to address the magnitude and functions of leadership in terms of excellence in communication management.

Therefore, a potentially useful area of future research is to utilize the integrated perspective for establishing empirical thresholds of excellent leadership in public relations across firms and contexts. In addition, understanding the sequence of developing and testing key dimensions of leadership in public relations will provide a road map for organizations planning to undertake communication management efforts. For public relations practitioners, it seems that an understanding of how comprehensive dimensions of leadership influence their individual achievements and the communication objectives at the organizational level would benefit themselves in the practice.

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Table 1. Items Used to Measure Each Dimension of the Self-Dynamics Construct

Component Name	Item
	An excellent public relations leader should have...
<i>Sub-Dimension 1: Self-Insight</i>	
SI1	The nature of being dependable.
SI2	The nature of being trustworthy.
SI3	The nature of being proactive.
SI4	The capacity for engaging in strategic decision-making.
SI5	The capacity for acting as a changing agent.
SI6	Being aware of applying diverse strategies.
<i>Sub-Dimension 2: Shared Vision</i>	
SV1	The nature of being forward looking.
SV2	The nature of having a vision of PR as a managerial function.
SV3	The capacity for enlisting others in a shared vision.
SV4	The capacity for providing a vision of potential changes in areas affecting the organization.
SV5	The ability to provide organizational leaders with a clear vision about PR values and role.
SV6	The ability to provide organizational leaders with a clear vision of how PR goals are congruent with organizational goals.
<i>Sub-Dimension 3: Team Collaboration</i>	
TC1	The ability to collaborate with members to define PR strategies.
TC2	The ability to actively cope with crisis situations.
TC3	The ability to develop a proactive and professional communication team.
TC4	The ability to facilitate positive interdependence among team members.
TC5	The ability to bring diverse groups together to collaboratively solve problems.
TC6	The ability to inspire and motivate other members.

Note, all items were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale.

Table 2. Categorical Demographic Profiles of the Respondents

<i>Categorical Variables</i>	Total Sample Size (N=222)	
	<i>Freq. (n)</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	89	40.10
Female*	133	59.90
<i>Age</i>		
18-30	2	.90
31-40	42	18.90
41-50*	95	42.80
51-60	76	34.20
Over 60	7	3.20
<i>Years of experiences in PR</i>		
3 to 5 years	2	.90
5 to 10 years	11	5.00
10 to 15 years	39	17.60
More than 15 years*	170	76.60
<i>Type of organization working for</i>		
Public corporation*	83	37.40
Private corporation	43	19.40
Public relations agency	39	17.60
Nonprofit organization	27	12.20
Government organization	15	6.80
Educational institution	14	6.30
<i>Organization size</i>		
Fewer than 100*	49	22.10
100-499	19	8.60
500-999	13	5.90
1,000-2,499	18	8.10
2,500-4,999	22	9.90
5,000-9,999	22	9.90

10,000-24,999	20	9.00
25,000-49,999	17	7.70
50,000 or more	39	17.60
<i>Size of PR employees inside the organization</i>		
Fewer than 10*	62	27.90
10-19	30	13.50
20-49	42	18.90
50-99	25	11.30
100 or more	57	25.70
Don't know	6	2.70

Note, * top category

Table 3. Summary of Reliability Estimates and Item-Total Correlations

Scale/Items	Item Means	Std. Dev.	Coefficient Alpha Reliability Estimates of Scales (Standardized)	Item-Total Correlations
<i>Self-Insight</i>			.712	
SI1	6.35	.97		.651**
SI3	6.47	.75		.617**
SI4	6.27	.81		.604**
SI5	6.16	.95		.760**
SI6	5.69	1.07		.686**
<i>Shared Vision</i>			.735	
SV1	6.23	.82		.585**
SV2	5.84	1.06		.684**
SV3	5.95	.92		.663**
SV4	6.40	.86		.604**
SV5	6.42	.84		.755**
SV6	6.35	.90		.640**
<i>Team Collaboration</i>			.801	
TC1	6.13	.88		.652**
TC3	6.35	.73		.689**

TC4	5.79	.97	.824**
TC5	5.82	1.01	.831**
TC6	6.18	.90	.731**

Note, ** item-total correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4. Hierarchical Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Construct Reliability

Construct/Indicators	Standardized Loading (<i>t</i> -value) ^a	Factor	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
<i>Self-Insight</i>			.692	.312
SI1	.465 (5.87)			
SI3	.437 (6.82)			
SI4	.501 (7.12)			
SI5	.558			
SI6	.554 (7.42)			
<i>Shared Vision</i>			.713	.300
SV1	.477 (6.60)			
SV2	.591			
SV3	.553 (6.75)			
SV4	.317 (4.62)			
SV5	.480 (6.52)			
SV6	.506 (6.45)			
<i>Team Collaboration</i>			.807	.464
TC1	.434 (7.03)			
TC3	.445 (8.83)			
TC4	.786 (11.93)			
TC5	.791			
TC6	.590 (9.55)			

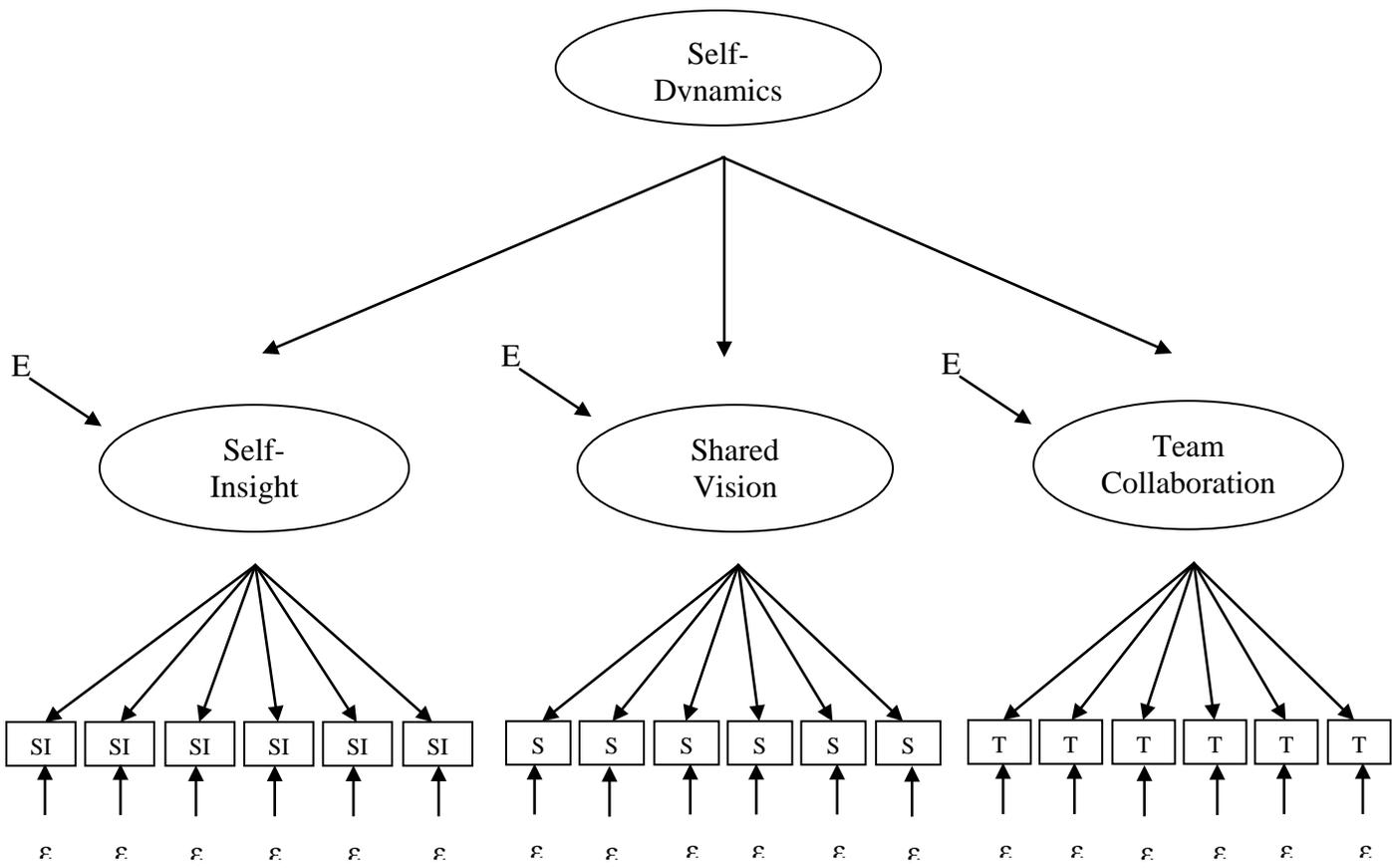
Note: ^a Figures in parentheses are *t* values. Based on one-tailed *t* tests: *t* values > 1.65, *p* < .05; *t* values > 2.33, *p* < .01. Estimates without *t* values are fixed parameters.

Table 5. Correlations among the First-Order Factors

	1	2	3
1. Self-Insight	1		
2. Shared Vision	.98	1	
3. Team Collaboration	.81	.82	1

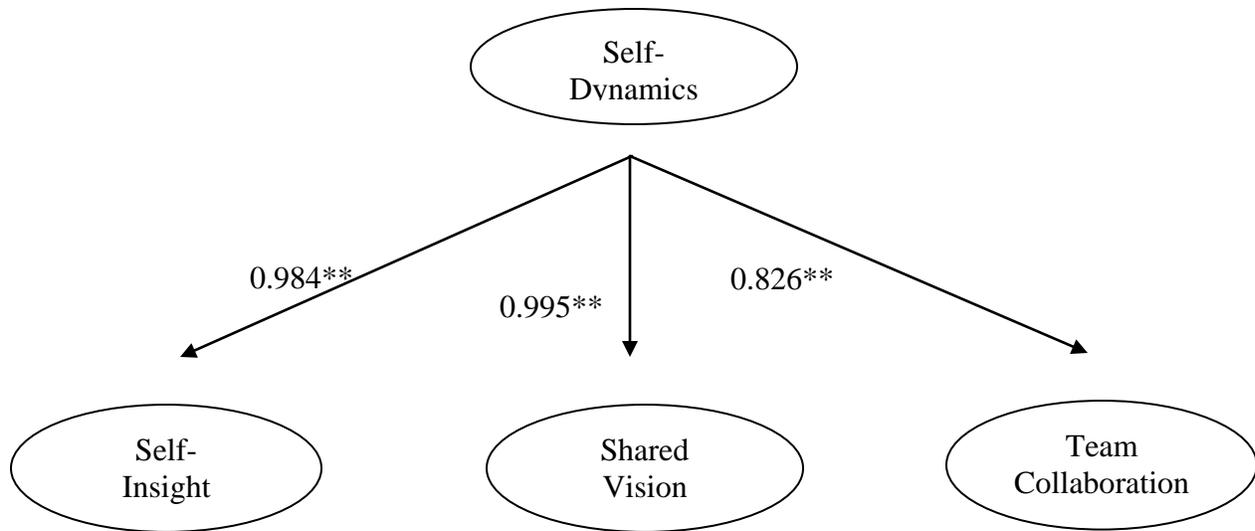
Note: all correlations are significant at the .01 level

Figure 1: The Hypothesized Second-Order Confirmatory Factor Model of Excellent Leadership in Public Relations



Note: SI1-SI6 = Self-Insight items; SV1-SV6 = Shared Vision items; TC1-TC6 = Team Collaboration items.

Figure 2: Second-Order Confirmatory Factor Model and Factor Loadings



Note: Table 5 exhibits the standardized factor loadings for 3 first-order factors.

Talk-the-Talk: Using Internal Communication to Build Trust with Employees

Karen Mishra
Lois Boynton

Introduction

A study by the Great Place To Work Institute found that employees enjoy working in an environment where they “trust the people they work for, have pride in what they do and enjoy the people they work with” (Carroll, 2006, p. 1). Business ethics scholar Archie Carroll argues that ethical organizations take care of their employees, working to build trust with them through positive communication efforts, as well as demonstrating respect for employees and acting with integrity in all employee relations. He claims that if management does not demonstrate honesty, transparency, genuine caring, supportiveness and a willingness to listen, employees will end up with less trust in management.

This study examines the impact of organizational communication and relationship management on employee trust and commitment. Cheney (1999), in his study of the Mondragon Cooperatives, found that employees are now demanding consideration as an internal market. The use of internal organizational communication, also referred to as inward marketing by advertising professor Robert Lauterborn (2005), leads employees to be better customer ambassadors (Lowenstein, 2006). Employees have important knowledge and skills about both their jobs and the organization, providing employees the opportunity to be organizational advocates to the customer, who in turn can enhance the firm’s reputation (Gronstedt, 2000).

Literature Review

Relationship management is the coordination, management, and relationship building between an organization and its publics with a variety of publics, including investors, community activists, suppliers, and even employees. Gronstedt (2000) points out that the roles of each of these publics is overlapping, for instance, both employees and investors are becoming activists, which makes it more important for organizations to better manage communications between and across these different publics. Theoretically, relationship management is the practice of building relationships with an organization’s publics (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998) by attempting “to restore and maintain a sense of community” (Kruckeberg, 2000, p. 145). Relationship has been defined by Thomlinson (2000) as “as set of expectations two parties have for each other’s behavior based on their interaction patterns” (p. 178). Increasingly, a focus of this relationship is how the parties communicate with each other to build the relationship (Toth, 2000), although the mechanics of how this communication takes place and what outcomes it produces have not been widely studied.

To date, employees have been understudied by relationship management scholars. This may reflect managers’ lack of concern in their own employees. As Cheney (1999) points out, “Amid the rush toward heightened efficiency and competitiveness is a sense that most organizations don’t care a great deal about their employees” (p. x). Organizational

communication with employees is potentially insufficient because the emphasis by organizations is toward external publics about products and services through marketing communications such as advertising or public relations. Cheney points out that there is an opportunity to meld the internal and external communications of the organization, instead of keeping them distinct. Kennan and Hazleton (2000) are among the first to define internal public relations as an important step in recognizing employees as a distinct public worthy of individualized attention.⁷²

As a result of such a narrow focus on marketing communications, employee communication can suffer, and with it, employee trust and commitment. Cheney (1999) suggested that values in the workplace can be evaluated by the role communication plays. Broom, Casey and Ritchey (2000) agree that communication is a critical aspect of how organization-public relationships are evaluated. Gavin and Mayer (2005) found that internal communication affects the trust between employees and managers. Chia (2005) affirmed that “trust and commitment are byproducts of processes and policies which are designed to make the relationship satisfactory for both parties, such as open, appropriate, clear and timely communication” (p. 7). Trust can be conveyed through effective communication (Mishra & Mishra, 1994) via openness and concern. Additionally, Mishra (1996) found that “the extent to which the trusted person engages in undistorted communication then reinforces the trust (in terms of openness) placed in him or her” (p. 276).

Organization communication scholars have shown that the adequacy of information provided by the organization has also contributes to an employees’ job satisfaction (Rosenfeld, Richman & May, 2004). Communication practices within an organization are expected to have an important influence on the degree to which employees trust their managers and the organization’s top echelon, as well as their commitment to the organization.

One key dimension of communication that is expected to influence trust and related outcomes is its “richness” (Daft, Lengel, & Trevino, 1987). Information that is richer (face-to-face communication) is considered more personalized and reduces uncertainty because it contains higher quality information (Daft, Lengel, & Trevino, 1987). The richness of the media used to communicate with employees has been found to contribute towards increased satisfaction and loyalty in an employee-organization context (Daft, Lengel, and Trevino, 1987; Vickery, Droge, Stank, Goldsby, and Markland, 2004).

Kelleher (2001) found that public relations practitioners relied on written communication while public relations managers relied more on face-to-face communication. Cheney (1999) also observed that face-to-face communication is considered more reliable than written communication in a business context because it provides more information to the other party. It is important to understand if these differences in communication richness do matter in terms of reliability and trustworthiness among employees.

In the public relations literature, trust is considered a critical aspect of the organization-public relationship (Botan & Taylor, 2004). In an earlier study, Bruning and Ledingham (2000) found that trust had a significant impact on customer satisfaction. In addition, Wilson (1994) found that both employee and public perceptions of commitment, trust and mutual respect are

⁷² Researchers William Kennan and Vincent Hazleton give Public Relations Scholar Carl Botan credit for prompting them to label the term “internal public relations” (per email correspondence with Dr. Hazleton).

important for understanding organization-public relationships. All of these findings focus on the relationship aspect of publics and the positive impact on customer satisfaction and firm reputation yet fail to consider the impact of communication on that relationship or on the relationship with other stakeholders. Paine (2003) specified that organizations should make sure to ask several questions prior to measuring trust in organizations, including “Which channels of communication were used and/or deemed most important to use in disseminating the messages? (e.g., the media...word-of-mouth...direct mail...special events?)” (p. 11).

When an employee develops a relationship with external stakeholders, s/he can become an “ambassador” of that firm. Therefore, relationships exist not only between an organization and its publics, but relationships between an organization’s different publics are also important. In addition, employees can take on multiple roles, including that of investor and activist, as well as employee (Dougall, 2005; Gronstedt, 2000). If employees are considered an important public, they can be an important source of relationships with other publics, such as customers.

Research Question

Based on an overview of the previous literature, the following research question is proposed: How do organizations communicate with employees to create trusting relationships with employees?

In order to answer this question, interviews were conducted with both front-line employees and executives responsible for internal communication at their firms.

Employee Interview Method

Employee Interviews

The employee interviews were conducted in-person, recorded, transcribed, and analyzed to better understand how employees think about communication within their company. In addition, the employee interviews provided a platform to create the executive questions. The employee interview data were coded using cluster analysis (Foss, 2004). First, the interviews were analyzed for key terms based on frequency or intensity. Second, the interviews were mapped for other terms clustered around the key terms, such as those that are found nearby a key term or that may connect to a key term. Finally, the analysis examined patterns of association or linkages to identify which clusters are most interesting or of greatest importance. To visualize the clusters, a mindmap (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004) of the analysis was developed.

All four interviewees were young women, under the age of 30. Alex, Deserai, Jessica, and Sharon had all worked in more than one location for a retail operation, yet at the time of the interviews, were all working at the same store. Last names are not given to preserve their confidentiality. Three are Caucasian and one is Black. Alex was from Lebanon and so she brought an international outlook to her job. In addition, she was a shift supervisor, which meant that she had some supervisory responsibilities while also having duties similar to her employees. All four had worked for this retail operation for less than five years, but had worked at multiple stores within this same chain, providing them with a variety of viewpoints. In this type of retail firm, employees work closely together, often as a team, to complete a customer transaction.

Using cluster analysis, several themes emerged analyzing the text of each employee interview: talking with their manager, open-minded managers, getting feedback, the people, and

their impact on the customer. Clusters of words that described both shared and individual world views surrounded those themes. Overall, employees focused on the interpersonal aspect of their relationships to explain how communication works in their firm. The themes that emerged, however, are in their own words.

Results

Talking with their manager

All four employees mentioned the importance of being able to “talk” with their manager. They felt that this openness allowed them to not only become better employees, but enabled them to enjoy their job more. Jessica mentioned that people often ask her what it is like working for an impersonal Fortune 500 company. She noted that she still feels the benefit of working for a smaller organization. Specifically, it provides an opportunity for her to interact with her manager during her shifts.

A lot of people say if you’re working for a really big company you’re just a number and people aren’t thinking of what you want and they aren’t listening. But I haven’t found that at all. Because each store – you’re never going to work with more than about 15 to 20 people I guess. Like at this store I think we only have like 12 people working. You’re going to know everyone and if you have something to talk about with your manager you’re most likely going to work a shift with them and you can just discuss it with them right away and every manager I’ve had has been helpful.

When asked about the ways they communicate at work, the four employees at this retail firm all said that face-to-face communication was the way they enjoyed talking to their manager and to each other. Jessica described her communication with her manager as face-to-face, rather than by another communication means, such as email. “It’s always face to face. If they had a problem with what an employee is doing they’d definitely – like when you’re here they’d ask you to come in a little bit early.”

All four employees explained that the managers that they had worked for had sought them out and asked questions about how they felt their work was going. Deserei said that she appreciated this proactive approach by her manager.

This store is so small – no emails. Which is really cool because I like – the thing about (my company) too is it’s very easy – most of the managers are very approachable. They actually encourage that. Like they have a day where they set up all admin stuff and they actually encourage – they have one on one’s with partners. Not necessarily a shift but maybe a [colleague] and you can sit down and they’ll ask how you’re doing, what’s going on. That’s cool. Recently Alex (her shift supervisor) and I had a one-on-one. She was like “What’s going on? How do you feel?” Then she was helping me with my PDP- kind of a thing – an outline they set up things to work towards to be an assistant. She was like “oh let’s work on that. What do you feel you need to be doing?”

As a shift supervisor, Alex has some supervisory duties in addition to doing the same job duties as her employees. She communicates with her employees mostly face-to-face through on-the-job training. She trains them and then watches them while they work to provide feedback on what works or what does not work. She finds that the other employees provide feedback to each other, too, so that they can all work together as a team more effectively. She said that this is because each person's work affects the other's work. Although the other three employees had positive things to say about their relationships with their managers, Sharon was the one employee who described how miscommunication had affected her company experience.

The same problems occur here as well like sometimes there's miscommunication and sometimes I think we all feel as though our opinions and our personal interests, requests aren't really appreciated and sometimes you feel your work is not appreciated. But it goes both ways as well. I'm sure managers need some encouragement once in a while.

Overall, employees said they appreciate the opportunity to talk face-to-face with their manager. These employees articulated, however, that the degree of openness in that face-to-face discussion depended on the willingness of their manager to engage with them.

Open-minded Managers

They all agreed that it was obvious which managers were truly "open" to a give-and-take discussion and which managers were not able to handle openness as well. Deserei described the managers she has worked for as open-minded and willing to listen.

Whenever I have an issue, I just go to talk to them and the door is always open. I never feel like there's a time when I can't. And that's with every manager that I've worked with – they're always open-minded. That's one thing I would say that (my company) looks for. It's just odd that every manager – not odd but it's nice that every manager that I've worked for I'm able to – they're so open-minded and willing to listen so I guess that would be one of the things that they look for in talking. A lot of the questions they ask are situational questions as far as manager – when you move up as manager so I guess they see how you react. You respond to different situations. So I guess that's how they evaluate who they move up and who they don't. I guess that would be one of them is to be open minded because a lot of the managers are pretty open minded and pretty approachable.

As a result of the communication in a store, employees said that they can figure out quickly which managers they could trust based on how open they are in their communication, which they feel makes them more committed to those managers. As a shift supervisor, Alex described her rise through the managerial ranks and her training, which included a class in performance communication. She described her communication style as open and honest.

All four employees said that they were able to quickly discern which managers were open-minded about communicating with employees. The third theme that emerged from the

analysis is the participants' beliefs in the value of asking for and receiving feedback from their managers.

Getting feedback

These four employees felt that any type communication from their manager was more effective if it included regular feedback. Both Jessica and Sharon indicated that they appreciated getting feedback from their bosses about how they were doing. Sharon also noted that some managers are better than others in listening and providing feedback. "So I think depending on what you say to the manager, management is receptive and is not receptive." Alex expressed gratitude to her district manager for teaching her how to give feedback in a constructive way to her employees.

Deserai, an employee who was scheduled by her manager to be promoted to the next level of supervision, believes that positive feedback is necessary to let employees know that they are important to the company, regardless of how long they have been with the company. She thinks that employees recognized, however, that communication suffered when the store was either too busy or understaffed. Deserai worried that "management has gotten away from giving encouragement and recognition for those old [colleagues] as well as new," because the managers were being held accountable for so many things in the store that they became distracted from providing that necessary feedback.

A lot of the old [colleagues] feel as though they might not get the positive feedback because the focus is on the new partners right now so we've got a lot of older [colleagues] that do an awesome job every day but because they do it every day it's kind of expected that - "We know you do a good job - you're fine." But you know sometimes they need that encouragement - not so much feedback but they need that encouragement.

Overall, the employees all said that they appreciated the opportunity to get feedback from their manager on their job performance. They believe that this feedback suffers, however, when a store is under stress, such as turnover. The next theme mentioned in the employee interviews is about what they agree they enjoy most about their job: the people.

The people

Jessica, one of the youngest employees noted that, "my favorite part of working here is the people-- the [colleagues]. I really like how I can talk to everyone and we're all doing the same job." Sharon agreed,

I guess the people I work with. You get to know a lot of different people in different areas. We have new people - there's a guy that's 47 years old and he's a really interesting guy. He's had a lot of really cool experiences. At my old store, there was a man who had a daughter my age and we were really good friends. He's a great guy - he was so fun.

They also feel that smooth communication between the employees served to enhance their own experience as well as their customers' experience. Deserai noted, "The way we interact with each other, the vibe is different when you have those [colleagues] that are happy when they come to work and they love what they're doing." Jessica also noted how she enjoyed both the co-workers and customers and how it brought her out of her shell. "Oh yes, I love the customers, I love my coworkers, it's just how it's made me be more out-going--like I was a lot more shy when I first started working here at the job."

Overall, the employees agreed that the favorite part of their job is the people they interact with—both their co-workers and their customers, and they believe that good communication is important for a positive work environment. The final theme the employees described was the way their actions affect their customers.

Customer impact

These employees believe their own communication style or ability would influence their relationships with their customers. Deserai also described a connection between how she worked with her co-workers and how it affected their customers.

We all come from different places and we all share different experiences with each other. So I think people see that and that they think it is an easy job. It looks like so much fun so it must be easy. They seem to be laughing and joking but they don't realize we still have to be making things, cleaning up, we have to be getting things prepared for the next person that comes in. ... but we still work and we're back there working our butts off just to give you 100% every time you come in. Like just to make sure the store looks good when you come in, just to make sure we have things out there when you come in.

Sharon noted how the positive relationships with co-workers and customers made her job meaningful.

That's the best part, the different people and how great they are. You'd never know it. I mean like sure you know they're nice people – people that help you when you're getting your coffee but when you work with them every day and see them and develop relationships, they're the best part.

They said they understood that their work behavior directly influenced how customers perceived them and their company. As a result, they felt they were aware that they were highly visible in what they said and did. Jessica described her feelings this way,

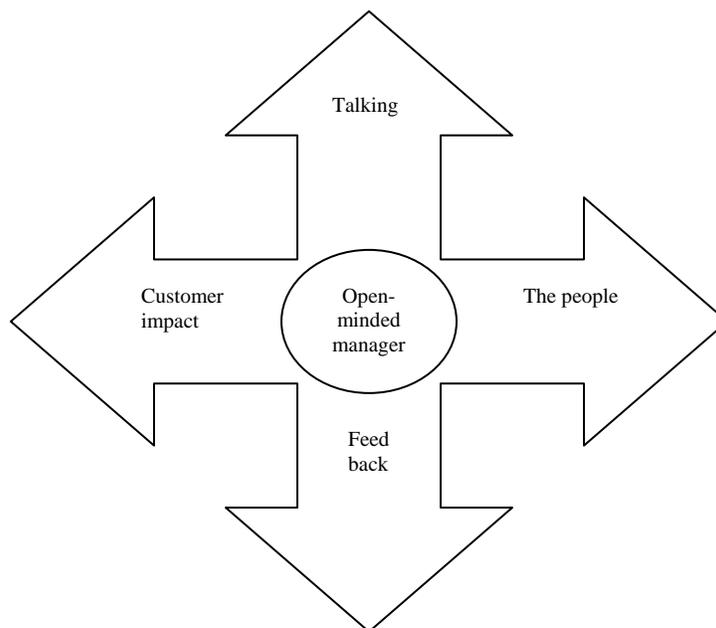
That's the best part whether it's interacting with my coworkers or interacting with the customers. That's definitely the best thing. Even if I'm in a bad mood one day – just talking to people and forcing myself puts me in a good mood because I have to. I'm not allowed to be rude to the customers even if I'm not having a good day. It forces me even in my day-to-day life with other activities to just remember that, "would I treat a customer that way?" No.

Overall, the employees believed that their actions on their jobs affected their customers. They also believed that those interactions with customers should be positive.

Employee Interview Summary

Overall, five themes emerged from the cluster analysis 1) talking with managers, 2) open-minded managers, 3) getting feedback, 4) the people, and 5) customer impact. First, these four employees described their ideal communication as face-to-face with their manager. One method for visualizing the relationships between the clusters in a qualitative analysis is to put them in a figure. Figure A is a mindmap (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004) showing how the clusters from the employee interviews fit together. It is clear that these employees feel that the crux of the experience lies with how open-minded they find their managers to be. Hence, “open-minded managers” is placed at the center of the diagram. They believe that this openness then affects the employee and customer environments. First, it affects how well managers are able to communicate with employees, as well as promote a sense of camaraderie among them. In addition, this open communication fosters an atmosphere of constructive feedback in which employees want to improve how well they do their jobs, but also to provide an enjoyable environment for the customer. The arrows pointing outward indicate that those actions move out from the manager to the employees and the customers. On the vertical plane, those communications affect the relationship between a manager and the employee, yet on the horizontal axis, those communications affect the relationships with both co-workers and customers.

Figure A. Mindmap of employee’s perceptions of how communication affects personal relationships



Executive Interview Method

The executive interviews were scheduled after the employee interviews were completed. It became clear during the employee interviews and analysis what was important to employees, and the intent of the executive interviews was to ascertain whether or not there was a link between employee needs and company efforts. The employee questions centered on what made them happy in their job, but the executive questions centered on the employee responses of the importance of communication with their manager. The six executives interviewed for this study came from many different industries and were recruited using a snowball approach. Not all executives were able to meet in person, and some preferred phone interviews or the opportunity to answer the interview questions by email. For those answering by email, follow-up or clarifying questions were sent to flesh out their responses and the text of the email messages were used for analysis. Those interviews that were done either in-person or on the phone were recorded, transcribed and later analyzed using cluster analysis (Foss, 2004), as described earlier.

All executives were responsible for employee communications as a significant aspect of their job responsibilities. These executives are:

1. Mary Beth, Vice President of Corporate Communications for a financial services firm
2. Keith, Vice President of Corporate Communications for an energy company
3. Karen, Director of Internal Communications for a software firm
4. Sharon, Manager of Employee Communications for a utility firm
5. Katherine, Corporate Secretary with a medium-sized construction materials firm
6. Gwen, District Manager with an international retail firm

Five of the executives are women and one of the executives is a man. Four of the executives have specific responsibility for corporate or employee communications and two of the executives have other roles which led them to affect communications in their firms.

The themes that emerged from the cluster analysis of the executive interviews were employee engagement, managing reputation, dialogue with key audiences, separate from marketing, owning all channels of communication, and face-to-face communication. Each theme is presented in the sections that follow.

Executive Interview Results

Employee Engagement

When each executive was asked how they defined their job or what their primary role was, three of them, Mary Beth, Keith, and Sharon, all mentioned that they believe “employee engagement” is one of their top priorities. They explained that employee engagement was a fairly new way for their firms to envision their communications role, and they said this perspective was being communicated down to them from their CEOs. All participants believe that employees must feel they are contributing to the company’s goals to be “engaged.” Engagement can be a process of ensuring employees understand

the company mission and “how they fit into it,” according to Keith. Similarly, Sharon said she believes it is essential for employees “to be aware of and have access to information” in order to become engaged employees.

Keith, the energy executive mentioned that when he came into his job one year ago, he reorganized the entire corporate communications department and toyed with the idea of making his title “director of employee engagement.”

The bigger, sort of the higher-level picture of the employee communications role is to increase the engagement of employees into what the company’s trying to do. Helping the employees understand what the company’s goals and objectives are, how they fit into it, helping them buy into the strategy because the research shows the more employees understand and feel like they’re contributing or in line with the company strategy, the more productive they are and the higher the morale and lower turnover.

Despite these advantages, some participants also see that employee engagement presents them with challenges. Keith believes that this goal of employee engagement is such an important part of his job and what his department does and yet he said he is having a difficult time finding other qualified people to fill new positions for his department. He believes this challenge is due to the job’s new focus on employee relations and away from media relations that has traditionally existed at large companies.

Media is sexy and visible, but employee relations has impact. There’s all kinds of varied defendable numbers to show that an engaged workforce is a happier workforce and a more productive workforce so it’s worth the investment. To that end, we end up getting into all those kinds of things from employee meetings, web casts, you know working with senior managers on presentations - they’re giving road show presentations to employees. Creating feedback mechanisms for employees and again constantly evaluating our tools to see how we can communicate to employees. Put in context the things that the company’s doing.

Employee engagement was mentioned by all executives as an important goal of their internal communication efforts. The second theme from the executive interviews is their goal of managing their firm’s reputation.

Managing Reputation

The second priority many of the executives expressed was a focus on protecting and managing the reputation of their company. Mary Beth said, “I feel like corporate communications is helping a corporation manage its reputation with all of its stakeholders.” Mary Beth believes that her firm’s reputation, both internally and externally, is driven by behavior and not corporate communication slogans.

The management decisions that you make about how you’re going to treat customers and employees will determine what your reputation is no matter what

we tell the news media about it. No matter what statement we make, it's really about your behavior and we would always want our statements to be honest and accurate so it starts with your behavior and the decisions you made to determine what we can then say about them.

In contrast, Gwen, the district retail manager, bases her reputation measure on how well a store is doing financially as well as how close they are to their customers. She believes that the stores that do best are those with "authentic" employees who are able to be the same selves at work as they are with friends or colleagues. "It's not authentic if it's not the voice you use all the time." She believes that this authenticity is cultivated by the "respect and dignity" in the way they communicate with each other. She feels like this authenticity is also evident to customers, which keeps them coming back.

In summary, the second theme that emerged from the executive interviews was a focus on managing and protecting their firm's reputation. The third theme identified in the analysis of the executive interviews is their goal of promoting dialogue with their key audiences.

Dialogue with Key Audiences

Along with managing reputations and promoting employee engagement, these executives believed that it was their role to promote dialogue with their key audiences or stakeholders. For example, Sharon, the utility firm employee communications manager, described her job as promoting "dialogue from the company's leadership with various audiences (media, key leaders, employees). We place a huge emphasis on relationships with our elected officials and regulators. To maintain those relationships, we have to be perceived well by our customers." Yet, the participants generally relayed how dialogue with key audiences had an impact on employee relations. Sharon described the importance of internal relations as well and indicated that employee communication was critical to rebuilding trust in her firm after a recent merger.

That cynicism is also due to the fact that Florida was acquired in the merger. They feel the previous management team was not straight with them, and so there's a lot of lingering distrust. In the Carolinas, most employees are pretty happy to work for this company. The company pays well, particularly as compared with others in some of the rural communities where our facilities are located, so you start off with most folks feeling pretty positive.

Karen, the Director of Internal Communications for a software firm, also described the goal of her department as "letting them (employees) know the company." She wants her efforts to help employees become more knowledgeable about the company and their place in it.

These executives identified one of their roles as opening a dialogue with their key audiences, including employees and external stakeholders. The fourth theme that emerged from the executive interviews is their belief that their job is distinct from yet coordinated with the goals and objectives of the marketing department.

Separate from Marketing

In asking each executive to describe their job and role in the organization, they were quick to explain that their department was *not* marketing, yet coordinated their messages *with* marketing, serving in what Mary Beth called “a strategic role.” The executives from the financial services, energy, utility, and software firms all worked in corporate or internal communications departments. They saw the world of employee communication from the lens of its role in corporate communication, along with media relations, public relations, customer relations, and creative which they said includes both advertising and new media. In all of these firms, the marketing function was distinct and separate from their focus of employee communication in their firms.

For instance, Mary Beth identified corporate communications as “managing relationships with all the stakeholders,” and added that her department works with marketing to make sure that the information going to external publics is consistent with the firm’s internal messages.

We would have a strategic consulting role when it came to how we communicate with customers. You know, if there were some sort of customer issue and we were going to provide talking points to our frontline about how to respond to it, oftentimes corporate communications may write that or even if marketing writes it, we would want to see it and have input into what we were going to say. So I think it’s really about managing your relationship with all the stakeholders. So there may be certain specific groups within your organization - you have specific responsibility for one stakeholder or the other – I think corporate communications is supposed to help manage and maintain the relationship across all of those.

Sharon mentioned that despite having a separate department responsible for external communication with customers, she feels that her firm does a good job of making sure both sets of messages are coordinated. “We do a pretty good job coordinating our messages so that there is no real difference in the essence of what we say to the media or to employees.”

In summary, only one executive had both corporate communications and marketing responsibilities. The other executives had responsibilities that they described as both distinct from yet coordinating with marketing and they believed that this separation was a good thing. The next theme underscores the executive’s belief that they had all channels of communication at their disposal to share their messages with their stakeholders.

Owning all channels of communication

The executives said they are responsible for all channels of communication with employees. Keith, the energy executive, described his firm’s approach.

For employee communications, we own all the channels to communicate to the employees. All of our electronic communications, we have a daily electronic newsletter. We have several other regular communications vehicles that go out to employees from human resources and IT and things like that. That’s one big chunk of the work – it’s managing that process of delivering the information.

One of the tasks these executives described was working to figure out which communication vehicles to use when and for what occasions. Mary Beth, the financial services executive, finds that her internal “clients” whom she counsels on internal communication prefer to communicate with their direct reports by issuing memos either in writing or by email. She believes, however, that there are occasions that call for a more intimate approach, such as face-to-face communication and tries to help her clients decide which approach is appropriate for which occasion.

Keith believes that rather than guessing how employees want to receive communication, he should ask them how they want to receive information on important issues. In his experience, employees want to receive any information about their company benefits in writing, so that they can take them home, read them over and digest them.

Well, you know, what you have to do is you really have to find out from employees how they like to be communicated to. There’s been plenty of research on things that are effective but what you find is there are certain kinds of information that people like to get a certain way. For example, HR information and benefits and things like that, most employees like to get a printed document. If it’s to review their health plan and their benefits, we still find that employees like to have something to look at in front of them. But if it’s just like quick company information, announcements and things like that, they like email or electronic newsletters.

Several of the executives mentioned that it was also important to match the medium with the message. Sharon, the manager of employee communications for a utility firm, noted that her firm has found that the mode of communication used depends on the circumstance for the communication.

We’ve seen in our research a strong and growing preference for electronic communication (for us that means the daily email and the intranet). However, that format works best to inform. Major change management initiatives -- where employees actually have to take action or face radical changes to their work -- are better done through some sort of face-to-face interaction. I think there is also a role for print, particularly if you need to educate employees around a particular set of issues.

In summary, these executives find that they have a wide range of communication vehicles to choose from when communicating with employees, but they also believe that it is best to ask employees which way they want to receive specific types of information. The next theme is the executives’ belief that despite this breadth of communication vehicles to choose from, face-to-face communication still plays an important role in the way they communicate with employees.

Face-to-face communication

Despite the variety of media available to these executives, they all believe in the benefit of maintaining face-to-face communication. Karen, the Director of Internal Communications,

for a software firm said, “There is nothing better than face-to-face communication.” Mary Beth, the financial services executive, discovered that when her firm conducted its own in-house employee communication study, “face-to-face communication with my boss” was the most satisfactory way employees in her firm said they wanted to get information.

I think we would say based on what we know from social science and based on what we know from our own surveys of employees, that the most effective communication is one-on-one with your manager. And then I would say beyond that would be in a meeting – a face-to-face meeting with your manager and there are five to ten people there or a hundred people there. A face-to-face meeting would be the most effective way because people get the body language and they can make a decision as to whether or not they think it’s credible. They can ask questions if they don’t understand something.

Gwen, the district retail manager, believes that face-to-face communication is critical for store-level employees and their bosses. “Our whole goal is respect and dignity in how we communicate and it translates to the partners as well as to the customers.”

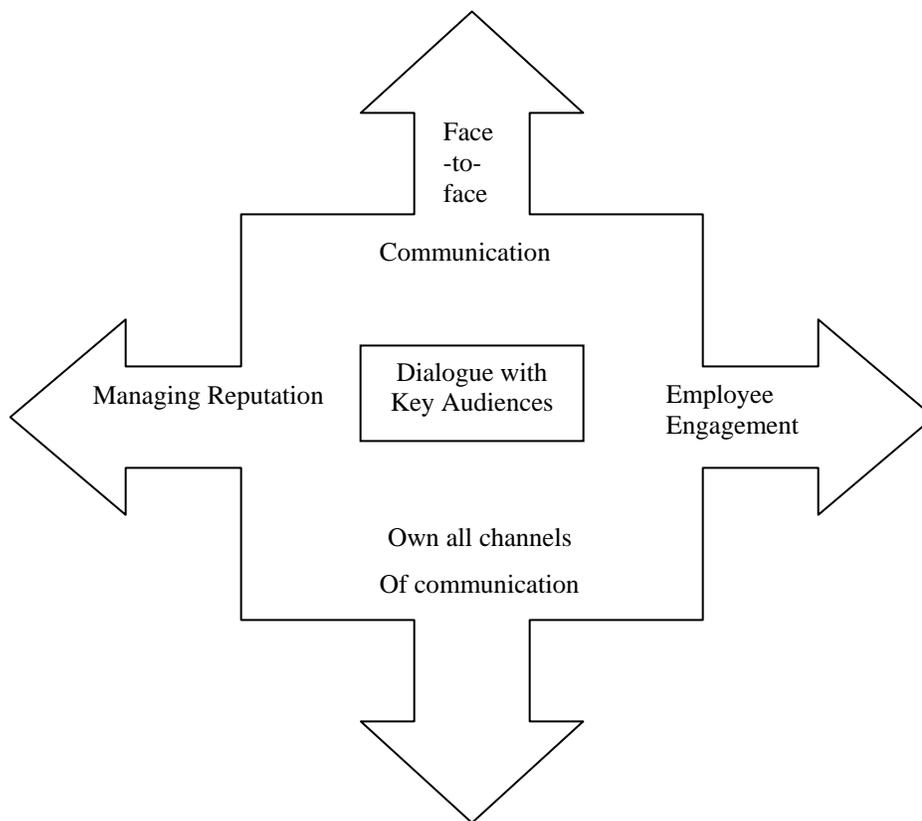
In summarizing the executive responses about face-to-face communication, data show that this type of communication serves a dual purpose. First, it keeps employees informed, and second, it keeps them secure about their place in the company.

Executive Interview Summary

Executive interviews revealed their primary goals of promoting dialogue with all of their key audiences, managing the reputation of their company’s brand and image, along with promoting employee engagement. The executives identified a full-range of communication vehicles they could use to implement these goals with employees, yet believed that face-to-face communication between an employee and his or her manager was preferred and most effective for reducing turnover and promoting a sense of community among employees. Finally, they saw their work as overlapping, yet distinct from the marketing departments, which they saw as more tactical than strategic.

Figure B is a mindmap of the cluster analysis of the executive interviews, created from the interviews and relating them back to the relationship management literature. Executives frequently mentioned that the focal point of their activities is engaging in or promoting dialogue among key audiences, which is placed at the center of the diagram. The purpose of their dialogue includes both managing the reputation of the firm and employee engagement, which is reflected in the horizontal arrows of the diagram. In addition, the mindmap illustrates that these communication executives have a range of communication vehicles to choose from when communicating with employees, but that they believe face-to-face communication occupies a distinct and important place in talking with employees, which is reflected in the diagram’s vertical arrows. The executive interviews corresponded more closely with the relationship management and public relations literatures, including aspects of building relationships. The mindmaps, however, utilize the words of the executives to describe those relationship management practices.

Figure B. Mindmap of executive perceptions of their role in promoting open communication



Discussion

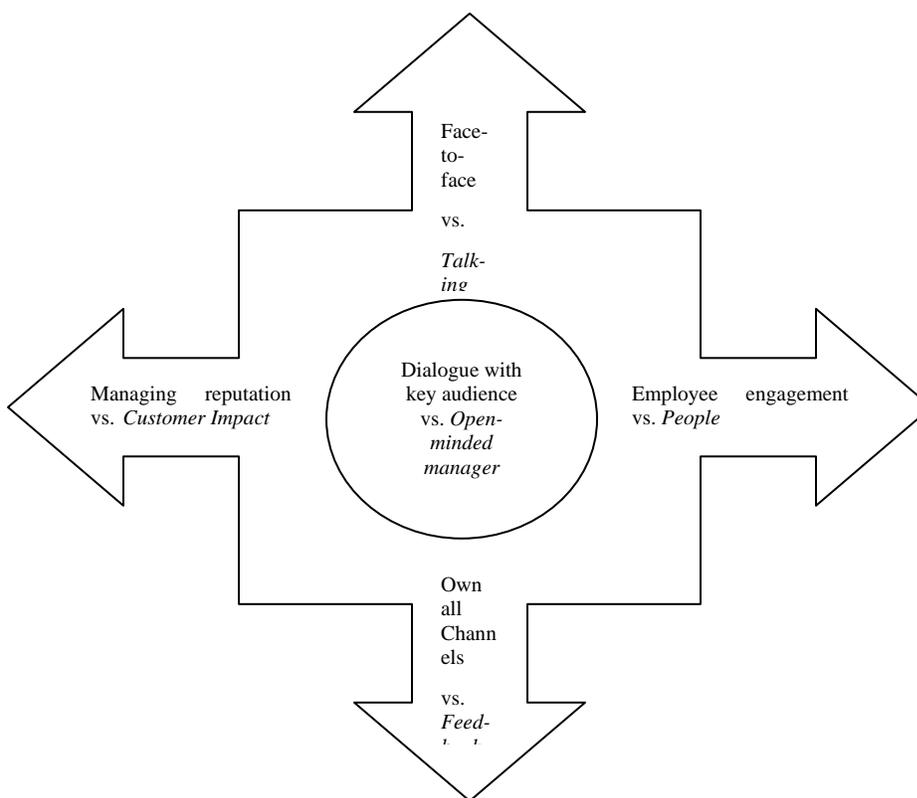
Although new digital forms of communication are emerging, such as email, intranets, and podcasts, executives believe face-to-face communication helps their firms build trusting relationships within their companies. Employees believe face-to-face communication is the best way to learn from their manager and build a relationship with that person. Executives describe internal communication as a way to build better relationships with employees, so that they feel more engaged in the mission of the organization, will want to remain with the organization, and will share that enthusiasm with their customers.

The mindmaps were created using terms from each set of interviewees, but it seemed clear that the employee clusters focused on communication as part of the process of building interpersonal relationships, whereas the executive interviews focused less on interpersonal relationships and more on how to instill a sense of employee engagement to meet the goals of the organization or to enhance the firm's reputation. In order to analyze the similarities and differences across employee and executive interviews, a collective mindmap (Figure C, Northcutt & McCoy, 2004) was developed. In the middle of their thinking, executives see their

job as opening dialogue with key audiences, including employees, but employees believe that this type of dialogue doesn't occur unless they happen to work for a manager who is very open-minded. This open-mindedness affects both the formality of communication managers have with employees as well as whether or not they offer the opportunity for employees to get and give feedback. Executives agree that face-to-face communication is important, but employees think of it as an opportunity to talk with their manager. There is the potential for consensus here, if managers understand that employees don't want formal, stuffy communication with their boss, but are seeking informal opportunities to talk with their boss. In addition, although executives see their ability to communicate widely through a variety of channels, employees crave informal opportunities to get and give feedback with their boss. Both talking and listening are informal methods of communication employed by these study participants.

Finally, executives see the goals of better communication to be employee engagement and managing their firm's reputation. Employees agree, but see communication more from their own perspective of enjoying the people they work with and positively affecting the customers they serve. Again, employees view these twin goals of internal and external engagement in a way that is much more informal than executives, yet are more focused on the bottom line. Employees want to affect customer relationships in a positive way and see how their own work habits and communication styles can actually improve customer relationships. Executives seem to intuitively know what their end goal of employee engagement entails, but don't verbalize it as well as the employees do.

Figure C. Collective mindmap of employee (*italic*) and executive perspectives



Employees think face-to-face communication is the most critical aspect of relating to their manager or company and the executives would agree, but the latter mentioned that they still have to coach their internal clients on how to do a better job relating to employees. These executives have found that their clients would rather send out a memo than walk over and talk to an employee. Executives also see many communication vehicles available to them to send messages to employees, and don't always see that face-to-face is fastest or easiest. The differing pattern of perspectives between employees and executives may reflect the latter's fragmented attention or compartmentalization with multiple employees to manage.

Executives even had specific names or jargon for this process: corporate communication, employee communication, or internal communication. They find it distinct from both marketing and public relations. For these executives, corporate communication or internal communication best describes the work they do to communicate with employee constituents. The implication is that communication is different than marketing or public relations to these executives.

Employees did not use specific names or jargon for this process. They refer to this type of communication as "talking." They recognize that having the ability and comfort level to talk to their boss each day is what makes them feel secure and happy in their jobs. They are very astute in understanding which managers are receptive to this type of open communication and which managers shy away from it.

As a result, employees and executives have different conceptions in how and why they communicate and there is room for miscommunication to occur. Managers might feel that they must present information to employees (as mandated by their supervisors or by the internal

communications department), yet employees seek opportunities for informal and open dialogue with their managers. This alone could contribute to an employee's sense that his or her manager is not open to dialogue because they are always in a presenting mode of communication. This also leaves a void between employees who seek intimate communication and communication executives who plan it—what person or role is there to advocate on behalf of what employees want?

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This study was limited by interviewing only four employees and six executives, all from a variety of firms. Future research should consider studying employees and executives from one firm in order to determine if one firm's employee engagement activities are building trust and creating an open atmosphere for employees and their managers to talk.

Referring back to the collective mindmap (Figure C), these results diverge where each party defines the importance of face-to-face communication. Executives see this type of communication as one method among many for promoting dialogue with their key audiences, but employees see this as integral for interpreting whether or not they have an open-minded manager who they are able to talk to. The executive interview responses concurred with the importance that employees place on face-to-face communication, yet disclosed that their managers are not always equipped to deal face-to-face with their direct reports. Future research should ask managers about their level of expertise in face-to-face communication, including their ability to listen and deliver constructive feedback. In addition, future research could examine a firm's efforts to build trust before and after that organization works with managers to improve these skills.

Grunig (1983) suggests that publics can perceive a difference between symbolic and behavioral communication and one-way communication is inherently symbolic in that it says something, but does not have to follow-up. Two-way or behavioral communication, on the other hand, suggests that the provider is willing to engage in dialogue and actually make changes as a result of that dialogue. That discrepancy could also explain a disconnect between what employees and executives agree is important. If the executives are only planning communication and not implementing it, they do not actually know how effective it was. Future research should examine the effectiveness of including either employees or their front-line managers in the planning of these communication efforts.

Another purpose of this study was to determine which communication method(s) were most effective for building trust between the company and its employees. The findings support what public relations scholars Grunig, Grunig, and Ehling (1992) suggested--that trust was an attribute of relationships with publics to be measured and cultivated. Grunig and Huang (2000) found that successful relationships between an organization and its publics emerged from mutual trust, and Bruning and Ledingham (2000) called for more research into a complete definition of trust.

Employee engagement is not a term used in the relationship management literature (Bruning & Ledingham, 2000; Toth, 2000). It emerged from the interviews with executives, however, as a critical component of their job responsibilities. The executives in this study described their responsibilities as building dialogue with key audiences, which included both an internal component of employee engagement and an external component of managing their

firm's reputation. These executives were aware that their employees are an important public, and considered them equal in value to investors or customers. Three of the firms had departments, in fact, specifically designed to manage relationships with employees. Referring back to the collective mindmap (Figure C), executives focus on engagement as a goal of their communication efforts, while employees focus on relationships with people as an outcome of the communication efforts of the company. Future research should focus specifically on employee engagement as a role of the internal communications executive and how those efforts build trust between the employee and the organization. In addition, future research should examine the role that this trust has on relationships with other stakeholders, including customers.

Efforts to build trust with employees through internal communication can provide benefits for both employees and the firm, as employees feel more engaged, and more empowered to build relationships with customers on the firm's behalf.

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Promoting Violence: Terror Management Theory and Campus Safety Campaigns

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Abstract

A new wave of campus safety campaigns have been implemented on high school and college campuses across the nation since the Virginia Tech shootings. Some of these campaigns are trying to increase awareness that violence can happen anywhere by reducing optimistic bias in students and faculty. This study poses that these campaigns have the potential to increase mortality salience and anxiety in individuals who already feel like cultural outcasts, and that these individuals are more likely to act out because of these feelings. We argue that some safety campaigns have the potential to widen the gap between conflicting cultural worldviews by reducing optimistic bias, and thereby, increase the likelihood of a violent act.

Violent acts on high school and college campuses have increased in the last decade. National statistics show at least 20% of public schools across the nation experience at least one violent crime on their campus (DeVoe et al., 2004). According to a National Crime Survey Report, teens between the ages of 12 to 17 are two times more likely to be victimized by a serious crime than adults and three times more likely to be assaulted. Research suggests 40% of all violent crimes take place on or around school grounds for children between the ages 12 to 19 (U.S. Department of Justice, 2000).

Defining school related violence is difficult because many definitions are broad and not well operationalized (Johnson et al., 2002). Hernandez and Seem (2004) define school violence as any harmful act, which results in a negative impact on the internal school climate. The California Commission of Teacher Credentialing suggests school violence is both a “public health and safety condition . . . including physical and nonphysical harm which causes damage, pain, injury or fear” (Johnson et al., 2002, p. 5).

Some of the most extreme violent acts like the Columbine and Virginia Tech shootings have raised awareness of the threat of violence academic settings face. These violent acts have also raised awareness of school safety issues, and in most cases, encouraged much needed changes in policy and warning systems. In addition, public awareness and safety campaigns have been developed and implemented on high school and college campuses across the nation. A goal these campaigns is to reduce the common perception that shootings only happen at other schools.

Optimistic bias is the notion that “bad things happen to other people, but not to me” (Chapin & Coleman, 2006, p. 381). Chapin and Coleman (2006) found that most students believe they are “less likely than others to become victims” of school violence and that the chance of violence occurring at their school is “less likely than other schools around the country” (p. 384).

While the awareness campaigns no doubt are trying to increase safety in schools, the outcome of these campaigns can actually have the opposite effect.

This study places rampage school shootings in the context of terrorism and critically examines the promotion of school safety through the lens of terror management theory. School safety campaigns are analyzed to expose the potential for these campaigns to decrease safety as cultural outcasts are further ostracized by the defense of cultural worldviews and self-esteem needed to decrease mortality salience. School violence and terrorism are reviewed, terror management theory is explained, and campaigns aimed at reducing optimistic bias are analyzed to make recommendations for future research and campus safety campaigns.

School Violence

A 2002 study conducted by the University of Arkansas School Violence Resource Center assessed recent quantitative and qualitative research, which placed an emphasis on how school-related violence was perceived and measured “among educators, students, parents, law enforcement officials, local governments, community service organizations, and community leaders” (Johnson et al., 2002, p. 3). Several definitions of school violence emerged from this study with no definitive definition. Some researchers define school-related violence in a broad spectrum, which makes operationalizing laborious. One definition of school violence is a deliberate and negligent act, which results in physical or psychological harm to a person or property on school grounds (Astor & Meyer, 2001). Another researcher suggests “the use or threat of physical force with the intent of causing physical injury, damage or intimidation of another person” is a good way to define school violence (Berg, 2000, p. 18). Still, other researchers define school violence in a more precise and focused way. Danner and Carmody (2001) give more specific examples of what they think should be considered school violence. They suggest any physical threat or force with the deliberate intent of causing intimidation or injury to another person, which includes forcible rape, assault, armed robbery, and homicide, as well as, hitting, shoving, or throwing objects should be considered a violent act and help define school-related violence. Because grade school students’ perception of school violence generally differs from high school students’ perception of school violence, Flannery and Singer (1999) posit that any definition of school violence should advance along a continuum of grade levels.

Violence is often attributed to racial, ethnic, and socio-economic inequalities (Blau & Golden, 2005). Research has found support for a variety of “school violence risk factors” (Johnson et al., 2002, p. 18). Some of these risk factors include not having a good stable family structure with rules, low or no involvement or support from parents, taking personal responsibility, involvement in gangs, violence in the media, personally witnessing violent acts, low self-esteem, and drug and alcohol abuse (Pietrzak, Petersen, & Speaker, 1998; Stetson, Stetson, & Kelly, 1998). Johnson et al. (2002) found that “teachers characterized likely victims of school-related violence as low income, racial minorities, low achievers, social outcasts and those with low parental supervision,” while students saw victims as “outcasts, homosexuals, boys, gang members, and students with low self-esteem” (p. 18).

Despite these extensive profiles of perpetrators and victims, very few characterizations match the perpetrators and victims in major school shootings. In fact, from 1992 – 2001, only one of what have been classified as the large-scale “random” school shootings occurred in an inner-city school by a black student; whereas, the remaining 22 were committed by white

students in middle-class, suburban schools (Kimmel & Mahler, 2003). In addition, “almost all the shooters came from intact and relatively stable families, with no history of child abuse” (p. 1442). The only characterization listed above that matched the profiles of school shooters was the propensity toward violence. A recent study supports the notion that a “positive relationship exists between the adolescents’ attitude toward violence and the use of violence” (Gellman & Delucia-Waack, 2006, p. 595). Students who had committed a violent act believed violence is a “means to ensure survival by being prepared to take the offensive” (Gellman & Delucia-Waack, 2006, p. 595).

Another commonality among the school shooters was that “All or most of the shooters had tales of being harassed—specifically, gay-baited—for inadequate gender performance...[the shooters] did not measure up to the norms of hegemonic masculinity” (Kimmel & Mahler, 2003, p. 1440). No reports have concluded that any of the shooters were gay, but that most were teased because they were different from the other boys—shy, bookish, honor students, artistic, musical, theatrical, nonathletic, “geekish,” or weird. “Nearly all had stories of being mercilessly and constantly teased, picked on, and threatened” (Kimmel & Mahler, 2003, p. 1445).

Most of the shooters had no past of committing violent acts. They were not bullies. They were students who had been bullied. A 2003 national report by *Fight Crime: Invest in Kids* states that bullying affects one in three children in grades six to ten or 6.9 million students. Children who are bullied are five times more likely to be depressed and are far more suicidal than other kids (Fox et al., 2003). Kimmel and Mahler (2003) contend that the shooters were culturally marginalized based on criteria for adequate gender performance, specifically the enactment of codes of masculinity. They view the shooters “not as psychopathological deviants, but rather overconformists to a particular normative construction of masculinity, a construction that defines violence as a legitimate response to a perceived humiliation” (p. 1440).

Even with the movement to broadly define school violence, some violent actions should not be classified together. The seemingly “random” shooting rampages on school campuses need to be categorized differently than school violence. Research has shown the shootings are not random (Reddy et al., 2001). They are meticulously planned to put an end to torment, demonstrate power, and induce fear. Seung-Hui Cho sent his manifesto including photos and 27 videos detailing his plans to CNN in between shootings at Virginia Tech. Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold planned their attack on Columbine for more than a year with the ultimate goal to “terrorize the entire nation by attacking a symbol of American life” (Cullen, 2004, para. 4). This study seeks to conceptualize shooting rampages that shock our school and social systems as acts of terrorism.

School Violence as Terrorism

Terrorism is defined as “a conspiratorial style of violence calculated to alter the attitudes and behavior of multitude audiences. It targets the few in a way that claims the attention of the many” (Crenshaw, 1995, p. 4). Viewing school violence as terrorism, O’Hair and Averso (2006) reveal a number of common elements including: 1) fear as the ultimate goal; 2) violence need only be threatened; 3) ultimate targets are not always the victims; and 4) the purpose is to impact political or social change. Specifically, “Terrorism is a response to a social system that the terrorist perceives is indifferent to his/her concerns or needs. The terrorist act is an anger-based, extreme measure intended to force the social system to take notice of the terrorist’s ignored

concerns or needs” (O’Hair & Averso, 2006, p. 2). Terrorists are individuals with a high mortality salience (thinking of death often) who feel so much aggression toward those with alternative worldviews that they seek to eliminate them (Miller & Landau, 2005). Gaddis (2001) suggests the whole idea behind terrorism is the ability to “accomplish a lot with a little” (p. 10). “What school violence and terrorism have in common is violent behavior that is an outcome of the interaction between individual development and social settings (e.g., the school) (O’Hair & Averso, 2006, p. 2).

The shootings are attacks on the system that perpetuated the shooters’ torment. Furlong and Morrison (2000) contend “Acts of violence that threaten the security of schools attack a core value of our social system” (p. 74). Newman (2004) suggests the shootings are institutional attacks because they take place on a public stage before an audience, are committed by a member or former member of the institution, and involve multiple victims chosen for their symbolic significance or at random. Schools may, in fact, be overestimating their contextual obstacles in managing violence. Studies of juvenile delinquency and high school drop out rates show that “a child is better off in a good neighborhood and a troubled family, than a troubled neighborhood and a good family” (Gladwell, 2000, p. 167-168). A school violence study involving 2,616 high school students found that school climate matters above and beyond any effect of the parent on the child (Gruseit, Weatherburn, & Donnelly, 2005). Tellingly, Columbine shooter Eric Harris quoted Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* in a term paper, “Good wombs hath borne bad sons” (Kimmel & Mahler, 2003, p. 1442). School violence can be conceptualized “as a multifaceted construct that involves both criminal acts and aggression in schools, which inhibit development and learning, as well as harm the school’s climate” (Furlong & Morrison, 2000, p. 71). Analyzing the climate and context of the shooters’ social systems shows a clear attack on a cultural worldview, indicative of terrorism.

Terror Management Theory

Terror management theory is based largely on the work of Ernest Becker (1962, 1973, 1975) who posited that human awareness of mortality creates the potential for overwhelming terror. The theory posits that to reduce the anxiety caused by mortality salience, people seek to defend their cultural worldviews and enhance their self-esteem (Greenberg, Pyszczynski, & Solomon, 1986; Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 1991; Greenberg, Solomon, & Pyszczynski, 1997). Cultural worldviews are “humanly created and transmitted beliefs about the nature of reality shared by groups of individuals” (Greenberg et al., 1997, p. 65). They vary across cultures and may include religious and social values, political and nationalistic beliefs, moral codes, or being a connoisseur of a craft or skill (Greenberg et al., 1997; Shehryar & Hunt, 2005). Belief in one’s cultural worldview provides meaning for life while living up to the culturally prescribed standards of that worldview increases self-esteem. A life in which social norms are followed or surpassed produces a legacy, allowing for the symbolic transcendence of death. Thereby, mortality salience is buffered by one’s actions in life being more meaningful than death.

Mortality salience is heightened by experiences that remind us of our eminent death. These may be first-hand experiences, or more often, mediated experiences. Messages of death and dying also increase our awareness of death (Greenberg et al., 1997). Reminding people of

their mortality has been found to increase the positive evaluation of those who bolster one's cultural worldview and the negative evaluation of those who threaten it (Greenberg et al., 1990).

Cultural worldview is a fragile social construction in need of constant validation...the existence of others who share one's worldview bolsters faith in that worldview...and the existence of others who do not share one's worldview threatens one's faith in it, thereby reducing its effectiveness as an anxiety buffer. (McGregor et al., 1998, p. 591)

To defend our cultural worldview and "alleviate existential anxiety" (Choi, Kwon, & Lee, 2007, p. 1), we embrace cultural symbols and come together to support others who share the same cultural worldview. Evidence of this could be seen in the sea of orange shirts at the Virginia Tech memorials and the U.S. flags outside almost every home and business following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001.

Another way in which one's cultural worldview is defended is through attacking those who have an alternative worldview. The tendency to reject those who are different is well documented in prejudice literature. Essentially, people prefer similar others over dissimilar others because they validate one's own beliefs and attitudes (Byrne, 1971; Festinger, 1954; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The most common and extensively documented way of attacking alternative worldviews is derogation, or belittling individuals to depict their world view as deficient (Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 1991). By labeling others as "barbarians" or "savages" alternative beliefs can be easily dismissed as inferior (Hayes, Schimel, & Williams, 2008).

When mortality salience is high people also rely more on stereotypes to enhance personal value, bolster group identity and preserve the social system by providing a downward comparison with negative out-group stereotypes (Fein & Spencer, 1997; Schimel et al., 1999). This could be seen in the personal attacks on Muslims following September 11. Because alternative worldviews "challenge an individual's faith in his or her worldview, he or she is likely to respond to those divergent worldviews with disdain and hostility" (Schimel et al., 1999, p. 906). Mortality salience increases aggression against a worldview threatener (McGregor et al., 1998).

While research has shown that messages increasing mortality salience increases hostility toward those with alternative worldviews, studies have also shown that the value of tolerance can counteract the propensity for mortality salience to encourage negative reactions toward those who are different (Greenberg et al., 1992). "When tolerance was either highly important or highly accessible to the individual, the typical mortality salience effect of increased hostility toward those who are different did not occur" (Greenberg et al., 1992, p. 218). Essentially, if an individual's worldview values tolerance, he or she is less likely to react with aggression or hostility toward individuals who subscribe to an alternative worldview.

Terror management theory and viewing rampage school shootings as terrorist attacks provides a dark lens through which to view the school safety campaign campaigns currently being implemented. Based on the literature, campaigns that increase mortality salience by reminding students that shootings *can happen here* have the potential to cause adverse effects.

Optimistic Bias and School Safety Campaigns

The massacre at Virginia Tech sparked college campus safety evaluations across the nation. Universities and researchers use the shooting as a learning experience as to what could have been done better to protect the people on campus that day. Many universities have implemented new ways of warning faculty, students, and staff when there is a violent incident on campus. This primarily consists of sending text messaging blasts and e-mails, along with some phone calls (for people without a texting option), and of course television and radio announcements. Universities also promote safety on their campuses through brochures distributed in the resident halls. The brochures recommend that students not walk alone after dark and caution students not to stay in academic buildings late at night. Further, the publications emphasize that “students living in residence halls should lock their doors at all times” (Santucci & Gable, 1997, p. 3).

Despite the propensity of school shootings in recent years and the changes and warnings, students do not see themselves in danger. The Association for Communication Technology Professionals conducted a survey in 2007 after the Virginia Tech shootings and found that 70% of the more than 400 respondents think their institution is well or adequately prepared for natural disaster and 59% think their institution is well or adequately prepared for a major crime on campus (Dufresne & Dorn, 2005). In a 2001 study, college students exhibited optimistic bias when asked about their chance of becoming a victim of a campus crime when comparing themselves to other college students across the U. S. (Chapin, 2001). Again in 2006, Chapin and Coleman found that most students believe they are “less likely than others to become victims” of school violence and that the chance of violence occurring at their school is “less likely than other schools around the country” (p. 384).

Unrealistic optimism is common. According to Weinstein (1980) an individual’s future optimistic expectations may or may not be realistic. He or she may be accurate in believing the prospect that he or she has a less than average chance of encountering a negative event (Weinstein, 1980). Unrealistic optimism, also known as optimistic bias, is the belief that negative occurrences are “less likely to happen to them than to others” and that positive occurrences are “more likely to happen to them than to others” (Weinstein, 1980, p. 807). Weinstein (1980) suggests this belief stems from an inaccurate image people have when comparing themselves to other people. “Optimistic biases arise because people tend not to think carefully about their own and others’ circumstances or because they lack significant information about others” (Weinstein, 1980, p. 817). Unrealistic optimism has also been linked to health and behavioral related issues, including sexually transmitted disease, skin cancer, illness, alcoholism, and abuse (Branstrom, Kristjansson, & Ullen, 2005; Chapin, 2008; Martin et al., 2000; Miller, 1991).

Successful examples of reducing or debiasing unrealistic optimism are rare. There were a series of studies published by Weinstein and Klein (1995) that attempted to reduce optimistic bias, but were unsuccessful. In fact, their study concluded some attempts at debiasing actually “enhanced optimistic bias” (Harris, Middleton, & Joiner, 2000, p. 236; Weinstein & Klein, 1995). Efforts to debias are influenced by a theoretical goal and a desire to better understand optimistic bias (Harris et al., 2000; van der Pligt, 1998). Existing literature provides a few examples of successful attempts to debias, which includes influencing the mindset, accountability, and information provisions (Harris et al., 2000; McKenna & Myers, 1997; Taylor & Gollwitzer, 1995; Weinstein, 1983).

Specific to this study, Chapin and Coleman (2006) sought to document optimistic bias among middle school and high school students and assess the success of an educational campaign aimed at increasing violence awareness and self-esteem and lowering optimistic bias. They found that as knowledge about school violence increased, optimistic bias decreased but there was not a variance in self-esteem. The study suggests that swift implementation of similar programs is warranted to reduce optimistic bias in conjunction with increasing knowledge. Chapin and Coleman (2006) contend that “heightened media coverage of school fatalities has primed school students for such programs” (p. 385), and that these types of programs may reduce violence by encouraging students to take self-protective measures when threats or warning signs emerge among their peers.

While these campaigns may be well-intentioned, they could have adverse effects. By decreasing optimistic bias the campaigns are encouraging the acceptance that school shootings *can happen here*. Essentially, the campaigns remind students they can be shot at school. Terror management studies have repeatedly shown that messages which remind individuals of death cause anxiety. High mortality salience has been shown to increase stereotyping, derogation, hostility, and aggression toward differing others (Fein & Spencer, 1997; Hayes, Schimel, & Williams, 2008; McGregor et al., 1998; Schimel et al., 1999; Solomon et al., 1991). This study argues that campaigns aimed solely at reducing optimistic bias to encourage self-protective measures could be increasing attacks on alternative worldviews. Those who do not fit the socially constructed norms of the school’s climate will be outcast and diminished. These attacks could then encourage a counter attack, potentially to the point at which an individual seeks to eliminate the threatening worldview (Miller & Landau, 2005).

The high-profile cases at high schools in Jonesboro, Arkansas; West Paducah, Kentucky; Pearl, Mississippi; Littleton, Colorado; and Red Lake, Minnesota; and the universities of Virginia Tech and Northern Illinois are examples of what can happen when someone deemed a social outcast seeks to transcend death by instilling fear and shaking the foundation of an alternative worldview. Further research is needed to analyze the effect of school safety campaigns on mortality salience and its impact on the social systems of schools.

Future Research and School Safety Campaigns

Greenberg et al. (1992) found that “When tolerance was either highly important or highly accessible to the individual, the typical mortality salience effect of increased hostility toward those who are different did not occur” (p. 218). Additional research has shown a component in declining violence rates includes the establishment of a strong sense of community and collective responsibility (Noguera, 1995). Some campaigns are already including tolerance as a foundation. The National Youth Violence Prevention Campaign has a five-day violence prevention program and day one focuses on promoting respect and tolerance (NYVPC, 2008). Unfortunately, Armstrong and Webb (2006) note that many schools “lack the resources necessary for the selection and effective implementation of empirically validated violence prevention strategies” (p. 80).

Intuitively we assume that if students are aware of the potential for violence they will be more cautious. However, by conceptualizing rampage school shootings as terrorist activities, literature on terror management theory implies that reminding students about violence in a social culture that does not value tolerance has the potential to increase aggression toward students who

are considered different. We suggest that safety campaigns, which do not encourage holistic acceptance of community groups, have the potential to widen the gap between conflicting cultural worldviews. We contend that future awareness campaigns should include tolerance of alternative worldviews as a core component to combat the natural tendency to decrease mortality salience by attacking others. Additionally, this study calls for further research to validate the implications of bridging terror management literature with school violence and a renewed commitment to mitigating attacks on alternative worldviews by bridging research and practice to reduce school violence.

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The trajectory of Organizational Communication in Brazil

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When organizational communication in Brazil was first spoken of, it all boiled down to the publication and distribution of bulletins, newspapers and magazines for employees. This was the norm for the communicational panorama in the second half of the 1960s, when the field of organizational communication began its process of theoretical and practical organization in addition to a series of affirmative actions aimed at institutionalizing the activity and its philosophy within the realm of businesses and the university, as well as dignifying journalists and public relations agents, who were mostly under the charge of the personnel areas. The most significant reference of this initial affirmative movement of organizational communication in Brazil is the foundation of the Aberje, on October 8, 1967, at the time known as the Brazilian Association of Corporate Industrial Editors and is today a historical benchmark that is called Brazilian Association of Business Communication.

The recognition of Aberje's role as a key player in the foundation and development of the professional and theoretical field of Organizational Communication in Brazil can be found in Kunsch (1997, p.57-61), which, using documented sources and statements, shows Aberje to be the "embryo of Organizational Communication in Brazil." Torquato (1984, 1998, 2002) also highlights Aberje's pioneering role, especially in the area of professionalizing corporate publications.

The pioneers in communicating human relations

Aberje's founding was an initiative by a group of corporate communicators and multinational and Brazilian company employees located mostly in Sao Paulo. At the head of this group was Nilo Luchetti, an Italian journalist and a manager at Pirelli who, at the time, ran the *Notícias Pirelli* magazine, a publication produced within the objectives of human relations, supported by the board of that company and which was a professional periodical model for other organizations. Luchetti, who held a privileged and special position when compared to the situations of other corporate communicators, stimulated other professionals to create an association where they could gather and spread technical and practical information on editorial activity, as well as promoting, among businesspeople who were educated within a rational and conservative vision of work, the role of communication as an integrating process. Talking about the action and vision of Luchetti, Professor Margarida M. Krohling Kunsch (1997, p.61) underscores that "the merits of one Nilo Luchetti, an untiring and passionate defender of this cause, must be recognized, as well as other pioneers that, starting with nothing, envisioned the promising horizon of organizational communication in Brazil."

In Aberje's first two decades, it accomplished its goal of improving the quality of corporate communications and institutionalizing the profession of organizational communicator in Brazil⁷³. As Torquato (1984, 1998, 2002) describes it, corporate publications at the time were produced using little journalistic and public relations theory, were lacking editorial techniques, and were practically without funding. This is due to at least four causes: first, to the traditional administrative models that structured businesses at the time; second, to the political climate which was unfavorable to the development of the field of communications; third, to the ideological disqualification of corporate journalism, labeled as an "instrument of the bosses" by the journalists working at the mass communication vehicles and at universities; and, lastly, to the mastery of marketing communications within the realm of Brazilian companies, geared exclusively towards publicizing products. Kunsch (2007, p. 57) and Torquato (2002, p. 3) qualify this view of organizational communication as the "era of the product."

Concerning the technical aspects of the first tools used by Brazil's organizational communication, Torquato (1984, p. 28-29) relates with preciseness the panorama that the Aberje had the mission of facing and overcoming:

At the time of its inception, complete improvisation was king. Employees at lower levels would meet to make the newspaper or bulletin; they would themselves write the texts, make the drawings, set the graphics for the publication in any which way, type everything and do the work of printing and mimeographing. Many publications had already died at the outset, condemned by their undefined objectives, their amateurism, and the complete lack of technical knowledge on the part of their planners. Very few businesses presented good publications, and these, if they came out regularly, were due more to the passion and zeal of some selfless people rather than to the doctrine of the corporate routine.

Torquato (2002, p. 2) also links the origin of an organizational communication that was aligned in its techniques, values, beliefs, and communities to economic, social and political development, especially starting in the 1960s. For him:

The history of organizational communication in Brazil is the history of economic, social and political development itself in the last few decades Here is a little of this history. In 1967, in Sao Paulo, the Aberje was founded. [...] At the start, there was the word, but there was no funding. Later the words multiplied and the funds were divided. This was more or less how the history of organizational communication in Brazil unfolded in the last 30 years. At the end of the 1960s, in the wake of the industrialization of the Southeast, the concept began to run free and businesses began

⁷³ Caldas Junior (2005, p. 4) points out that "Nilo Luchetti [...] was concerned with spreading new concepts, making the market grow, and preparing professionals to serve it; he met a professor from the Sorbonne of Paris, Dimitri Weiss, with whom he established a relationship and exchanged information. [...] In 1972, in his work *Contributions a l' Etude de la Presse d'Enteprise et Essai de Bibliografie*, professor Weiss cites the Aberje and Brazil "as a country endowed with a relevant corporate communications, next to the United States and Canada."

a process of intercommunication with more diverse audiences. A few businesses had already, at that time, realized that there was a strong bond between themselves and society. The organizations concerned themselves with telling their employees that they should be proud of the place where they work. And in clearly demonstrating to consumers that they manufacture good products and provide quality services. For this reason, they considered themselves honest and worthy of trust. [...] A look back reveals the initial steps of a lengthy learning process. First, the small newspaper with the features of a social column appeared, badly done and full of praise and good intents. In 1967, the *Aberje* held its first convention, with internal communications being the topic of all of the activities.

As its first associative expression indicated, the *Aberje* was a community of craftspeople, journalists, and public relations workers who worked in the internal areas of the companies, charged with the specific task of producing bulletins, magazines, and corporate newspapers. Craftspeople, because their training and work were exclusively operational. Most of these professionals, with the exception of Luchetti, were far from relating organizational communication with the cultural, technological and political aspects of the organization and of society, with the administrative models used at the companies at the time, and with the psychological dimensions of broadcasters and receivers, among other issues.

Furthermore, concerning the historical period that gave context to these first tools of Organizational Communication in Brazil, Torquato (202, p. 4) underscores that "it is necessary to remember that Brazil was coming out of an authoritarian period. Fear was rampant in the internal environments and Human Resources structures began to control even outsourced workers. Therefore, one lived under the sign of fear and of scrutinized communications."

In addition to the political constraints of the time, these pioneers in Organizational Communication in Brazil worked in organizations that were mostly ruled by organizational structures supported by the traditionalist models of administration. In these organizations, the factory bulletins, newspapers and magazines were part of formal communication processes, "from the top down," generally issued from the top levels and the personnel area. In this context, the messages from the administration, conveyed via print newspapers, had employee integration among their most important objectives. Andrade (1965, p. 163-179), the chief Brazilian theorist in public relations at the time, was the main theoretical reference for these first communicators, organizers, and founders of the *Aberje*, by conceptualizing the publications within a relational universe, defined by the greater aims of the organizations and not restricted to the technical aims of the journalism practiced within the companies, as notably believed by journalists linked to professional Journalism unions.

Corporate journalism began, with the *Aberje*'s activities, to be thought of and produced within the strategies and techniques of Public Relations and Organizational Communication. Unlike the journalism produced among mass communication vehicles, corporate journalism, for the first members of *Aberje*, was born of and had the meaning connected to relational demands. This relational positioning was highlighted in part by the corporate publications of the late 1960s. In these cases, in addition to spreading the message among the employees, the administrations produced publications with the purpose of publicizing the companies' accomplishments, especially those that rhetorically highlighted the alignment of these

organizations with the progress of the country, which was at the time governed by the military, and the capacity of these companies to create jobs within their communities as well as taxes for the government. This type of communication, which is oftentimes boastful, was the expression of the existing organizational model used in most of the industries in the state of Sao Paulo in the 1960s, where there was an administration that was markedly connected to the ideas of the Scientific Organization of Work⁷⁴. As a reinforcement, the mass of humble workers, who came from Brazil's rural areas were placed into this type of vertically communicated administration; for these workers, their first urban jobs meant a real social rise.

Analyzing this context based on the elements of the theory of communication, the communicational processes of these companies was characterized by a functionalist approach, based on a conceptual scheme directed at controlling the phases of the communication process: who said what, to what channel, and with what effects, just as designed by Laswell. This functionalist approach to organizational communication adapted perfectly to the administrative models being used at the companies, which were characterized for the emphasis they gave to tasks and the logic of the work at the operational level. In this view of communications control, it is possible to see, through empirical study of corporate texts from this historical period, the presence of asymmetrical communicational processes, produced outside of their political, situational, and cultural contexts, in which the companies stood out as the powerful, active broadcasters and the workers as passive receivers. Torquato (1984) remembers that the production of corporate publications – the bulletin, the newspaper, the magazine – based on functionalist concepts expressed the everyday issues faced by the organizational communicators of the time. In his work, this author presents a description of the types of corporate publications, the journalistic genres (informative, interpretive and opinion) appropriate for each one of these vehicles, the formats of these publications, the frequency with which they were published and the appropriate agendas, among other topics linked to the spread of organizational information.

With the Aberje, Organizational Communication in Brazil began to think about and operate its processes in a denser manner, which meant incorporating a theoretical vision into its day-to-day, especially the vision that was coming out of the University. The proof of this is the participation, in the first Aberje board, of renowned professors and specialists, such as Gaudêncio Torquato, Manoel Carlos Chaparro, Wilson da Costa Bueno, and Waldemar Kunsch.

Brazilian redemocratization and organizational communication

The strictly technical view, divided into strict or politically controlled jobs, concerning the process of organizational communication geared, internally, towards communication with the employees and, at the level of society, towards communication of the product, suffered its first shock with Brazil's redemocratization movement, which imposed new interlocutors for the companies and institutions, among which were the unions and political parties with democratic, centrist and leftist profiles. In 1985, Brazilian parties inspired by social-democracy and the New Republic were born from this movement. Organizational communication in Brazil, at the

⁷⁴ The Institute of Rational Organization of Work (Idort), founded in 1931 by representatives of the corporate world and conservative Sao Paulo thinking, played an important role in the formation of the administrative thinking of the time.

professional level, turned its eyes to the historical and political environment and aligned its plans and actions, especially those aimed at the press, for the new moment in society. During the period when the military regime was on its way out and democracy was on its way in, it was necessary to communicate beyond the product. It was fundamental to administrate communication using the production of a good image to be perceived by society, the market, and the countless corporate audiences as a reference. Businesses began to concern themselves with aligning their images to a society that looked at attributes that constituted a good organizational image in their dialogue and transparency. Organizational communication in Brazil had entered the age of the image. And, with this, it turned its eyes to the environment in which the organization was inserted and to greater articulation of the operations of its divisions, thoughts, and professionals.

At the theoretical level, the work of Gaudêncio (1986, p.13-18) and Kunsch (1986, p.107-129) laid out an organizational communication linked to the Systems Theory and the idea of power and they professed the need for integrated communicational action. Based on this broader vision, Kunsch (1986 p. 108) shows a need to break with the functionalist cubicles in organizational communication:

Integrated communication, most of all in the eighties, has become almost a demand of the organizations, which ask for complete communication services and no longer ask for just a specific job from an Advertising agency, Public Relations and Press agencies, or even from a promotion or merchandising company. This makes it possible, in practice, to transform the agencies into communication companies with specialized departments for each area.

In the professional field, one example of this integrated organizational communication in the 1980s was the Social Communication Plan for Rhodia in Brazil, implemented by Edson Vaz Musa, the president of that company, and part of an "open door" program. In a statement to Damante (2004, pp.6-12), Musa states:

When I took over as President of Rhodia, in early 1984, Brazil was still coming out of that dictatorship phase where society's protests were reduced practically to zero. The companies were constantly looking inwards, especially the multinationals, which were run by foreigners, who had great difficulty in expressing themselves on domestic issues. Coincidentally, it was precisely in this period of political opening and I was the first Brazilian to take over at a Brazilian multinational. [...] opportunity in the media, I began an "open door" policy, asking our people to have contact with society.

In this environment of Brazilian redemocratization, the organizational communicators, in addition to their work geared towards communicating with the employees, worked heavily on the processes and techniques of relating with the press. In this historic moment, the first press relations manuals were produced and the first executive training courses (media trainings) were also held in order to answer the demands for interviews and information, especially in situations of crisis.

Productive restructuring and organizational communication

It is in this environment, in the 1990s, that organizational communication, as formative of image and strategic positioning, before the local and global societies, increasingly had to also adapt to the new administrative focuses that underscored the importance of organizational behavior as a relational and communicative element, the work environment with emphasis on consultation and on participation of the employees and countless stakeholders, the organizational culture as the center of communications and organizational relations, the work processes and projects done in teams or in a matricial manner, and decision making processes fed by information and negotiation. It is in this historical period that organizational communication works with themes such as Total Quality, Re-engineering, Benchmarking, and Downsizing and the end of employment, among others.

Nassar & Bernardes (1997) highlight the role of productive restructuring in the transformation of Organizational Communication in Brazil, inserted here as a main component of the relationship policies at the companies and institutions used with the society and countless audiences. Organizational communication is associated to the success or failure of the corporate restructurings of mergers and acquisitions, to the technological innovations and innovations in processes and products, to the quality, environmental and risk management processes, to accounting for shareholders, to the rituals of recognitions and organizational changes.

The increased range of organizational communication in Brazil, in its corporate aspect, is pondered by Nassar & Figueiredo (1995, p. 19):

Corporate communication is the sum of all of the communication activities at the company. Elaborated in a multi-disciplinary manner – using methods and techniques from public relations, journalism, lobbying, advertising, promotions, research and market - and directed at society, opinion makers, consumers, and collaborators (workers, suppliers and partners). This elaboration almost always uses the business' strategic planning as a reference.

The multi-disciplinary characteristics of organizational communication brought up by Bernardes & Nassar (1997, p. 31) when describing the role of the communicator point to an even wider range for their thought and activity:

The role of the communicator within the paradigm of Strategic Corporate Communication has been "de-institutionalized" and is no longer centered in the hands of the traditional communication techniques, whether journalistic, publicity or public relations. Discussions on the improved strategies of corporate communications have risen to the company boardroom.

The multi-disciplinary aspects contained in the reflections of Nassar & Figueiredo did not use the expression "organizational communication." The expression "organizational communication" would be used for the first time in the context of corporate publication with the creation, within the *Aberje*, of the Brazilian Association of Organizational Communication, as announced in the *Ação Aberje* bulleting on November 12, 1998.

The new producers of contents and organizational communication

The archive of documentation that makes up the Center of Memory and Reference of Aberje highlights the late 1990s as a turning point for the field of Organizational Communication in Brazil. This historic moment – with the strengthening of social protagonists, such as non-governmental organizations, regulatory agencies, the consumers with their strengthened rights, and the materialization of digital technologies in communications and information in everyday social life - present an organization that has diminished its power to administer its non-material dimension. This loss of control over an important part of its symbolic dimension is not something that happened only to companies: other organizations have, today, also seen their controlling rolls diminish, including the School, the Church and political institutions. It can be said that companies and institutions - in the digital environment in which "the operators [are] de-territorialized, less connected to a definite basis in time and space," as described by Levy (2003, p.21) – lose the ability to impede or regulate who participates in the process of organizational communication. In this context, the business loses its role as a mediator. And everyone is transformed into mediators, making it so that the institutional role of public relations and organizational communication is re-thought. In the digital order, everyone is in public relations, all are communicators. In this new historic situation, it is necessary to share political decisions and planning, such as everyday actions, with everyone who belongs to the network of organizational relationships. The sharing of these decisions and other organizational aspects is the job of organizational communication. By sharing its ideology, its decisions, and its manner of acting, the organization seeks to legitimize its existence before the society and the its networks of relationships. The sharing of its practices leads the organization to learn and to a collective legitimacy, as shown by D. Williams and Tapscott (2007, p.32) and by Alvin and Heidi Toffler (2007, p.142-143).

Remarkably, for technological, political, social, psychological, and economic reasons, the company and the institutions are not territories that are separate from society. The organizational culture and identity, as well as its products, goods, services and markets, and its members, as expressive elements, are structured and gain countless meanings in the environment of the relationship networks. The practices of organizational auto-denomination, produced in the communications area with persuasive or influential objectives, are no longer sustainable. Organizational communication has lost its authoritarian centrality. The company structures itself, configures (or deconfigures) itself, acquires and consolidates (or tears down) its identity when it establishes relationships with its alterities, which are also content producers. This situation falls under what Castells (2003, p. 53) calls "appropriation [by the corporation] of the ability to interconnect through social networks of all kinds." In this context, communication is seen only as a tool, as a technique, and has little use. Organizational communication, as thought and action, does not go beyond an attempt to legitimize or negotiate a certain interpretation among other social interpretations. Organizational communication is meta-organizational. It happens, it is designed in an entangled environment of relationships, wherein the business or institution is no longer the center, but rather the co-participant. The organization no longer has the power to say that it wants to be perceived in one way or another, as dictated by a communications or management area. The organization will be that which the network of relationships perceives, it will be that which is produced via a process of negotiations, supported by a ritual of dialogue.

A large part of the debate concerning Organizational Communication and the role of the corporate communicator in Brazil, from the 1980s to the present day, is registered on the pages of the Business Communication Magazine, on the pioneering internet site, maintained by the organization since 1997, and in the hundreds of events and courses promoted with the presence of renowned international specialists and researchers, such as James Grunig, United States, as well as: Abraham Nosnik, Mexico; Cees van Riel, Netherlands; Derrick de Keerkhove, Canada; Don Stacks, United States; Javier Puig, Spain; Joan Costa, Spain; Paul Thompson, England; Maria Russel, United States; T.J. Larkin, United States; Terry Flynn, Canada, Gianni Vattimo, Italy; Vítor Baltasar, Portugal and others.

Since the early 1990s, the Aberje has been editing books with work from professors such as Margarida Kunsch and Gaudêncio Torquato, among others, and by renowned professionals. Starting in 2001, the Aberje created its research institute, the Databerje, which has been producing research in Brazil with the goal of mapping important aspects of Public Relations and Organizational Communication. The entire archive of documents described is available for public consultation at the Aberje's Center of Memory and Reference.

Corporate Communication in Organizations

Corporate communication is a sector that is becoming increasingly strategic, even though most corporate communication departments are still rather lean; there is a predominance of women in the area of communication; and the practice of measuring the results in this segment is growing, including for the purposes of obtaining budget increases. These are some of the findings of a study entitled "Corporate Communication in Organizations," organized by DatABERJE, the Research Institute of the Brazilian Association of Business Communication (ABERJE) in partnership with the newspaper *Valor Econômico*.

The data were collected from August 19th to 28th, 2008, using the responses from 282 professionals responsible for the departments of communication at corporations mentioned in the 2007 edition of the "Valor Top 1000" list, and was published in the October 8th issue of the newspaper supplement *Valor Sectorial*. There was a wide range of sectors represented in the study, such as sugar and alcohol; metal and steel; agriculture; mining; water and sewerage; pulp and paper; food products; petroleum and natural gas; foreign trade; retail; construction and engineering; information technology; pharmaceuticals and cosmetics; transportation and logistics; and vehicles and auto parts. We believe that the communicator "has become a mediator, a manager of teams, a caretaker of the grand modern ritual that is *relationships*." Today, a company is just one node of a large network and must build its image through dialogue, which has transformed the communicator into an articulator and educator. "In this context, communicators must embrace the flag of culture: they need to be intellectuals, capable of dealing with the process that takes one from identity to otherness—something other, something different."

According to the study women are predominant in Corporate Communication, representing 59.2% of the respondents. Regarding age, nearly 70% of the respondents are between 25 and 44 years of age. Among managers, men and women are divided fairly equally. About 65% of the respondents hold a position of manager, coordinator or supervisor at the company where they work. Although the index is relatively low, it is also worth mentioning the participation of company directors and superintendents. Around 1/3 of these professionals have

degrees in Journalism, followed by Business Administration and Public Relations, among several other areas of educational background.

There was a high percentage of respondents who perceive that the area of Communication is seen as strategic at their respective companies, primarily in the services sector, where 67.4% have such an opinion. It is noteworthy that the higher the number of employees, the greater this perception is: at 70.2% of the companies with over 5,000 employees, Communication is seen as a strategic area. The data also reveal growth in the area of Corporate Communications, investments are increasing and, consequently, this area has been gaining prestige and power within the corporation. Furthermore, now there is a concern to measure the performance of Corporate Communications. However, at half of these enterprises, this area still has no representation on the Executive Board, and there are several different names used: Corporate Communications, Organizational Communications, Institutional Communications. Only 5.4% of the companies do not have a department of communication. At others, isolated responses appear, such as Communication and Events; Communication and Sustainability; Marketing and Social Communication.

At most of these companies, the area of Corporate Communications is headed by a director or manager, especially at foreign companies, 73.1% of which use this type of configuration. Almost 80% of the companies have fewer than 10 staff members in this area, and nearly all of the companies with less than 1,000 employees have no more than 10 staffers in the corporate communications department. One point that drew the analysts' attention was the fact that, despite the lean size, these departments are the ones responsible for relevant topics in the everyday business routines and relationships with employees, the community, the government, the press, and organized society. Responses were fairly balanced regarding trends of the area of Communication regarding the company's relationship with its stakeholders: 53.2% say that the trend is to work with all publics in an integrated manner, and 43.3% believe in working with certain publics in a targeted manner. Perhaps this is the reason that for 74.5% of the respondents, Corporate Communication greatly impacts the company's reputation. Brazil has been a good location for experiments in corporate communication, particularly regarding the company's relationship with its workforce. The creativity of the local professionals, together with the receptive profile of the Brazilian people, provides a favorable situation for the implementation of collaborative models of communication, and increases receptivity regarding initiatives in this area.

At 41.6% of the companies, investments made by the company in Marketing are higher than investments in Corporate Communication; the opposite is true at only 19.3% of the companies analyzed. Approximately 30% of enterprises evaluate the performance of their Corporate Communications by monitoring the media and opinions of the workforce, providing means for employees to express themselves (whether through opinion polls or through other channels) as well as the opinions of the external public, including customers, suppliers, and users. It is also mention-worthy that 17.0% of these companies do not measure performance in the area of communication.

Aberje, 40 years

When reflecting on the complexity of Organizational Communication regarding its time, and in the auspices of the celebration of Aberje's 40 year anniversary, Nassar, Janine Ribeiro,

and Gutilla (2007, p. 5 - 8) summed up the evolution, in Brazil, of this field of Applied Social Sciences thus:

Forty years ago, in some Aberje courses, the weight of the paper was discussed. Today, what is in play is the weight of our role of the world. The education of a good professional that knows here methods and techniques was a great success for us. There have never been such high-quality professionals, nor so many technical advances. But the present time has brought us ethical questions that we can not ignore and that challenge us as human beings. In the drama of our time, what role are we, communicators, going to take on, since we are at the same time trained professionals and simple human beings, faced with the great social, economic and environmental challenges that are poverty and global warming?

The path tread by the Aberje in these last 40 years shows that organizational communicators must increasingly face not only technical issues but also the ethical and esthetic dimension of their thinking and activity.

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Crafting the Image of Nations in Foreign Audiences: How Developing Countries Use Public Diplomacy and Public Relations?

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Abstract

This paper seeks to explain the main differences in public diplomacy approaches between developed countries in the West and Third World nations. It focuses on the concept of publics through an overview of major institutional settings in the West and the use of practical cases in the Third World. In fact, the differences in strategic priorities have engendered a difference in target publics between the West and the Third World in their needs to reach out to hearts and minds of their respective foreign audiences. The paper concludes that Western countries, through well organized government structures, tend to reach out to foreign publics using public diplomacy as a wartime exigency, a vehicle for the promotion of democracy, a means to expand modes of engagement and as a mouthpiece versus policy instrument; whereas developing countries, in the pursuit of their economic survival, are more inclined to use international public relations to directly reach out to foreign government authorities, not the foreign countries citizens.

Introduction

The need for nations to convey a certain image to the rest of the world has always been a central element in governments' agendas. Many different reasons can lead a country to cultivate its image to a foreign public. Image cultivation mainly follows a crisis that requires repairing a country's image among the public of another country.

In the context of globalization, nations have entered a new world in which communication, knowledge and culture are key to the achievement of cohesion between the different peoples of the globe. The main concern among actors of international relations lies in the fact that "the powerful engine of the global economy will roll over cultural diversity, fragile social and political systems, and state sovereignty itself" (Potter, 2002, p. 2). Potter makes allusion to the growing concern among Western countries facing a pressing need to win the hearts and minds of other publics in different parts of the globe.

Developed countries, mainly in the West, have a different approach of public diplomacy in contrast to developing countries in the Third World. In the West, public diplomacy has entered a full scale of development in contrast to what is known as diplomacy, traditional diplomacy, and public diplomacy (Cull, 2007). For Allan Gotlieb, former Canadian ambassador to the US, "the new public diplomacy as, I called it, is, to a large extent, public diplomacy and requires different skills, techniques and attitudes than those found in traditional diplomacy" (Gotlieb, 1991, p. Vii). In this case, public diplomacy from developed country's perspective is directly geared to the public of another country using government medium or affiliates to service policy goals. Cole (2005), for instance, defined British public diplomacy as "work aiming to inform and engage

individuals and organizations overseas in order to improve understanding of and strengthen influence for the United Kingdom in a manner consistent with governmental medium and long term goals” (p. 8). The British government objective over the years has generally been based on the use of foreign governments to reach foreign publics. Yet, nowadays a more succinct definition links public policy to direct access to foreign publics. In fact, public diplomacy has now become “the process of achieving the UK's International Strategic Priorities through engagement with the public overseas.” Under this definition, strategic priorities are set forth in the process of reaching directly other publics.

In contrast, Third World countries are facing the need to craft a positive image to the West for many reasons, among which concerns for sustainable economic development are the most prominent (Kunczik, 2000). The acquirement of aid and funds for development projects from rich nations are based on criteria that Third World countries have to abide by to be eligible. This entails an approach to public diplomacy that is solely geared to rich countries’ governments, not directly to their publics. For Kunczik (2000), the flow of international capital within Third World countries depend on the images of nations to governments of Western countries. In fact, developing countries mainly rely on public relations professionals in the West to prevail in developing countries’ decisions.

The purpose of this paper is to probe the differences in public diplomacy approaches between developed countries and Third World nations with emphasis on the concept of publics. In fact, the difference in strategic priorities have engendered a difference in target public between the West and the Third world in their needs to reach out to hearts and minds of their respective audiences. Western countries, through public policy, tend to reach other publics whereas Third World countries are more inclined to use international public relations to directly reach out to foreign governments.

The study will explore public policy as applied by developed countries to set their agenda in foreign nations and how Third World countries, due to development constraints, rely more on international public relations to reach out to rich nations in the West. Yet, I will primarily survey the theoretical framework that set the basis for public diplomacy.

Public Diplomacy: An Overview

Defined as a “government’s process of communicating with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation’s ideas and ideals, its institutions and cultures, as well as its national goals and current policies” (Tuch, 1990, p. 3), public policy follows a process through different channels including media programs, cultural activities and exchanges between nations. Leonard (2002) defined public policy as the task of communicating with foreign publics. For Wang and Chang (2004) public policy can be assimilated to a form of international public relations. The argument is based on the fact that both public relations and public policy objectives are to reach out to a given public and at the same time share the same strategies and tactics. Dutta-Bergman (2006), in his attempt to relate public policy to public relations, states that:

Public diplomacy involves the communication of a government to the people of another nation with the goal of influencing their image of the sender nation. To the extent that public diplomacy attempts to influence the perceptions and opinions of the members of

the target state with respect to the image of the source (nation), it embodies a form of public relations. (p. 104)

Public diplomacy then becomes a form of public relations' practice extended to a foreign public by another nation in its attempt to manipulate perception of its image through different strategies. It pertains to "issues of nations" image and reputations abroad and its management through public diplomatic actions" (Wang, 2006, p. 34). Kunczik (2003) considered public diplomacy public relations practiced by nations toward the public of other nations' with little difference with traditional public relations. For Wang (2006), the origins of public relations can be sought in the realm of public diplomacy in its early years. After reviewing the works of Kunczik (2003), Wang concludes that

an examination of the history of public relations demonstrates that the historical roots of the field of public relations are located in public diplomacy efforts such as the German and British public diplomacy initiatives, the public diplomacy conducted by the Committee on Public Information headed by George Creel, the work of Carl Byoir and Associates with foreign governments, and the role of Ivy Lee as a counselor to multiple foreign governments including the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. (p. 104)

In fact, public diplomacy and public relations share the same objectives and the same strategies geared to different publics. Their very existence is inherent to the need for governments and organizations to reach out to win the hearts and minds of their publics using strategic communication efforts. In the case of public diplomacy, there are two schools according to Deibel and Roberts (1976): The tough-minded school and the tender-minded school. The tough-minded school exerts influence on attitudes of a foreign audience through persuasion and propaganda by using fast media such as radio and TV. As for the tender-minded school, it uses the cultural functions of public diplomacy through slow media by incorporating academic and cultural exchanges. Within both schools, the images of nations through cultivation, play a prominent role in the strategies set forth for governments to achieve their agenda goals toward foreign publics. In fact, image cultivation stands as the backbone of public diplomacy.

For Kunczik (1996), image cultivation could be traced back to the beginning of the history of humanity. He pointed out that even the Bible contains examples of image manipulations. He also contended that attempts to influence the image of nations could be found in early history even though there are difficulties "to distinguish between attempts to influence one's own population and attempts to manipulate the image abroad" (p. 123). Yet, public policy relations through image cultivation peaked in Europe after the scientific breakthroughs in printing (Kunczik, 1996). In fact, Gutenberg's invention of printing consecrated the emergence of a new kind of international public relations, according to Kunczik. For instance, Emperor Maximilian I of Germany was the first to use newspapers as an efficient instrument for war. By using biased reports of war he managed to control the mood of his surrogates.

In a more recent era in the relationship between modern nations, public relations play a more compelling role in influencing the complex images of nations. For Fabian (1970),

they present one's own nation to the other as being as likable as possible. They exchange ambassadors and arrange state visits, they put on art shows and transport warm blankets to the locality of a disaster, they print brochures and invite students to a language course, they do all they can and they hope that at the next soccer international there is no brawling between the players of the two teams. (p. 29)

Von Studnitz, cited by Kunczik (1996), compares contemporary public relations between nations to the past in these words: "In the old days, one could win over an empire by marrying; today you can win over peoples by leading an article" (p. 299).

For a more contemporary understanding of public diplomacy practice, Signitzer and Coombs (1992) delineated three different reasons that entail the need for governments to reach out to foreign publics. First, the world we live in today has become more diverse, complex and intertwined. In fact, the flow of information is immediately shared around the globe with the ever-increasing development of information technology. Second, with new trends of cooperation in the world, globalization is playing a greater role in the peoples' relationships. The third reason relates to the urgent need for nation-states as well as multinational corporations to communicate across international boundaries to attain certain objectives. Yet, Szondi (2008) suggested that for Western countries, "public diplomacy is rooted in conflicts and related to different levels of tensions between states and other actors; a peaceful political environment is not a necessary condition for engaging in public diplomacy" (p. 3). Thus, he identified three different stages in the evolution of US public diplomacy:

The first period stretches over four decades when American and Western values and norms were intensively spread throughout Eastern Europe and a whole range of methods were used to persuade people leaving behind the iron curtain. The collapse of the Berlin Wall marks the second phase of public diplomacy when significantly less efforts and resources were devoted to public diplomacy resulting in the decline of US public diplomacy worldwide. The tragic destruction and collapse of the World Trade Center on 11 September, 2001, marks the beginning of the third phase. (p. 2-3)

Yet Szondi (2008) argued that the conditions, goals, strategies, the directions of communication and message context have to change in a global context. According to Szondi, the 21st century public diplomacy should neither evolve through conflicts or tensions between states, nor should it be based on persuasion to manage publics, but it should even prosper in time of peace and geared to building and maintaining relationships by engaging with publics through two-way communication (dialogue) instead of one-way communication (monologue).

Public diplomacy is generally linked to communication in the sense that it uses global communication channels to reach out to foreign audiences (Fortner, 1993). According to Fortner, "public diplomacy aims to affect the policies of other nations by appeals to its citizens through means of public communication" (p. 278). Frederick went further and affirmed that the main objective of public diplomacy "is to influence a foreign government by influencing its citizens" through overseas radio broadcasts and cultural programs. Hachten and Scotton (2002) suggested that public diplomacy is about "a government's overt efforts to influence other governments and their publics" (p. 102). For this reason, Hachten and Scotton (2002) used the term International

Political Communication (IPC) to further define public diplomacy. The term helped “identify public diplomacy, overseas information programs, cultural exchanges, propaganda activities and political warfare” (Hachten & Scotton, p. 104). Furthermore they contended that the international media of all nation-states play a prominent role in IPC, and in more general terms, in public diplomacy.

Yet, all nation-states do not have the same financial possibilities to conduct public diplomacy. In fact, nation-states in the periphery, mainly developing countries in the Third World, “are mostly in the receiving end of public diplomacy because most lack the communication capability to compete effectively on a global basis” (Hachten & Scotton, 2002, p. 104). For this reason, many Third World countries engage in international public relations leveled to foreign governments’ authorities.

In these countries, public diplomacy is linked to public relations at the government level, where the image of nations “is outsourced to branding or marketing agencies and consultants who advise governments about country branding, develop the core ideas and elements of the brand, design visuals, as well as produce a national ‘brand book’” (Szondi, 2008, p.12).

In the next section I will demonstrate that, through well organized government structures, Western nations tend to reach out to foreign publics using public diplomacy as a wartime exigency, a vehicle for the promotion of democracy, a means to expand modes of engagement and as a mouthpiece versus policy instrument; whereas developing countries, in the pursuit of their economic survival, are more inclined to use international public relations to directly reach out to foreign government authorities, not the foreign countries citizens.

First of all I will set the different elements of public diplomacy in the West by using examples of the U.S and Great Britain and later use practical examples of government diplomacy in the case of developing countries and their implications.

The purpose of Western Nations’ Public Diplomacy

The relationship between the West and the rest of the world has mainly been guided by the need for Western nations to build and maintain secure spaces of support for the flow of capital and establishment of peace, according to the realist point of view (Kiesling, 2007). The process requires strategic priorities that would set the basis for engagement in efficient public diplomacy. In fact, “the priorities for the management of the international environment – is a precondition for effective public diplomacy” (Cull, 2007, p. 11). According to Cull, engagement with a foreign public has the same objective as the management of the international environment (engagement between an actor and its own public is known as public affairs). Cull further sustained that “effective engagement requires listening and feeding back, hence the apparatus of public diplomacy and especially its listening elements should have a key role to play in defining and shaping the policies they will be called upon to deliver” (p. 12).

Western countries such as the United States and Great Britain have always faced challenges in managing their image and reputation within foreign publics. In their strategies to portray a flawless image to the rest of the world, these Western countries have developed strategies aimed at reaching out directly to foreign publics through government-operated structures.

In the United States, the practice of public diplomacy has a rich history since the early years of its development. Yet “as a formal, organized function of the government, such overseas information operation began in earnest during the First World War with the creation of the

Committee on Public Information (CPI)” (Wang, 2007, p. 22). Other government vehicles for public diplomacy such as the Office of War Information (OWI) and the United States Information Agency followed respectively with the Second World War and the Cold War (Wang, 2007). Based on his historical review of the manifest mandate of U.S international communication agencies, Wang (2006) made four interesting observations on the purpose of U.S public diplomacy. First, public diplomacy is an exigency of wartime. He contended that “U.S public diplomacy has served primarily as an instrument of foreign policy to meet wartime exigencies” (p.26). In fact, the government established agencies as strategy to facilitate communications in World War I and II after recognizing the ultimate importance of international public opinion in the conduct of the conflict (Wang, 2006).

In times of conflict, the government of the U.S has always relied on agencies with strict wartime goals. For Wang, “the paramount mission of the agencies, whether through dissemination of information or building global understanding of America, was to help win the war” (p.26). After the end of any of the war government agencies tend to be obsolete without indicating that the United States international communication strategies stopped.

Second, public diplomacy plays an important role in the spread of democracy around the globe (Wang, 2007). The goal of US agencies is to promote American- style democracy all over the world. According to Dizard (2004), the Roosevelt administration primarily advocated the eradication of the Axis forces by promoting self-determination even though the mission of OWI was later geared to winning the war.

The third observation pertains to the expansion of modes of engagement. For Grunig (1993), public diplomacy “consists essentially of the application of public relations to strategic relationships of organizations with international publics” (p. 143). Wang (2007) further stated that “in strategic communication, the work of public diplomacy is not only to promote the policies and values of a particular nation but also to engineer consensus and facilitate understanding among overseas publics” (p. 27). To achieve this goal, it is crucial for any country “to understand the needs of foreign publics and to adjust one’s communication strategy and tactics accordingly” (p. 27).

The fourth observation is an attempt to probe the role of public diplomacy over whether it constitutes a mouthpiece or an actual policy instrument. According to Wang,

at issue is whether public diplomacy should be involved in policy making as well as policy communication. In this regard, it parallels the larger debate on the role and function of public relations in an organizational process, i.e., serving as a communication technician or a strategic management function (p. 27).

These four observations allow to understand how public diplomacy from the West follows a set of objectives with defined guidelines to reach out to the publics of foreign publics. In fact, public diplomacy from the West is contingent to the political environment of the period with the creation of agencies to achieve policy goals. Even in the post 9/11 era, the US found it important to reiterate its public policy mission to engage with foreign publics to curb anti-American sentiment; mainly in the Arab world.

After 9/11, the United States dialogue with the rest of the world is based on three strategic principles according to Karen Hughes, U.S Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and

Public Affairs. For Hughes (2005), U.S public diplomacy is geared to (1) “offer a positive vision of hope and opportunity to people throughout the world, a vision rooted in our enduring commitment to freedom”, (2) “to isolate and marginalize violent extremists, and undermine their efforts to exploit religion to rationalize their acts of terror and (3) “to foster a sense of common interests and common values between Americans and people of different countries, cultures and faiths across our world”. This renewed appeal to dialogue also resonates with the British governments’ aim to embrace the publics of foreign nations.

Cole (2005), in his review of British diplomatic strategies, defined public diplomacy as “work aiming to inform and engage individuals and organizations overseas in order to improve understanding of and strengthen influence for the United Kingdom in a manner consistent with governmental medium and long term goals” (p. 8). This definition of public diplomacy tends to characterize public diplomacy as a means to achieve policy goals. And a more objective definition from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office considered public diplomacy “the process of achieving the UK's International Strategic Priorities through engagement with the public overseas” (p. 12).

In the Western conception of public diplomacy, priorities are primarily set and defined to achieve objectives. Each government agency has a determined set of objectives to attain. There should be no expectations that each element within the British public diplomacy apparatus should take an equal role in realizing every priority (Cull, 2007). For Cull, “the British Council, for example, is more suited to serving an objective of engagement with the Islamic world as part of a counter terrorist policy than assisting in combating illegal migration” (p.9).

In fact, the debate in the British foreign sphere is concerned with determining the priorities that must govern its action toward foreign publics. For Cull, the Treasury, for instance, should question the reason why revenues should be spent on activities which cannot be linked to foreign policy objectives.

A new diplomatic environment took place after the invasion of Iraq, according to the British Foreign Center. This explains the dynamism of Western public diplomacy in the wake of a global crisis in comparison to Third World countries. In an article, a group of British scholars are calling for new orientation in policies for public diplomacy. Leonard, Small and Rose (2005) suggested that “the last year has shown that achieving political change now means developing new coalitions by using a wide range of policy and communications tools.” (p.7). In fact, governments are increasingly constrained by public opinion, which makes the legitimacy of policies increasingly important (Leonard, Small and Rose).

In the advent of this new public diplomacy environment, they identify key elements that entail a new approach to the exigency of the time. According to Leonard, Small and Rose (2005) “the revolution in information and communication technology means that information travels more quickly; is more diffuse and is increasingly responsive to individual markets” (Leonard, Small & Rose, p. 7). The development in communication technology has created “the new phenomenon of transnational public opinions operating and competing in a global space” (p. 8).

Globalization is playing a key role on revising traditional diplomacy. In fact, “globalization means that governments are increasingly reliant on attracting international trade, investment, tourism and talent to drive their economies” (p. 8). The gist of the argument is that there is no clear line between domestic politics and foreign politics. In fact, the political debates

in Western countries can directly or indirectly affect the welfare of publics in developing countries.

Leonard, Small and Rose also contended that, “ the spread of democracy and – perhaps to an even greater extent – the flexing of extra-democratic populist pressure mean that governments are increasingly constrained by public opinion, which makes the legitimacy of policies increasingly important” (p. 8). Because of the spread of democracy, Western countries tend to take foreign publics’ opinion into consideration in the implementation of policies. In addition, public policy helps solve the need for strong multilateralism; meaning that political action increasingly depends on mobilizing international coalitions and placing great importance on winning over public opinion in partner countries (Leonard, Small, & Rose, 2005).

A main difference in public diplomacy practice between Western countries and the Third world is the use of Non-Governmental Organizations to conduct diplomacy efforts according to the complexities of the missions geared to foreign publics. In fact, countries in the West use NGOs throughout the world, especially in the “developing countries”. NGOs play an important role in representing Western nations abroad by positively contributing to the image of their respective country of origin (Wang, 2005). NGO’s also constitute channels and networks for Western countries to efficiently reach out to foreign publics in developing countries (Leonard, 2002).

Matthews (1997) attributed the rise of NGOs as central entities of civil society to the power shift that characterized international relations. According to Jarvik (2007), NGOs have become prominent actors in international politics by acquiring enormous influence in developing countries.

The purpose of Western countries’ public diplomacy is led by a strong objective for these nations to reach out to foreign publics to secure their interests. Not only are they more and more inclined to exchange with foreign publics using well structured government agencies and NGO’s, but they are more prone to use dialogue following the recent developments in globalization and world politics. For less developed nations in the Third World, public diplomacy tends to be confined to the level of governments, not the public. In fact, Third World countries tend to focus on working directly with foreign governments as their publics. There are many reasons that underlie that approach, among which one can identify the need for economic survival in a world where their credibility in the eyes of foreign developed nations plays a prominent role in the flow of capital.

Third World Public Diplomacy: Image-making Toward Developed Countries’ Governments

Third World countries’ image-making efforts do not depend on their own government structured agencies for the purpose. Albritton and Manheim (1984), suggested that “one of the most interesting trends in political image-making in recent years has been the growing use of professional public relations consultants by national governments” (p. 641). In fact, the overwhelming majority of countries using public relations instead of a defined public diplomacy are Third World countries trying to polish their image to reach out directly to the United States government for economic privilege (Albritton & Manheim, 1984). Albritton and Manheim later contended that “This trend has been especially pronounced in the United States, where such assistance is readily available and where, the assumption seems to be, an improved national image can be translated into more concrete gains” (p. 641).

According to Kunczik (2003), “images of nations have a strong influence on the flow of international capital” (P. 3). For less developed countries the existence of certain criteria for eligibility to receive aid in form of loans from international monetary institutions has compelled them to craft an image that can be trusted to reach out to developed countries. The lack of human and financial resources could limit public diplomacy for developing countries (Szondi, 2008).

Third World nations use public relations’ agencies to establish trust between them and more well-off governments in the West. Many countries make considerable efforts to cultivate their images abroad, especially in the United States and Europe (Kunczik, 2003). Developing countries image-making will mainly depend on international public relations as it adequately help them convey an good image to the governments of Western countries. For Kunczik (2003), the main objective of international public relations is to create or maintain an already existing positive image of one's own nation to appear trustworthy in the eyes of decisive actors in the world system.

Kunczik considered trust the main factor that could help less developed countries achieve their economic goals to enjoy the flow of capital from rich countries. He states that “trust is an important factor in mobilizing resources, e.g., in receiving political and/or material support from other nation” (p.6). In other words, if other actors in the world system place their trust in a developing nation because of her reliability, trust becomes the equivalent of money (p.6). To put it simply: “trust is money and money is trust, the positive image of a country's currency reflects confidence in that country's future” (p.6).

In their need to establish trust, developing countries engage in international public relations through foreign firms. Public relations firms advise their international clients' embassy personnel on how to talk about important issues facing them (Albritton & Manheim, 1984). Albritton and Manheim summed up the role of international public relations agencies in these words: “they also schedule and conduct field trips for the press, organize visits with editors and lunches with business groups, conduct financial seminars dealing with opportunities offered by the countries, use their own contacts to help representatives of the client states” (p.77). These international public relations agencies help Third World countries develop personal relationships with officials of the United States government, and provide a variety of advice about specific policies or approaches to policy that a client government might adopt to improve its image. Perhaps one of the most important services such firms offer is to provide easier access to officials of the government in question (p. 77).

Reaching out to authorities in foreign countries is an ultimate goal for less developed countries. The task appears less burdensome with the use of international public relations agencies. In fact those countries lack the necessary resources to conduct a traditional public diplomacy that would allow them to influence Western governments through their publics. Moreover, the need for economic survival guides their international public relations objectives. According to Albritton and Manheim (1984), these objectives include:

visits of the head of state to the United States or the issuance of an invitation for the American president or vice-president to visit a given country, ending of political arrests followed by one or more releases or reductions in the sentences of either leading dissidents or masses of political prisoners, government-organized field trips for

journalists to locations which call attention to the government's own agenda or point of view (p. 78).

The tendency to resolve bilateral issues at government have led some countries to hire international public relations firms to attain their objectives. The case of Surinam is a vivid example of international public relations.

The State of Surinam was plagued by a bloody dictatorship over the years. In that period, the United States did not desire to maintain good relationships with the Government of Lieut. Col. Desi Bouterse. Bouterse, following a military coup had taken over the country eight years earlier after ordering the killing of his chief political opponents, and then flirted with Libya and Cuba, which are enemies of the United States in that period (Binder, 1988).

The Reagan Administration's position was that Bouterse should not stay in power, according to Binder. The Surinamese government then hired The van Kloberg firm. The firm is one of numerous consulting firms in Washington that help improve the image and facilitate the access of foreign governments and companies (Binder, 1988). The firm's task was primarily to organize a five-day visit to Washington by a Surinamese delegation led by the Prime Minister of the country. It was a rocky beginning. According to Binder, the visitors wanted a high-level government interaction and later learned that the most senior Government official who would receive them was Elliott Abrams, the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs. The strategy later paid off after the prime minister's address to the United Nations through a speech written and prepaid by the Kloberg firm. The relationship between the two countries became normal for the benefit of Surinam as development assistance followed quickly.

Yet, public diplomacy priorities can shift because of economic prosperity. For instance, China, mainly considered a developing country for a while, has witnessed a new direction in its public diplomacy after its rise as a major power in international politics (Wang, 2008). China's diplomacy was first meant to shape its image to rest of the world in an attempt to establish bilateral and multilateral cooperation at the government level (2006). This traditional conception of public diplomacy was inherent to the fact that "Since the main discourse of international relations is Westernized, so the argument runs, if the Chinese government expresses itself in the usual international language, it will lose its Chinese-ness and will be criticized by the Chinese people for being too Westernized" (Wang, 2008, p. 259). Traditional Chinese diplomacy mainly focuses on high level government interactions and neglects grass root politics. Public diplomacy was not directly geared to foreign publics such as the United States as "Chinese officials and citizens alike, for example, assume that if Sino-U.S. relations go well at the highest level, then all Americans will be sympathetic to China" (Wang, 2008, p. 260). According to Wang (Wang), this is the reason why Chinese government officials are puzzled when the White House sends good intention gestures to China while the U.S. Congress expresses some hostility.

Yet, the peaceful rise/peaceful development to a major political and economic power policy in Chinese strategy has sought to integrate a new realm of public diplomacy (Wang, 2008). Rawnsley (2007) noted that Chinese current leadership has deeply understood the value of public diplomacy and soft power in a way that their predecessors never could. He attributed this renaissance to China's embrace of economic approaches to globalization, its opening to world commerce, and its greater involvement in international regimes. In fact, China is no longer an

isolated power and is now determined to play an increasing role in this more interdependent global environment (Rawnsley, 2007).

The rise of China as an economic power has prompted the country to think in terms of its soft power (Wang, 2008). In fact, the Chinese government has paid more and more attention to the development of its public diplomacy (Wang, 2008). Wang later argued that “with the academic Seminar on China’s Public Diplomacy, inaugurated on March 19, 2004, a new Chinese public diplomacy strategy started being shaped” (Wang, 2008, p. 263). Wang identified two important roles China’s public diplomacy aims to fulfill. First, public diplomacy must stand as a channel for wise strategic thinking and defensive reasons, and second as a task to facilitate China’s rise to soft power (Wang, 2008). A renewed public diplomacy will help China as it seeks the road for peaceful economic development. Thus, “Chinese diplomacy has to go beyond the traditional model of diplomacy, which focuses on government-to-government engagement” (Wang, p.263). The Chinese government has to engage in foreign civil society to efficiently reach out to foreign public, according to Wang.

Less developed countries are more concerned about credibility and trust with foreign governments than reaching their public. In fact, the concept of publics in international public relations is mainly confined to foreign governments as publics for Third World countries. Public diplomacy from the Third World is carried out with compelling limitations as developing countries are not economically powerful (Ur Rashid, 2008). The objectives of Third World diplomacy depend on situations and circumstances, according to Rashid. Yet, there exist some underlying objectives that mainly require a government level interaction. The main objectives are about the preservation of sovereignty and territorial integrity of a nation and economic development (Ur Rashid, 2008). These goals are carried out through standard or traditional diplomacy which he defines as a traditional art of negotiation, representation and analysis (Ur Rashid, 2008). According to Ur Rashid, traditional diplomacy relates to the ways diplomats interact with each other to solve bilateral issues.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to explain the differences in public diplomacy approaches between developed countries and Third World nations. In fact, the differences in strategic priorities have engendered a difference in target publics between the West and the Third world in their needs to reach out to hearts and minds of their respective audiences. Western countries, through public policy, tend to reach out directly to foreign publics; whereas Third World countries are more inclined favor higher levels of interaction with foreign administrations or use international public relations to directly reach out to foreign governments.

It appears that public diplomacy as carried out by Third World countries relates to traditional diplomacy and does not rely on their own governments’ structured agency. At times, these countries tend to rely on public relations firms in the foreign countries to craft a positive image. In fact, the ultimate goal for these countries is dictated by a strong need for economic resources (Albritton & Manheim, 1984). The flow of capital is generally on the hands of developed countries and winning the trust of their government authorities appear to be efficient in gaining support for sustainable development. Yet, according to some scholars it appears that attempts to primarily win foreign publics are an efficient way to reach out to their governments (Wang, 2006).

Yet, in the case of Third world countries, government agencies that would solely be in charge of shaping their positive image cannot generally prosper for reasons that led them to bypass foreign publics and turn directly to government authorities (Ur Rasid, 2008). Among those reasons, one can cite the lack of economic and human resources and their inability to carry out such ambitious public diplomacy projects. Further research, with practical examples, can explore typical examples of Third World emerging giants such as India and Pakistan in their way to handle public diplomacy.

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An Analysis of the Messages Used in Merck's Gardasil Vaccination Campaign

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to assess the extent to which the Gardasil vaccination campaign included messages about HPV that, according to Witte's (1992) extended parallel processing model (EPPM) would prompt mothers and young women to not only understand their risks of contracting HPV which can lead to genital warts and cervical cancer, but also feel able to respond to the threat by seeking effective protection against the virus. Theoretically, the study builds on existing literature on the EPPM by showing how the EPPM constructs can be found in an actual health campaign. The practical implications for persuasive communication include helping health communication and public relations practitioners, public relations practitioners working in health care and health care advertisers to write their messages more effectively. Content analysis was used to isolate the messages in the promotional material that conform to the variables of severity, susceptibility, response efficacy, and self-efficacy, identified by existing fear appeal research as being crucial to the construction of effective health promotion messages. Using statistical analyses, it was found that there was a general lack of balance in coverage of threat and efficacy components of the EPPM. The results also revealed that the top seven themes of the campaign fell within the limits of the information women want about HPV, and that taken together, younger targeted promotional material did not differ from older targeted promotional material.

In 2007, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that genital human papillomavirus (HPV) was the most common sexually transmitted infection in the United States and that an estimated 6.2 million people are newly infected every year. Although most of the infections cause no clinical symptoms and are self-limited, persistent infections can cause cervical cancer for women (CDC). Due to the widespread use of Papanicolaou testing (known as the pap smear) that detects precancerous lesions of the cervix, cervical cancer rates have decreased in the United States. Worldwide, cervical cancer is the second most common cancer in women, causing an estimated 470,000 new cases and 233,000 deaths each year (US Food and Drug Administration, 2006). Although the figure is far behind the leading causes of cancer among women in the US with lung (about 71,000) and breast (about 40,000) (Edwards, 2007), HPV and cervical cancer have increased among women.

In 2006, Gardasil was the first drug designed to prevent infection of the most common strains of HPV linked to cervical cancer and vulval cancer approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in young women ages 9 to 26 (Brandweek, 2007). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2007), Gardasil is "an inactivated (not live vaccine) which protects against 4 major types of HPV" (p.1). The CDC (2007) emphasized in its Vaccine Information Statement that the vaccine could prevent the HPV strains that cause genital warts and the majority of cervical cancer cases.

The purpose of this study was to assess the extent to which the Gardasil campaign included messages about HPV that would prompt mothers and young women to not only understand their risks of contracting HPV which can lead to genital warts and cervical cancer, but also feel able to respond to the threat by seeking effective protection against the virus. To create the Gardasil campaign, Merck worked with two strategic communication agencies: Doyle, Dane and Bernbach (DDB) and Edelman. The Extended Parallel Processing Model (EPPM) was used as the theoretical framework because the EPPM explains the conditions under which fear appeals may succeed or fail in persuading the audience (Witte, Meyer, & Martell, 2001; Witte, 1992).

Theoretically, the study builds on existing literature on the EPPM by showing how the EPPM constructs can be found in an actual health campaign. The practical implications for persuasive communication include helping health communication and public relations practitioners, public relations practitioners working in health care and health care advertisers to write their messages more effectively. Without proper construction, the messages and campaign will be useless to their target publics. Through balanced and appropriate coverage of both threat and efficacy messages to each target audience, health message designers of these important sources of the HPV vaccination, HPV and cervical cancer information may in fact be able to make a difference in the young women's and mothers' health intentions and decisions.

Wright, Sparks, and O'Hair (2008) noted that there is a great need to study how to make health campaigns more effective, "Although communication and public health researchers have learned more and more about how to effectively influence health behaviors in the past several decades, there is still much room for improvement" (Wright et al., p. 233). The authors noted that the literature on health campaigns suggested that the majority of campaigns conducted in recent years have had only limited success in changing targeted health behaviors. Also, attempting to change health-related behaviors such as sexual practices and compliance with recommended disease screening can be particularly challenging (Wright et al.).

Literature Review

The Extended Parallel Processing Model (EPPM) is the theoretical framework that was used to assess the extent to which Merck's Gardasil campaign included messages about HPV that 1) highlighted the risks, 2) the severity of the disease, 3) discussed efficacious prevention and detection options, and 4) adequately addressed barriers. The EPPM has been tested and validated empirically on numerous occasions in several health settings (see Hale & Dillard, 1995; Stephenson & Witte, 2001) including prevention of genital warts (Cheah, 2006; Kline & Mattson, 2000; Morman, 2000; Witte, Cameron, McKeon & Berkowitz, 1996; Witte, 1992, 1994) heart disease (Rimal, 2001), skin cancer prevention (Rimal & Real, 2003), and HIV/AIDS (Witte, Cameron, Lapinski & Nzyuko, 1998; Smith, Ferrara & Witte, 2007), as well as other important contexts like firearm prevention (Roberto, Meyer, Johnson & Atkin, 2000) and road safety (Lewis, Watson, White & Tay (2007).

Extended Parallel Processing Model

The framework of the EPPM is based on the integration of several past theories of fear appeals including Roger's (1975) protection motivation theory, which explains when and why fear appeals work, Janis's (1967) explanations of when and why fear appeals fail, and Leventhal's (1970) parallel process model, which forms the basis of the EPPM. Perceived

threat and perceived efficacy are the key constructs of EPPM. Perceived threat includes perceived susceptibility and severity, and perceived efficacy includes perceived self-efficacy and response efficacy. Perceived susceptibility refers to a person's belief of the likelihood of experiencing the threat, whereas perceived severity refers to a person's belief of the magnitude of the threat. Perceived self-efficacy refers to the confidence in one's ability to carry out the message recommendations; perceived response to efficacy refers to personal beliefs regarding the usefulness of the message recommendations in reducing the threat.

The EPPM explains the conditions under which fear appeals may succeed or fail in persuading the audience (Witte, Meyer, & Martell, 2001; Witte, 1992). Fear is a negatively valenced emotion aroused when a threat is perceived (Witte, 1994), threat is referred to as the danger in the environment, and perceived threat is a person's cognition of thought about the threat (Witte, 1992, 1994). Maibach and Parrott (1995) described fear appeals as persuasive messages that emphasize the harmful physical or social consequences of failing to comply with message recommendations. The key components of a fear appeal message include: fear, perceived threat, perceived efficacy, and outcome variables. The EPPM predicts three types of fear appeal effects: no effect, intended effects, and unintended effects. When the perceived threat is low, fear appeals produce no effects- because individuals do not see a health risk significant or relevant to them, therefore fear appeal messages tend to be ignored by the audience under these circumstances. The EPPM stipulates that the intended or unintended effects of fear appeals are created only when individuals perceive strong implications of threat. When perceived threat is high, the level of perceived efficacy determines whether an individual will respond to fear appeals with either intended or unintended effects.

The theory of EPPM, which is grounded heavily in the fear appeal literature, is especially appropriate for fear arousing health topics like HPV and, therefore, served as the theoretical foundation for this study. However according to Cheah (2005), "current understanding of how fear appeals work is still limited and does not provide enough evidence to conclude that fear appeals are effective tools that should be adopted by public health practitioners or campaign designers" (p. 4). Witte and Allen (2000) concluded that strong fear appeals coupled with high-efficacy messages produce the greatest behavior change and the opposite results if strong fear appeals are coupled with low-efficacy messages.

The Gardasil campaign has two distinct target audiences: mothers of girls 9 to 17 years and women 18 to 26 years. Therefore, the study also assessed and compared the presence of fear appeals in the promotional material. This was done because research has shown that different ages do not have the same response to fear appeals, so through this comparison it can be shown if Merck is catering for the needs of both populations. The impact of age on the persuasiveness of fear appeals also assists in explaining why so many fear appeal messages to promote better health are ineffective. Hale and Dillard (1995) noted that the age of the target audience may inhibit the effectiveness of fear appeals because the age of the target audience influences the audience's perceived vulnerability to the threat. Hale and Dillard gave an example of televised public service announcements targeted at adolescents to decrease driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs. These messages often contain fear appeals, but as research has shown, fear appeals are unlikely to influence the young people at whom they are aimed (Hale & Dillard).

Older children respond best when involved in their own decision making and they respect the rules they have a part in making and get more out of programs they have a part in producing, “Health message designers need to do more listening to children and less preaching to them” (Austin, 1995, p.114). Austin suggested that planners should not view children and adolescents only as target audiences but also as one of their most potent resources.

In a cancer-related context, Nabi, Roskos-Ewoldsen, and Dillman-Carpentier (as cited in Dillard & Nabi, 2006) found that young adults higher in self-perceived knowledge of testicular cancer or breast cancer were less likely to experience fear in response to cancer-related information. This effect of knowledge dampening emotional arousal may result from people either acquiring information concerning adaptive behavior, which likely diminishes the threat and its corresponding fear, or developing strategies for defensive message processing (Dillard & Nabi) and novel stimuli are more likely to evoke emotion than familiar ones, prior knowledge is poised to offer more resistance to emotional arousal. Irwin & Millstein (1986) found that younger people felt as though death and disease happen to elders or perhaps other young people, but not to themselves.

Overview of HPV Research

Although this is the first study to assess Merck’s HPV vaccination campaign, there have been other studies done on the issue of HPV. Previous research has focused on women’s HPV information needs and perceptions.

HPV research has shown that women’s questions on HPV were inconsistently answered (Hall, Howard, & McCaffery 2008); knowledge of cancer was varied and somewhat anecdotal, showing no unified body of knowledge, but instead representing an assemblage of information culled from formal and informal sources (Mosavel and El-Shaarawi (2007); and participants generally wanted factual, current information about the nature of HPV and its link to cancer; methods of transmission, prevention, and detection; and the treatment of its symptoms and consequences (Friedman and Sheppard 2007). Also, studies have shown that while few women were familiar with several aspects of the disease, most women had never heard of cervical cancer (Mosavel & El-Shaarawi), and owing to the consistently low level of HPV awareness across groups, the content of desired information was similar for all racial/ethnic and geographic groups (Friedman & Sheppard).

Research Questions

By looking at the messages and their persuasive appeal, researchers and practitioners can evaluate if the methods used in the campaign were successful in achieving the goals. If so, similar messages and methods can be used in future health and social marketing campaigns. This research was guided by the following questions:

RQ1: To what extent does the material covering the Gardasil campaign address the severity of the disease, susceptibility, and includes messages that are likely to enhance self-efficacy and response efficacy.

According to Witte and Allen (2000) strong fear appeals coupled with high-efficacy messages produce the greatest behavior change and the opposite results if strong fear appeals are coupled with low-efficacy messages. Hale and Dillard (1995) noted that fear appeals have

enormous persuasive potential and can promote better health. The effectiveness depends in large part on the structure of the messages.

RQ2: Are there differences between amount of severity, susceptibility, and efficacy messages in material targeted to the young women and material targeted toward the mothers?

Fear appeals do not work in every circumstance, so one should be mindful of the age of the target audience (Hale & Dillard, 1995). Young girls and young women have varying degrees of risk and varying risk factors. The impact of age on the persuasiveness of fear appeals also assists in explaining why so many fear appeal messages to promote better health are ineffective. Hale and Dillard noted that the age of the target audience may inhibit the effectiveness of fear appeals because the age of the target audience influences the audience's perceived vulnerability to the threat.

RQ3: What are the main themes of the Gardasil vaccination campaign?

Examining the main messages of the campaign will provide insight into the central themes used in the campaign and to evaluate if they are aligned with the needs of the sample audience. The goal for researchers and practitioners is that for messages to be effective among the target populations, they must be crafted in response to the needs and interests of the target groups. Past research has shown that the audience wanted to be empowered by being educated about the natural history, transmission, and prevention of HPV while emphasizing available options for preventing and treating its potential consequences. The research also showed that audiences wanted accurate portrayals of HPV risk without creating undue anxiety or complacency (Friedman & Shepeard, 2007).

Method

Study Sample

Data for this study included information packets, two for mothers and two for young women, ($N=4$) collected by requesting information from Merck via gardasil.com, information available at gardasil.com ($N=1$), and 60-second television spots ($N=4$). The two "I Chose" television spots can be viewed at the gardasil.com. The other television spots, titled "Gardasil Commercial" are no longer available at gardasil.com, but can be viewed on YouTube.

Recording Units

For this study, the basic unit of text is complete and mutually exclusive idea units or themes. Baxter (1991) specified a thematic or idea unit as "threads of meaning that recur" (p.250). Because the aim of this study is to assess the extent to which the Gardasil campaign included messages about HPV that 1) highlighted the risk, 2) the severity of the disease, 3) discussed efficacious prevention and detected options, and 4) adequately addressed barriers, recording units are words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, or groups of paragraphs that refer to or make some claim regarding the thematic categories.

Coding Guide and Categories

To develop the unit of analysis, the researcher followed the work of Mattson and Kline (2000), and Brown and Lewis (2003). An initial list of relevant words and phrases was developed by the researcher based on the definition of each construct found in health behavior and medical literature. For each construct of the EPPM, coding units were either a word, a group of words, or a sentence that corresponds to the component categories and exemplar words. The coding scheme was derived from components of Witte's extended parallel processing model, which posits that a balance of fear-inducing messages and efficacy messages is crucial in positively affecting health attitudes and behaviors.

In order to determine if severity, susceptibility, response and self-efficacious messages are present in each item, a list of themes/issues that represent each construct exclusively was developed. This method was adopted from Mattson and Kline (2000). The list was adopted from Brown and Lewis (2003) and modified to fit the current study's needs.

Severity. The seriousness of HPV and cervical cancer was determined to be present in messages that addressed HPV and cervical cancer mortality rates at various ages or ages not specified, treatment options (e.g., vaccination, radiation, and hysterectomy), physical suffering, and emotional suffering.

Susceptibility. The likelihood that an individual will get HPV and cervical cancer was determined to be present in messages that addressed cervical cancer morbidity rates at various ages, and specific risk factors such as infection with HPV, sexual history, age, and other potential risk factors identified in the medical literature.

Self-efficacy. The perception that a person is able to perform the recommended response to the threat was determined to be present in messages dealing with nervousness associated with getting the vaccination, ways to avoid risk of HPV, whether the article addressed overcoming the barrier of cost associated with getting the vaccination, ways to select a doctor, and any positive or neutral descriptions of the vaccination procedure (e.g., the procedure is quick and relatively painless).

Response-efficacy. The perception that the recommended response is an effective and feasible way to avoid the threat was determined to be present in messages dealing with the effectiveness of the vaccination in preventing HPV, early vaccination being the key to survival, and how often women should continue their regular cervical cancer screening through pap smears (e.g., annually).

Procedure

Each piece in the sample population was labeled numerically, starting with one, for easier identification in the coding process.

The packets were requested through the website gardasil.com. Each packet had several pieces of information in it. Each piece in the four packets was viewed as a separate document and numbered accordingly. The television spots were viewed at gardasil.com and verbally transcribed. To obtain the promotional information on the website, screen shots of each page under the headings in the site map were taken and printed. The headings were Home, Get the Facts About HPV, Make an Impact, Learn About Gardasil, More for Parents, Request More Information, Patient Product Information, and Prescribing Information, Glossary. The information under the Espanol and Healthcare Professional headings was not included because it was not relevant to the scope of the study; the former was in Spanish and the latter was aimed

at physicians and those in the healthcare industry. In cases where the headings had subheadings, screen shots of the pages were also taken and printed for analysis. Each heading and subheading page was numbered individually and analyzed as a single document. By using the site map as a guide, it ensured that all the relevant information on the website was included in the study. By numbering each piece from all the promotional materials collected numerically, the sum of sample was ($N = 60$).

Two coders individually analyzed each of the documents using the coding list. All coding disagreements were resolved by discussion. Words/phrases not found on the list were included in the analysis if both coders independently identified the same word/phrase as being representative of the same component category. The content was coded according to established definitions. Cohen's *Kappa* was used to evaluate intercoder reliability. According to Banjeree, Capozzoli, McSweeney, & Sinha (1999), a Cohen's *Kappa* of .75 and above indicates excellent agreement beyond chance, and a Cohen's *Kappa* of .40 and above indicates fair to good agreement beyond chance. The intercoder reliability for severity was .88, for susceptibility it was .70, for self-efficacy it was .65 and for response-efficacy it was .80.

Results

Research Question 1.

This research question addressed to what extent the Gardasil campaign material addressed the severity of the disease, susceptibility and to what extent the campaign included messages that were likely to enhance self-efficacy and response efficacy.

For the sample as a whole ($N = 60$), severity messages were mentioned the least amount of times ($M = .11$; $SD = .261$), followed by, susceptibility ($M = .38$; $SD = .537$), self-efficacy ($M = .80$; $SD = .651$), and finally response efficacy ($M = 1.75$; $SD = 1.338$). This indicates that across all documents, messages that would induce threat ($n = 319$) were least common at 28.38%, while efficacy messages ($n = 805$) that would offer ways to deal with the threat were most common at 71.62%.

The analysis showed a statistically significant difference between self-efficacy and self-response ($t(59) = -4.970$, $p \leq .001$). Messages of response-efficacy ($M = 1.75$; $SD = 1.338$) were mentioned more than messages of self-efficacy ($M = .80$; $SD = .651$). There was a statistically significant difference ($t(59) = 7.842$, $p \leq .001$) between susceptibility ($M = .38$; $SD = .537$) and severity ($M = .11$; $SD = .261$). This means that susceptibility messages occurred more than severity messages.

Research Question 2.

To assess the second research question concerning comparing threat and efficacious messages found in documents targeted to younger women and documents targeted to mothers, the sample ($N = 60$) was divided into three groups: material targeted at mothers, material targeted at the young women and material targeted at the general population. Descriptive statistics were obtained and independent sample two-tailed t -tests were run to analyze for statistically significant mean differences. Information that specifically targeted young women totaled 13; information that specifically targeted mothers totaled 15, and information that targeted the general population totaled 32. The information that targeted the general population

was defined as information that did not specifically state who it was targeting. Means and standard deviations for each category in the young women's documents were as follows: self-efficacy messages ($M = .87$; $SD = .885$), response-efficacy ($M = 1.65$; $SD = 1.855$), susceptibility ($M = .56$; $SD = .882$), and severity ($M = .11$; $SD = .271$). Combining the documents did not change the relative rank order of variables compared to the overall sample rank order; mentions of threat messages remained less common than mentions of efficacious messages.

Documents aimed at the mothers included two mailed packets, information under the heading "More for Parents" at gardasil.com, and two television ads ($n = 15$). Means and standard deviations for each category in the mothers' documents were the following: self-efficacy messages ($M = 1.00$; $SD = .678$), response-efficacy ($M = 1.87$; $SD = 1.866$), susceptibility ($M = .41$; $SD = .615$), and severity ($M = .12$; $SD = .275$). Combining the documents did not change the relative rank order of variables compared to the overall sample rank order: mentions of threat messages remained less common than mentions of efficacious messages.

Documents aimed at general population included information at gardasil.com under the following headings: Home, Get the Facts about HPV, Learn About Gardasil, Make an Impact, Request More Information, Patient Product Information, Prescribing Information, and Glossary. Means and standard deviations for each category in the general populations' documents were as follows: self-efficacy messages ($M = .68$; $SD = .510$), response-efficacy ($M = 1.73$; $SD = .701$), susceptibility ($M = .29$; $SD = .232$), and severity ($M = .10$; $SD = .257$).

The analyses revealed no statistically significant differences ($p > .05$) between mean mentions of severity, susceptibility, self-efficacy, and response-efficacy in young women targeted versus mother targeted promotional material. This indicated that there was no difference between the number of times young women's documents include messages from each category and the number of times mothers' documents include messages from each category.

However, some interesting findings emerged when documents that targeted the young women ($n = 13$) were compared to documents that targeted the general population ($n = 32$), and when documents that targeted the mothers ($n = 15$) was compared to documents that targeted the general population ($n = 32$).

The analysis showed a statistically significant difference between susceptibility messages in both groups ($t(43) = 1.598$, $p \leq .001$), indicating that susceptibility messages were mentioned more in the young women's documents ($M = .56$) than in the documents that targeted the general population ($M = .29$). The analysis also showed a statistically significant difference between response-efficacy messages in both groups ($t(43) = -.213$, $p \leq .01$), indicating that response-efficacy messages that targeted the general population ($M = 1.73$) were higher than for young women ($M = 1.65$).

When comparing the documents aimed at the mothers to the documents aimed at the general population, the analysis showed a statistically significant difference in the susceptibility messages ($t(45) = .970$, $p \leq .01$), indicating that susceptibility messages were mentioned more often in the mothers' material ($M = .41$) than in the general population's material ($M = .29$). There was a statistically significant difference in messages of response-efficacy in the

documents for both groups ($t(45) = .355, p \leq .01$), indicating that response-efficacy for mothers ($M = 1.87$) was mentioned more often than for the general population ($M = 1.73$).

Research Question 3.

To assess the third research question concerning the main themes of the Gardasil campaign as it relates to the EPPM, descriptive analyses were run. The limitations of the vaccination were mentioned the most ($M = 4.78; SD = 3.289$), followed by ways to increase knowledge ($M = 2.23; SD = 2.273$), other diseases risk factor ($M = 1.67; SD = 2.160$), cancer risk factors ($M = 1.40; SD = 1.749$), other prevention methods ($M = 1.28; SD = 1.195$), empowerment messages ($M = 1.23; SD = 1.899$) and effectiveness of vaccine ($M = 1.12; SD = 1.236$). The standard deviation for the limitations of the vaccination and other diseases risk factors is high because some of the documents had no instances of those particular messages, while other documents had several mentions of those types of messages.

Summary of Findings and Discussion

Analysis of the sample as a whole revealed that severity messages were few, while response-efficacy messages were most common. Overall, efficacious messages ($n = 805$) outnumbered threat messages ($n = 319$). Theoretically, then, the Gardasil campaign has the potential to help young women and mothers deal with the threat of HPV and cervical cancer but the campaign does not have the potential to make the audience feel threatened by the possibility of developing HPV and cervical cancer. This, according to research and the EPPM, does not create effective messages. Witte and Allen (2000) concluded that strong fear appeals coupled with high-efficacy messages produce the greatest behavior change and the opposite results if strong fear appeals are coupled with low-efficacy messages. According to research, the message content of the Gardasil campaign does not follow the guidelines of effective persuasive fear-based messages.

In the next step of the analysis, the material was separated into three groups: young women, mothers and general population. Intuitively, the researcher expected to see differences between the material presented to the young women and material presented to the mothers, however there were no statistically significant differences among any of the totals for the four variables. This finding could indicate that taken together, younger targeted promotional material does not differ from older targeted promotional material. This finding might also be indicative of lack of statistical power to detect differences due to the small sample size of documents target to the young women and mothers ($n = 13; n = 15$), respectively. Though not statistically significant, mothers' targeted materials in this sample included more self-efficacy messages than young women targeted materials. Perhaps with a larger sample the Gardasil campaign or campaigns of this nature do in fact address self-efficacy messages more often to parents.

When comparing the messages in the young women's promotional material to the material targeted at the general population, the analysis showed a statistically significant difference between susceptibility messages in both groups indicating that susceptibility messages were mentioned more in the young women's documents than in the documents that targeted the general population. The analysis also showed a statistically significant difference between response-efficacy messages in both groups indicating that response-efficacy messages

that targeted the general population were higher than for young women. In terms of severity and self-efficacy, there was no statistically significant difference in the frequency of the messages between both groups.

It is important for practitioners to target their messages consistently and effectively. Even though the material targeted at the general population is accessible to the young women, the material specifically targeted to the young women needs to have a balance in the susceptibility and response-efficacy messages because the young women are more likely to pay attention and seek out the information that is directly targeted to them.

When comparing the documents aimed at the mothers to the documents aimed at the general population, the analysis showed a statistically significant difference in the susceptibility messages indicating that susceptibility messages were mentioned more often in the mothers' material than in the general population's material. There was a statistically significant difference in messages of response-efficacy in the documents for both groups indicating that response-efficacy messages for mothers were mentioned more often than for the general population. It is reasonable to conclude that if the mothers received more susceptibility messages then they should receive more response-efficacy messages. In terms of severity and self-efficacy, there was no statistically significant difference in the frequency of the messages between both groups.

A reason why response-efficacy messages were higher in the messages targeting the mothers could be that parents are responsible for making the final decisions for their underage children, so they need more convincing and require more information to make decisions. Also, it could be that parents provide the money for the vaccination for the girls and some of the young women, so more efficacy messages are necessary for the parents.

This study showed that taken together, younger targeted promotional material does not differ from older targeted promotional material. This finding is in conflict with previous research recommendations. Practitioners should be aware of how different age groups react to messages and construct their messages based on research and methods that have been proved to be effective. Hale and Dillard (1995) noted that the age of the target audience may inhibit the effectiveness of fear appeals because the age of the target audience influences the audience's perceived vulnerability to the threat.

Overall the campaign focused on the limitations of the vaccination ($n = 287$). However, it must be noted that this is a result of having the "Important Information About Gardasil" is stated at least once on 87 % of the documents ($n = 52$). This section contained at least five messages about the limitations of Gardasil. Messages about increasing knowledge came in second ($n = 134$). The majority of the messages about increasing knowledge encouraged the target audience to, "talk to your doctor or healthcare professional." In other instances, the material directed the audience to the website gardasil.com for more information. Risk of other diseases ($n = 100$) and cancer risk factors ($n = 84$) followed. The top seven themes of the campaign fall within the limits of the information women want about HPV. These themes are limitations of the vaccine, ways to increase knowledge, risk of other diseases (caused by HPV), cancer risk factor, other prevention methods, empowerment messages, and effectiveness of vaccination.

Past research has shown that the audience wants to be empowered by being educated about the natural history, transmission, and prevention of HPV while emphasizing available

options for preventing and treating its potential consequences. The research also showed that audiences want accurate portrayals of HPV risk without creating undue anxiety or complacency (Friedman & Sheppard, 2007). Although the campaign fell short of the recommendations of fear appeal message construction, which stipulates that an effective fear appeals should have a balance of threat and efficacy message, the statistics from the CDC and from the Merck financial reports showed that a quarter of girls a quarter of the 10 million girls aged 13-17 in the United States received Merck & Co's Gardasil vaccine in 2007 to protect against the human papillomavirus (CDC, 2008). Worldwide sales of the vaccine as recorded by Merck, were \$401 million for the third quarter of 2008, a decrease of 4 % from the third quarter of 2007 (Merck, 2008). This success could be a result of the campaign providing information that women have stated they wanted to know about HPV and cervical cancer as highlighted by research conducted by Friedman and Sheppard (2007), Mosavel and El-Shaarawi (2007), Hall, Howard, and McCaffery (2008).

Limitations of Study

Several limitations of this study need to be addressed. The study did not look at the campaign's magazine advertisements. Second, the sample was small which may have resulted in lack of statistical power to detect differences. Future research should include a larger sample to ensure statistical power. However, since this study examined all relevant material for the campaign (minus the print ads), it represents a population not a sample limiting the usefulness of statistical testing. Third, based on past research, the researcher determined what kinds of messages constituted the constructs under study. It is possible that other messages not coded could be considered by readers as threatening of efficacious in nature.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to assess the extent to which the Gardasil campaign included messages about HPV that would prompt mothers and young women to not only understand their risks of contracting HPV which can lead to genital warts and cervical cancer, but also feel able to respond to the threat by seeking effective protection against the virus.

As noted by Hale and Dillard (1995) fear appeals have enormous persuasive potential and can promote better health, but their effectiveness depends in large part on the structure of the messages. At the least, "an effective fear appeal must include a severe threat, evidence suggesting the target is especially vulnerable to the threat, and solutions that are both easy to perform and effective" (Hale & Dillard, p. 78). Through balanced and appropriate coverage of both threat and efficacy messages to each target audience, health message designers of these important sources of the HPV vaccination, HPV and cervical cancer information may in fact be able to make a difference in the young women's and mothers' health intentions and decisions.

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How to set benchmarks in social media: Exploratory research for social media, lessons learned

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Ever since social media emerged as a significant part of the communications and marketing mix, organizations have been trying to assess their position and reputation within blogs, social networks and other channels of social media. Much has been proposed as far as metrics and standards for measurement, but for the vast majority of organizations, until recently, the answer has been “it depends.”

As organizations have tried to figure out how to proceed in social media, increasingly they’ve conducted primary research to find out what others in their market place were doing, what were the norms and what were the best practices. During the past year KDPaine & Partners has conducted several benchmark reputation studies for a wide variety of organizations and in the course of conducting these benchmarks we have established a standard methodology and schema that can be used by any organization to assess and measure its position in social media.

This paper addresses the research methodology, and provides detailed descriptions of the collection and analysis procedures as well as the coding instructions for these benchmark reports. We will further discuss how the organizations are using these benchmarks to create and improve their own communications programs.

Discussion of overall research goals

Social media is a new and unfamiliar development for many companies and institutions. It is growing so quickly and taking on so many new forms that many organizations are at a loss to understand its present use and future possibilities.

Georgia Institute of Technology found itself in just that position. It wanted to organize and improve its institutional use of social media, but needed help to understand the myriad options, and to develop effective new programs with realistic goals.

Georgia Tech is home to some 22,000 scholars, faculty and administration. It is consistently ranked in U.S. News & World Report's top ten public universities in the United States. Georgia Tech is in competition with other top-ranked universities for students, faculty and research grants, so it was important for it to understand not just its own social media usage, but also how it compared with that of competing academic institutions.

To better understand its social media presence and options, Georgia Tech asked KDPaine & Partners to undertake a major study of social media use at academic institutions. Presented in this paper are the major results of that study, as well as benchmarks that institutions of higher education can use to compare with their own social media results.

Research Goals

Earlier research had shown that social media is an important tool for academic admissions departments, and in many cases is more commonly used in academia than in the

corporate world (Barnes & Mattson, "The Game Has Changed: College Admissions Outpace Corporations in Embracing Social Media"). In this case, 88% of responding admissions departments said that social media was Very Important or Somewhat Important to their marketing/recruitment strategy and 61% said that they used social media. In particular, 33% used blogs, 29% used social networking, and 19% used video.

So Georgia Tech had no doubt that social media was important. The question was how important, and which media were more important than others?

With the above concerns in mind, KDPaine & Partners designed a research program for Georgia Tech. The following major goals were decided upon:

1. Determine specifically what presence and activity Georgia Tech and peer institutions had in social media.
2. Advise Georgia Tech on what it should be doing in social media: What changes should it make to its present programs, and/or what new programs should it add?
3. Set benchmarks for Georgia Tech to judge its results by after it implements its new social media program(s).

Research Methodology

Standardization of collection techniques

To best achieve these goals, it was decided to observe and explore a range of social media channels for Georgia Tech as well as a small group of peer academic institutions. Typical patterns of traffic and usage could then be determined.

Four peer institutions were chosen by Georgia Tech as its closest national competition for students, faculty, and research resources.

The following social media channels were observed:

- * 50 external blogs in 7 categories - -chosen from their applicability to Georgia Tech's goals
- * 114 institutional blogs – essentially all blogs produced by peer institutions
- * 1668 YouTube videos – all that were posted during the time period
- * 811 items on Facebook that were posted during the time period. (Broken down, this was 405 network discussion posts, 53 freshman group discussion posts, and a sample of 353 popular topics. Note: KDPaine & Partners did not look at any student profiles or retain names of any individual students. All items examined were available to any user with a Facebook account.)
- * Social bookmarking sites, including Digg, Fark, Newsvine, Reddit, Slashdot and del.icio.us, based on assumptions of popularity.

Data was gathered for a 30-day period between September and November of 2007, and included all references to Georgia Tech and the four peer institutions. To ensure comparability and a manageable data set, content related to athletics was not included. To allow context comparisons, back content for discussion volume was collected for Facebook groups from January - November 2007.

Standardization of terminology – types of conversations, types of content

During the course of the study, KDPaine & Partners established a standard set of definitions to describe the conversations and media types that people use in social media. The 27 standard types of conversations are:

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| <i>1. Acknowledging receipt of information</i> | <i>15. Giving a shout-out</i> |
| <i>2. Advertising something</i> | <i>16. Making a joke</i> |
| <i>3. Answering a question</i> | <i>17. Making a suggestion</i> |
| <i>4. Asking a question</i> | <i>18. Making an observation</i> |
| <i>5. Augmenting a previous post</i> | <i>19. Offering a greeting</i> |
| <i>6. Calling for action</i> | <i>20. Offering an opinion</i> |
| <i>7. Disclosing personal information</i> | <i>21. Putting out a wanted ad</i> |
| <i>8. Distributing media</i> | <i>22. Rallying support</i> |
| <i>9. Expressing agreement</i> | <i>23. Recruiting people</i> |
| <i>10. Expressing criticism</i> | <i>24. Showing dismay</i> |
| <i>11. Expressing support</i> | <i>25. Soliciting comments</i> |
| <i>12. Expressing surprise</i> | <i>26. Soliciting help</i> |
| <i>13. Giving a heads up</i> | <i>27. Starting a poll</i> |
| <i>14. Responding to criticism</i> | |

Additionally we identified 19 Types of YouTube Video content:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <i>1. Advertisement</i> | <i>13. News Broadcast</i> |
| <i>2. Animation</i> | <i>14. Promotional Video</i> |
| <i>3. Demonstration</i> | <i>15. Sightseeing/Tour</i> |
| <i>4. Event/Performance</i> | <i>16. Slide show</i> |
| <i>5. Fiction</i> | <i>17. Speech</i> |
| <i>6. Film</i> | <i>18. Television Show</i> |
| <i>7. Home Video</i> | <i>19. Video Log</i> |
| <i>8. Instructional Video</i> | |
| <i>9. Interview</i> | |
| <i>10. Lecture</i> | |
| <i>11. Montage</i> | |
| <i>12. Music Video</i> | |

Standardization of qualitative data such as tone, positioning and visibility

Tone was defined as follows:

POSITIVE	You are more likely to think the school is a good place to learn, do research, send a child for education, work or donate money.
NEUTRAL	The article doesn't give you enough information to feel either way, or it gives information that is both positive and negative, and you feel you'd need more information before you could make a decision.
NEGATIVE	You are less likely to think the school is a good place to learn, do research, send a child for education, work or donate money.

We also characterized each item (post, comment, Facebook thread, video) as either high visibility or low visibility depending upon where in the item the brand was mentioned.

We also examined whether each item contained one or more of the institutions key messages, what subjects were discussed, which departments or colleges were mentioned and how each item positioned the institution on key issues.

Definitions of benchmarks – picking peer institutions and competitors

A total of 4 peer institutions were selected with which we could compare and contrast results. Peer institutions were selected based on their proximity in national rankings, and the degree to which the institution was seen as a rival for students, faculty and grants.

Research Results

Goal #1:

Determine the social media presence and activity of Georgia Tech and the peer institutions.

Summary chart of net results for all media across all institutions

	External Blogs	Facebook Discussion	Institution Blogs		Social Bookmarks		YouTube
	Avg. Comments	Thread Length	Avg. Comments	Avg. InLinks	Avg. Bookmarks	Avg. Comments	Avg. Comments
Georgia Tech	18	3	2	8,246	659	105	2
Peer #1	11	3	0	590	140	22	7
Peer #2	6	2	1	762	305	40	8
Peer #3	13	5	5	1,405	206	70	4
Peer #4	15	2	1	661	169	36	4
OVERALL	13	3	2	1,687	228	59	5

Blog Findings

Over all the external blogs (those not hosted by an institution) studied, the median number of comments per blog post was roughly 3 (depending on category), and this amount of activity is a good benchmark of reasonable traffic. But the average number of posts per comment was 13, a level that generally indicates strong engagement. And, if the topic was controversial, a post got as many as 35 comments. After 3 days most comments were made, and after 14 days there would almost definitely be no additional comments.

And for institutional blogs (hosted on the domains of an institution, like *gatech.edu*, for instance), we found that roughly 2 out of 5 postings included at least one key message of the institution. Note that this level of message communication is about what one would expect for articles in traditional media. This is a counterintuitive result; the institutions are writing their own blog articles, so we would expect a somewhat higher level of message communication for the blogs than for traditional media. (GT has suggested that this result is likely due to its desire to generate content that is less calculated, less "marketey," and more authentic.) Thus a good benchmark for message inclusion in articles in internal blogs is at least 2 out of 5.

Social Bookmarking Findings

As for social bookmarking, we found a rough median of one submitted item every other day, with a lot of variance between schools.

Facebook Findings

- * Less than one percent of users used network-level discussion features.
- * By September, discussion hosted by freshman groups decreased 99%.
- * Almost 1/3 of content posted to profiles was related to a home institution.
- * 22% of Facebook discussion was related to the asking and answering of questions, second only to advertising (30%).
- * 56% of questions went unanswered, but most unanswered questions were not related to the institution.
- * High school students accounted for 8% of all questions. Almost all of their queries were answered.

Special Research Question #1:

What subject matter consumes the bulk of the discussions across all social media?

The data shows that the answer to this question will never be simple. Academic discussion is much more fragmented and diffused than corporate or nonprofit discussion. University society and interests are far more diverse, and so the answer is usually, "These three or four things," or, "These three or four other things." It is rarely just any one subject that audiences discuss.

In general, dominant topics of discussion for each medium are:

- * YouTube- Students, Campus Life

- * External Blogs- Research, Institution News
- * Institution Blogs- Campus Life (when institution related), Science/Education (overall)
- * Social Bookmarking Sites- Research, Institution News
- * Facebook- Campus Life

Special Research Question #2:

What is the influence of traditional media?

Part of the purpose of the study was to determine the extent to which traditional media triggers social media content. We found that:

- * Although traditional media has some influence over social, it is not a full predictor of content or visibility in social media.
- * On average, bloggers included as many as six links to external content in a post. The third most common link source was traditional news media sites.
- * Of all of the links to pages on Peer#1.edu that were found in our population of external blog posts, 26% of them were links to content found in the newsroom.
- * On Facebook, traditional news media sites were the source of 25% of popular items posted to profiles.
- * One third of content on social news sites was from traditional media sources.
- * Twice as many hard news stories were posted to social news sites as features.

Goal #2:

Advise Georgia Tech on what it should be doing

Our recommendations to Georgia Tech based on Overall Analysis:

1. Add tactics targeting social bookmarking sites to traditional media program plans. Learn what gets bookmarked for sites relevant to your institution and the most common sources of seeded items, and put those on your priority media lists in the hopes that you can get listed on social bookmarking sites.
2. Because the individual voice was found to be more engaging and effective, GT should encourage individuals (especially faculty), rather than departments, to maintain institution blogs.
3. Engage directly with popular external bloggers.
4. Limit engagement with Facebook to contact with group officers.
5. Focus on creating YouTube playlists of thematic content already found on the site.

Note that recommendations #1, #2, and #4 are definitely counter to current practice, based on our observations. Also, #5 is original and innovative; to our knowledge no one does it yet.

Goal #3:

Set benchmarks by which Georgia Tech can judge results after they have implemented their social media program

KDPaine & Partners' data provided summaries of activity for both Georgia Tech and the four peer institutions. As Georgia Tech enacts new programs, it can compare itself to these benchmarks to determine if it is meeting with success compared to its past, and compared to its peers.

It is tempting to anticipate that these effects will vary with certain attributes of institutions. For instance, we might expect that smaller schools, with their more cohesive social atmospheres, might have more success with social media programming than big public and private institutions. However, we tested the social bookmarking data for effects based on size of student body, size of incoming class and price of tuition; none of which were found to have an effect.

Of course, the more new programs are developed, the more new data will be available for future comparisons. What was very obvious in the data was that different institutions were trying to help to guide their social media content, though for the most part, it was organic, gritty and, well, natural. Using a horticulture analogy, we're talking about watching plants grow to figure out how we can use grafting and other techniques to get plants that we want.

Lessons learned

We learned early on that being very explicit and precise in our descriptions and definitions of coding parameters is essential. Most missteps were in the area of identifying tonality, which is very different in social media than it is in traditional media content analysis.

It was also necessary to establish consistent collection methodologies, particularly with Facebook and Social Bookmarking items.

Finally, in implementing similar programs for other institutions and organizations, we realized that the challenge isn't in establishing the benchmarks and best practices, but rather in getting the organizations to act on the recommendations.

Final Stage Development of the Integrated Crisis Mapping (ICM) Model in Crisis Communication: The Myth of Low Engagement in Crisis

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Abstract

Extending current theories in crisis communication, the authors have developed a more systemic approach to understanding the role of emotions. The Integrated Crisis Mapping (ICM) model is based on a public-based, emotion-driven perspective where different crises are mapped on two continua, the organization's engagement in the crisis and primary public's coping strategy. This final-stage testing, representing the sixth in the series, found that even though organizations need not be highly engaged in crises relating to human resource, transport failure and security issues, they were galvanized to engage in action-based stance by situational factors like external threats. The fact that the publics experience a diversity of emotions ranging from anxiety, sadness to anger could mean that organizations could not afford to be in a position of low engagement. Perhaps low organization engagement is a myth that needs to be dispelled. Where people's emotions are at stake, there is the constant need to be *seen* to engage and connect with them. The findings, while still very much exploratory, suggest theoretical rigor in the model, with room for further refinements to generate what Yin (2003) termed "analytic generalization" (p. 33) for the ICM model.

Introduction

How to shape the appropriate strategies in response to a crisis is critical for any given organization and public relations practitioner working in the field of crisis communication. Given that the goals of crisis communication, defined as the "ongoing dialogue between the organization and its publics" prior to, during, and after the crisis (Fearn-Banks, 2002, p. 2) are to restore organizational normalcy, influence public perception, and regain and repair image and reputation, strategies used should be "designed to minimize damage to the image of the organization" (p. 2). Strategies, argued Massey (2001), are "message repertoires that are designed to repair the organization's image by influencing stakeholder perceptions" (p. 155). Ray (1999) argued that strategies establish and enact "control (at least in its appearance) in the

face of high uncertainty” (p. 19). Lukaszewski (1997) argued that the strategic management of message response in crisis communication is a “fundamental communication principle” (p. 8). Designing sound strategic communications has been described as “management at its zenith” (Stocker, 1997, p. 203).

While most of these strategies are often characterized as direct responses to the crisis (Cowden & Sellnow, 2002; Fearn-Banks, 2002; Fink, 1986; Harrison, 1999; Massey, 2001; Pauchant & Mitroff, 1992; Seegar & Ulmer, 2002; Ulmer, 2001), Ray (1999) argued that strategies would either, (1) deny the crisis exists; (2) provide “partial, inaccurate, or delayed information”; or (3) maintain an open communication channels with constituents (p. 20).

Current Situation-Based Conceptualization of Crisis Response

Arguably, the two dominant theories on crisis strategies, Benoit’s (e.g., 1994; 1995; 1997; 1999; 2004) image repair strategies, and Coombs’ (e.g., 1995; 1998) situational crisis communication strategies, are designed to understand what strategies are relevant to use under what circumstances. These often stem from a *situation-based* response to crisis. The image repair theory is appropriate to be used when the situation leads to a loss of face. When face is threatened, face works is used to repair image, argued Benoit & Brinson (1994). This usually occurs when the accused is believed to have committed an offensive act by its salient audience (Benoit, 2004). Face, image, and reputation are extremely important commodities, argued Benoit and Brinson (1994), because, as a society, we pride ourselves on, and value those who enact tolerance, and sensitivity, to the feelings and traditions of others (Brinson & Benoit, 1999). Coombs’ (1998) strategies are positioned according to the situation based on the types of crises and the organization’s locus of control. On one hand, when the organization is deemed to have strong personal control over the crisis, more accommodative strategies like full apology are recommended for use. On the other hand, when the organization has weak control over the crisis, more defensive strategies like attack and denial are recommended.

ICM Model: Conceptualizing Emotions in Crisis Responses

While these situation-based crisis responses serve as vital roadmaps to understand the crisis situation, it is argued that a more universal and systemic approach would be to shape crisis responses from an *emotion-based* perspective: To understand what are the emotional upheavals that the publics involved in the crisis are likely to experience so that organizations can streamline their strategies to address their specific needs. Previous studies have found that the perception of a crisis, particularly from a given public, is not strictly a function of an environmental stimulus itself, but involves an interpretation of the stimulus (e.g., see Carver & Blaney, 1977). Emotion is argued to be a critical stimulus. Lazarus (1991) defined emotion as “organized cognitive-motivational-relational configurations whose status changes with changes in the person-environment relationship as this is perceived and evaluated (appraisal)” (p. 38). In a crisis, as the conflict between the publics and the organization escalates, emotions are one of the anchors in the publics’ interpretation of what is unfolding, changing, and shaping.

Jin, Pang, and Cameron (2007) have developed a new conceptualization called the Integrated Crisis Mapping model (ICM) aimed at understanding the diverse and varied emotions likely to be experienced by the key stakeholders in crises. Dominant emotions in the ICM model, developed from integrating works from psychology and crises literature, are extrapolated on two continua. On the X-axis is the publics’ coping strategy (from cognitive to conative coping),

which consists of the primary public's cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external or internal demands and on the Y-axis is the level of organizational engagement (from high to low).⁷⁵ Different types of crises, drawn from the crisis literature, are mapped into each of the four quadrants, with the dominant and secondary emotions posited.

Testing of the ICM model

To validate the theoretical robustness and ecological validity of the ICM model, the authors have systematically tested it since 2007. Each stage consists of two tests, the first to identify the emotions and coping strategies of the publics while the second examined organizational strategies and their effectiveness as evaluated by the publics. The first test was on the five crises posited in the first quadrant (see Figure 1), i.e., crises we inferred as requiring the publics' conative coping and high organizational engagement, such as reputational damage, technological breakdown, industrial crisis, labor unrest/protest, and regulatory/legislative minefield, where the primary emotion identified is anger, followed by anxiety. Findings showed that the presence of anger and anxiety, as posited. Additionally, the emotion of sadness was also found to co-exist with anger and anxiety. The primary publics seemed to engage more in conative than cognitive coping (Jin, Pang, & Cameron, 2007a). In conative coping, the publics tried to manage the situation so as to alter a troubled relationship or to sustain a desirable one by taking actions or at least showing their tendency to action. On the contrary, in cognitive coping, the publics tried to sort out a way of thinking or interpreting the meaning of the crisis with regard to their well being. In the second test, findings suggested that organizations embroiled in the crises identified in the first quadrant need not be highly engaged in reaching out to the publics. As counter-intuitive as this may appear, evidence showed that organizations embroiled in these crises need only to engage moderately, rather than intensely, in reaching out to the publics. This "strategic holding position", as Pang, Jin, and Cameron (2007) argued, affords a situation where organizations are able to assume a qualified rhetoric-mixed stance, utilizing a mixed bag of strategies simultaneously ranging from defensive strategies like excuse and justification as well as accommodative strategies like ingratiation and corrective action to engage their publics.

In the third test, the authors found further evidence that anxiety could be the default emotion that publics feel in crises. The subsequent emotions felt by the publics in crises involving hostile takeovers, accidents and natural disasters were variations of sadness, anger and fright, while the subsequent emotions felt by the publics involving CEO retirement, rumor and psychopathic acts were fright and anger. As far as coping strategies were concerned, conative rather than cognitive coping was evident. Organizations involved in crises pertaining to hostile takeovers, accidents and natural disasters do need to be highly involved while those involved in crises pertaining to CEO retirement, rumor and psychopathic acts need not be highly involved, as posited in the model (Jin, Pang, & Cameron, 2008). In the fourth test, the authors found the default response organizations embroiled in similar crises tend to adopt is qualified rhetoric-mix stance that is full of rhetoric while doing little to reassure the publics. Where possible, organizations should move from a qualified rhetoric-mix stance to action-based stance, peppered with messages that use what we call "emo-action language", language that acknowledges the emotional upheavals the publics experience with promises of concurrent action to alleviate their

⁷⁵ The authors would like to thank Timothy S. Penning of Grand Valley State University for his suggestion to refine this term.

emotional turmoil (Pang, Jin, & Cameron, 2008). In the fifth test, further evidence suggests that anxiety is the default emotion that publics feel in crises. The subsequent emotions felt by the publics in crises involving transport failure, security issues and human resource problems were variations of sadness and anger. As far as coping strategies were concerned, evidence suggests strong merit that conative coping is the external manifestation of the internal cognitive processing that has already taken place. Cognitive coping is thus the *antecedent* of conative coping.

Encouraged by the findings so far, the authors take the development of the model to the final-stage testing, the sixth in the series, in this study by examining the emotions in the fourth quadrant of the model. The three crises examined are the Amtrak crisis caused by power outage in 2006, an example of transport failure; the T.J. MAXX case in 2006 where customers and financial records were breached, an example of crisis relating to security issues; and the lawsuit against Wal-Mart by six former and current female employees for sex discrimination. The case, which began in 2001, culminated with the US 9th Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco allowing it to be a class-action lawsuit, probably the largest sex discrimination case in US history. The central questions examined follow from the evidence that suggests anxiety is the default emotion that publics feel with variations of sadness, anger and fright (Jin, Pang, & Cameron, 2008), this paper examines first, what strategies can organizations take when they are in situations which require them to be lowly engaged; second, what stances should organizations assume that are consonant with the strategies used; and third, what factors influence stance.

Data to examine the three crises come from content analyses of the population of stories published in the largest circulating and widely influential U.S. national newspapers, *USA Today*, *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *Washington Post* (Audit Bureau of Circulation, 2006; Viguerie & Franke, 2004). To ensure that media coverage reflects organizational perspectives, the respective organizations' websites were accessed to analyze their official announcements through press releases. However, as such information was not available in all of the cases, the authors decided to analyze only media coverage for a more comparable analyses.

This study is significant on several fronts. First, this represents the authors' on-going commitment to test our Integrated Crisis Mapping (ICM) model. This paper edges us to the end stage of our series of empirical studies and the authors are excited to see how the model is shaping up. Second, and more significantly, in the development of the Integrated Crisis Mapping (ICM) model, it is the authors' goal to advance current understanding in crisis communication and offers practical insights to scholars and practitioners on how they can understand, with greater preciseness, the emotional upheavals their primary publics are likely to experience so that they can shape the appropriate crisis response and tools to manage the crisis with optimal effectiveness. Organizational response in crises through the enactment of strategies has been, and arguably will continue to be, a recurring theme in the developments of crisis communication theories (Coombs, 1999; 2004). Last but not least, the authors aim to build a new theoretical framework by studying real life phenomenon. Saunders (2004) argued that applying theory to real life situations is "useful towards theory building" because such situations "provide observations grounded in actual organizational efforts aimed at solving actual organizational problems" (p. 140). Five cases of the same phenomenon were explored in order to construct a more robust study (Yin, 1993). These cases are studied for their instrumental value rather than intrinsic value. In instrumental case study methodology, Stake (1998) argued that the cases are examined to provide "insight into an issue or refinement of theory" (p. 88). The authors are

excited to understand how well the hypotheses posited in our model hold up, and what subsequent refinements need to be made to stand the scrutiny of scholarship as well as its relevance to the practitioners' world.

Theoretical Framework

Public Responses Based on Key Emotions

Publics are a "group of people who face a common issue" (Gonzalez-Herrero & Pratt, 1996, p. 84). In a crisis, the publics have been defined differently, according to their importance to resolving situation (Lukaszewski, 1997), their functional roles (Dougherty, 1992), and their long-term influences (Ulmer, 2001). Based on previous literature, we propose that in crisis situations the primary publics comprise the following characteristics: 1) They are most affected by the crisis; 2) They have shared common interests, and destiny, in seeing the crisis resolved; and 3) They have long-term interests, and influences, on the organization's reputation and operation.

Based on the appraisal model of emotion (Lazarus, 1991), Jin, Pang and Cameron (2007) developed a theoretical framework to understand the primary publics' crisis responses, as evidenced by the predominant emotion elicited by different types of crises. Four negative emotions (anger, fright, anxiety, and sadness) are identified as the dominant emotions that are mostly like to be experienced by the publics in crisis situations (Figure 1).

Anger. The core relational theme underlying anger is a demanding offense against "me" and "mine" (Lazarus, 1991). In crisis situation, the primary publics tend to experience anger when facing a demanding offense from certain organization against them or their well being. The ego-involvement of the public is engaged to preserve or enhance their identity or benefit in the situation. There is usually an issue of blaming that derives from the knowledge that the organization is accountable for the harmful actions and they could have been controlled or even prevented by the organization. The primary public might potentially favor attack as the strategy in facing the organization. At the stance and strategy level, though sometimes the public may appear cooperative, anger can be expressed indirectly in passively aggressive tactics.

Fright. The core relational theme underneath fright is facing uncertain and existential threat (Lazarus, 1991). The public is not certain about how to cope with the loss as well as how the engaged organization may handle this situation. Depending on their resource and power, they may choose avoidance or escape from the crisis as a viable recourse.

Anxiety. By definition, anxiety stems from the core relational theme as facing an immediate, concrete, and overwhelming danger (Lazarus, 1991). The public may feel overwhelmed by the crisis situation and look for the immediate solutions. Their ego-involvement is evidenced as the effort to protect their own ego-identity against the organization whom they perceive to be the direct source of existential threat. They might blame or not blame the organization depending on their environment assessment. Given the uncertainty of how to cope with the situation and what the organization might react, they tend to avoid and escape.

Sadness. Having experienced an irrevocable loss is the core relational theme of the emotion of sadness (Lazarus, 1991). In those cases, the public suffers from tangible or intangible loss or both. Their goal of survival is threatened and this loss of any type of ego-involvement (e.g., esteem, moral values, ideal, people and their well-being, etc.) caused by uncontrollable sources may lead them no one to blame and in desperate need for relief and comfort. If they perceive the loss can be restored or compensated for, their sadness may not occur or will be

associated with hope. The action tendency of the public might well depend on what measures the organization may take.

Another key concept in appraisal model of emotion is the different levels of emotions felt at a given time toward a given stimulus. The primary level emotion is the one the public experiences at the first, or immediate, instance. The secondary level emotion is one the public experiences in subsequent instances, as time goes by, and contingent upon the organization's responses to the crisis. The secondary level emotion may be transferred from the dominant emotion or coexisting with the primary level. In this study, we focus on Quadrant 2 (sadness as the primary emotion and fright as the secondary emotion) and Quadrant 3 (fright as the primary emotion and sadness as the secondary emotion) as conjured by crises in CEO retirement; accidents, rumors, psychopathic acts, natural disasters, and economic/hostile takeovers.

Operationalization of the ICM Model

As Figure 1 illustrates, the ICM model is indicated by a crisis matrix based on two axes: The analysis of the organizational engagement level in the crisis that can be examined through a scale of high engagement and low engagement, and the primary public's coping strategy from conative coping to cognitive coping. It is argued that for effective crisis management, the organization, at varied engagement level in different issues, must understand the primary public's emotional demands so as to communicate accordingly and align with the coping strategy needed by the primary public (Jin, Pang, & Cameron, 2007).

On the **X-axis** is the public's coping strategy. Adapting the cognitive appraisal theory in emotion (Lazarus, 1991), there are two types of coping: 1) problem-focused coping – changing the actual relationship between the public and the organization via actual measures and steps, and 2) cognitive-focused coping – changing only the way in which the relationship is interpreted by the public. Therefore, coping strategy refers to the dominant choice of the publics in dealing with the crisis situation: Either 1) cognitive coping – the public try to sort out a way of thinking or interpreting the meaning of the crisis with regard to their well-being, or 2) conative coping – the public try to manage the situation so as to alter a troubled relationship or to sustain a desirable one by taking actions or at least show their tendency of action. Anchoring these two coping strategies to the axis, different primary publics in different crises may choose different coping strategy along this continuum. Therefore, this X-axis consists of cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external or internal demands (and conflicts between them) that are appraised as exceeding the resources of the public.

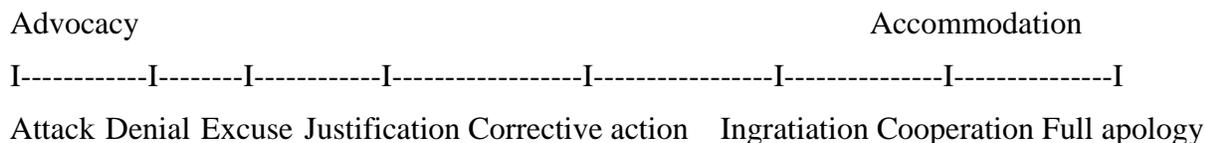
On the **Y-axis** is the level of organizational engagement, ranging from high to low. Jin, Pang and Cameron (2007) defined high organizational engagement as intense, consolidated, sustained, and high priority in allocation of resources to deal with the crisis; on the contrary, low organizational engagement does not mean cursory or no engagement, but that the organization devotes comparatively less resources, effort, and energy to deal with the crisis, either because the organization recognizes there is little it can do, or when the organization did not cause the crisis, it is depending on external help, like a regulatory agency, to help it resolve the crisis.

Emotions and publics' coping mechanism. The two axes further form four quadrants in the crisis matrix: Quadrant 1 (High engagement/Conative coping), Quadrant 2 (High engagement/Cognitive coping), Quadrant 3 (Low engagement/Cognitive coping), and Quadrant 4 (Low engagement/Conative coping). In each of the quadrants is the dominant emotions (primary and secondary), based on the confluence, interactions, and inter-relations of the publics' coping strategy as well as organizational engagement.

Organizational Stance and Strategies

Cancel, Cameron, Sallot, and Mitrook (1997) first introduced the notion of organizational stance in the contingency theory of strategic conflict management. A theoretical perspective diametrically different from the excellence theory, which positioned two-way symmetrical model as normative theory (Grunig, 1996), the contingency theory argued that a more realistic description of how organizations engage its publics could be ascertained by the examination of one's stance towards the other. The stance adopted need not be static, and could change based on the influence of organizational factors (Cancel, Cameron, Sallot, & Mitrook, 1997). Stances were measured through a continuum, which has at one extreme, advocacy, which meant insisting exclusively on one's own interests; and at the other end, accommodation, which meant giving in entirely. Jin and Cameron (2006) further developed a scale measuring stance as degree of action-based accommodation and qualified-rhetoric-mixed accommodation. Within an organization, the contingency theory had identified more than 80 variables, categorized into 11 themes (see Appendix 1), that could affect stance movement along the continuum (Cancel, Mitrook, & Cameron, 1999).

One's stance necessarily affects one's strategies (Pang, 2006). To study the full range of advocacy or accommodation undertaken by the organization towards its publics and vice versa, we have adapted and modified Coombs' (1998) crisis communication strategies into the contingency framework. Ihlen (2002) argued that Coombs has built a "better typology" (p. 190) than other sets of strategies. Coombs' (1998) typology consisted of seven strategies: Attack, denial, excuse, corrective action, justification, ingratiation, and full apology. To reflect the true spirit of the contingency theory, we modified this framework by reordering corrective action and justification, and by adding another strategy, cooperation, into the continuum.



Armed with these findings from three empirical tests so far, the authors extend this study to examine the crises in fourth and final quadrant (Low engagement/Conative Coping),

RQ 1: What stance (action-based versus qualified-rhetoric) did the organizations take towards its primary publics?

RQ 2: What contingent factor appears to influence this stance?

RQ 3: What is the strategy used?

RQ 4: How does the organization assess its strategy effectiveness?

RQ 5: How do the primary publics assess the organization's strategy effectiveness?

Method

We attempted to continue understanding the veracity and rigor of the ICM model using content analyses of crisis cases in the fourth quadrant. Case studies allow the researcher to delve into and explain the uniqueness and complexity of organizational processes, and as Gummesson (2000) argued, to capture the essential processes of decision-making, implementation and change.

The purpose of case studies is to empirically investigate a “contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” and address a “situation in which the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 1993, p. 59). In this study, we adopt a multiple case study design within the same phenomenon, with the primary interest of understanding how the ICM model works. The cases are thus studied for their instrumental value rather than intrinsic value (Stake, 1998). Though the cases are analyzed in detail, contexts examined, and activities explored, these play supporting roles to the researchers’ objectives, which are to facilitate understanding of how relevant they are to the model. Consequently, by applying the method on five disparately managed cases, Yin (1993) argued, is an appropriate initial attempt at theory testing (p. 64), with the aim of building “analytic generalizations” (Yin, 2003, p. 33) from the conceptualization.

Sample

Three crises are selected based on the opinions and suggestions of a group of public relations practitioners and educators. Shin, Cheng, Jin, and Cameron (2005) as well as Pang, Jin and Cameron (2007) found this to be a viable way of identifying the appropriate crises to analyze. The three cases are: T.J. MAXX customer credit card information leaking, an example of security issues; Wal-Mart employee relations crisis, an example of human resource; and Amtrak breakdown, an example of transportation failure. Data are taken from content analyses of the population of stories published in the largest circulating and widely influential national newspapers, *USA Today*, *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *Washington Post* (Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2006; Viguerie & Franke, 2004).

News stories in the five major newspapers (N= 69) were uploaded from Lexis-Nexis by typing in the key words of the organization and the crisis. News stories were excluded if 1) there was no comment made by a spokesperson from the respective organization or official from the organization or no mention of any official communication from the organization; or 2) the stories were in the same publication or there was no mention of the crisis. The cases are detailed in Appendix 2.

Coders and Training

Two coders, both graduate students and familiar with the content analysis method, conducted the coding. With the help of a codebook, the coders were given detailed instruction and description of the various categories used. Two practice sessions were held using samples of stories to familiarize with the coding instruments. The coders worked independently and were not allowed to consult with each other about the coding. The inter-coder reliability achieved .83 using Scott’s Pi.

Coding Instrument

The unit of analysis is defined as a news story. This includes stories by the staff of the newspaper and wire stories from the editors. The content analysis instrument is designed to evaluate the appraisal of crisis engagement and coping strategies from organizations’ and their primary publics’ perspectives. The 69 stories were coded for the following variables:

Organizational stance: Items from Jin and Cameron (2006)’s stance inventory were used to examine two clusters of stances as degree of accommodation, on a 7-point Likert-like scale, with 1 as “not evident” and 7 as “very evident”: 1) The organization takes Action-Based Stance

toward the public (The organization seems willing to: yield to the public's demands; Or agree to follow what the public proposed; Or accept the public's propositions; Or agree with the public on future action or procedure; Or agree to try the solutions suggested by the public; Or any combination of these.); and 2) The organization takes Qualified-Rhetoric-mixed Stance toward the public (The organization seems willing to: express regret or apologized to the public; Or collaborate with the public in order to solve the problem at hand; Or change my own position toward that of the public; Or make concessions with the public; Or admit wrongdoing; Or any combination of these.).

Dominant contingent factor: Dominant contingent factor that drives the organization's stance with regards to its public was identified, using the matrix of contingent factors as: External Threats, Industry Environment, General Political/Social Environment/External Culture, External Public, Issue Under Question, Organization's Characteristics, Influence of Public Relations Practitioners, Influence of Dominant Coalition, Internal Threats, Individual Characteristics, and Relationship Characteristics. If there was no evident contingent factor in the story, it was coded as "99. N/A".

Primary crisis response strategy: crisis response strategies by level of responsibility acceptance (Coombs, 1999): Attack, Denial, Excuse, Justification, Ingratiation, Corrective action, and Full apology, as well as 99 as N/A in case of stories with no crisis strategy evident.

Organization's self-assessment of strategy effectiveness: It was measured on a 7 point Likert-like scale, where 1 was "very ineffective," and 7 was "very effective", and 99 was used if this variable was not addressed in the story.

Public's acceptance of the organization's crisis strategy: It was measured on a 7 point Likert-like scale, where 1 was "very unacceptable," and 7 was "very acceptable", and 99 was used if this variable was not addressed in the story.

Results

Organizational Stance

RQ1 examined the stance taken by the organizations towards their primary publics. For Amtrak case, more action-based accommodation was taken ($M = 4.22$, $SD = 2.28$) than qualified-rhetoric-mixed accommodation ($M = 2.78$, $SD = 1.86$) ($t = 2.600$, $p < .05$). For TJ MAXX case, the organization took very advocating stance, while it was more advocating in terms of the qualified-rhetoric-mixed stance ($M = 1.38$, $SD = 1.10$) than its action-based stance ($M = 1.77$, $SD = 1.75$) ($t = 1.848$, $p < .10$). For Wal-Mart case, there was no significant difference in terms of the two types of stance. Across the three cases, more action-based accommodation was taken ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 2.42$) than qualified-rhetoric-mixed accommodation ($M = 2.80$, $SD = 2.23$) ($t = 2.798$, $p < .01$).

Dominant Contingent Factor

RQ2 examined what contingent factors appeared to influence the stance movement. For Amtrak case, organization's characteristics (92.3%) and external threats (7.7%) were the only identified contingent factors (Chi-square = 62.303, $p < .001$). For TJ MAXX case, external threats (100%) was the only contingent factor identified (Chi-square = 62.303, $p < .001$). For Wal-Mart case, external threats (95.8%) and external public (4.2%) were the only contingent factors identified (Chi-square = 62.303, $p < .001$).

Primary Crisis Strategy

RQ3 examined what were the primary crisis response strategies used by the organizations, as well as what message attributes were evident for those strategies. For Amtrak case, excuse (33.3%), denial (22.2%), ingratiation (22.2%), and corrective action (22.2%) were the primary crisis strategies (Chi-square = 49.498, $p < .001$). For TJ MAXX case, denial (67.9%), attack (21.4%), and corrective action (10.7%) were the primary crisis strategies (Chi-square = 49.498, $p < .001$). For Wal-Mart case, corrective action (70.6%) was the primary strategy, while denial (5.9%), excuse (5.9%), justification (5.9%), ingratiation (5.9%), and full apology (5.9%) were also evident (Chi-square = 49.498, $p < .001$).

Organization's Self-Assessment of Strategy Effectiveness and Publics' Acceptance

RQ4 examined how the organization assessed its crisis strategy effectiveness, whereas RQ5 examines how acceptable the primary publics perceive the strategy was. For Amtrak case, the primary publics found the organization's crisis strategy was less acceptable ($M = 2.60$, $SD = 1.95$) than the organization assessed its own strategy's effectiveness ($M = 5.20$, $SD = 1.30$) ($t = 3.474$, $p < .05$). For TJ MAXX case, the primary publics found the organization's crisis strategy was less acceptable ($M = 2.00$, $SD = 1.07$) than the organization assessed its own strategy's effectiveness ($M = 4.73$, $SD = 1.10$) ($t = 5.444$, $p < .001$). Similar patterns occurred to Wal-Mart case as well: the primary publics found the organization's crisis strategy was less acceptable ($M = 2.77$, $SD = .44$) than the organization assessed its own strategy's effectiveness ($M = 5.00$, $SD = 1.58$) ($t = 5.651$, $p < .001$).

Discussion

The findings are distilled into two categories: First, what the evidence suggests as strong merit; and second, evidence that suggests as some merit. Implications of the evidence are drawn, with suggestions to refine the ICM model (Figure 2).

Organizations' initial response: Emergence of a default stance?

RQ 1 examined the stance taken by the organizations towards their primary publics. Consistently, evidence suggests strong merit that anxiety is the default emotion in most, if not all crises posited in the model. In the first quadrant, variations of anger and sadness were found with anxiety as the dominant emotion (Jin, Pang, & Cameron, 2007a). In the second and third quadrants, variations of sadness, anger, and fright were found with anxiety as the dominant emotion (Jin, Pang, & Cameron, 2008). In this quadrant, our findings again showed anxiety as the dominant emotion, followed by different variations of anger, which was posited, and sadness, which was not posited. The emotion of fright, which was not posited, was not found to be present (Jin, Pang, & Cameron, 2009). As argued in Jin, Pang, and Cameron (2008), it is not surprising to argue that anxiety pervades human emotions in crises. Anxiety is caused by fear, and mankind constantly battles with fear (Ogrizek & Guillery, 1999). Fear rears its ugly head when uncertainty, caused by crises, reigns. It is fear for the worst possible outcomes or consequences.

This begets the question: If anxiety is the default emotion felt by publics, is there a default organizational response as well? The evidence thus far: In all of the three quadrants analyzed, evidence suggested that a qualified rhetoric-mixed stance could be the *default* stance

adopted by organizations to its primary stakeholders (Pang, Jin, & Cameron, 2008). A qualified rhetoric-mixed stance is one where the organization is willing to express regret and apologize to the public, to collaborate with the public, to make concessions or to admit wrongdoing. It contains more rhetoric or posturing by the organization, and may or may not lead to action that supports the rhetoric. Indeed, adopting a qualified rhetoric-mixed stance or a rhetorical posture appears to be the logical manner to engage the publics at the first instance. Coombs (1999) described such responses as “form recommendations”, the posture of responding quickly, being open and consistent (p. 126). Such responses, Coombs (1999) argued, are widely accepted and practiced by practitioners.

Findings in this quadrant, however, suggests otherwise. Evidence suggests some merit that an action-based stance appeared to be driving organizational response. As contrast to the qualified rhetoric-mixed stance, an action-based stance is one where the organization is willing to yield to the public’s demands, accept the public’s propositions, and agree to the public’s suggestion for solution. While the former is synonymous with saying what one *is willing to do*, the latter is tantamount to saying what one *will do*. This, however, appears to be counter-intuitive to our proposition that organizations need only to be lowly engaged in crises relating to security issues, human resource and transport failure.

Yet, at the same time, it would be too tempting – and simplistic – to conclude that even though qualified rhetoric mixed stance ought to be the default stance because three of the four quadrants found it to be so. What would be wiser would be to tease out what this piece of evidence is trying to tell us about responding in crises where organizations need only to be lowly engaged. The clue appears to lie in the need for organizations to show some action even though they need not be highly engaged. The moral of the story appears to be that low engagement does not mean, in industry parlance, all talk and no action.

Strategies synonymous with low organizational engagement

RQ 2 examined what contingent factors appeared to influence the stance movement while RQ 3 examined the primary crisis response strategies used by the organizations. These will be discussed conjointly. Evidence suggests strong merit that external threats appeared to be the driving factor in influencing the organizations’ action-based stances. Evidence also suggests strong merit that the consequent strategies used are attack, denial, and excuse, all strategies on the advocacy end of the contingency continuum. External threats are a situational variable in the contingency theory (Cameron, Pang, & Jin, 2007), and these include threats of negative media coverage, government regulations and litigation. Cancel, Mitrook and Cameron (1999) argued that the greater the threat, the faster the organization would respond. The findings thus support the argument that organizational response would be in the form of action-based stance rather than qualified-rhetoric mixed stance because all posturing and no action would not be the expedient option in the face of looming threats emanating externally over which one has little or no control.

Interestingly, the action-based stances actualize into more advocating strategies than accommodating strategies. Coombs (1998) argued that one attacks by confronting the accuser that a crisis exists. One denies by explaining the crisis does not exist. Benoit (1997) argued that denial also involves shifting blame to another cause or party. One makes excuses by denying any intention to do harm. Collectively, these advocating strategies appear to be intentionally used to minimize the organizations’ involvement and responsibility in the crises or to defend that the organizations do not have control over the crisis.

What, then, does this all mean for practitioners? Confronted by external threats (factor) which the organization argues has little or no control, practitioners take concrete measures and actions (action-based stance) and adopt defensive strategies (attack, deny and excuse) to refute suggestions that the organization is responsible for the crisis. Such defensive strategies are often used when organizational responsibility is “weak” (Coombs, 1998, p. 189), or by extension, when organizations want to portray their responsibility to be weak in the crises. The moral of the story appears to be that when organizations are lowly engaged in crises, action would still need to be taken to protect the organization, as Coombs (2006) argued.

The Myth of Low Engagement

RQ 4 examined how the organization assessed its crisis strategy effectiveness, whereas RQ 5 examined how acceptable the primary publics perceived the organizations’ strategy. These are examined conjointly. Evidence suggests strong merit that the organizations involved in all of the abovementioned crises regarded its strategies as acceptable and effective, i.e., by maintaining low engagement with their publics. They spring to action only when confronted by external threats, and their response would be one characterized by action-based stance with advocating strategies. While organizations feel that they are doing a fine job, mostly in inoculating themselves, evidence suggests strong merit that the publics do not think so. This is consistent with earlier findings regarding the third quadrant where low engagement was also posited in crises involving CEO retirement, rumor and psychopathic acts (Pang, Jin, & Cameron, 2008). It appears that the publics experience a diversity of emotions ranging from anxiety, fright to anger (in quadrant three) and anxiety, anger and sadness (in quadrant four) suggesting that organizations could not afford to be *seen* as being in a position of low engagement, disengagement, or even no engagement.

The moral of the story appears to be that when people’s emotions are at stake, there is the constant need to be *seen* to engage and connect with them in their hours of need. Collectively, these insights bear practical applications for practitioners: It is perfectly legitimate to protect organizations during crises and to rise above the cacophony of accusations that are regularly leveled at them, especially when organizations have to contend with circumstances beyond their control.

However, if the default stance has been one of qualified rhetoric-mix stance as found in previous studies (Pang, Jin, & Cameron, 2007; 2008), then the evidence in this study suggests that organizations should move beyond initial posturing to real action, i.e., from a qualified rhetoric-mix stance to action-based stance, with promises of concrete action to deal with the crises regardless of whether they were the cause or not. Therefore, it appears that even if organizations remain lowly engaged, there are three areas they still need to engage the publics in:

- ❑ Heart: Be proactive in understanding the publics’ emotional upheavals in their hour of need. This is precisely how the emotions-driven ICM model is a radical departure from current strategies-driven perspectives by raising the level of awareness of the critical role emotions play in crises.
- ❑ Mind: Employ persuasive strategies with the intention of reaching out to the publics instead of defending themselves. Respectfully, even though the strategies in Benoit’s image repair theory and Coombs’ situational crisis communication theory are comprehensive, their primary intentions remain that of rhetoric defense of the

organization. Perhaps there is scope for the authors here to develop a complementary set of strategies of rhetorical acceptance of the publics?

- Body: Be proactive in meeting the physical needs of publics during crises. As practiced as this has been (e.g., Pang, 2006), it remains a fundamental imperative that organizations should not underestimate.

If, indeed, such practical applications are pertinent, perhaps low engagement is just a myth that needs to be dispelled? Perhaps there is no such thing as high or low engagement in crisis? As the authors continue our journey of discovery, perhaps we should redefine engagement on different dimensions, probably along the lines of action-engagement in place of high engagement and emotional-engagement in place of low engagement? This insight is certainly instructive for further refinement of the ICM model.

Conclusion and Limitations

This present study represents the final-stage of testing to investigate the viability of the ICM model by integrating crisis perspectives with psychological analyses. This study, the sixth in the series of empirical tests, represents the continuing work of the authors to generate what Yin (2003) termed “analytic generalization” (p. 33) in the model. Analytic generalization is achieved when “two or more cases” (Bennett, 2004, p. 22) support the theoretical assertions (Yin, 2003, p. 33). Though much of what the authors have been studying is still exploratory, findings suggested theoretical rigor in the model, with room for further refinements. Admittedly, one limitation of this study is that the analyses are all based on media reports. First, given the small number of newspaper articles that were relevant to the crisis cases, the statistical power of detecting associations among the coding variables was limited. Given the exploratory nature of the research, we argue it is a limitation we have to accept. Second, this study excluded media releases and letters or opinion section of newspapers that might have provided valuable information on the organization’s crisis strategies as well as the publics’ expression of emotions. Further research should include examination of messages disseminated through media releases as well as interviews with practitioners and focus groups with publics involved in the respective crises. Third, our reliance on content analysis of media reports which could be filtered through the eyes of journalists who might have framed the issues according to their perceptions of what had happened. In this regard, we argue that due to the rapidity, abruptness, and volatility in each of the crises, and the exigency and imperativeness to respond to the crisis, both on the organizational as well as the publics’ side as rapidly as possible, analysis of news coverage would provide an expeditious and *fair* representation of what had happened as in all of the cases, our studies often centered on the height of the crisis, i.e., the first month(s) of the crisis. Indeed, previous works analyzing crises through media coverage through prestige newspapers (Krippendorff, 2004; Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 1998) had proved insightful (for instance, see Kaid, 1996; Jin, Pang, & Cameron, 2006; Meng & Berger, 2008; Reber, Cropp & Cameron, 2003; Shin, Cheng, Jin, & Cameron, 2005). The inherent methodological limitations would not invalidate our findings.

A cursory survey of papers presented at major conferences like IPRRC, ICA and AEJMC showed that increasingly more studies are examining emotions in on crisis communication. It is our thesis that studies analyzing audience reception in crises should increasingly dominate crisis scholarship for the simple argument that organizational strategies would be ineffectual if these do not appeal to the hearts and minds of the publics. We are excited that our studies may form

the imprints of an initial trail that open up to a new vista of research with the potential of transforming the landscape of crisis communication. Our work has just begun.

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Figure 1. Integrated Crisis Mapping (ICM) Model (Jin, Pang, & Cameron, 2007)

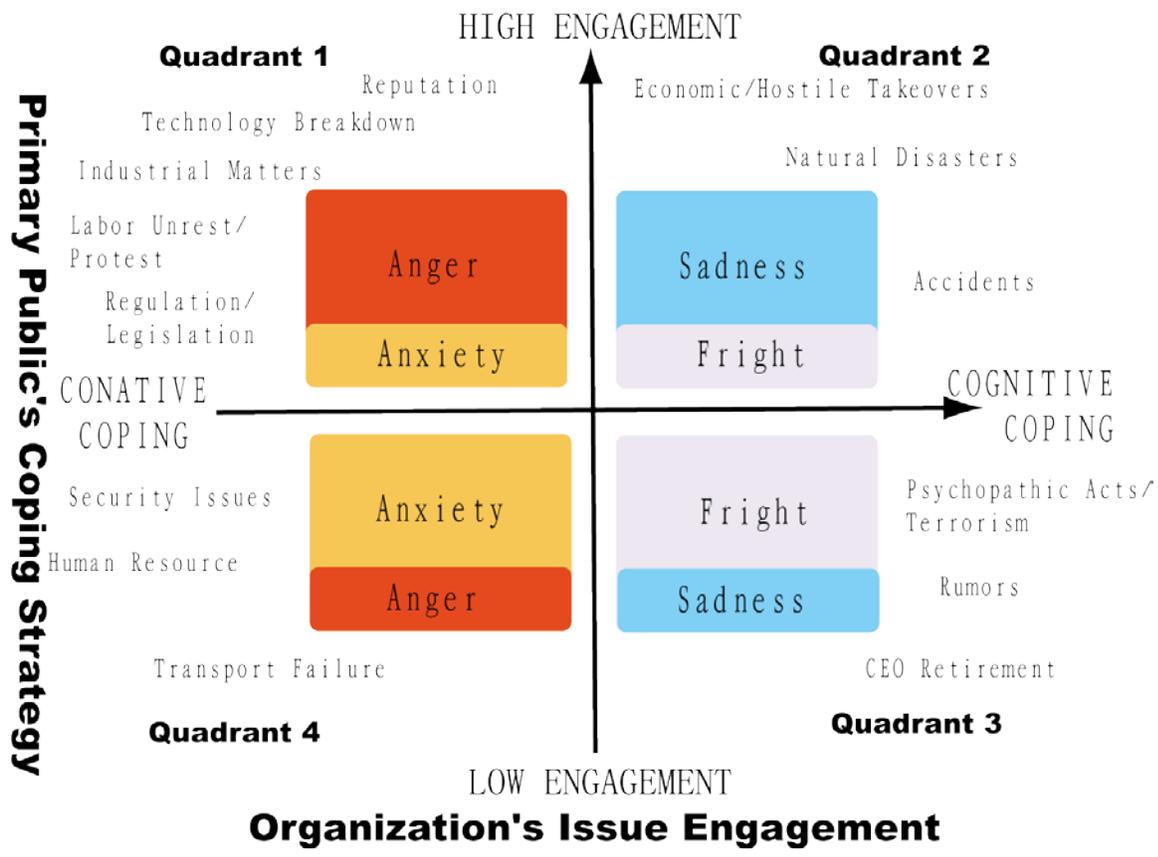
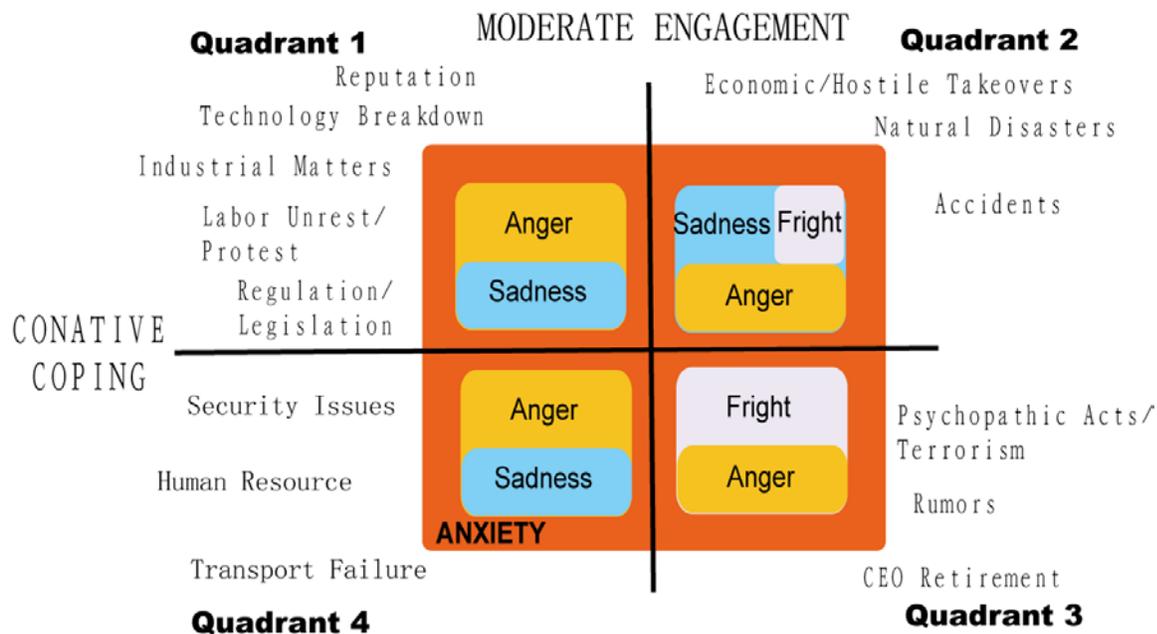


Figure 2. Revised ICM Model



Appendix 1: Analysis of contingent factor (adapted from the Contingency theory)

1. Threats: litigation, government regulation, potentially damaging publicity, scarring of organization's reputation in community, legitimizing activists' claims
2. Industry Environment: changing (dynamic) or static, number of competitors/level of competition, richness or leanness of resources in the environment
3. General Political/Social Environment / External Culture (level of constraint/uncertainty): degree of political support of business, degree of social support of business
4. The External Public (group, individual, etc.): size/number of members, degree of source credibility/powerful members or connections, past successes or failures of public to evoke change, amount of advocacy practiced by organization, level of communication/involvement of public/s members, whether the public has public relations counselors or not, community's perception of public: reasonable or radical level of media coverage the public has received in past, whether representatives of the public know or like representatives of the organization, whether representatives of the organization know or like representatives from the public, public's willingness to dilute its cause/request/claims moves and countermoves, relative power of organization, relative power of public
5. Issue Under Question: size, stakes, complexity

6. Organization's Characteristics: open or closed culture, dispersed widely geographically or centralized, level of technology the organization uses to produce its product or service, homogeneity or heterogeneity of employees, age of the organization/value placed on tradition, speed of growth in the knowledge level the organization uses, economic stability of the organization, existence or non-existence of issues management personnel or program, organization's past experiences with the public, distribution of decision-making power, formalization: number of rules or codes defining and limiting the job descriptions of employees, stratification/hierarchy of positions, existence or influence of legal department, business exposure (product mix and customer mix), corporate culture
7. Public Relations Department Characteristics: total number of practitioners and number with college degrees, type of past training of employees: trained in PR or ex-journalists, marketing, etc., location of PR department in hierarchy: independent or under marketing umbrella/ experiencing encroachment of marketing/ persuasive mentality, representation in the dominant coalition experience level of PR practitioners in dealing with conflict, general communication competency of department autonomy of department physical placement of department in building (near CEO and other top decision makers or not) staff trained in research methods, amount of funding available for dealing with external publics, amount of time allowed to use dealing with external publics, gender: percentage of female upper-level staff/ managers, potential of department to practice various models of public relations
8. Characteristics of Dominant Coalition (top management): political values (conservative or liberal), open or closed to change, management style (domineering or laid back), general altruism level, support and understanding of PR, frequency of external contact with publics, department perception of the organization's external environment, calculation of potential rewards or losses using different strategies with external publics, degree of line manager involvement in external affairs
9. Internal Threats (how much is at stake in the situation): economic loss or gain from implementing various stances, marring of employees' or stockholders' perception of the company, marring of the personal reputations of the company decision makers (image in employees' perceptions and general public's perception)
10. Individual Characteristics (public relations practitioner, dominant coalition and line managers): training in PR, marketing, journalism, engineering, etc., personal ethics, tolerance of ability to deal with uncertainty, comfort level with conflict or dissonance, comfort level with change, ability to recognize potential and existing problems, extent of openness to innovation, extent to which individual can grasp others' world-views, personality: dogmatic, authoritarian, communication competency, cognitive complexity: ability to handle complex problems, predisposition towards negotiation, predisposition towards altruism, how individuals receive, process and use information and influence, familiarity with external public or its representative, like external public or its representative, gender: female versus male
11. Relationship Characteristics: level of trust between organization and external public, dependency of parties involved, ideological barriers between organization and public
12. Others: None of the above

Appendix 2: Details of the cases studied

T.J. MAXX Case: In Dec 18, 2006, apparel retailer discovered suspicious software on its computers and began investigation. Three days later, the company concluded that a breach had probably occurred and that the intruder was still on the system. The next day, it notified federal investigators. On Dec 27, the firm learned that customer data had been stolen, and it notified banks and check-processing companies. The extent of the intrusion was disclosed in March 2007. Hackers had swiped US\$45.7 million of its credit and debit card transaction records. Articles relating to this case were searched from January 2007 to September 2008. This yielded 26 stories. Stories that were relevant to the study were eventually filtered to 25.

Wal-Mart Case: The case dates back to June 2001, when six former and current female Wal-Mart employees accused the retail giant of denying women equal pay and opportunities for promotion. On June 21, 2004, a federal judge in San Francisco ruled that the case could proceed as a class action. On February 6, 2007, a federal appeals court in San Francisco ruled that the case should proceed as a class action. Wal-Mart Stores Inc. lost a bid to have an appeals court reconsider its decision to allow 2 million current and former female workers to sue as a group with sex-bias claims. Articles relating to this case were searched from June 2001 to September 2008. This yielded 40 stories. Stories that were relevant to the study were eventually filtered to 31.

Amtrak Case: An Amtrak power outage during the busy morning commute disrupted all rail traffic between Washington and New York on May 25, 2006, stranding commuters on Amtrak and MARC train lines and causing a ripple of cancellations and delays throughout the morning. The power outage, which originated at a substation in Pennsylvania, began shortly after 8 a.m. and ended about 10:15 a.m. Articles relating to this case were searched from May 26, 2006 to Dec 31, 2006. This yielded 13 stories, which were all relevant to the study.

From Strategic Management to Policy Consensus in a Health-related Crisis: An Analysis of the National Salmonella Outbreak in the United States

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Abstract

This study applied the contingency theory to examine how the U.S. government (i.e., FDA and CDC) managed its stance and strategies during the salmonella outbreak that occurred in the summer of 2008. A content analysis of 72 news articles revealed that the government primarily demonstrated advocative stances toward consumers and produce industries while cooperating with state health departments to pinpoint the source of the outbreak. All publics, with the exception of the tomato industry, appeared accommodative to the government throughout the crisis. Regarding contingent factors that influenced the government's stances and strategies, the issue under question (e.g., the source of the outbreak) appeared to be the predominant factor. In accord with the essence of the contingency theory, the results suggest that strategic crisis management is dynamic and that the stances and strategies of an organization shift over time along a continuum from advocacy to accommodation according to a given situation. The findings also suggest that the media may play a supporting role for the government in delivering immediate, up-to-date information and triggering public attention to problems in the existing food systems.

Introduction

Health-related crises, such as epidemic diseases and food poisonings, require immediate attention and rapid dispensing of accurate information, and the government often takes a leading role in dealing with those critical situations (Jin, Pang, & Cameron, 2006). At the onset of a health-related crisis, the government's handling of the situation reflects not only its responsiveness to public demands, but also its ability to protect its citizens from potential risks (Lee, 2007). While searching for the causes of and solutions to a problem, the government tries to communicate information relevant to the issues at hand in a timely manner that reduces uncertainty or misunderstanding among publics. It also gives guidelines that publics can follow in order to avoid putting their health at risk. In terms of the contingency theory, such communication can occur at any point along the continuum—from advocacy to accommodation—and involve different strategies and tactics for its multiple publics based on its stance, which moves along the continuum (Cameron, Pang, & Jin, 2007; Cancel, Cameron, Sallot, & Mitrook, 1997). This dynamism of the contingency theory can be applied to analyze the U.S. government's crisis management in the nationwide outbreak of salmonella that occurred in the summer of 2008.

The first documented illness from salmonella occurred on May 11, 2008, and the outbreak lasted for more than three months due to the uncertainty about its source (Weise, 2008). Throughout the crisis, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Food and

Drug Administration (FDA) cooperated in their efforts to trace the source of the outbreak and terminate the spread of illness. The FDA first focused on salmonella-tainted tomatoes and issued a nationwide warning on June 7 that consumers should not eat raw red tomatoes. Still, the FDA and CDC searched for the exact source of contamination, and the number of infected people rapidly increased, soon becoming the largest food-borne illness outbreak of the past decade (Venkataraman, 2008). On June 27, the FDA and CDC announced that they were investigating other foods commonly eaten with tomatoes (e.g., jalapeno peppers, cilantro, and salsa), although they were still concerned about tomatoes. The FDA revoked its warning of avoiding tomatoes on July 17 and finally found a matching strain of salmonella on a jalapeno pepper at a distribution center in Mexico on July 21. After causing more than 1300 illnesses, the outbreak of salmonella was finally terminated on August 28 when the FDA lifted its warning to consumers about jalapeno peppers. During the course of the crisis life-cycle, many conflicting issues emerged among different groups of public with respect to perceived responsible parties for the underlying problems behind this crisis. In the early phase of the crisis, the produce and food industries cooperated with the FDA by pulling tomatoes from the market. After the FDA's warning against eating jalapeno peppers, however, the produce industry, especially tomato growers, accused the FDA of making a hasty decision to put tomatoes first on the suspect list (Venkataraman, 2008). On the other hand, the FDA blamed produce industries for not having electronic food tracking systems, delaying the investigation (Lazo, 2008). As the situation unfolded, the government's and other publics' stances toward each other changed.

Despite growing attention to understanding dynamics in the strategic management of crises, little research has been conducted on health-related crises using the contingency theory. This study sought to shed more light on the application of contingency theory in health-related crises by analyzing the recent crisis of Salmonella Saintpaul. Therefore, the primary purpose of this study was to explore how the salmonella outbreak was managed and communicated by U.S. government agencies. Another aim of this study was to identify the significant role that the media played during the crisis. This study focused on the role of the media as a mediator between the government and its publics, but it also explored how the formation of public opinion arose along the stages of the crisis life-cycle and how it affected food-safety policies and systems. The findings of this study provide important implications for public relations scholars and practitioners seeking to attain a better understanding of crisis dynamics that possibly lead public debates and social consensus on critical issues and to develop a strategic communication approach to mitigating a health-related crisis and resolving related issues. This study also contributes to advancing a theoretical framework for the application of the contingency theory to crisis communication.

Literature Review

Contingency Theory of Strategic Conflict Management

The notion of public relations as a strategic management function has evolved based on two major public relations theoretical foundations: the excellence theory and the contingency theory. Grunig and Hunt's (1984) excellence theory posits that public relations activities can be classified into four typologies: (a) press agency/publicity model, (b) public information model, (c) two-way asymmetric model, and (d) two-way symmetric model. It emphasizes the two-way symmetric model as normative theory, which guides practitioners regarding how they should perform public relations to be most effective and ethical. Noting that public relations is too

complex and versatile to be forced into the four models, however, Cancel et al. (1997) proposed the contingency theory of accommodation as an alternative to the normative excellence theory in public relations. They argue that a continuum model could explain public relations practices more accurately and better reflect the dynamics of strategic communication. The contingency theory assumes that strategic communication occurs at any point along a continuum from pure advocacy to pure accommodation (Cameron, Wilcox, Reber, & Shin, 2008). Advocacy refers to the degree to which an organization maintains its own standpoint disagreeing with the public's viewpoint, while accommodation means that an organization gives in and takes a position in favor of its publics (Cameron et al., 2008). In other words, the position or stance that an organization takes in dealing with conflict can be placed on the continuum from pure advocacy to pure accommodation. Between these two extremes of the continuum, there are other stances that involve "different degrees of advocacy and accommodation" (Cancel et al., 1997, p. 37). Capturing the dynamics of conflict, the continuum identifies the stance of an organization toward a given public at a given time in a given situation, and the organization's stance, in turn, affects its strategies and tactics (Cancel et al., 1997). Based on this theoretical perspective, "true excellence in public relations may result from picking the appropriate point along the continuum that best fits the current need of the organization and its publics" (Cancel et al., 1997, p. 35).

There are two basic principles underlying the contingency theory (Cameron et al., 2008). First, an organization's stance is determined by various factors when dealing with a conflict or crisis. The second principle is that the stance of public relations changes as events and factors evolve. The contingency theory provides 87 factors affecting how an organization responds to conflict, and those contingent factors are categorized into 11 groups on internal and external dimensions (Cancel et al., 1997). External variables consist of the following five groups: (a) external threats, (b) industry-specific environment, (c) general political/social environment, (d) external public characteristics, and (e) the issue under consideration. Internal variables include (a) general corporate/organizational characteristics, (b) characteristics of the public relations department, (c) top management characteristics, (d) internal threats, (e) personality characteristics of involved organization members, and (f) relationship characteristics. Through quantification of the contingent variables, Shin, Cameron, and Cropp (2006) showed that all of the variables are well-combined into a simple matrix of these thematic categories and confirmed the validity of the contingent variables in order to construct a theory for public relations.

To test the practicality of the contingency theory, Cancel, Mitrook, and Cameron (1999) interviewed public relations practitioners and further classified these contingent variables into two dimensions: predisposing and situational factors. Predisposing factors, such as the characteristics of the dominant coalition and organizational size and culture, affect an organization's stance before it enters a situation with a given public. Situational factors, such as perceived urgency and threat and the feasibility of accommodation, may change the stance of an organization while it interacts with a particular public (Cancel et al., 1999). By employing in-depth interviews with public relations practitioners, Cameron, Cropp, and Reber (2001) provided six proscriptive variables that prevent an organization from accommodating its publics. They found that the practitioners first described their approaches in a way that was consistent with the two-way symmetrical model. Deeper glimpses into these approaches, however, revealed less or nonexistent two-way symmetry in their actual practice; rather, it was the proscriptive factors that applied and combined to directly affect their decisions: (a) moral convictions, (b) multiple publics, (c) regulatory constraints, (d) management pressure, (e) jurisdiction issues, and (f) legal constraints.

Contingency scholars have shown the application of contingency theory to public relations practice in diverse fields, such as high-profile conflict resolution (Shin, Cheng, Jin, & Cameron, 2005), intra- and inter-organizational conflicts (Pang, Cropp, & Cameron, 2006; Yarbrough, Cameron, Sallot, & McWilliams, 1998), health-related crisis management (Jin et al., 2006, 2007; Qui & Cameron, 2005), the practitioner-lawyer relationship (Reber, Cropp, & Cameron, 2001), and the source-reporter relationship (Shin & Cameron, 2003, 2005). Specifically, Shin et al.'s (2005) study of high profile conflicts supports the dynamics of conflict management and provides evidence that an organization's stances and strategies, as well as its publics' stances, shift over time along the contingency continuum as situations unfold. In addition, focusing on dynamics in a health-related crisis, Jin et al. (2006) examined how the Singapore government strategically managed a crisis of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) by analyzing its stance and crisis communication strategies toward multiple publics and influential contingent factors. The crisis management of the Singapore government appeared to be proactive advocacy; the government took the lead in dealing with the situation and protecting its citizens from the SARS infection, and thus managed to win public support. Through their comparison of the Chinese and Singapore governments, Jin et al. (2007) highlight that different organizations may take different stances and strategies in a given situation according to influential contingent factors on an organization's decision. Based on these empirical analyses of successful crisis management cases, the contingency theory has been elaborated and advanced to offer useful insights into strategic conflict management and provide theoretical ground for analyzing crisis-response strategies.

It is important for an organization to develop effective crisis-response strategies that may reframe the public's general comprehension of negative issues (Benoit & Pang, 2007) and generate supportive behaviors as well as collective emotions among various publics (Coombs, 1999). From a contingency theory perspective, an organization's crisis communication strategies may be determined by its stance toward a given public (Cameron et al., 2007, 2008) and can also be described in terms of the contingency continuum (Jin et al., 2006). As an elaboration of his typology of crisis communication strategies, Coombs (1998) proposed the accommodation-defensive continuum by integrating various crisis communication strategies. This continuum includes seven categories: attacking the accuser, denial, excuse, justification, ingratiation, corrective action, and full apology and mortification. Jin et al. (2006), however, modified Coombs' continuum in accord with the contingency framework by adding the strategy of cooperation and reordering strategies. The modified continuum includes the following strategies (in order from advocacy to accommodation): (a) attack the accuser (aggressively defending itself against an accuser), (b) denial (asserting that there was no crisis), (c) excuse (avoiding or minimizing its responsibility for the crisis by denying any intention to cause the crisis), (d) justification (explaining why it had to take a certain course of action), (e) corrective action (fixing the problem and promising to prevent its recurrence by changing its initial positions or actions), (f) ingratiation (taking action to generate a more favorable public attitude toward the government), (g) cooperation (making overtures to reach out to the public with the goal of resolving the problem), and (h) full apology (taking full responsibility, making apologies, and asking forgiveness for its wrongdoing) (Coombs, 1999).

In accord with the essence of the contingency theory, this study sought to examine the U.S. government's management of the salmonella outbreak and communication efforts, focusing on the complexities and dynamics of strategic management. In this study, the U.S. government refers to two federal agencies—the CDC and FDA—that were responsible for dealing with this

food-poisoning crisis. As the contingency theory notes than an organization may take different positions toward different publics in a given situation (Yarbrough et al., 1998), the U.S government strategically dealt with various publics: consumers, the tomato industry, the pepper industry, the food industry, state health departments, and the Mexican government. Based on the framework contingency theory, the following research questions were proposed:

RQ1a: What kinds of stances and strategies were used by the U.S. government and its publics during the various stages of the crisis life-cycle?

RQ1b: What contingent factors appeared to influence the U.S. government's stances and strategies toward its multiple publics?

The Role of Media in Crisis

When a crisis breaks out on a large scale, the government should communicate important, up-to-date information with its publics in a timely manner due to the rapid evolution of the situation and the uncertainty about its impact (Jin et al., 2006). Thus, the media may play a significant role in informing the public of what has happened and guiding them to avoid potential risks in times of crisis. Particularly in outbreaks of serious diseases, such as SARS, the government can strategically deal with its multiple publics in cooperation with the media and resolve critical situations without serious damage to its image (Jin et al., 2006, 2007; Qui & Cameron, 2005). In doing so, the media can help draw public attention to the reform of related health policies and facilitate a social consensus on setting new regulations and enforcing existing laws (Dorfman, 2007; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Jernigan & Wright, 1996).

As a result of recent health-related crises (e.g., spinach contaminated with *E. coli* and outbreaks of salmonella poisoning), the public's awareness of food-safety issues and food tracking systems has been considerably increased. Since the media have reported problems with the fresh food distribution system that might have worsened the crises, many public groups (e.g., consumer unions and restaurants) have called for the development of new food safety plans along with reform of current regulations (Weise, 2008). It is crucial for the government to be aware of public opinion and attentive to its voice, especially when latent public opinion and sentiments trigger public events such as protests and vigils (Heath, 1997; Sturges, 1994). In responding to public opinion and action, the government may search for solutions and encourage sponsor organizations to take the initiative to enhance problematic situations (Heath, 1997). According to Sturges (1994), the process of group opinion formation can be described by the following series: (a) latent issues emerge → (b) an event occurs → (c) pro and con factions form → (d) debates occur → (e) time lapses → (f) public opinion forms → (g) social actions take place → (h) social norms form. As a facilitator, the media contributes to this process of generating the collective opinion among publics (Page & Shapiro, 1987). Since the public may tend to pay more attention to the media after a crisis breaks out, the media can serve as a useful tool to trigger public policy initiatives. Jernigan and Wright (1996) note that the media can be an effective instrument for educating the public and policy makers and garnering public support for policies to promote a healthier society.

Although issues presented in the media cause the generation of public opinion on those issues, media discourse and public opinion can interact with each other as parallel systems (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). In other words, both media discourse and public discourse may be parts of the process of constructing meaning in a large context. Gamson and Modigliani

(1989) specify that “media discourse is part of the process by which individuals construct meaning, and public opinion is part of the process by which journalists and other cultural entrepreneurs develop and crystallize meaning in public discourse” (p. 2). While trying to understand emerging social issues that touch their own lives, people may also rely on media messages to help them make sense of those issues and construct underlying meanings (Viswanath & Demers, 1999). Regarding some social issues, such as policy reforms and disease prevention, however, the media may take a larger part than the public counterpart could in the social construction of meaning and the creation of initiatives to resolve social problems. That is, the potential of the media in influencing public opinion may vary from issue to issue (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1982). When it comes to health-related crises, publics may be more dependent on media accounts because critical issues pertaining to the situation (e.g., the treatment, prevention or possible causes of illnesses; problems in the current health system) are too volatile or complicated for them to easily understand. Therefore, media discourse during a crisis and in its aftermath may be the key to understanding public opinion, and it at least contributes to public discussion that can lead to social change (Viswanath & Demers, 1999).

As the major information channels in the public sphere, mass media are considered essential for understanding the formation of public opinion and the emergence of social consensus on important issues (Habermas, 1991). In the salmonella outbreak, while the media were promoting the flow of relevant information about food contamination occurrences, they were also drawing public attention to the reform of related health policies. The media may also have facilitated the formation of public opinion and social consensus on the need for new regulations and enforcement of existing laws to enhance food traceability and public safety. Further, social consensus ultimately leads to social change with moderate adjustments in the current social system (Viswanath & Demers, 1999). In terms of Viswanath and Demers’ (1999) typology of relationship between social control and social change, many health-related movements fall into the category of moderated change because a gradual change is made to some aspect of the system while the dominant values remain the same. A content analysis of news articles about a health-related crisis might reveal key issues in media messages as well as emerging discussion on policy reform or other changes among lawmakers in the opinion formation process (Malone, Boyd, & Bero, 2000). In this sense, this study focuses on the role of the media in encouraging the formation of public opinion as well as in dispensing important, accurate information speedily in the outbreak of salmonella. Therefore, the second research question asks the following:

RQ2: What role did the media play in the salmonella outbreak with respect to dispensing information and covering issues that possibly influence public opinion?

Methods

Study Design

In order to examine the proposed research questions, this study employed a quantitative content analysis of major U.S. newspapers’ crisis coverage regarding salmonella-tainted tomatoes. Media may reflect dynamics of crisis situations and thus serve as a useful tool in examining an organization’s stances and strategies, as well as publics’ reactions in times of crisis (Martinelli & Briggs, 1998). Three newspapers (i.e., *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, and *The Washington Post*) were selected based on the circulation size and availability.

Data Collection

News articles were downloaded from Lexis-Nexis News Database. A key word search using the word “salmonella” in news publication during the six months from April 1 to September 30, 2008, generated 62 articles in *The Washington Post*, 36 articles in *The New York Times*, and 27 articles in *USA Today*. Because the first salmonella occurrence was reported to the state health department on May 11 and the CDC announced the end of the outbreak on August 28, the timeframe of six months (from one month before the report until one month after the end of the outbreak) was reasonable for comprehensively examining the evolution of the crisis. Some of the articles retrieved, however, mentioned salmonella in a peripheral way (e.g., discussion on food irradiation) or addressed other salmonella cases; these articles were excluded from the analysis. Both editorials and feature news, including news briefings, were also included. The deletion process resulted in a total of 72 articles.

Coding Procedure and Inter-coder Reliability

Two graduate students were trained to code the news articles. After training sessions, two coders separately coded 15 percent of the sample for an inter-coder reliability test. Scott’s *pi* scores for each variable ranged from .81 to 1.0, indicating that the agreement between the coders was acceptable (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006). Two coders then coded the rest of the news articles independently.

Coding Categories

The unit of analysis was an individual news story, and the codebook was developed based on Jin et al.’s (2006) research. The coding categories were composed of four sections: (1) general publication information (e.g., newspaper source, date, section, length, phase, etc.); (2) stance changes of the government and involved publics, as well as and contingent factors; (3) crisis response strategies of the government; and (4) sources cited and information addressed by the government and other sources.

Publication information. The date of publication, the page where an article appeared, and the length of the article (in number of words) were coded from the information provided by the Lexis-Nexis Database.

Phase. To examine the evolution of the crisis, four phases were identified: (a) tomato-warning phase, (b) jalapeno-warning phase, (c) matching-strain phase, and (d) post-crisis phase. Although the time frame of this study includes the date the first salmonella case was reported to the Mexico State Health Department (May 11), newspapers first reported the salmonella outbreak on June 8, when FDA announced a national consumer warning not to eat certain types of red raw tomatoes (June 7). Therefore, the actual time span for the analysis began with the first news report on the outbreak (June 8), with no news articles found prior to the crisis.

The phase was identified by examining the critical events during the life-cycle of the crisis. The tomato-warning phase (coded as 1) included publications from June 8 (the first news report regarding the salmonella outbreak) to June 26. News articles in this phase presented the FDA’s national consumer warning and its initial investigative efforts. The jalapeno-warning phase (coded as 2) included publications from June 27 to July 20, when the FDA expanded its investigation into other sources of contamination, such as peppers, and then initiated its public warning on jalapeno and Serrano peppers. As the FDA found the matching bacterial strain in

Texas on July 21, the crisis moved to the matching-strain phase (from July 21 to August 27; coded as 3). Finally, the post-crisis phase was defined as the aftermath of the CDC's announcement of the end of the outbreak on August 28 (coded as 4). The four phases divided the time frame in a relatively balanced way: tomato-warning phase (3 weeks), jalapeno-warning phase (3 weeks), matching-strain phase (5 weeks), and post-crisis phase (4 weeks).

Conference call follow-up. To examine the relationship between the government and media in the crisis, it was coded whether a news article was written based on the conference call or news releases. The dates of news releases and conference calls were identified from the FDA website. If a news article was published within one day of the government's conference call or news release, the article was coded as 1; otherwise, it was coded as 0.

Types of publics. Seven major publics involved in the crisis were identified: (a) government (i.e., FDA and CDC), (b) state health departments, (c) consumers/consumer organizations, (d) tomato industry, (e) pepper industry, (f) food industry (i.e., food retailers, restaurants), (g) Mexican government, and (h) others. Each article was coded if one or more types of publics were presented in addressing the crisis (1=presented; 2=non-presented).

Stance. The stance variable measured how each group of publics took a stance toward the other groups of publics on the advocacy-accommodation continuum. Since this study focused on the government's role in the crisis, this study mainly measured (1) what stance the government took toward the other seven types of publics and (2) what stance the other groups of publics took toward the government. The stance was measured on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (pure advocacy) to 5 (pure accommodation), based on Cameron et al.'s (2008) operational stances on the contingency continuum. For example, a stance reflecting arguing or avoiding was coded as 2, a stance reflecting comprising or negotiation as 3, and a stance reflecting collaboration or cooperation as 4.

Contingent factors. Since news coverage of crisis situations may not reflect internal contingent factors, such as organizational characteristics and culture, only external factors that may have affected the government's stances or strategies were coded (1=presented; 2=not presented) under six sub-categories. These factors included (a) threats, such as a rapid dissemination of illness or possible reputational damage to the government; (b) industry environment, such as recent changes in the produce and food industries or new safety measures recently implemented in restaurants; (c) general political/social environment/cultural environment, such as consumers' support or opposition to the government's current policy or new proposals in Congress; (d) external public, such as consumer organizations' requests; (e) issue under question, such as arguments about the possible sources of the outbreak; and (f) others.

Crisis-response strategy. The government's crisis response strategies were coded for the seven groups of publics, according to Coombs' (1998) crisis-response strategy continuum. However, adopting Jin et al.'s (2006) modification of Coombs' continuum, the strategies were measured in terms of the following eight categories: (1) attack the accuser (e.g., FDA and CDC accusing the tomato industry of not having the food tracking system while defending itself against tomato producers' criticism), (2) denial (e.g., asserting that their delayed investigation was not due to their negligence), (3) excuse (e.g., avoiding or minimizing its responsibility for the delayed investigation to track the source of the outbreak), (4) justification (e.g., explaining why it took a long time to pinpoint the cause of the crisis), (5) corrective action (e.g., correcting the source of the problem and promising to prevent its recurrence), (6) ingratiation (e.g., stating that its state-of-the-art technology was used to find the source of the outbreak or announcing possible financial support to produce industries for profit loss), (7) cooperation (e.g., working

with state health departments to resolve the situation), and (8) full apology (e.g., taking full responsibility for the rapid spread of illness or making apologies to consumers or tomato growers).

Source. The sources cited in the news articles were coded (1=cited; 2=not cited) under seven sub-categories: (a) federal agencies (e.g., representatives of the FDA and CDC), (b) state health departments (e.g., Indian Health Service), (c) consumers/consumer organizations (e.g., individual consumers, Center for Science in the Public Interest, Consumer Union), (d) produce industry (e.g., individual farmers, Produce Marketing Association, California Tomato Farmers), (e) food industry (e.g., National Restaurant Association, restaurant owners/spokespersons), (f) food safety experts (e.g., professors or researchers), and (g) others. A direct quotation with quotation marks and a citing phrase, such as “according to,” were examined to point to the news sources. Additionally, verbs indicating one’s verbal statement were used to identify sources in the news articles: said, noted, reported, criticized, announced, told, recommended, advised, reiterated, asserted, warned, acknowledged, and declared. Two or more sources cited in the same category were also coded as 1.

Problem and solution. These variables measured whether or not each group of sources (i.e., source variable) addressed (1) the problems regarding the existing food safety system, policy, or regulation and (2) the solutions to resolve the problems embedded in the existing food safety system, policy, or regulation (1=addressed; 2=not addressed).

Information provided by the government. This variable measured what kind of information was presented in the news article being provided by the government sources. A news article was coded as to whether information in each sub-category was presented (coded as 1) or not (coded as 2). Sub-categories included (a) general information about salmonella (e.g., type of disease, symptoms of disease), (b) potential causes of the outbreak (e.g., source of contamination, region of the outbreak’s origin), (c) figures and statistics (e.g., the number of illnesses; spread of illness), (d) investigation updates (e.g., CDC’s efforts, discovery of the outbreak strain), (e) FDA alerts and recommendations, (f) impact on the industry (e.g., financial loss), (g) previous outbreaks (e.g., spinach with *E. coli* in 2006), (h) problems (e.g., problems with food tracking system), (i) solutions (e.g., new traceability standards, electronic records, advanced produce distribution system), and (j) others.

Findings

Table 1. Number of articles analyzed by newspaper and phase

<i>Phase</i> <i>Newspapers</i>	<i>Tomato</i> <i>warning</i>	<i>Jalapeno</i> <i>warning</i>	<i>Matching</i> <i>strain</i>	<i>Post crisis</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>New York Times</i>	10 (52.6)	4 (21.1)	4 (21.1)	1 (5.3)	19 (100)
<i>USA Today</i>	3 (18.8)	7 (43.8)	5 (31.2)	1 (6.2)	16 (100)
<i>Washington Post</i>	15 (40.5)	11 (29.7)	9 (24.3)	2 (5.4)	37 (100)
Total	28 (38.9)	22 (30.6)	18 (25.0)	4 (5.6)	72 (100)

Of a total of 72 news articles analyzed, 19 articles (26.4%) were from *The New York Times*, 16 articles (22.2%) were from *USA Today*, and 37 articles (51.4%) were from *The Washington Post*. Regarding the four phases, news articles were generated most during the tomato-warning phase (38.9% of the entire publications), followed by the jalapeno-warning phase (30.6%), the matching-strain phase (25.0%), and the post-crisis phase (5.6%) (Table 1).

The first research question regarded the stances and strategies employed by the U.S. government and its publics over the four stages of the salmonella outbreak life-cycle. Over the six-month period of the outbreak, federal agencies appeared to be involved in all of the articles analyzed (n=72, 100%). Consumers (n=57, 79.2%) and the tomato industry (n=38, 52.8%) were frequently addressed as being involved in the crisis, followed by the pepper industry (n=27, 37.5%), the food industry (n=27, 37.5%), state health department (n=14, 19.4%), and the Mexican government (n=7, 9.7%). Chi-square analysis revealed differences of involvement of certain types of publics (i.e., state health department and food or produce industry) over the identified four stages, while federal government agencies and consumers were addressed as being involved in the crisis regardless of the phase (Table 2). Specifically, state health departments and the food industry were mostly discussed in the tomato-warning phase, and mention of them seemed to disappear over the next phases. On the other hand, the engagement of the tomato and pepper industries tended to increase over the phases.

Table 2. Type of publics involved

<i>Publics</i>	<i>Phase</i>	<i>Tomato warning</i>	<i>Jalapeno warning</i>	<i>Matching strain</i>	<i>Post crisis</i>	<i>Total</i>	χ^2 <i>p-value</i>
Government		28 (100)	22 (100)	18 (100)	4 (100)	72 (100)	NA
State health dept.		10 (35.7)	2 (9.1)	2 (11.1)	0 (0)	14 (19.4)	.046*
Consumers		23 (82.1)	18 (81.8)	13 (72.2)	3 (75.0)	57 (79.2)	.846
Tomato industry		8 (28.6)	14 (63.6)	14 (77.8)	2 (50.0)	38 (52.8)	.007*
Pepper industry		0 (0)	9 (40.9)	14 (77.8)	4 (100)	27 (37.5)	.000*
Food industry		16 (57.1)	6 (27.3)	5 (27.8)	0 (0)	27 (37.5)	.033*
Mexican gov't		1 (3.6)	2 (9.1)	4 (22.2)	0 (0)	7 (9.7)	.183
Others		8 (28.6)	6 (27.3)	6 (33.3)	1 (25.0)	21 (29.2)	.973
N		28	22	18	4	72	

Note. * significant at $p < .05$

On a five-point scale, ranging from 1 (pure advocacy) to 5 (pure accommodation), the government mostly demonstrated advocacy stances toward consumers (M=2.23, SD=.890), the tomato industry (M=2.81, SD=1.009), and the pepper industry (M=2.33, SD=.734), while it appeared to be accommodative to state health departments (M=3.85, SD=.555). The ANOVA test resulted in statistically significant changes of government stances toward consumers, the tomato industry, and the pepper industry, in an accommodative direction as the crisis approached the endpoint (Table 3).

Table 3. Government's stances toward multiple publics

<i>Publics</i>	<i>Phase</i>	<i>Tomato warning</i>	<i>Jalapeno warning</i>	<i>Matching strain</i>	<i>Post crisis</i>	χ^2 <i>p-value</i>
State health departments		4.00 (.000)	3.00 (1.414)	4.00 (.000)	NA	.047*
Consumers		2.0 (.686)	2.06 (.574)	2.20 (.632)	4.67 (.577)	.000*
Tomato industry		2.14 (.690)	2.57 (1.089)	3.38 (.870)	3.00 (.000)	.035*
Pepper industry		NA	2.11 (.782)	2.14 (.363)	3.50 (.577)	.001*
Food industry		2.08 (.760)	2.40 (.548)	3.00 (.000)	NA	.212
Mexican government		3.00(NA)	4.00 (NA)	3.33 (1.155)	NA	.833
Others		2.57 (.976)	3.00 (1.414)	3.00 (.000)	3.00 (NA)	.873

Note. 1 = Advocacy to 5 = Accommodation; Mean (S.D.)

* significant at $p < .05$

On the other hand, most of the public involved in the crisis appeared accommodative to the government throughout the crisis (M(SD)=3.79(.579) for state health department; M(SD)=3.54(1.1285) for the food industry, and M(SD)=3.42(.948) for consumers). In contrast, the tomato industry and the pepper industry significantly changed their stances toward the government as the investigation continued. The stance of the tomato industry toward the government moved from its initial accommodative stance (M=3.50, SD=.548) to an advocative stance (M=1.91, SD=.944). Once jalapeno rose as a suspect of the contamination, and it became more advocative (M=1.75, SD=.707) after a matching strain was identified. On the other hand, the stance of the pepper industry was initially relatively advocative (M=2.88, SD=1.126), but became more accommodative (M=3.71, SD=.756) after a matching strain was identified.

Table 4. Multiple publics' Stances toward the government

<i>Publics</i>	<i>Phase</i>	<i>Tomato warning</i>	<i>Jalapeno warning</i>	<i>Matching strain</i>	<i>Post crisis</i>	χ^2 <i>p-value</i>
State health dept.		3.90 (.316)	3.00 (1.414)	4.00 (.000)	NA	.107
Consumers		3.58 (.900)	3.43 (.938)	3.18 (1.079)	4.00 (NA)	.716
Tomato industry		3.50 (.548)	1.91 (.944)	1.75 (.707)	1.00 (NA)	.001*
Pepper industry		NA	2.88 (1.126)	3.71 (.756)	1.00 (NA)	.046*
Food industry		4.00 (1.038)	3.00 (1.581)	2.80 (1.304)	NA	.111
Mexican gov't		4.00 (NA)	3.00 (1.414)	3.00 (1.732)	NA	.862
Others		2.62 (1.408)	2.50 (1.049)	1.80 (.837)	NA	.462

Note. 1 = Advocacy to 5 = Accommodation; Mean (S.D.)

* significant at $p < .05$

Along with the overall stance of the government toward publics, the government's crisis response strategies were examined. The government mostly used a strategy of cooperation (n=11, 91.7%) with state health departments. It also employed justification (n=17, 37.8%) and corrective strategies (n=16, 35.6%) most often to consumers; excuse and justification strategies to the tomato (n=9, 12.5%; n=10, 10.9%) and pepper industries (n=5, 6.9%; n=11, 15.3%); and corrective action (n=12, 70.6%) and ingratiation strategies (n=2, 11.8%) to the food industry. However, the crisis response strategies were not significantly different across the four phases, considering the eight crisis response strategies as a continuous variable with an equal interval from 1 to 8 (1=attack, 2=denial, 3=excuse, 4=justification, 5=corrective action, 6=ingratiation, 7=cooperation, 8=full apology).

Table 5. Government's crisis response strategy toward multiple publics

<i>Publics</i>	<i>Phase</i>	<i>Tomato warning</i>	<i>Jalapeno warning</i>	<i>Matching strain</i>	<i>Post crisis</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Sig</i>
State health dept.		7.00 (.000)	4.50 (3.536)	7.00 (.000)	NA	6.58 (1.443)	.065
Consumers		4.12 (.885)	4.5 (.966)	4.80 (.632)	5.33 (.577)	4.49 (.895)	.084
Tomato industry		2.71 (1.254)	4.00 (1.414)	3.77 (1.691)	4.00 (NA)	3.66 (1.514)	.323
Pepper industry		NA	3.67 (1.323)	2.91 (1.300)	4.67 (.577)	3.43 (1.343)	.103
Food industry		4.17 (.718)	3.75 (1.258)	4.00 (NA)	NA	4.06 (.827)	.709
Mexican gov't		3.00 (NA)	5.50 (2.121)	5.00 (3.464)	NA	4.83 (2.563)	.809
Others		4.17 (2.483)	5.00 (2.828)	3.33 (.577)	NA	4.09 (2.071)	.718

Note. 1=attack, 2=denial, 3=excuse, 4=justification, 5=corrective action, 6=ingratiation, 7=cooperation, 8=full apology; Mean (S.D.); ANOVA

Regarding contingent factors that may have affected the stances or strategies of each public, the issue under question (n=64, 88.9%) appeared to be the most prominent factor, followed by threats (n=45, 62.5%), political/social/cultural environment (n=27, 37.5%), and the external public (n=24, 33.3%). Such a pattern was presented across the phases (Table 6).

Table 6. Contingent factors presented in the news articles

<i>Contingent factor</i>	<i>Phase</i>	<i>Tomato warning</i>	<i>Jalapeno warning</i>	<i>Matching strain</i>	<i>Post crisis</i>	<i>Total</i>	χ^2 <i>p-value</i>
Threats		17 (60.7)	18 (81.8)	9 (50.0)	1 (25.0)	45 (62.5)	.068
Industry environment		3 (10.7)	8 (36.4)	6 (33.3)	1 (25.0)	18 (25.0)	.156
Political/social env't		13 (46.4)	7 (31.8)	6 (33.3)	1 (25.0)	27 (37.5)	.647
External public		6 (21.4)	11 (50.0)	7 (38.9)	0 (0)	24 (33.3)	.079
Issue under question		23 (82.1)	21 (95.5)	16 (88.9)	4 (100)	64 (88.9)	.432
N		28	22	18	4	72	

The second research question asked about the role of media in the salmonella outbreak crisis. It specifically attempted to examine the facilitating role of the media in the relationship between the government and other publics in its providing of relevant information, and in the formation of public opinion about the social system and policy regarding food safety. Table 7 shows that almost half of the news articles (n=31, 43.1%) were published on the day after an FDA/CDC conference call or news release. Considering the number of media conference calls and news releases during the six months, the number of news articles generated from the pseudo events is regarded as substantial. Except for the post-crisis phase, this pattern appeared over the crisis period.

Table 7. Number of conference call follow-up articles

<i>Follow-ups</i>	<i>Phase</i>	<i>Tomato warning</i>	<i>Jalapeno warning</i>	<i>Matching strain</i>	<i>Post crisis</i>	<i>Total</i>
Yes		12 (42.9)	10 (45.5)	9 (50.0)	0 (0.0)	31 (43.1)
No		16 (57.1)	12 (54.5)	9 (50.0)	4 (100.0)	41 (56.9)
Total		28 (38.9)	22 (30.6)	18 (25.0)	4 (5.6)	72 (100)

Over the six-month timeframe for this study, federal agencies (i.e., FDA, CDC) appeared in the vast majority of the news articles as a source. Overall, 62 articles (86.1%) cited federal government sources, and dependency on the government sources was especially noticeable during the tomato-warning (n=25, 89.3%) and jalapeno-warning phase (n=20, 90.9%). On the other hand, the produce industry was cited only in a third of the articles (n=25, 34.7%), followed by food safety experts (n=16, 22.2%). State health departments (n=11, 15.3%), consumers (n=9, 12.5%), and the food industry (n=6, 8.3%) were rarely quoted in the articles in addressing the crisis. The use of sources was not significantly different across the phases.

Table 8. Sources mentioned in the news articles

<i>Sources</i>	<i>Phase</i>	<i>Tomato warning</i>	<i>Jalapeno warning</i>	<i>Matching strain</i>	<i>Post crisis</i>	<i>Total</i>	χ^2 <i>p-value</i>
Federal agencies		25 (89.3)	20 (90.9)	13 (72.2)	4 (100.0)	62 (86.1)	.240
State health dept.		8 (28.6)	1 (4.5)	2 (11.1)	0 (0)	11 (15.3)	.081
Consumers		4 (14.3)	2 (9.1)	2 (11.1)	1 (25.0)	9 (12.5)	.821
Produce industry		7 (25.0)	11 (50.0)	6 (33.3)	1 (25.0)	25 (34.7)	.306
Food industry		4 (14.3)	1 (4.5)	1 (5.6)	4 (100.0)	6 (8.3)	.521
Food safety experts		4 (14.3)	5 (22.7)	7 (38.9)	0 (0)	16 (22.2)	.168
Others		6 (21.4)	6 (27.3)	8 (44.4)	1 (25.0)	21 (29.2)	.405
N		28	22	18	4	72	

Table 9. Information given by the government

<i>Sources</i>	<i>Phase</i>	<i>Tomato warning</i>	<i>Jalapeno warning</i>	<i>Matching strain</i>	<i>Post crisis</i>	<i>Total</i>	χ^2 <i>p-value</i>
General information		4 (14.3)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (25.0)	5 (6.9)	.062
Potential causes		12 (42.9)	13 (59.1)	6 (33.3)	1 (25.0)	32 (44.4)	.327
Statistics		19 (67.9)	12 (54.5)	3 (16.7)	3 (75.0)	37 (51.4)	.005*
Investigation		15 (53.6)	9 (40.9)	8 (44.4)	3 (75.0)	35 (48.6)	.564
Alerts/recommendations		9 (32.1)	8 (36.4)	8 (44.4)	1 (25.0)	26 (36.1)	.814
Previous outbreaks		4 (14.3)	0 (0)	1 (5.6)	0 (0)	5 (6.9)	.228
Problems		6 (21.4)	4 (18.2)	2 (11.1)	1 (25.0)	13 (18.1)	.818
Solutions		2 (7.1)	2 (9.1)	1 (5.6)	1 (25.0)	6 (8.3)	.636
Others		6 (21.4)	0 (0)	2 (11.1)	2 (50.0)	10 (13.9)	.025*
N		28	22	18	4	72	

Note. * significant at $p < .05$

The majority of news articles (n=62, 86.1%) included any sort of information provided by the government. Looking carefully at the information provided by the government, statistics about the spread of the disease was the most frequently presented information in the news articles. About half of news articles (n=37, 51.4%) contained such statistic information, and it was more frequently presented in the early stages of the crisis. Updates about the investigation (n=35, 48.6%), potential causes of the outbreak (n=32, 44.4%), and public

alerts/recommendations (n=26, 36.1%) were also commonly found over the life-cycle of the crisis. On the other hand, general information about salmonella infection, such as symptoms and preventive actions, was rarely presented (n=5, 6.9%). Also, discussions about problems with the present food safety systems (n=13, 18.1%) and solutions for the problems (n=6, 8.3%) were highly limited in the news articles. Other information found in the articles included tension between Congress and the FDA regarding budgetary matters, the food industry's (restaurants and retailers) reaction to the outbreak, distributors' recalls of jalapenos, compliments of the local/state health professionals, the official announcement of the end of outbreak, and excuses for the agency's responses to the outbreak.

As shown in Table 10, government sources were most likely to point out the problems regarding food safety systems (n=15, 20.8%), compared to other sources. Besides government sources, the produce industry (n=6, 8.3%) and food safety experts (n=6, 8.3%) discussed the problems involved in the present food safety system, but the proportion was not substantial. Discussion of solutions to improve the present food safety system or to minimize the future risks of food-borne illness was not prominent across phases or sources. Federal agencies were the major sources to propose such solutions (n=7, 9.7%), followed by the produce industry (n=5, 6.9%), consumers (n=3, 4.2%), and food safety experts (n=2, 2.8%).

Table 10. Problems and Solutions in the news articles by source

<i>Sources</i>	<i>Phase</i>	<i>Problems</i>	<i>Solutions</i>
Federal agencies		7 (9.7)	15 (20.8)
State health dept.		0 (0)	1 (1.4)
Consumers		3 (4.2)	2 (2.8)
Produce industry		5 (6.9)	6 (8.3)
Food industry		0 (0)	0 (0)
Food safety experts		2 (2.8)	6 (8.3)
N		72	72

Discussion

As the contingency theory contends, this study supported the dynamics of stance changes and corresponding strategies of the government and publics involved in the crisis of salmonella outbreak. The government and its publics involved in the crisis changed their stances along a continuum from advocacy to accommodation according to a given situation. The government appeared to adopt advocatory stances in dealing with most of the public by giving alerts and recommendations to help them avoid potential risks. On the other hand, the general public (i.e., consumers) appeared to be accommodative to the government by following its recommendations. Such a pattern corresponds to what other scholars have found with regard to the SARS epidemics (Jin et al., 2006).

Results of content analysis also supported that the media played a mediating role in this crisis situation in some ways. With heavy dependency on the government sources, it seems that

the media served as a watch guard, rather than as a watchdog, in the life-threatening health crisis. The high proportion of news articles published as follow-ups of the FDA/CDC's conference calls also implicitly supports the idea. However, this does not mean that the media should be blamed for functioning as the government's watch guard, because such health-related crises (e.g., a spread of epidemic diseases and food-borne illnesses) require immediate public attention and prompt delivery of accurate information mainly from the government (Jin et al., 2006, 2007; Qui & Cameron, 2005). In this regard, media play a supporting role for the government, assisting in the dissemination of warnings and updates in a timely manner, preventing further spread of infections, and further, encouraging public reflection on the reform of related policies.

In this case of salmonella-tainted tomatoes, uncertainty about the source of the outbreak created a tension between the government and the tomato industry around food safety systems. However, on top of media's role in promoting the flow of relevant information about food contamination occurrences, the results of content analysis suggested the potential role of media in drawing public attention to the reform of related policies and facilitating the formation of public opinion and social consensus on the needs for new regulations and enforcement of existing laws. Although the intensity of discussion regarding policy and regulation did not turn out to be phenomenal (see Table 10), the news articles addressed many flaws regarding the health-threatening outbreak from a social and political perspective. For example, in addition to the on-going crisis itself, news articles demonstrated budget problems in public health, lack of state resources for public health, the tension between Congress and federal health agencies (e.g., FDA), problems with increased produce imports, and flaws in the current food-safety plan and produce traceback system (e.g., paper-based tracking system, produce repacking from multiple sources, complicated distribution system). At the same time, news articles also highlighted diverse solutions for overcoming these problems, such as legislative actions to improve the current food safety policy to strengthen the authority of the FDA, mandatory food-safety regulations, enhancement of financial and human resources in related areas, and advanced traceback systems (e.g., computerized record system). Content analysis also revealed that several news stories were devoted to investigating the issue in a broad social context, including food safety systems (e.g., Fulton, 2008; Schmit, 2008; Shin, 2008). Such attempts of news media are believed not only to help build public opinion regarding the issue, but also to facilitate social consensus for subsequent actions (e.g., legislative actions). In fact, the outbreak of salmonella became a focus of consideration again and accelerated dialogue when discussion of food irradiation rose in the public sphere in late August. From this standpoint, the outbreak of an illness is not only an eye-catching developing story; but it is also a trigger for public conversation. The role of news media should be considered in such a social context.

However, this study also suggests some points that the media may consider for reporting similar crises in the future. This study found that information delivered by newspapers was heavily focused on governmental sources, while consumers were considerably disregarded. It is also noteworthy that of the information given by government agencies, statistics about the salmonella outbreak and the agencies' investigative efforts were the prominent content, while only 6.9% of the news articles provided general knowledge about the salmonella infection, such as symptoms and preventive techniques. A news article in *The Washington Post* titled "Digesting the Alert and Staying Safe" (June 11, 2008) was one of a few articles that primarily addressed prevention and detection issues regarding the salmonella outbreak. By presenting the information provided by the FDA in a Q&A format, this article provided its readers with valuable information about the illness itself. We hope to see more such types of information in news

reports of food-borne illnesses. Considering news coverage to be an educational tool for promoting public health, general information about diseases is essential. When people are involved in the issue and pay significant attention to it, knowledge gained from newspapers could be more effective, and what people learn is likely to be incorporated in their lives afterwards.

This study also points out that media coverage of post-crisis and pre-crisis phases has been extremely neglected. Given the possibility of a variety of food-borne illnesses in the recent decades and its potential impact on the public health, continuous attention of media to the issues is desirable. News coverage should be not only a reactive report of the developing illness, but also a guideline for preventing future illnesses. David Acheson, FDA associate commissioner for food protection, summarized this idea, stating, “The key is not to react but to prevent” (*cited in Schmit (2008)*).

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

By examining news coverage of salmonella-tainted tomatoes, this study shed light on the dynamics of the government’s strategic crisis management in a national food-borne illness. However, this study has limitations. This study only employed content analysis of newspaper coverage of the salmonella crisis. Future research may include news releases of the federal agencies and transcripts of conference calls to better understand the government’s responses to the crisis before they are filtered through media gatekeeping. By combining these raw materials with media coverage, the results are expected to more comprehensively show how the government handled the crisis and how the media functioned in the crisis. Additionally, examination of other channels of information (e.g., television news, the Internet) would also be meaningful. For example, how related information was circulated in popular social network websites during the crisis and how the shared information led to public discussion on the problems and solutions regarding the food safety issues would be an important venue for supporting the research questions posited in the current study. Also, how either TV news or local newspapers portrayed the same issue, compared to national newspapers, would be an interesting topic. Presumably, for example, TV news and local newspapers may have used more sources of consumers or consumer organizations. In fact, we attempted to examine the local newspapers in Texas and New Mexico, where the outbreak was initially reported, as opposed to national newspapers. However, a Lexis-Nexis search did not bring forth any local news articles regarding the issue. Therefore, why it was the case would be another study to worthy investigating.

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How Intrinsic and External News Factors Affect Health Journalists' Cognitive and Behavioral Attitudes toward Media Relations

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Using a nationwide survey of 309 U.S. newspaper health journalists, this study examines how intrinsic and extrinsic news factors influence journalists' perceptions and use of public relations materials. Health topics, reliance on medical journals, and metropolitan market predict how journalists view corporate pharmacy media relations, while reliance on other media influences how journalists use public relations materials.

Introduction

The study of the interaction between journalists and public relations practitioners has focused on misperceptions about their relationship and the potential for conflict in that relationship (Shin & Cameron, 2003, 2005). A recent study using content analysis examined how external factors influenced the description of public relations in U.S. newspapers (Lim & Bae, in press). However, only a few studies have examined the relationship between journalists and public relations practitioners in health journalism. Previous studies on the health journalists' source selection in health reporting describe the probabilities of health journalists' reliance on public relations materials compared to other resources and show that health journalists get initial ideas mostly from health care provider, followed by press releases, press conferences, wire service reports, and medical journals (Viswanath, et al., 2008).

The present study advances research in this area by analyzing data from a nationwide survey of 309 U.S. newspaper health journalists about their cognitive and behavioral attitudes toward public relations materials and explores how these attitudes are influenced by individual-level, media-routine, and organizational-level factors. Previous survey research examining the attitudes of health journalists working for different types of news media found that newspaper journalists are more skeptical about public relations resources than television and magazine journalists (Len-Rios et al., in press). However, little attention has been paid to exploring the intrinsic and external predictors influencing newspaper journalists' skeptical views of public relations resources.

The purpose of this study is to examine the influences of intrinsic and external news factors (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996) on newspaper health journalists' attitudes toward corporate pharmacy media relations and behaviors in using public relations materials. These factors consist of 3 types: 1) individual-level factors (a journalists' gender, personal interest in health, educational background, and level of journalistic experience); 2) media-routine factors (news topics, use of medical journals, and reliance on other media); and 3) organizational-level factors (newspaper market size).

This study specifically focuses on health journalists' attitudes toward corporate pharmacy media relations, which is defined as a news release distributed by a public relations agency representing local in-store pharmacies. Most survey research on health journalists' reliance on public relations materials categorizes public relations resources too broadly, such as a website or print materials, and focuses on government's or public health organizations' websites and press releases. However, this research elucidates the meaning of public relations resources and examines how corporate pharmacy media relations is viewed and influenced by factors endemic to journalists' news production process.

Theoretically, this study investigates health journalists' gatekeeping role by looking at the relationship between intrinsic or external news factors and journalists' self-reported behavior regarding public relations materials. Also, this study provides meaningful practical implications to media relations professionals working in a public relations agency representing the pharmaceutical companies as their clients.

Literature Review

Source-Reporter Relationships

In the context of gatekeeping, it would seem that journalists and public relations practitioners would play opposing roles—with public relations professionals seeking to deliver their messages to journalists' news audiences and with journalists resisting those messages as to avoid the appearance of bias. In reality, public relations professionals provide a service to journalists by putting them in contact with news sources and supplying them with story ideas and background material at little cost (Curtin, 1999). In fact, some research indicates that a larger proportion of journalists view their relationships with practitioners as positive rather than neutral or negative (Sallot & Johnson, 2006). Other research has found that journalists and public relations practitioners misperceive each other. In a survey of journalists and PR practitioners, Shin and Cameron (2005) found “a tendency to perceive the other profession as a source of conflict in the source-reporter relationship although each profession actually shows some degree of accommodation or collaboration to the other profession” (p. 325). Also, scholars suggest that while journalists may say they dislike public relations practitioners in general, they are likely to say that they interact well with the public relations practitioners they know (Cameron, Sallot, & Curtin, 1997). Furthermore, a study of how three large newspapers reported on the field of public relations found that while PR was most often defined by its media relations function, the field was depicted more favorably more often than not (Bishop, 1988). Business, entertainment, and health publicity were the three topics to receive the most positive treatment in newspaper content.

Numerous studies confirm that many journalists rely on and use public relations materials to create news content (De Semir, Ribas, & Revuelta, 1988; Morton, 1986, 1988; Morton & Warren, 1992; Turk, 1986; Walters & Walters, 1992). It has been argued that health journalists may be more likely to use public relations materials because of the technical nature and specialization required to understand health issues (Cho & Cameron, 2007).

Factors Affecting News Selection and Content

Reviewing the intrinsic and external news factors as outlined by Shoemaker and Reese (1996) and exploring how these factors have been used to explain journalist attitudes and behavior in preceding studies further illuminates the foundation for this research. There are five levels in a communication setting that may influence media content: individual, routines of

media work, organizational, social/institutional (extramedia) and ideological. While Shoemaker and Reese (1996) have charted how these different levels might influence media content, we examine how they might influence attitudes and behaviors, which subsequently affect media content. In this study we focus on the first three levels and how they influence health journalists' thoughts and behaviors toward public relations material.

The first level, the individual level, covers factors that are intrinsic to the journalist, which include gender, personal interest in health, education, and professional experience, among others. It is worth noting that health is something that journalists do experience in their personal lives and so they might maintain stronger beliefs on this subject than they would on topics that do not affect them directly. According to Shoemaker and Reese (1996), these individual-level characteristics directly and indirectly shape media content. Gender and personal interest in health would have an indirect influence and be limited by professional values and organizational routines. Education and professional experience would have a direct effect on media content because they shape professional roles and ethics. As to how much influence these individual factors have, the consensus from Shoemaker and Reese (1996) and Weaver and Wilhoit (1996) is that the influence is limited unless the individuals have the power to influence media routines in their organizations. It is important to empirically measure these influences in research.

The second level of influence on media content is work routines, which include "those patterned, routinized, repeated practices and forms that media workers use to do their jobs" (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, p. 105). The benefit of these routines is typically increased efficiency, less uncertainty, and overall consistency with a media product. Health journalists have systems to help them distill the sea of medical information. As with political news organization rules and procedures, these "quasi-natural" rules (Cook, 1998, p. 71) offer a means to an end. Notable *New York Times* health and science journalist Gina Kolata (2003) describes in her book how she receives hundreds of press releases each week, some based on good science, but many based on inadequate, unreliable research. She writes about "hucksters who promote programs with not even a pretense of objective evidence" (p. 11), studies with miniscule sample sizes and no control group, and data that are statistically insignificant. The work routines of the health journalist help him or her to separate the good science from the bad science and to predict which stories will resonate with readers.

One of the variables in news routines is news values, which reflect what journalists think audience members find interesting and important (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). In this research, we ask health journalists about the topics they frequently cover in order to reveal which subject matter has news value within their routines. As part of their news routines, it is likely that health journalists typify information to be a story about cancer, diabetes, heart disease, etc... just as Tuchman's (1973) news journalists had typifications for hard news, soft news, and so forth. The health topics that journalists repeatedly cover show that the organization finds these topics to be inherently appealing, so they may influence behavior and attitudes toward public relations. Additionally, the way in which health journalists deal with raw material, or external sources and suppliers of news is the second variable we analyze within news routines. Sources take many forms, including expert interviews, press releases, journal articles, and lay people interviews. Shoemaker and Reese (1996) point out that public relations in particular has been a key part of systemizing connections between journalists and institutions. We ask what kind of influence their source preferences as a news routine have on journalists' behaviors and attitudes. A final variable in work routines that we examine is the reliance on other media, also called intermedia agenda-setting and sometimes derided as "pack journalism." Looking for consensus on what is

news provides consistency across news organizations and helps a journalist avoid error. This kind of intermedia influence could be just as valuable to health journalists as political news journalists because they face the constant flow of medical science news as well as the challenge of weighing the rigor and veracity of such news.

The third level of influence on media content that Shoemaker and Reese (1996) illuminate is that of the organization, which is more macro in scope than the previous two levels. Qualities of a news organization affect how it is bureaucratically structured and how it meets economic goals. One variable within organizations is the market they serve. Whether a news outlet serves a national, metropolitan, or community audience means that it will have different organization roles and structure and will seek to gain financial benefits from different types of markets. This could in turn influence attitudes and behaviors of the health journalists working for the organization.

Studies have analyzed individual-level factors, media-routine factors, and organizational factors that influence how reporters do their jobs, but less is known about how these factors may be specifically related to the use of public relations. Studies in journalism have examined how individual-level factors affect journalists' decisions. Research on the topic of gender has been mixed. Some research has found that reporter gender sometimes influences news content (Armstrong, 2004; Zeldes, Fico, & Diddi, 2007) and is associated with certain types of news stories, while other research has found no or weak associations (Everbach, 2005). For instance, Rodgers and Thorson (2003) found gender effects for news routines in the use of sources, but the newspaper market factors mitigated some of those differences with fewer distinctions between male and female reporters in the larger circulation markets.

With regard to health reporting specifically, Corbett and Mori (1999) examined television news story content about cancer from 1975 to 1995 and found that male reporters reported more often on gender-specific cancers and tended to use more medical research in their reports whereas female reporters' stories were more likely to include celebrities. In a study of hormone replacement therapy stories, researchers (Nelson & Signorielli, 2007) found that female reporters wrote nearly three-quarters of the stories and used a "self-help" frame more than twice as often as did males. Male reporters, however, were almost four times as likely to use an "economic" frame to their stories than were females. Other research on reporter gender and reporting on gender-specific cancer stories in general audience and Black newspapers found no association between reporter gender and staff written stories about cancer or gender-specific cancers (Len-Ríos, Park, Cameron, Luke, & Kreuter, 2008). However, there has been little research in the public relations literature that we are aware of that specifically tests the association between health reporters' gender and acceptance of public relations materials. Only a few studies have examined the relationship between reporter gender and the tone of frames of public relations in the U.S. newspaper coverage of broad topics (Lim & Bae, in press) and the relationship between Indonesian journalists' gender and the use of public relations materials (Sinaga & Wu, 2007).

Journalistic experience and media routines have also been thought to be associated with journalists' attitudes and behaviors. One study of Indonesian journalists shows that those with more experience were more likely to use public relations sources for story ideas (Sinaga & Wu, 2007). The same study did not show gender effects or education effects for the use of public relations materials. However, little research has evaluated whether journalistic experience is related to health journalists' attitudes and behaviors toward public relations sources. Viswanath et al. (2008) simply showed the profiles of U.S. health journalists from a 2005 national survey of health journalists and described that more than one-third of U.S. health journalists had more than

20 years journalistic experience. Turk (1986) found that media-routine factors were more prominent than organizational factors in the use of public relations materials for print journalists. She discovered that identifying the newsworthiness of the materials had more sway on journalists' news selection choices than did staff size. Similarly, Berkowitz (1990) found that local television journalists were more apt to select stories that were timely and had great impact. As for market size, some research has indicated that newspaper market size does affect news release acceptance rates (Curtin, 1999), while other research has found that newspaper and TV market size do not predict attitudes towards public relations practitioners or PR materials (Cameron & Blount, 1996; Pincus, Rimmer, Rayfield, & Cropp, 1993).

Research of how the news factors influence perception and use of public relations materials shows significant results from the effects of reliance on medical journals and other media. In tracking scientific journal press releases and subsequent newspaper coverage, Kiernan (2003) found that coverage of a journal article was principally determined by whether the Associated Press picked it up. Kiernan clarifies that newspapers would often run original stories, instead of just running the AP story. Although public relations efforts through the press releases seemed to have no direct effects on newspaper coverage, they were successful when using the channel of the wire service. "When it comes to breaking news about scientific research, newspapers try to make sure that they cover the stories that other newspapers cover. The goal is not to be different, but to be the same" (Kiernan, 2003, p. 917). The present research also questions whether reliance on medical journals and other media has an effect on behaviors toward public relations material.

More recently, Tanner (2004) conducted a national survey of television health journalists and found that the most frequently used sources for story ideas were personal contacts from public relations practitioners and news releases. She also found that actual story selection was determined more by journalists' perceptions of the audience's interest in the story, and this did not vary by TV market size. She did find, however, that the experience level of the journalists appeared to be associated with perceptions of news source influence on story content.

Conversely, results of a national survey of 774 health journalists working for a variety of media found that journalists reported relying more on other news media and their own personal interest in determining story ideas, although they said they still used public relations resources (Len-Ríos, Hinnant, et al., 2008). An analysis of a subset of that data by Len-Ríos, Hinnant and Park (In press) examined journalistic rules for using public relations materials. They found that the rules for using public relations materials varied by media. Newspaper and freelance journalists reported that they viewed it as more inappropriate to use government news releases than did magazine, trade publication, or television health journalists. In addition, they found that news markets served and experience level influenced perceptions of news release material. National journalists were less likely to say it was appropriate for them to use news releases from a local university or local state health department, and newspaper journalists with more experience were more likely to say it was inappropriate to use news release material from a local in-store pharmacy. However, the differences between highly experienced and less experienced newspaper journalists in their attitudes toward public relations do not reveal that journalistic experience is a significant predictor of newspaper journalists' attitudes toward corporate pharmacy media relations. Moreover, journalistic experience or news markets may not predict actual use of public relations materials in health reporting. Other individual characteristics or media-routine factors may better account for journalists' attitudes toward corporate pharmacy

public relations or behaviors in using public relations materials when looked at in combination with other factors.

Previous studies found that medical journals and press releases are highly selected resources by health journalists across all types of media (Viswanath et al., 2008; Weitkamp, 2003). However, the intertwined relationship between reliance on medical journals or other media and journalists' attitudes or behaviors towards public relations materials has not been studied. Research to date suggests that health journalists do rely on public relations practitioners to produce news content, but that there may be individual level differences (e.g., experience), media-routine factors (e.g., reliance on other media), and organizational factors (markets served) that affect use of public relations materials. Thus, we present the following research questions:

RQ1: Will individual-level factors (gender, personal interest in health, educational background, and level of journalistic experience) predict how health newspaper journalists perceive corporate pharmacy media relations and use public relations materials?

RQ2: Will media-routine factors (news topics, use of medical journals, and reliance on other media) predict how health newspaper journalists perceive corporate pharmacy media relations and use public relations materials?

RQ3: Will newspaper market size as an organizational-level factor predict how health newspaper journalists perceive corporate pharmacy media relations and use public relations materials?

RQ4: Which of the three-level factors will be the strongest predictor of health newspaper journalists' attitudes toward corporate pharmacy media relations and behaviors in using public relations materials?

Method

A professional research center at a Midwestern university conducted the survey between January-February 2008. The survey questioned health journalists about their attitudes, opinions, and newsgathering behaviors. The Association of Health Care Journalists developed a sampling frame using Bacon's Media directory online of the names of 2,966 health journalists, of which 2,805 were valid. The final response rate for the survey was 61.9% using standards by the American Association of Public Opinion Researchers. The final number of eligible completed surveys of newspaper journalists was $N = 309$.

Predictor Variables

Individual-level variables. Individual level variables included the journalists' gender, their use of their own personal interest or that of someone on staff in health generating story ideas (7 = very often; 1 = not at all), training in health reporting (yes or no), and years of journalistic experience.

News-routine variables. Variables that represented media news routines were news topics, use of medical journals, and reliance on other media for story ideas. For news topics, journalists were asked if they ever wrote stories about cancer, heart disease, nutrition/fitness/diabetes prevention, mental illness, healthcare policy, and strokes. Use of medical journals was measured by asking journalists whether they often get health "story ideas from a medical journal" with the response category (7 = very often; 1 = not at all). Reliance on other media was measured by

“how often do you get story ideas from reading newspapers or other news publications” (7 = very often; 1 = not at all).

Organizational variables. Newspaper market size was used to represent the organizational-level factor. To determine the newspaper market size that the journalists served, they were asked whether they served a (1) national, (2) metropolitan, or (3) small community audience.

Criterion Variables

The two outcome behaviors measured were *health journalists' attitudes* and *health journalists' behaviors*. Journalists' attitude toward corporate pharmacy media relations was measured by asking journalists how appropriate “developing a story about local in-store pharmacies from a news release sent by a public relations agency representing the pharmacies” (7 = highly appropriate; 1 = highly inappropriate). Journalists' behavior in using public relations materials was measured by asking how often journalists get story ideas from “a public relations person who pitches a story” (7 = very often; 1 = not at all).

Findings

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the profiles of respondents in this survey. Almost 62% of the respondents were female reporters, while 38% were male reporters. The average years of journalistic experience reported by journalists was 19 years. Nearly 20% of the respondents had had special training in health reporting. In addition, 6% of the respondents worked for national media markets, 52% worked for metropolitan media markets, and 42% worked for small community media markets.

To answer RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3, a series of stepwise regression analyses were used. The analysis was set up to separately examine each of the three sets of predictor variables: individual-level factors, media-routine factors, and organizational-level factors on the criterion variables. For RQ4, a hierarchical regression was conducted to explore the relative strengths of all of the independent variables found statistically significant in the previous regression analyses.

RQ1 asked whether individual-level factors, such as gender, personal interest in health, educational background, and level of journalistic experience, would predict health newspaper journalists' attitudes toward corporate pharmacy media relations and behaviors in using public relations materials. As a result, none of the individual-level factors were entered into the regression equation. In other words, none of the individual-level factors were significant predictors of both attitude and behavior criteria variables in the regression analyses. Thus, both health newspaper journalists' attitudes toward corporate pharmacy media relations and behaviors in using public relations materials were not predicted by individual-level factors. However, it should be noted that journalists' gender correlated with the frequency of using public relations practitioners who pitch a story for their health story ideas ($r = .11$; $p < .05$). Specifically, female journalists say they got health story ideas from public relations materials more frequently than male journalists. Nonetheless, according to the regression tests conducted in this study, journalists' gender did not contribute significantly to frequency of using information from a public relations practitioner's pitch.

Second, RQ2 addressed whether media-routine factors, such as news topics, use of medical journals, and reliance on other media, would predict health newspaper journalists' attitudes toward corporate pharmacy media relations and behaviors in using public relations

materials. When examining influences of media-routine factors on health newspaper journalists' attitudes toward corporate pharmacy media relations, only two predictors were entered (See Table 1). Health news topic (stroke and stroke prevention) and the use of medical journals were the only significant predictor variables of health journalists' attitudes toward corporate pharmacy media relations. According to the results, health journalists who covered strokes or stroke prevention held negative attitudes toward using a news release provided by a public relations agency representing the pharmacies ($B = -.68$; $SE = .20$; $p < .001$), and frequency of using medical journals was positively related to health newspaper journalists' attitudes toward corporate pharmacy media relations ($B = .16$; $SE = .06$; $p < .01$). So, the more frequently health journalists get health information from medical journals, the more favorably journalists felt towards corporate pharmacy media relations. Even though other health topics (i.e., heart disease, obesity, mental illness, and healthcare policy) correlated with journalists' attitudes toward the use of a news release sent by public relations agency representing the pharmacies, those health topics did not contribute significantly to journalists' attitudes toward corporate pharmacy media relations.

Regarding the influences of media-routine factors on health journalists' behaviors in using public relations materials, only one variable was entered into the regression equation (See Table 2). The results showed that the reliance on other media was a significant predictor of health journalists' behavior in using a public relations practitioner who pitches a story for their health story ideas ($B = .42$; $SE = .06$; $p < .001$). Apparently, reliance on other media accounted for more than one-third of the variance in the regression model ($R^2 = .37$). The more frequently health journalists read other newspapers and news publications, the more often they get health story ideas from a public relations person who pitches a story. In contrast to the attitude criterion variable, neither health topics nor the use of medical journals correlated to the behavior criterion variable—frequency of using public relations materials.

Third, RQ3 asked whether newspaper market size as an organizational-level factor would predict health newspaper journalists' attitudes toward corporate pharmacy media relations and behaviors in using public relations materials. The first stepwise regression was conducted to examine whether the newspaper market size that health journalists served predicted health journalists' attitudes toward using a news release sent by public relations agency representing the pharmacies. Health newspaper journalists' perception of corporate pharmacy media relations was regressed on newspaper market size: national audience, metropolitan audience, and small community audience market. As seen in Table 3, only one newspaper market size, metropolitan audience market, was a predictor of health journalists' attitude toward corporate pharmacy media relations ($B = .61$; $SE = .20$; $p < .01$). Whether or not health newspaper journalists serve a metropolitan audience was positively related to their attitudes toward corporate pharmacy media relations. In other words, health newspaper journalists who served a metropolitan market thought using a news release sent by public relations practitioners representing the pharmacies was more appropriate. Additionally, a descriptive analysis of our data showed that the average of respondents thought corporate pharmacy media relations was somewhat inappropriate ($M = 3.01$, $S.D. = 1.77$). Indeed, health journalists who served national markets ($M = 3.19$, $S.D. = 2.00$) and small community markets ($M = 2.67$, $S.D. = 1.54$) evaluated corporate pharmacy media relations as less appropriate compared to journalists who served a metropolitan audience ($M = 3.33$, $S.D. = 1.87$). However, in regards to the second dependant variable, journalists' behaviors in using public relations materials, a result of the second stepwise regression analysis, in which the behavior criterion variable was regressed on newspaper market size, showed that none of three

newspaper markets was a predictor of health journalists' behaviors in using public relations materials.

Finally, a hierarchical regression was conducted to answer RQ4 about the relative strengths of all of the independent variables found statistically significant in the previous regression analyses. In the previous analyses, three variables were significant predictors of health journalists' attitudes toward corporate pharmacy media relations and only one factor, reliance on other media, was a significant predictor of health journalists' behaviors in using public relations materials. Since the reliance on other media was the only important predictor of the second criterion variable, health journalists' behaviors in using public relations materials, only the first criterion variable, health journalists' attitudes toward corporate pharmacy media relations, was regressed on three independent variables: 1) health topic (stroke), 2) frequency of using medical journals as media-routine factors, and 3) market size as an organizational-level factor. Three predictors were entered in the regression equation one at a time. As a result, all three variables that were significant predictors of health journalists' attitudes toward corporate pharmacy media relations in the previous analyses remained statistically significant when they were examined simultaneously in this model (Table 4). Specifically, journalists who reported on writing about strokes served as the strongest predictor ($\beta = -.17$; $p < .01$), followed by metropolitan market size and the use of medical journals. More specifically, health journalists who had covered stroke or stroke prevention stories were more likely to regard corporate pharmacy media relations as inappropriate. On the other hand, frequency of using medical journals ($\beta = .13$; $p < .05$) and whether or not health journalists serve metropolitan media market ($\beta = .13$; $p < .05$) accounted for a similar proportion of the variance in health journalists' attitudes toward corporate pharmacy media relations. As explained earlier, the more often health journalists use medical journals for their health story ideas, the more favorably they felt towards corporate pharmacy media relations. In addition, health journalists who worked for metropolitan media markets are more likely to believe that corporate pharmacy media relations is appropriate.

Discussion

In terms of how the news factors affect journalists' attitudes and behaviors toward public relations material, our findings reinforce findings from previous research. First, we examined four individual level characteristics; two that would have direct effects, education and level of journalistic experience, and two that would have indirect effects on media content, gender and personal interest in health. The idea that the influence of gender and personal interest in health is limited (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996) is supported in that gender and personal interest in health were not significant predictors. Gender, however, correlated with being receptive to story idea pitches, which provides some support to Lim and Bae's (in press) findings that women were more positive about public relations material. Even though this study found that female reporters more frequently use public relations materials for their health story ideas compared to male reporters, reporter gender was not a significant determinant of behaviors in using public relations materials in health reporting. The other individual-level characteristics, which were health journalists' education and level of journalistic experience, would be expected to have more predictive power than personal characteristics because Shoemaker and Reese (1996) point out that they shape professional roles and ethics. However, journalists' education and level of journalistic experience did not significantly predict attitudes toward corporate pharmacy media relations. In this study, the four individual-level variables did not appear to have

much influence, whether direct or indirect. There are likely other factors, beyond individual-level characteristics, that predict journalists' attitudes and behaviors toward public relations materials.

The second level of influence, which is that of media routines, did show predictive power. These news values were predicted by reporting on the health news topic of stroke and stroke prevention, and use of medical journals. The health news topic of strokes could be different from the other health topics in that there is low public understanding of stroke and stroke prevention (Greenlund, et al., 2003). It is possible (though it deserves further exploration) that there are not many public relations campaigns devoted to strokes and stroke prevention, which would help explain the low public recognition of the strokes. If health journalists who cover stroke and stroke prevention were not accustomed to receiving public relations material, this unfamiliarity could breed discomfort with the material. Our data found that a minority of health journalists had covered strokes. Fully 41% of respondents said they had not reported on strokes. This was relatively high compared with journalists who said they had not reported on other health topics [i.e., cancer (16 %) heart disease (16.6 %), obesity (12%), mental illness (26.1%), and healthcare policy (35.7%)]. Thus, a lack of specialization of health journalists in reporting on strokes compared with other health topics may also provide an explanation for the negative view of using pharmacy public relations materials.

Along the same lines, the journalists who reported more frequently using medical journals more frequently for story ideas in their media routines would likely be very familiar with the news releases that the medical journals themselves distribute, which would lead to evaluating the use of public relations information as appropriate. As an extension of previous research on health journalists' use of medical journals and reliance on public relations resources, this study revealed the interconnected relationship between reliance on medical journals and journalists' attitudes towards public relations materials. It is generally considered that deadline pressure is one of the reasons why journalists rely on medical journals or public relations materials (Catalán Matamoros, Axelsson, & Strid, 2007; Viswanath, et al., 2008; Weitkamp, 2003). Because of the high credibility of medical journals, health journalists also prefer to use medical journals as sources for their stories (Conrad, 1999; Viswanath, et al., 2008). It may also be that medical journals are one of the counterbalancing sources to corporate sources of information when it comes to understanding the efficacy of drug effectiveness since the information from medical journals is peer reviewed. Also, when health journalists rely on medical journals, they might need to reshape complex and difficult health topics for a broad range of audiences. Thus, it is possible that frequent use of medical journals lead to positive attitudes toward the use of all public relations resources because they have a better understanding of the information. With regard to health journalists' behavior in connection with public relations, the finding that reliance on other media meant an increased likelihood of using public relations practitioners for story ideas makes sense. If health journalists are already looking to other media in order to decide what is news, this routine could seamlessly extend to looking to public relations practitioners for help in deciding what is news.

Finally, organizational factors, which are part of the third level of influence, showed predictive power in terms of health journalists' attitudes toward corporate pharmacy media relations. The finding showed that health journalists who serve a metropolitan market were more accepting of news releases from a public relations agency representing the pharmacies. One explanation might be that health journalists have different news values depending on the media market journalists serve. Metropolitan markets are bigger than small community markets and have different publication schedules as well as purposes and goals. Small community markets

tend to cater to community news and hyper-local information and are often bi-weekly or weekly. That means they have less news hole to give to things that are not specifically local events or activities. National media tend toward covering public health stories with national implications and would be less likely to write about local in-store pharmacies as regularly as a metropolitan area that may have many pharmacy chain stores in its metro area, which would increase the news value of the story's "impact."

The characteristic that makes this research unique is that we have looked at how Shoemaker and Reese (1996)'s first three levels influence an entity that is on the fourth level because public relations campaigns are considered an extramedia source. Instead of looking at the effects of lower level factors on media content, we look to their effects on another intermediate level, which in turn affects content. This study revealed that media-routine levels are the most influential factor on this source within the extramedia level, because media-routine factors consistently influenced both health journalists' attitudes toward corporate pharmacy media relations materials and the use of public relations materials. Under the news production process in health journalism, this study specifically looked at corporate pharmacy's media relations, which is differently rated by health journalists compared to news releases from the government or public health agencies (Len-Ríos, Hinnant, et al., 2008). In sum, not only did this study clearly specify the category of public relations resources, but it also explored factors in predicting health journalists' evaluations of acceptance of corporate pharmacy media relations as well as their use of public relations materials.

The present study also provides practical implications to media relations practitioners working for corporate pharmaceutical industries. In light of the significant role that journalists' use of medical journals has on attitudes toward corporate pharmacy media relations, public relations practitioners should contact health journalists who already use medical journals as sources in their stories because they may be more receptive to corporate pharmacy media relations. Additionally, health journalists' reliance on other media significantly predicts behaviors in using public relations materials. Thus, distributing news releases to a broad range of news media or targeting bellwether news media in health journalism would be important for media relations professionals to maximize their potential to reach audiences.

One possible limitation is that this study is based on the data from a survey on health journalists' self-reported behaviors regarding the use of public relations materials. It is possible that actual behaviors in using public relations materials during the journalistic news selection process are different from our survey results. Thus, future research should compare a survey result with a content analysis of health news in order to shed a light on the relationship between health journalists and public relations practitioners working for the corporate pharmacy media relations. In addition, other variables representing Shoemaker and Reese's (1996) factors should be measured. There could be other factors not measured here that relate to why newspaper health journalists who report on pharmacies would turn to medical journals. Future research should also explore these other factors.

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Table 1

Regression analysis for media-routine factors on health journalists' attitudes toward corporate pharmacy media relations

Variables	B	SE	β
Health Topic: Stroke (yes = 1)	-.68***	0.20	-.19
Use of medical journals	.16**	0.06	.15
Non significant variables			
Reliance on other media	.07		
Health Topic: Cancer	-.06		
Health Topic: Heart disease	-.05		
Health Topic: Obesity	-.08		
Health Topic: Mental illness	-.09		
Health Topic: Health policy	.08		

*Note: $R^2 = .224$. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.*

Table 2

Regression analysis for media-routine factors on health journalists' behaviors in using public relations materials

Variables	B	SE	β
Reliance on other media	.42***	0.06	.37
Non significant variables			
Use of medical journals	.03		
Health Topic: Cancer	.04		
Health Topic: Heart disease	.08		
Health Topic: Obesity	.03		
Health Topic: Mental illness	.01		
Health Topic: Health policy	.03		
Health Topic: Stroke	.10		

*Note: $R^2 = .371$. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.*

Table 3

Regression analysis for newspaper market size as an organizational-level factor on health journalists' attitudes toward corporate pharmacy media relations

Variables	B	SE	β
Metropolitan market (yes = 1)	.61**	0.20	.172
Non significant variables			
National market	.06		
Small community media	-.05		

Note: $R^2 = .172$. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 4

Regression analysis of all variables on health journalists' attitudes toward corporate pharmacy media relations

Variables	Health journalists' attitude		
	B	SE	β
Media-routine factors			
Health Topic: Stroke (yes = 1)	-.62**	.20	-.17
Use of medical journals	.13*	.06	.13
Organizational-level factor			
Metropolitan market	.45*	.20	.13

Note: $R^2 = .259$. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Community Relations and OPR: In Search for a New Approach to Local Corporate Community Initiatives

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Abstract

The rising importance of Corporate Social Responsibility in Colombia, following a well-established global trend of businesses committing to social, economic and environmental sustainability, has contributed significantly to pressure private local businesses to take on a greater role as corporate citizens and assume a more proactive approach within the communities in which they are operate.

In seeking to respond to this demand, every day the number of medium and large businesses carrying out community initiatives increases in the city of Barranquilla. However, while a considerable number of these companies declare to have adopted CSR policies, important deficiencies in the way they relate to their stakeholders can be detected, and there is little analysis by which to assess how the engagement process is perceived by the publics the companies seek to reach out to.

The study will analyze the organization–public relationship (OPR) among three companies and the local community of Barranquilla, Colombia. The interest is to explore the organizations' attitudes towards community involvement, the practices of these corporations for building relationships with the community, and how these relationships are perceived by the community. In-depth interviews and focus groups will be conducted with both companies and community members. Hon and J. Grunig's relational elements such as trust, control mutuality, commitment and satisfaction will be examined as they relate to relationship building and maintenance.

Introduction

The current working scenario where corporations find themselves today, is no longer a world where purchasing decision are made solely based on criteria such as affordability and convenience for consumers. Today, more than ever , corporations are faced with the reality that their decisions and actions are being closely monitor by more educated consumers, who not only expect, but more often are starting to demand, socially responsible behavior from the corporations they chose to relate, and give their business to. Interests in the role of businesses in society have been promoted by increased sensitivity to, and awareness of, environmental and ethical issues such as improper treatment of workers, child labor, environmental problems and consumer welfare.

Because the idea that businesses are obliged to take responsibility for the consequences of their actions, as well as to make contributions to the societies of which they are a part, the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility has increasingly moved up in the organizations' strategic agenda, from an assistentialist approach to business to a prime management value. The changing expectations of companies to become good corporate citizens have allowed the integration of CSR into the core culture of major corporations over the past few years.

The KPMG International survey of Corporate Responsibility Reporting 2008 states that three-quarters of the top 250 companies listed in Fortune Global 500 (G250) for the year 2007 have a corporate responsibility strategy that includes defined objectives, and that 63 percent of them use a structured approach to stakeholder dialogue, up from 33 percent in 2005. In the midst of this global transformation, corporations worldwide are engaging in some form of corporate citizenship actions, for a variety of reason ranging from ethical to reputational, political as well as philosophical (Young & Burlingame, 1996).

Following in the steps of corporations in economically developed countries, current trends in Latin America include the deepening of CSR models, the extension of CSR practices to small and medium-size enterprises, an increase in cross-sector alliances, and the building of relational capital through the development of grassroots organizations (Gutierrez & Jones, 2004)

In Barranquilla, Colombia - the case has been no different. The rising importance of Corporate Social Responsibility, has contributed significantly to pressure private local businesses to take on new roles as corporate citizens and assume a more proactive approach within the communities in which they operate. Due to the deep implications of being socially responsible, every day the number of medium and large businesses carrying out corporate community initiatives increases.

However, as in the rest of Latin America, where distance and distrust make it difficult for businesses to assess community needs develop plans to address these needs, and learn from the processes (Gutierrez & Jones, 2004), while a considerable number of companies in Barranquilla, Colombia declare to have adopted a policy of CSR, important deficiencies in the way they relate to their stakeholders can be detected. Specifically, they have difficulty identifying to whom their CS programs should be directed to, and many do not understand clearly the needs and demands of their stakeholders. (Mejia, 2008)

Drawing upon the concepts of OPR and Stakeholder Engagement, this research explores how local private companies create, maintain and enhance relationships with their communities, based on their Corporate Community Involvement practices. The premise of this research is that effective community relations should meet the needs of both the organization and its key community constituencies (Ledingham & Bruning, 2001).

A case study methodology will examine examples of three firms in Barranquilla, Colombia, that have demonstrated a clear desire to become socially responsible. By closely examining a relatively small number of cases, and comparing and contrasting them, the researcher learns about significant features of the phenomenon and how it varies under different circumstances (Yin, 1994).

The significance of this study lies in investigating the stakeholder process, as it is being practiced in Barranquilla's private sector, in order to develop a framework that will allow local companies to reinforce their community relations efforts, based on a stakeholder engagement program that is not only suited to their local contexts and stakeholders' needs, but that can be both tied to the companies' strategic planning and their commitment to social transformation.

Literature Review

The concept of Social Responsibility

In a world of changing expectations, the perceptions of a corporation's social responsibility have evolved enormously in the last decades. From Friedman's famous article for the *New York Times Magazine* - stating that the only one social responsibility of business is to

increase its profits (Friedman, 1970) - to meeting legal compliance, philanthropic giving, and management based on transparency and credibility- the argument about a company's accountability for its decisions and actions has always been on the table.

In 1998, during its first CSR dialogue in The Netherlands, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development [WBCSD] developed a concept widely used today when referring to a company's role in society. According to it, "Corporate Social Responsibility is the continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the local community and society at large (WBCSD, 1998)."

Other CSR definitions share the rationale that ethical behavior and strong business values are at the heart of a company's, and its stakeholders', best interests. In that regard, non-profit Business for Social Responsibility [BSR] defines CSR "as operating a business in a manner that meets or exceeds the ethical, legal, commercial and public expectations that society has of business. CSR is viewed as a comprehensive set of policies, practices and programs that are integrated throughout a business' operations, and decision-making processes that are supported and rewarded by top management."

Today's CSR numbers confirm that companies around the world are at that stage where they are no longer just complying with what is legally required of them, but rather seem to be committing themselves to good corporate citizenship. Although the establishment of social standards is the domain of government and other institutions, companies have come to realize that they too have an obligation to self-regulate and behave in a socially responsible manner. Not only because it is required by society, but because in the long term it comprises a solid and safe base for a business' stability and success.

In the United States CSR was initially driven by responsible business operations. In the late 1960s and early 1970s the U.S. government established the "Big Four" regulatory agencies that shaped much of the baseline for responsible corporate business operations: Occupational Safety and Health Administration; Equal Employment Opportunity Commission; Consumer Product Safety Commission; and the Environmental Protection Agency. These agencies created, and continue to maintain, the standards for socially responsible business practices.

But the sustainability efforts don't end there. Aware that dealing with environmental and societal issues adds value and sustainable competitiveness in a market driven by stakeholders' expectations, most average businesses incorporate a doing-well-by-doing-good philosophy into their CSR investment decisions: making sure that the programs they invest in fit with their business, achieving real business oriented goals, as well as societal ones, and engaging employees and customers.

Malik (2007) stated that the possible scenarios that describe the nature of CSR can be characterized by compliance, integration and transformation. He argues that the progression through the phases is not automatic, but rather, the result of a number of choices at many different levels that need to be continually made by the organization. By incorporating CSR into existing business processes, companies move away from a compliance stage, where they fulfill rules and regulations, and begin to move up to a transformation point where the organization is repurposed.

When talking about Corporate Social Responsibility, it is widely understood that a socially responsible business is one whose:

- products and services contribute to the well-being of society,
- behavior goes beyond the strict fulfillment of the norms and the practices of free market,

- managers behave ethically,
- activities are respectful to the environment,
- development contemplates the support of the communities in which it operates.

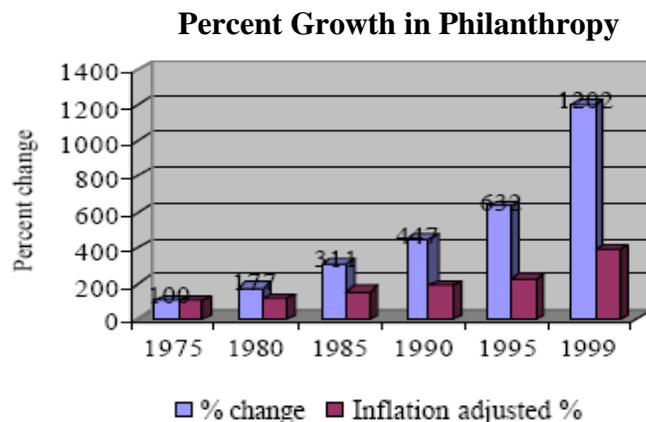
In other words, it is an organization whose values are focused on what is best for the key stakeholders, the community and the environment and not just the shareholders.

Concept of Strategic Community Involvement

The literature on Social Corporate Responsibility identifies different spheres where an organization's commitment and efforts to behave ethically and contribute to economic and social development its stakeholders, as well as of the local community and society at large, can take place. Among Community Relations, Social investment and other terms, CSR can be referenced as Corporate Philanthropy.

Even though many scholars have argued the role of corporate philanthropy in business and the real motivating factors behind CSR, and even after several research studies have been conducted proving the lack of impact that corporate giving and CRS programs have on a company's bottom line, the social investment figures of medium to large-scale corporations in the U.S., and around the world, have grown considerably over the years.

The results of a 2002 national Corporate-Community Relations study in the U.S. confirm this fact. According to the survey report "philanthropic donations have been on the rise since the middle of the century, and for the last quarter-century, the rise has been especially rapid, with philanthropic activity increasing by over 1,200 percent overall and nearly 400 percent in inflation adjusted dollars. Private foundations have become a significant force in this distribution of resources." (Guthrie, 2004)



Source: Ford Foundation Yearbook, 2001(as cited in Guthrie, 2004)

Despite the many attempts to discredit the impact of good corporate citizenship on a firm's performance, many businesses still choose to do the "right thing" by dealing with social issues and the expectations their stakeholders have of them. Aware of the potential advantages to actively contribute to sustainable development initiatives, different sectors of society have come together to address a range of issues affecting communities (Murphy & Bendell, 1999).

A 2001 report, *The Double Bottom Line: Competitive Advantage through Community*

Investment, by the Ford Foundation, illustrated that a number of companies in the United States are strategically choosing to reach out to underserved communities, not out of charity, but as a strategic involvement intended to result in a healthier economy and positive business outcomes.

Moss (1999) describes companies moving beyond corporate social responsibility to corporate social innovation as being at the vanguard of the new paradigm. According to Moss, such companies view community needs as opportunities to develop ideas and demonstrate business solutions, to find and serve new markets, and to solve long-standing business challenges.

In that regard, the concept of Strategic Community Involvement represents a way to approach the changing expectations of community members while advancing the interests of both the company and the community. It refers to a wide range of actions – community partnership, employee giving, global community involvement, philanthropy, product and services donations, volunteerism, etc – taken by companies to maximize the impact of their operational activities on the communities in which they have a presence. By aligning business goals with community needs, Strategic Community Involvement creates a cycle of social impact and business value.

Whether referenced as Corporate Citizenship, Corporate Community Affairs or Corporate Community Investment, one key commonality shared by the concepts describing the relationship between organizations and communities is, without a doubt, that they are stakeholder driven. When Basu and Palazzo (2008) state that CSR is “the process by which managers within an organization think about and discuss relationships with stakeholders as well as their roles in relation to the common good, along with their behavioral disposition with respect to the fulfillment and achievement of these roles and relationships”, the focus on relationship building becomes evident. Looking specifically at community relations, not only have the number and substance of expectations changed over the years, but the relationship itself has evolved.

In contrast to the past, when communities passively waited for companies to provide for them, today’s community expectations encompass a wider scope of proactive desires and demands, including dialogue, involvement, leadership and support. Therefore, contributing to sustainability today surpasses the mere donation of technical experience and financial resources that for long ruled the company-community relationship, and requires a mutual commitment to social transformation.

In that respect, when analyzing public-private partnerships, LeFrance & Lehmann (2005) posited that “real and meaningful partnerships can only be established through development of social relations, through commitment and mutual trust and through establishing mutual understanding and consideration.” (p.217)

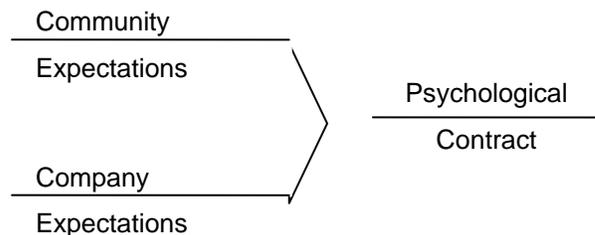
But trust and understanding cannot only be expected of partnerships amongst private companies and international organizations, NGOs and the government. The direct relationship that a company creates with the community where it has a presence or impact, must also be grounded by a mutual sense of trust, transparency, dialogue, commitment and satisfaction.

According to Burke (1999), just as there is a psychological contract of both written and unwritten expectations between a company and its employees, there are explicit and implicit expectations between a company and its community.

There is reciprocity of trust – a common basis, a common set of values, that communities and companies have for each other. There are recognized values that are held in common— a company needs to remain competitive and a community needs to be treated

honestly and fairly—and there will be a mutual attempt to make each other successful in achieving these ends. (p. 5)

The Psychological Contract



Source: as adapted and used by Burke with permission of the Levinson Institute, (1999).

In order to become the “neighbor of choice”, Burke (1999) argues that companies must build sustainable and ongoing relationships with key community individuals, groups, and organizations; manage community issues and concerns; and use community support programs to build trust.

The expectations that companies and communities have for each other may be different in character than those between managers and companies. They are, nonetheless, real. Some are explicit: pay taxes, obey the laws and ordinances in the community, and provide employment opportunities for the residents. At the same time, companies have specific expectations of communities. They expect that communities will provide the infrastructure for the companies’ operations – police, fire protection, and transportation facilities, for example. They also expect an educated workforce. The implicit expectations focus on the intangible and are often part of the values, hopes, and ideals the company or the community has for itself, and these are in continual flux. (p.6)

Similarly, Hess, Rogovsky & Dunfee (2002) identified what they called “Corporate Social Initiatives” as an emergent form of a corporate community involvement that, in contrast to earlier stages of CRS, “are connected to the firm’s core values, responsive to moral pressures, based on a firm’s core competencies, and have objectives and clear means of measurement” (p.110).

In Colombia, the field of corporate community involvement is still developing. On the one hand, as in the rest of Latin America, multilateral agencies are providing different kinds of support to businesses so that they can fulfill the expectations of them as corporate citizens. On the other hand, distance and distrust between businesses and communities make it difficult for them to assess their needs, develop plans to address these needs, and learn from the process (Gutierrez & Jones, 2004).

In contrast to global trends, a good part of the engagement sources come from the government, and steadily the private and third sector are playing a more prominent role across

the social sphere. The Colombian Center for Corporate Social Responsibility (Centro Colombiano de Responsabilidad Social Empresarial [CCRE]), reported that the industries that have contributed the most to social investment are government, 20%; utilities, 12%, and paper and cardboard, 11%.

Besides their social investment, somewhat less known is the actual role of businesses in the community, the motives that drive a corporation to engage in socially responsible activities, and the type of engagement they have with stakeholders. According to the CCRE, in terms of CSR, Colombian businesses first analyze their commercial goals or the services they provide, to decide if they can generate social programs that could serve them as a “battle horse” for their performance within a community. Indeed, the analysis unleashes further ideas for actions focusing towards education, health promotion and prevention, nutrition, best practices, environment, culture, recreation, professional and technological growth.

Austin et al. (as cited in Gutierrez & Jones, 2004, p. 153) presents a clear position on the topic – “in practice, the most sustainable ventures occur when utilitarian and altruistic drives are strong and blended. Altruistic motivations alone might not withstand economic downturns; utilitarian drives alone might distance social partners.” – This reflection prompts the question: How can local corporations form relationships with governments, nonprofits and communities, so that the priorities they assign to the social practices, in which they engage, are mutually beneficial for both the community and the business?

Understanding Organization-Public Relationships

Although the study of organization-public relationships as a public relations theory has received great attention amongst scholars (Broom et al., Ledingham, Hon and J. E. Grunig), there is to this day little consensus regarding the OPR construct.

Increasingly, the OPR scholarship includes definitions, dimensions, types of organization-public relationships, maintenance strategies, the importance of stakeholder expectations, and developmental and process models (Ledingham, 2003)

After reviewing the concept of relationship from different perspectives – interpersonal communication, interorganizational relationships, psychotherapy, and system theory – Broom et al. (1997) first suggested that the concept of relationship must be addressed in ways that lead to valid operational definitions for use in both theory and practice. Without explication, Broom et al. (1997) argued, researchers and practitioners alike will continue to use instruments that may not measure the relationships themselves.

Answering the call, Ledingham and Bruning (1998) offered the following definition: OPR “is the state which exists between an organization and its key publics, in which the actions of either can impact the economic, social, cultural or political well being of the other” (p. 62).

Other definitions include:

Broom, Casey, & Ritchey (1997): “relationships consist of the transactions that involve the exchange of resources between organizations” (p. 91).

Thomlison (2000): a relationship “is a set of expectations two parties have for each other’s behavior based on their interaction patterns” (p. 178).

Huang (1998) defined OPR as “the degree that the organization and its publics trust one another, agree on one has rightful power to influence, experience satisfaction with each other, and commit oneself to one another” (p. 12).

Although there have been different ways of defining the concept, the literature seems to agree that the study of organization-public relationships involves the analysis of (1) antecedents: things that need to be in line before relationships between organizations and publics can be established, (2) maintenance processes: strategies for building and maintaining the relationship, and (3) outcomes: dimensions of the relationship state or characteristics.

Relationship Outcomes

Likewise, along with the construction of a conceptual definition of OPR, several scales have been developed in an attempt to evaluate the success of relationship-building efforts. These measurements are based on relational dimensions, such as: reciprocity, trust, credibility, mutual legitimacy, openness, mutual satisfaction, and mutual understanding (Grunig et al., 1992); mutuality, trust, relational satisfaction, and relational commitment (Grunig & Huang, 2000); trust, openness, involvement, investment and commitment (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998).

Additionally to this group of dimensions, Hon and Grunig (1999) developed the *PR Relationship Measurement Scale*, where longer-term *relationships* with key constituencies are measured by focusing on six components of the relationships that exist. These are:

“Control Mutuality -- The degree to which parties agree on who has the rightful power to influence one another. Although some imbalance is natural, stable relationships require that organizations and publics each have some control over the other.

Trust -- One party’s level of confidence in and willingness to open oneself to the other party. There are three dimensions to trust: *integrity*: the belief that an organization is fair and just ... *dependability*: the belief that an organization will do what it says it will do ... and, *competence*: the belief that an organization has the ability to do what it says it will do.

Satisfaction -- The extent to which each party feels favorably toward the other because positive expectations about the relationship are reinforced. A satisfying relationship is one in which the benefits outweigh the costs.

Commitment -- The extent to which each party believes and feels that the relationship is worth spending energy to maintain and promote. Two dimensions of commitment are *continuance* commitment, which refers to a certain line of action, and *affective* commitment, which is an emotional orientation.

Exchange Relationship -- In an exchange relationship, one party gives benefits to the other only because the other has provided benefits in the past or is expected to do so in the future.

Communal Relationship -- In a communal relationship, both parties provide benefits to the other because they are concerned for the welfare of the other -- even when they get nothing in return. For most public relations activities, developing communal relationships with key constituencies is much more important to achieve than would be developing exchange relationships.” (p.3)

Relationship maintenance strategies

Along with the PR Relationship Measurement Scale, as part of their Excellence Study, Hon and Grunig (1999) developed a set of communication strategies for maintaining symmetrical relationships with key constituencies that are likely to produce relationship outcomes. These strategies are widely based on research from interpersonal relationships and conflict resolution theories. According to the authors, the following concepts can be adopted from the interpersonal relationships:

“Access—members of publics or opinion leaders provide access to public relations people. Public relations representatives or senior managers provide representatives of publics similar access to organizational decision-making processes.

Positivity—anything the organization or public does to make the relationship more enjoyable for the parties involved.

Openness—of thoughts and feelings among parties involved.”(p.14)

“Assurances—attempts by parties in the relationship to assure the other parties that they, and their concerns are legitimate.

Networking—organizations’ building networks or coalitions with the same groups that their publics do, such as environmentalists, unions, or community groups.

Sharing of tasks—organizations’ and publics’ sharing in solving joint or separate problems.” (p.15)

From the conflict management theories, the strategies can be as follows:

“Integrative. These approaches are symmetrical because all parties in a relationship benefit by searching out common or complementary interests and solving problems together through open discussion and joint decision-making.

Distributive. These strategies are asymmetrical because one party benefits at the expense of another by seeking to maximize gains and minimize losses within a win-lose or self-gain perspective

Dual Concern. These strategies take into consideration the dual role of balancing the interests of publics with the interests of the organization. Several other dual concern strategies are symmetrical and are the most effective at building and maintaining a relationship in the long term. These are:

- 1) Cooperating: both the organization and the public work together to reconcile their interests and to reach a mutually beneficial relationship.
- 2) Being unconditionally constructive: the organization does whatever it thinks is best for the relationship, even if it means giving up some of its positions and even if the public does not reciprocate.
- 3) Saying win-win or no deal: if the organization and public cannot find a solution that benefits both, they agree to disagree—no deal.” (p. 16)

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to make a sound contribution to local community involvement practices, drawing upon the strategies to develop community relationships and the outcomes of these relationships. To achieve this goal, the study explores the key relational elements of organization-public relationships within the context of three community involvement initiatives from local companies and their relationships with the community. Based on the literature, the study focuses on two research questions:

RQ1. How are community relationships created and maintained by three companies in the city of Barranquilla, Colombia?

RQ 2: What are the outcomes of community relationships in these case studies?

General Objective:

Analyze how three local companies create and maintain relationships with their communities in Barranquilla, Colombia.

Specific Objectives:

1. To explore the organizations' attitudes towards community involvement.
2. To inventory local corporate practices for building positive relationships with the community.
3. To distinguish how these relationships are perceived by the community.
4. To identify the outcomes of cultivating relationships with the community.
5. To propose a set of communication strategies needed in relationship building.

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to analyze how three local companies create and maintain relationships with their communities and to explore the relational outcomes that define the quality of the relationships. The study is based on the cultivation strategies suggested by Hon and Grunig (1999), and the authors' guidelines for assessing relationships between organizations and publics (2002).

Because the review of three cases enables a more general understanding of local corporate community practices and how local organizations relate to their stakeholders by drawing comparisons and explore differences within and between cases, therefore, this research project is a multiple-case study. In a multiple case study, the researcher examines several cases to understand the similarities and differences between the cases. Yin (2003) finds that a multiple case study either, "(a) predicts similar results (a literal replication) or (b) predicts contrasting results but for predictable reasons (a theoretical replication)" (p. 47). Two qualitative methods will be implemented to investigate the research questions: focus groups with community members and in-depth interviews with the organizations' executives.

Background

The study analyzes three cases of Corporate Community Involvement [CCI]: Promigas (Natural gas service provider) – School of Excellence, Electricaribe (Electricity service provider) – Restart and Argos (Cement manufacturer) – School Infrastructure.

Promigas – "School of Excellence". This initiative seeks the improvement of education quality in selected institutions within low-income neighborhoods. It does so by working with teachers and administrators, through the strengthening of school administration in terms of planning, execution, verification and introduction of curriculum adjustments that can assure better institutional results. Aware of the incidence that the development of language and mathematics skills has in the socio-cultural variables of the students, Promigas, thought it was necessary to design a strategy to improve the ways in which pedagogical work is carried out in the schools that are part of the initiative.

Electricaribe – "Restart": This project seeks to help unemployed, vulnerable people, who possess empirical knowledge in electrical work, have better opportunities of social and economic

development, improve their ability to find a job and undertake initiatives that would allow them to earn an income on their own.

For the company, poverty is directly related to people's level of education and the opportunities they have to participate in the economy. The purpose of this intervention is to grant the beneficiaries part of what is missing, so that they can actively participate in economical and social decisions. Electricaribe believes that the only way in which these groups can come out of poverty is by creating the conditions for their productive incorporation in the economic world. "Reinitiate" was created to alleviate the remarkable restrictions the market imposes on the low-income population to access certain assets and resources required for their complete productive incorporation.

Argos – School Infrastructure: Through this program the company offers their products and services for the improvement or building of adequate school environment thereby enhancing the educational level of students. They do so by analyzing the context within the community, their climate, material needed and the legal requirements imposed by the Minister of Education. Argos builds classrooms, school cafeterias, libraries, leisure centers and parks, in the public institutions that have been prioritized by developmental plans in the municipalities where the company has a presence and impact. The program involves the engagement of parents, students, school teachers and administrators through workshops in maintenance and appreciation of the newly built areas. In the year 2007, the company reported the completion of 84 projects, benefiting 50,634 people.

Data Collection

In depth interviews and focus groups will be the primary data collection methods that address the research questions. Interviews will be conducted with companies' executives in charge of public relations / communications / community relations and / or the department where the allocation of responsibility for community involvement lies within the firm. Focus groups will be conducted on community members and the beneficiaries of the firms' corporate community initiatives.

Participants will be asked a series of open-ended questions based on J. Grunig's (2002) questionnaire, with regards to the strategies that the organizations have used to cultivate relationships between the company and community members, and about the type and quality of these relationships.

To address the former, the content of the interviews and focus groups will explore the strategies, techniques, and programs the organizations use to communicate with the community in order to develop and maintain a relationship with them.

The qualitative question to assess the maintenance strategies used by the three companies will focus on the following variables:

- Access— does the company allow members of the community to be part of the decision making processes?
- Positivity— what has the company done to make the relationship enjoyable for community members?
- Openness— what thoughts and feelings does the community share in relation to the company?

- Assurances— what attempts has the company made to assure community members that their concerns are legitimate?
- Networking— in what kind of community networks, if any, has the company engaged itself?
- Sharing of tasks— how does the company encourage the sharing of tasks for the purpose of solving problems within the community?

The questionnaire will also lead to explore whether the communication strategies put in place fall under an integrative, distributive or dual concern – asymmetrical category.

To respond to the second research question, the main content of the interviews and focus groups will focus on participants' perceptions of the four relational elements identified by Hon and Grunig (1999): trust, commitment, control mutuality and satisfaction. Moreover, the analysis will assess the existence of two types of relationship between the firms and community: communal or exchange.

- Trust – What things has the company done to treat community members fairly? (integrity), to indicate that it can be relied on to keep its promises? (dependability), and has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do? (competence)
- Commitment – Are there any examples that show that the company wants to maintain a long-term relationship with the beneficiaries?
- Satisfaction – Do community members and beneficiaries of CCI feel satisfied with the relationship that the company has had with them?

To analyze the existence of two types of relationship, whether Communal or Exchange, the questionnaire will look at the perceptions of the community with regards to their welfare.

- Do they feel that the company is concerned about the welfare of the community even if it gets nothing in return? (communal)
- Do they feel that the company gives or offers something to the community because it expects something in return? (exchange)

In order to reach a holistic understanding of this case, published data concerning the community involvement of the firms, such as annual reports on sustainability, social balance reports, etc... and other documentation, will be reviewed as it appears relevant to the purpose of the study.

Premise for discussion

The review of literature and previous studies indicate that the building and maintenance of communal relationships are important when companies are to be socially responsible and add value to society as well as to the business. Effective community relations programs therefore need to meet the needs of both the organization and its key community constituencies.

Expected Results

Based on the cases to be analyzed under the concepts of Community Relations and OPR, this research project seeks to propose a useful framework for building and maintaining positive organization-public relationships between local businesses and their communities in the city of

Barranquilla. The goal is to enable the strengthening of the social initiatives that govern the conducts and motivations of local enterprises that actively chose to be socially responsible.

Along with the above mentioned outcomes, the study attempts to have an academic, social and economic impact, by obtaining the following:

- A better understanding of local community relations practices, particularly with regards to relationship building and maintenance.
- A better understanding of local community perceptions in reference to current corporate community initiatives.
- A greater appreciation for the role of private companies in the social and economic development of the city of Barranquilla.
- A strengthening of public relations research in a local context.

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The Use of Integrated Marketing Communications by U.S. Non-profit Organizations

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Introduction and Review of Literature

There are approximately 1.4 million non-profit organizations in the United States (The Urban Institute, 2006). The non-profit sector currently accounts for 5.2% of gross domestic product in the United States, reporting \$1.4 trillion dollars in revenue and \$1.3 trillion dollars in assets and employing 9 percent of the country's workforce (The Urban Institute, 2006). The non-profit sector is extremely competitive, and organizations are constantly working to attract donors, volunteers, employees, grant funding, and media attention.

To gain an advantage, many non-profit organizations have adopted philosophies and strategies once commonly associated with for-profit corporations. Popular marketing concepts, such as market segmentation, market orientation, database marketing, and branding, have been successfully applied to the non-profit sector (Ewing & Napoli, 2005; Venable, Rose, Bush, & Gilbert, 2005). Integrated marketing communications (IMC), described as the integration of advertising, public relations, direct marketing, and sales promotion into a comprehensive plan (Caywood, 1997), has also emerged as a valuable approach for non-profit organizations. Non-profits adopting this strategy focus on building relationships with supporters and utilize communication tactics like donor appreciation, face-to-face communication, and recurring newsletters.

Integrated Marketing Communications as a Relationship-Building Strategy

Non-profit organizations benefit from creating long-term relationships with supporters (Weir & Hibbert, 2000). It has been demonstrated that a new donor does not become profitable in terms of net income to a non-profit organization for 12-18 months (Gaffney, 1996). Therefore to make its investment in recruiting a new donor worthwhile, an organization needs to extend the relationship for longer than 18 months.

For most non-profit organizations, the two largest, and arguably the most important, stakeholder groups are supporters who donate money and time and individuals who benefit from an organization's services (Venable et al., 2005). Marketing and communication strategies that focus on building relationships have been proven successful with both of these stakeholder groups (Weir & Hibbert, 2000). Bennett and Barkensjo (2005) studied five relationship-building tactics with individuals who receive services offered by human welfare charities in Great Britain: 1) relationship advertising; 2) two-way communication; 3) database marketing; 4) face-to-face contacts; and 5) listening. Their research demonstrated that higher quality relationships and

higher levels of satisfaction were reported by service recipients of organizations that used higher quality relationship-building tactics.

Social exchange theory can be used to explain the concepts of relationships, commitment, and trust with respect to organizations. Developed by John Thibaut and Harold Kelley in 1959, social exchange theory proposes that people assess relationships in terms of consequences. Each relationship has costs and rewards associated with it, and the consequences of a relationship can be viewed in terms of the rewards received and the costs incurred (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Costs are “drawbacks that are perceived as unpleasant or holding us back from a goal,” while rewards are “any benefits perceived as enjoyable or helping to achieve a specific aspiration” (Dainton & Zelle, 2005, p. 64). Applying this theory to the relationship between a person and a non-profit organization, relationship costs include a person’s monetary costs, time, social commitment, and emotional investment (Bussell & Forbes, 2006). Rewards vary from person to person, but include tax advantages of donations, benefits of social affiliation with the organization, and satisfaction gained from helping others (Cermak, File, & Prince, 1994).

Social exchange theory considers relationships a highly selective matter because different relationships have different consequences for different people. When a person explores entering a new relationship, he or she assesses the required investments and expected benefits. The person compares the relationship’s anticipated outcome, or cost-benefit ratio, to his or her comparison level (CL), which is “the standard against which the member evaluates the ‘attractiveness’ of the relationship or how satisfactory it is” (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959, p. 21). If the anticipated outcome is near his or her CL, the person is likely to be satisfied with the relationship (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959).

A person chooses whether to remain in or end an existing relationship depending on his or her comparison level of alternatives (CL_{alt}), which is “the lowest level of outcomes a member will accept in the light of available opportunities” (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959, p. 21). The height of the CL_{alt} depends on the quality of the best available alternative options for a person. If the relationship outcome drops below a person’s CL_{alt} , he or she is expected to end the relationship (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959).

As relationships meet outcome expectations for rewards and costs, trust develops between the partners. They gain confidence in each other’s reliability and integrity (Dwyer, Schurr, & Oh, 1987; Venable et al., 2005). The presence of trust represents the move from an unpredictable relationship to one characterized by stability where motives and behaviors can be predicted (Kingshott, 2005). As the partners fulfill expectations in the relationship their attractiveness to each other increases. The partners are motivated to continue the relationship because as satisfaction increases, the number of available alternatives for achieving the same level of satisfaction decreases. Commitment between relationship partners occurs when satisfaction reaches a level that precludes the expected outcome of all other available alternative relationships (Dwyer et al., 2006). Achieving this commitment level, or customer loyalty, is the ultimate goal of developing relationships for most organizations.

The concepts of trust and commitment are essential for building strong relationships, and as a result, they are of central importance to non-profit organizations. As one would expect, people are more willing to choose to support organizations that demonstrate high quality services (Parsons, 2007; Weir and Hibbert, 2000). Donors and volunteers must be able to trust that a given organization will use their donations of money and time responsibly (Venable et al., 2005). As predicted by social exchange theory, supporters will only continue to donate time and money to an organization when they are satisfied with the results (Bussell & Forbes, 2006). Ensuring

that they are providing the rewards desired by supporters and that supporters' satisfaction levels are high should be a priority for non-profit organizations.

Research Questions

This research aims to expand the knowledge about United States non-profit organizations' current use of IMC to build relationships with stakeholders. The goals of the research are: (1) to determine what types of non-profit organizations currently use IMC as a relationship-building strategy, (2) to describe the content and use of IMC tactics, and (3) to examine the success of those tactics. In particular, this research examines the following questions:

RQ1: What types of non-profit organizations are more likely to focus on relationship building as an important organizational strategy?

RQ2: What communication tactics are considered successful by organizations that give a high importance to relationship building?

RQ3: Is the success of specific tactics related to the success of building and sustaining relationships with specific stakeholders?

RQ4: Is the success of specific tactics related to the benefits that the organization perceives as important to stakeholders?

RQ5: Do organizations that focus on building relationships as an important organizational strategy have longer average relationships with supporters than those organizations that do not?

Method

A quantitative online survey was distributed to a random sample of communication professionals at non-profit organizations.

Instrument

A close-ended survey was developed to collect information from communication professionals at non-profit organizations. Eight variables were assessed in this study, including: 1) the importance of relationship marketing, 2) the perception of success in building and maintaining relationships with key stake holders (board members, community leaders, corporations, donors/volunteers, etc.), 3) average length of the relationships between the organization and supporters (donor, member/volunteers), 4) perceptions of success with 12 communication tactics to build/sustain relationships (advertising, mailings, emails, face-to-face, database marketing, etc.), 5) perception of benefits to organizational supporters (personal satisfaction from helping others, public recognition of support, social affiliation with other supporters, tax advantages of donations) 6) organizational age, 7) annual revenue, and 8) number of full time employees (full survey instrument available upon request).

Sampling Procedures

A random sample of 1,000 organizations was selected from the population of 501(c) (3) public charities that filed IRS tax forms in 2005. The random sample was stratified by annual

revenue to ensure an accurate representation of the total population. The random sample was drawn from the National Center for Charitable Statistics, a data clearinghouse on the United States non-profit sector. After selection of organizations, online searches and telephone calls were used to identify email addresses for each organization in the sample. The online survey was sent to the organizations, and after approximately one week a follow-up email was sent to non-responding organizations. Due to low response rate, an additional 400 organizations were randomly selected, once again stratified for annual revenue, and added to the sample. Online surveys and follow-up emails were also sent to these 400 organizations.

Sample Population. Two hundred and twelve completed survey responses were obtained for a response rate of 15.1%. Despite the attempt to receive responses from organizations with annual revenues that represented the population of 501(c)(3) organizations, the participating organizations were skewed toward the highest revenue classification. The mean annual revenue for the participating organizations was between \$100,000 and \$499,999. The mean organizational age was between 10 and 24 years, and the mean number of full-time employees was between 5 and 9 employees.

Of the 212 surveys completed, a narrow majority (53%) were completed by chief executive officers (CEO) or executive directors. Fourteen percent of surveys were completed by communications/marketing professionals and nine percent were completed by development/fundraising professionals.

Results

Characteristics of Organizations Focusing on Relationship Building

The vast majority of organizations participating in the survey (90%) rated relationship building as an important organizational strategy. The importance of the strategy was significantly correlated with annual revenue, ($r^2 = .021, p < .05, n = 212$) (see Table 5.1). However, the importance was not significantly correlated with either organizational age or number of full-time employees.

Success of Communication Tactics

The success of 12 communication tactics in building and sustaining relationships with supporters was analyzed. The success of database marketing ($r^2 = .02, p < .05, n = 205$), face-to-face communication ($r^2 = .032, p < .01, n = 212$), and listening ($r^2 = .032, p < .01, n = 209$) was significantly correlated with an organization's view of relationship building (see Table 5.2).

Success of specific communication tactics and success of building and sustaining relationships with specific stakeholders

Like all organizations, non-profit organizations have many different stakeholders and are likely to use different communication tactics to reach each group. The success of face-to-face communication, listening, and ongoing communication was significantly correlated to the success of building relationships with all stakeholder groups (see Table 5.3).

Success of Communication Tactics and Types of Organizational Benefits

Non-profit organizations offer supporters many types of benefits. Some benefits are intrinsic like the personal satisfaction gained from helping people while others are extrinsic like the tax advantages of donations (Cermak et al., 1994). This research found that the success of communication tactics varies depending on the importance of the benefits an organization offers

supporters. The success ratings of donor/volunteer appreciation and mailings as tactics were significantly correlated with the importance of all four identified benefits offered by organizations (see Table 5.4).

Use of Relationship Building as an Organizational Strategy and Length of Relationships with Supporters

The vast majority of organizations (91%) reported average relationships with donors/volunteers of 18 months or longer. Almost 40% of organizations reported average relationships of more than 5 years in length. However, there was no significant correlation between an organization's view of relationship building and the average length of relationship with a donor/volunteer (see Table 5.5).

Post-Hoc Analysis

Regression analysis was conducted as a post-hoc analysis to further investigate the connection between relationship building as a strategy and an organization's income, age, and staff size. Using the importance of relationship building as the dependent variable and the organizational characteristics as independent variables, a stepwise multiple regression was conducted. The three organizational characteristics explained a significant proportion of variance in an organization's view of relationship building, $R^2 = .04$, ($F(3, 208) = 2.95$, $p < .05$). Organizational age demonstrated a significant effect on an organization's view of relationship building (see Table 5.6).

Discussion

As prior research suggested, relationship-building strategies were found to be widely practiced by organizations in this sector. However, the success rate of various tactics and the success rate of building relationships with various stakeholder groups varied.

Characteristics of Organizations Focusing on Relationship Building

Overwhelmingly, the non-profit organizations that participated in this research indicated that they recognized the benefits of focusing on relationship building. In the survey results, the mean importance rating of relationship building was 4.23 (where 1 is "not at all important" to 5 "very important").

Organizations with higher annual revenue were more likely to rate relationship building as an important organizational strategy. This finding was not surprising as organizations with higher revenue and larger budgets are more likely to embrace more advanced concepts.

Although organizational age was significantly positively correlated with annual revenue, older organizations were not more likely to consider relationship building an important strategy. Only six participating organizations reported relationship building as not applicable or not at all important. These six organizations were all at least 10 years of age. The age category with the highest percentage of organizations that reported relationship building as a very important strategy was the youngest category (i.e., 0-4 years of age).

Perhaps older organizations are more set in their ways and resistant to switch to new practices. Older organizations were more likely to report success with fundraising appeals, mailings, and telemarketing, which are all fairly traditional communication approaches. Recently

formed organizations may be more flexible and open to accepting newer practices. Older organizations are also more likely to have long-standing, established relationships with supporters. Because they have methods that already have proven to be successful, these older organizations may not need to rely on relationship-building tactics in the same way as younger organizations that are still developing their supporter bases.

The research also found no significant correlation between the importance of relationship building and number of full-time employees. This research result was unexpected, partly because the number of employees was significantly positively correlated with annual revenue. It stands to reason that organizations with more employees should have increased ability to undertake relationship-building tactics, such as face-to-face communication or listening, which are often time-intensive.

The researcher suspects that the age categories provided in the survey may have influenced the results. Because information about non-profit organizations and staff size could not be located through secondary research, the researcher created the age categories based on her judgment. While the responses to the other demographic questions (i.e., age and annual revenue) were evenly distributed, 69% of participating organizations fell into the two smallest categories for number of full-time employees (i.e., 0-4 employees and 4-9 employees). If these categories had been narrowed, it is likely that fewer organizations would have been lumped together and more detail could have been obtained from the data.

The survey collected a category description of the participating non-profit organizations (e.g., education, health, human services). However, after initial review the data was not used in the analysis. Organizations of all descriptive types followed similar patterns based on age, income, and staff size. A high-income, long-established animal-related organization was more likely to act in a similar manner as a high-income, long-established arts organization than a low-income, newly formed animal-related organization.

Success of Communication Tactics

Organizations that considered building relationships with supporters an important organizational strategy were more likely to have success using database marketing, face-to-face communication, and listening (i.e., obtaining feedback) than organizations less concerned with relationships. The results of this research question concur with the results of Bennett and Barkensjo's (2005) study of relationship marketing with service recipients. Higher quality versions of these three tactics were found to result in higher quality relationships with service recipients (Bennett & Barkensjo, 2005).

Database Marketing

Database marketing involves using a computer database of stakeholder information to segment markets and create targeted communication. Obviously, personally meaningful and relevant communication helps to build a relationship between a person and a non-profit organization. When communication from an organization meets information needs and fulfills expected rewards, people are more likely to experience satisfaction. Social exchange theory predicts that this satisfaction allows the relationship to continue and eventually leads to trust and commitment (Dywer et al., 1987; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Bombarding an individual with irrelevant information or no information at all is likely to result in dissatisfaction and the probable end of the relationship. Through computer monitoring of supporter interests and

responses to previous communication efforts, database marketing will help organizations ensure that communication is relevant and meaningful to supporters, which will strengthen relationships.

Face-to-Face Communication

According to social exchange theory, individuals are assumed to enter and stay in a relationship when the benefits of the relationship outweigh the costs (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Face-to-face communication allows an individual unfamiliar with the organization to gain a more complete understanding of the non-profit entity than an impersonal fundraising letter or brochure. This communication method enables an individual to receive information about an organization and immediately have his or her questions about benefits and costs answered.

Face-to-face communication is also a means of providing individuals with expected relationship benefits, such as heartfelt appreciation for their support, an update on the organization's activities that provides supporters with a sense of accomplishment, or a free dinner. Face-to-face communication is arguably the most natural method for developing relationships so it makes sense that organizations interested in building relationships reported success with this tactic.

Listening

Trust develops when a person's outcome expectations of the relationship are continually met, and this development of trust eventually leads to commitment and loyalty (Dwyer et al., 2006; Kingshott, 2005). Listening, or receiving feedback from supporters through opportunities like surveys or open houses, allows individuals to express the relationship outcomes they desire, as well as their current satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the organization. After receiving this feedback, the organization can incorporate supporters' suggestions into future plans and make any necessary adjustments to ensure that supporters are satisfied, which will make them likely to continue the relationship and develop loyalty to the organization.

Communication tactics and building and sustaining relationships with specific stakeholders

The survey results showed that organizations' success with various communication tactics was related to their success with building and sustaining relationships with various stakeholders. The success of face-to-face communication, listening, and ongoing communication with supporters had a significant positive correlation with success with all stakeholder groups. These three tactics offer universal benefits for both internal and external stakeholders. The value of the first two tactics, face-to-face communication and listening, in building relationships was addressed in the previous section.

The third tactic, ongoing communication, is likely to appeal to all audiences. Ongoing communication creates a sense of intimacy between relationship partners, which positively influences satisfaction, trust, and commitment (Remley, 1996). Social exchange theory shows these constructs to be imperative for establishing stable relationships (Kingshott, 2005). Ongoing communication can also convey information that provides relationship benefits expected by supporters (e.g., information that demonstrates an organization's positive impact on society).

The Importance of the Target Audience

This research showed many expected significant correlations between certain audiences and certain communication tactics. For example, success with donor appreciation and

recognition was associated with success with the three groups most likely to receive recognition: donors, corporations, and funding agencies. Success with newsletters was primarily associated with success with internal audiences (e.g., employees, donors/volunteers, board members) while success with annual reports was associated with success with a much broader audience (e.g., board members, community leaders, corporations, donors/volunteers, media).

Success of Communication Tactics and Types of Organizational Benefits

The relationship-building success rates of different communication tactics were significantly correlated with the importance ratings of different stakeholder benefits provided by the organizations. Organizations that saw public recognition as an important benefit for supporters were likely to have success with tactics that could be used to publicly recognize donors and other supporters (e.g., database marketing, donor appreciation, annual reports, fundraising appeals, mailings, and newsletters). Success with communication tactics that are used to report financial information and provide financial accountability, such as advertising, fundraising appeals, mailings, and newsletters (Buckmaster, 2000), was correlated with organizations that viewed tax advantages as an important supporter benefit. The importance of personal satisfaction as a benefit for supporters was significantly correlated with the relationship-building success of only four tactics: donor appreciation, ongoing communication, fundraising appeals, and mailings. When altruism is the primary motivation for supporters, perhaps they experience satisfaction mainly from the knowledge that they are helping others.

Donor Appreciation and Recognition and Mailings

The success of donor appreciation and recognition and mailings was correlated with the importance of all organizational benefits. Even though connection between donor appreciation and recognition practices and the benefit of public recognition makes the most sense, perhaps appreciation and recognition are such powerful motivators that they work even with people who are not expecting the benefit.

Targeting Supporters' Desired Benefits

When considering the connections between importance of supporter benefits and success of communication tactics, it is important to realize that non-profit organizations frequently offer more than one benefit to supporters.

Relationship Building and Length of Relationships with Supporters

Patricia Gaffney's research (1996) illustrated that an organization needs to extend a relationship with a new donor for at least 18 months to make the investment in recruiting the donor worthwhile. Almost 91% of participating organizations reported an average length of relationships of longer than 18 months.

Grounded in social exchange theory, relationship-building tactics have been demonstrated to positively influence relationship outcomes with service recipients, donors, and volunteers (Bennett & Barkensjo, 2005; Bussell & Forbes, 2006; Weir & Hibbert, 2000). Therefore, it was expected that focusing on relationship building would be significantly positively correlated with length of relationship with supporters. However, this study did not find longer average

relationships with donors and volunteers for organizations that rated relationship building as an important strategy.

Lack of Success with Communication Tactics

Participating organizations overwhelmingly recognized the benefits of relationship building. However, these organizations did not universally report success with relationship-building tactics such as database marketing, listening, face-to-face communication, and donor/volunteer appreciation. In fact between 9% and 29% of organizations did not even use the tactics. Organizations may recognize the value of relationship building but they may not have mastered how to integrate the concept into interactions with supporters. Difficulties could stem from financial, time, or technological constraints.

Impact of Organizational Age

It stands to reason that the age of an organization and average length of relationship with supporters are related to some degree. This study found a significant correlation between average relationship length and organizational age ($r^2 = .125$, $p < .01$, $n = 212$). As discussed in the analysis of RQ1, 14% of organizations with more than 50 years of age did not report building relationships as an important organizational strategy. The oldest category of organizations reported the highest mean average relationship length with supporters (mean 3.63 on a 4-point scale) and a lower reliance on building relationships as an organizational strategy than younger organizations. Many older organizations are presumed to have already established stable supporter bases and may rely on factors other than relationship-building tactics, such as prominence in a region or organizational history, to sustain supporter relationships.

Post-Hoc Analysis

A post-hoc analysis using regression revealed that the three organizational characteristics of income, age, and staff size influenced how organizations view relationship building. These factors explained 4% of the variance so while an organization's characteristics influence how the organization views relationship building, there are also other contributing factors, including the view of the organization's leadership, overall staff expertise, level of competition faced by an organization, and characteristics of an organization's supporters.

Organizational age was found to be a significant predictor of an organization's view of relationship building. As an organization increased in age, the organization's view of the importance of relationship building was likely to decrease by a corresponding amount. This result supports the research's previous conclusion that older organizations, as a whole, were less likely to rely on relationship-building tactics because they had already established stable relationships with supporters.

Implications for Non-profit Organizations

This research demonstrated that non-profit organizations, as a whole, recognized relationship building as a valuable organizational strategy. Organizations are encouraged to adopt database marketing, face-to-face communication, and listening, as these were the communication tactics considered most successful by organizations interested in building and sustaining relationships with supporters. When deciding on which tactics to adopt, organizations

should consider the intended audience of the tactic. The research found that face-to-face communication, listening, and ongoing communication with supporters were likely to be successful with all organizational stakeholders. Other communication tactics were shown to have varying rates of success depending on the target stakeholder group.

For success, organizations should also consider the relationship benefits that their supporters expect and tailor tactics to fulfill those benefits and promote relationship satisfaction. Donor/volunteer appreciation and recognition and mailings to supporters were considered successful in reaching supporters regardless of the benefits that they valued. Other communication tactics appealed to different groups of supporters at varying levels of success.

Despite this research's failure to demonstrate a connection between length of relationship with supporters and relationship building as a strategy, non-profit organizations are encouraged to consider this approach. Every non-profit supporter evaluates the cost and rewards of participating in a relationship with the organization. When benefits outweigh the costs, supporters are satisfied and likely to maintain the relationship (Dainton & Zelle, 2003). Integrated marketing communications stands to positively impact relationship satisfaction by ensuring that supporters receive the benefits they expect.

Emphasis on relationship building is thought to have more of a benefit for organizations with less established supporter relationships, such as younger organizations or organizations undergoing recent change. While the approach is beneficial for all non-profit organizations, these organizations stand to have more to gain.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study demonstrates the opportunity for further research to be conducted about non-profit organizations' use of integrated marketing communications and relationship-building tactics. This study examined the success of communication tactics from the perception of organizational leaders. A study involving the stakeholders of non-profit organizations would provide additional information, perhaps more reliable, about the success of communication tactics. A survey or a series of focus groups could be conducted with individuals on the receiving end of communication to determine which tactics they found most beneficial. By involving an organization's supporters in the research, a more accurate representation of the strength of relationships would be obtained.

Another recommendation for future research is to expand the variety of non-profit organizations examined. These research results may have been influenced by the type of organizations that participated in the survey. Participating organizations did not accurately represent the national population of 501(c)(3) public charities, as the survey received a higher response rate from organizations with annual revenues greater than \$1 million dollars than organizations in other revenue categories.

Table 5.1: Importance of Relationship Building (RB) as an Organizational Strategy and Organizational Characteristics

	Importance of RB	Annual revenue	Age	Number of employees
Importance of RB		.145*	-.101	.091
Annual revenue			.246**	.720**
Age				.298**

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5.2: Importance of Relationship Marketing (RM) and Success of Communication Tactics

	Impor RM	Advert	Database	Donor appr	F-to-F comm	Listening	Ongoing comm
Imp.RM		.075	.140*	.114	.179*	.153*	.098
Advert			.287**	.183**	.168*	.052	.181*
Data				.216**	.199*	.252**	.294**
Donor app					.403*	.289**	.397**
F-to-F						.449**	.460**
Listening							.594**
	Ann.report	Emails	Fundraising	Mail	Newsletter	Tele	
Importance of RM	.008	.096	.087	.088	.123	-.049	
Advertising	.173*	.032	.180*	.097	.112	.220**	
Database	.151*	.246**	.117	.255**	.179*	.136	
Donor	.302**	.142*	.375*	.372**	.338**	.043	
Face-to-Face	.283**	.204**	.335*	.256**	.359**	.014	
communication							
Listening	.193**	.376**	.090	.179**	.201**	-.010	
Ongoing	.276**	.344**	.279**	.324**	.419**	.007	
Annual report		.073	.313**	.321**	.293**	.170*	
Emails			.000	.133	.143*	.041	
Fundraising				.566**	.287**	.102	
Mailings					.431**	.084	
Newsletters						-.026	

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 5.3: Success of Communication Tactics and Success with Stakeholder Groups

	Communit v	Corp	Donors/	Employee	Fundin	Govern	Medi a	Other
Board	.280**	.226*	.268**	.260**	.194**	.174*	.104	.133
Communit y leaders		.357**	.207**	.177**	.285**	.482**	.425*	.186*
Corpor(s)			.318**	.214**	.286**	.314**	.355*	.161*
Donors/ volunteers				.212**	.203**	.096	.274*	.276*
Employees					.396**	.243**	.170*	.185*
Funding agencies						.397**	.302*	.357*
Govern. officials							.292*	.259*
Media								.276**

	Potenti al donors/ volun	Service recipient s	Advert	Data market	Donor apprec	F-to-F comm	Listen	Ongoing comm
Board	.233*	.080	.164*	.125	.159*	.143*	.195*	.307**
Community leaders	.241**	.121	.215*	.085	.182*	.271**	.313*	.332*
Corporation	.355**	.230**	.124	.156*	.292**	.228**	.213*	.219**
Donors/ volunteers	.620**	.095	.098	.207**	.412**	.323**	.195*	.468**
Employees	.115	.383**	.175*	.139*	.168*	.276**	.201*	.238**

Table 5.3 continued

	Potential donors/ volunteers	Service recipients	Advert	Database market	Donor app	F-to-F comm	Listen	Ongoing comm
Funding agencies	.331**	.283**	.263**	.097	.200**	.276**	.280**	.229**
Government officials	.210**	.170*	.123	.188**	.176*	.192*	.238**	.214**
Media	.311**	.071	.360**	.160*	.263**	.233**	.230**	.294**
Other non-profits	.307**	.169*	.032	.166*	.107	.162*	.262**	.271**
Potential donors/		.237**	.175*	.314*	.392**	.377**	.270**	.361**
Volunteers								
Service recipients			.123	.075	.212**	.209**	.256**	.193**
Advertising				.287**	.183**	.168*	.052	.181*
Database marketing					.216**	.199**	.252**	.294*
Donor appreciation						.403	.289**	.397**
Face-to-face communication							.449**	.460**
Listening								.594**
	Annual	Emails	Fundraising	Mailings	Newsletters	Telemarketing		
Board	.177*	.156*	.303**	.244**	.158*	.039		
Community leaders	.270**	.177*	.115	.127	.104	.124		
Corporations	.280**	.122	.298**	.290**	.246**	.088		
Donors/	.192**	.144*	.477**	.426**	.387**	.051		
Volunteers								
Employees	.151*	.108	.131	.155*	.227**	.022		
Funding agencies	.270**	.036	.315**	.211**	.265**	.030		
Government officials	.256**	.096	.025	.112	.085	.032		
Media	.288**	.126	.223*	.254**	.132	.069		
Other non-	.126	.215**	.161*	.210**	.290**	.046		
Potential donors/	.301**	.218**	.456*	.419**	.290**	.102		

Service recipients	.068	.201**	.121	.122	.140*	.002
Advertising	.173*	.032	.180*	.097	.112	.220**
Database marketing	.151*	.246**	.117	.255**	.179*	.136
Donor appreciation	.302**	.142*	.375**	.372**	.338**	.043
Face-to-Face communication	.283**	.204**	.335**	.256**	.359**	.014
Listening	.193**	.376**	.090	.179**	.201**	-.010
Ongoing communication	.276**	.344**	.279**	.324**	.419**	.007
Annual		.073	.313**	.321**	.293**	.170*
Emails			.000	.133	.143*	.041
Fundraising appeals				.566**	.287*	.102
Mailings					.431**	.084
Newsletters						-.026

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5.4: Success of Communication Tactics and Importance of Supporter Benefits

	Personal sat	Public recog	Social aff	Tax advantage	<i>Advertise</i>	<i>Database marketing</i>	<i>Donor apprec</i>	<i>F-to-F</i>
<i>Personal</i>		.142*	.095	.210**	.041	.104	.234**	.103
Public recognitio			.576**	.314**	.132	.217**	.217**	.157*
<i>Social</i>				.217**	.099	.286**	.143*	.187**
<i>Tax</i>					.175*	.096	.160*	.221**

	<i>Listening</i>	<i>Ongoing comm</i>	<i>Annual reports</i>	<i>Emails</i>	<i>Fundraising</i>	<i>Mailings</i>	<i>Newsletters</i>	<i>Telemark</i>
<i>Personal</i>	.116	.176*	.113	.074	.227**	.138*	.051	.077
Public recog	.097	.130	.321**	.136	.148*	.260**	.220**	.027
Social affil	.077	.100	.227**	.104	.132	.206*	.155*	.132
<i>Tax Advan</i>	.002	.222**	.201**	.067	.304**	.170*	.254**	.112

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5.5: Importance of Relationship Building (RB) as an Organizational Strategy and Length of Relationship with Donors/Volunteers

	Importance of RB	Length of relationship
Importance of RB		.035

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5.6: Summary of Linear Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting an Organization's View of Relationship Building

Variable	B	SE B	β
Annual Revenue	.173	.264	.173
Age	-.142	.098	-.147*
Number of Employees	9.230E-03	.086	.011

* $p < .05$

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Doing Measurement Right: One Organization's Experience Creating a Best-In-Class Measurement Program from Scratch

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Introduction

The intent of this paper is to illustrate the ongoing process by which one organization is seeking to answer the question, "How well are we communicating?" Over the years the IPRRC has heard a number of theoretical methodologies for ideal measurement programs – essentially outlines of how to do measurement right. Now, with the USO we have a best-in-class, real-world case study of how theory translates to practice.

When Mark Phillips joined the USO in mid-2007, he found an opportunity to directly apply public relations theory to a nationally recognized brand. Based on the Excellence model of public relations (as put forth by Grunig, Grunig and Dozier, 2002), he designed a communication program and system of metrics, ranging from relatively superficial measures of productivity to fundamentally important effectiveness measures. These metrics served as a guide for formative research and the development of organizational goals and objectives. They also provided a structure for meaningful program evaluation.

Starting with an organization that lacked sophisticated communication measurement and with a clear goal of developing a research-based communication program, Mark assessed the USO's communication research, planning, execution and evaluation capabilities to identify gaps and redundancy. Undoubtedly, the largest gap was in the lack of formative and evaluative research capabilities. To correct these inadequacies, he looked to Katie Paine. Together, they identified and sourced the data necessary for useful assessments, developed and refined a research and assessment methodology and produced an online dashboard that could accommodate the data, assessments and reports.

The insights gleaned from this project led to several useful developments, such as a highly touted "USO message map" to help the thousands of USO employees and volunteers communicate clearly, accurately and effectively. It also led to the development of the concept of incomplete, complete and amplified messages in media assessment. The dashboard enabled the USO's communication team to correlate their media and community relations programs with outcomes from their public service announcement program and other organizational key performance indicators (e.g., public opinion, donations, customer feedback, website and social media activity and so forth). Because of its flexibility and broad utility, the USO's senior leadership has started using the dashboard, with an eye to using it as the model for an organization-wide management tool.

This case study covers and includes discussion of how to integrate analysis of earned media coverage, public service announcements, web traffic, social media, public opinion, customer and volunteer feedback, donation information and other relevant data into the

measurement program design. We present the USO dashboard, along with some of the most frequently used charts.

Where We Were

About the Organization

Since before the United States entered World War II, the USO (United Service Organizations) has been the bridge between the American public and the U.S. military. In times of peace and war, the USO has delivered comfort, morale and recreational services to military personnel and their families. The USO is a congressionally chartered, private, nonprofit organization. It was created as a way of integrating various grassroots civilian efforts to support the troops and still relies on the generosity of individuals and corporations to support USO activities.

Today, the USO delivers its programs and services at more than 135 locations around the world. In recent years, the USO opened centers in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait and Qatar to support service members participating in Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom, as well as centers throughout Europe and the Pacific, and in areas with large military populations across the United States.

Military personnel and family members visited USO centers more than seven million times in 2008. Services include free Internet, long-distance telephone and e-mail access, libraries and reading rooms, housing assistance, family crisis counseling, support groups, game rooms and nursery facilities, to name a few.

For 68 years, the USO's mission has remained the same: To support U.S. troops and their families wherever they serve. Although the mission has remained the same, the way this support is delivered has changed dramatically and has been fueled by changes in technology and culture. Some of the new programs include the use of satellite-based broadband Internet access coupled with Voice Over Internet (VOIP) telephones, which allow troops serving in extremely remote locations to stay in contact with friends and family at home. Another related program provides a way for deployed troops to play video games against professional athletes in the U.S., and to enable their families to take part in the event. Other programs give deployed military parents a way to record themselves on DVD reading to their children; the DVDs and books are then mailed home so the children can read along with their parents to help each family stay connected. These are just a few examples of the USO's use of communication technology to extend its reach and effectiveness.

The USO is perhaps best known for celebrity entertainment tours that bring volunteer actors, musicians, comedians and athletes to entertain, lift morale and express the gratitude and support of the American people. Although highly visible, the entertainment program only represents about 20% of the USO's operation.

How the USO planned, communicated and measured

The USO, like many non-profit organizations, gathered and analyzed little communication research data upon which to base organizational decisions. One bright spot was a national awareness study that was conducted by the USO's advertising agency, Williams Whittle Associates, in three waves between February 2003 and September 2004. The major finding was that "awareness and favorability of the USO are very high, but understanding of the

USO as a non-profit and as providing more than just entertainment needs improvement” (Williams Whittle Associates, 2004, p. 2).

Based on less formal anecdotal evidence gathered in early 2007, the perception within the organization was that the brand was highly recognized, but little understood. In a series of person-on-the-street interviews, participants were asked what they knew about the USO. One respondent said, “I don’t believe in them, but my husband does,” equating the USO with UFOs. Most of the responses were not as humorous, but equally telling in revealing the lack of general awareness of what the USO does. Clearly, the USO needed to increase the level of awareness and understanding of its organization and mission.

Knowing that an organization faces communication challenges is important and the more clearly these challenges can be defined, the better the organization’s communication program can be designed to meet these challenges. It is important to also understand how the organization communicates. Prior to Mark joining the USO, the organization’s public relations practitioners used annual media directories to manually construct media distribution lists. Press releases were then distributed to these media lists via a wire service.

The USO employed an outside firm to monitor print media and clip articles that included any mention of the organization. These clippings were then mailed to the USO on a monthly basis. The clippings were tallied and assessed by volume, with the presumption that more coverage was better than less coverage. Many of the clippings were obituaries in which the USO was mentioned as a place where the deceased had met their spouse or had volunteered. Because such mentions looked to the organization’s past, they did not help to increase understanding of the USO’s current operation. With the media assessment focusing entirely on volume, there was no attempt to assess tone, key message inclusion or other more meaningful analyses of the coverage. In short, the monthly stack of press clippings showed that the USO was in the news, but there was no way to systematically determine what that coverage meant for the organization or its publics.

When the stack of clippings arrived each month, the USO’s communications coordinator sorted through the clippings, selecting those that she thought would be of interest to the CEO and members of the Board of Governors. These clippings were photocopied and mailed to the senior leadership. It was then up to the leaders to find meaning in these packets of photocopied press clippings.

Historically, the USO’s Board of Governors met approximately three times each year and the reports to the board typically focused on the Public Service Announcement (PSA) program, which has been exceedingly successful, with scant mention of mainstream media coverage, other than mentions of highly visible news coverage (e.g., an NBC Nightly News report) or reporting the raw volume of media coverage. Such media coverage typically was reported in a slide or two that listed the publications or broadcast networks in which USO coverage had appeared during the reporting period and might include a tally of the articles.

Where We are and How We Got Here

Taking Stock of the Situation

When Mark joined the USO in mid-2007, one of the first things he did was to assess how the USO functioned within the Research-Plan-Execute-Evaluate (RPEE) cycle of public relations practice. The initial assessment is presented in *Figure 1* as a simple red-yellow-green stoplight

chart. Red represents no capability, yellow represents limited capability and green represents full capability. Although all of the capabilities have been brought up to the green level, at the time of the initial evaluation, it was plain that there was very little formative research being conducted to provide the organization with the necessary information to effectively plan its communication activities, nor was there anything other than the most rudimentary evaluation (e.g., raw press clippings) to let the organization's leadership know how well the communication program was working. This was not a complete surprise as Mark had been told in his first employment interview that building research and evaluation competencies for the USO would be among his primary responsibilities.

Figure 1. The USO's Research-Plan-Execute-Evaluate capabilities as of mid-2007.

In addition to the lack of research and evaluation activities in the RPEE cycle, Mark determined that planning frequently was done at the tactical level, with communication plans being drawn up for specific projects. Execution of these plans was the bright point in the scenario, with a small, but talented and dedicated public relations staff actively engaged with both local and national media that ranged from general interest publications to those that focused on military issues. They were generating lots of press coverage, as the considerable stack of press clippings would indicate, but their efforts primarily were driven by two factors: Queries from journalists and specific operational events (e.g., new center openings, program milestones, and so forth).

In gathering information to chart out a course of action, Mark also assessed the support contracts that the USO was using. During this assessment, it became clear that there were gaps

in the organization's communication capabilities, which would require changes to the support that the USO contracted from other organizations. Before these contractual changes could be made, however, it would be necessary to develop a detailed metrics schema to serve as the new foundation for the USO's communication efforts. After all, it wouldn't make sense to hire new employees or let new contracts without a clear idea of what they should be doing.

Developing a Metrics Schema

Following the initial assessment of the USO's extant communication capabilities, resources and processes, Mark laid out the first draft of a metrics schema for the organization. Although the development of communication metrics for the organization has been an iterative process during the ensuing 20 months, evolving as the organization changes, the main focus of the metrics has remained constant. That focus has been on creating a measurement system that ultimately will drive organizational decisions based on the goal of fostering strong, positive, mutually beneficial, communal relationships between the USO and its strategic stakeholders.

These stakeholders were identified by considering the question, "Who depends on the USO and upon whom does the USO depend?" In the graphic at *Figure 2*, the USO is at the center of the constellation of strategic stakeholders. This constellation represents those groups of people who are vital to the organization. The customers (i.e., the troops and their families) are the USO's reason for being. For the most part, the other groups of stakeholders have an affinity for these customers and, therefore, are allied with the USO as they help the organization fulfill its mission of lifting the spirits of the troops and their families.

Following a clear articulation of the USO's strategic stakeholders, Mark then asked, "What do we, as an organization, want to achieve?" This question was first viewed conceptually and in the broadest organizational terms. For example, he asked, from a communications perspective, what might be desirable organizational outcomes? In the long run, desirable outcomes were defined in terms of the organization's relationships with its stakeholders (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2002; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000). This was based on the model of public relations practice identified during the Excellence project (Grunig, et al., 2002). With positive relationships as the ultimate goal, Mark worked backward to determine what conditions would be necessary set the stage for achieving these kinds of relationships. Such conditions included stakeholder awareness of the USO mission and understanding of its operation, as well as attitudes (i.e., affective response to) and opinions (i.e., cognitions about) the USO, its mission and its operations.

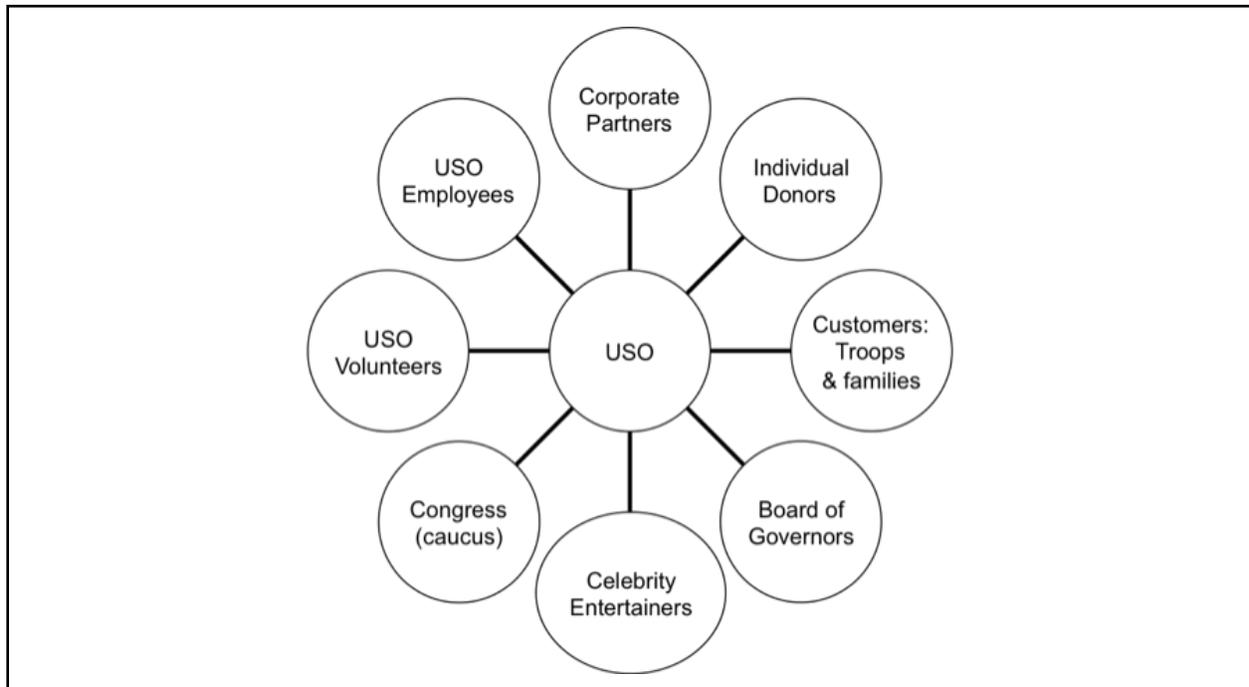


Figure 2. The USO's constellation of strategic stakeholders.

Recognizing that he would not be able to directly assess the quality of the organization's relationships with some of its stakeholders immediately, if ever, Mark developed a set of bridge metrics that would serve as analog measures of the quality of these relationships. Such analogous metrics would be based on the assessment of observable and measurable behaviors. For example, with respect to the USO's relationship with members of its Congressional caucus, it might not be possible to survey the caucus members. However, it is possible to monitor the size of the caucus and their legislative activities that affect the USO mission. Likewise, the behavior of individual donors, corporate partners and celebrity volunteers is observable, even if it is not possible to directly ask them about their relationship with the USO. The intent was to eventually measure the relationships directly, where feasible, while also accommodating real-world limitations on what was possible.

These measures were grouped under the rubric of "Impact" metrics or assessments of the overall effectiveness of the communication program in the broadest sense and by no means limited to the activities of the communication department. In fact, in the USO's communication metrics chart (*Figure 3*), as metrics progress from left to right, they become increasingly important to the entire organization and indicative of the actions of the organization as a whole, not just of the communication department. It is important to note that these metrics were developed from the perspective of the communications department and have not yet been fully vetted or approved by the overall organization.

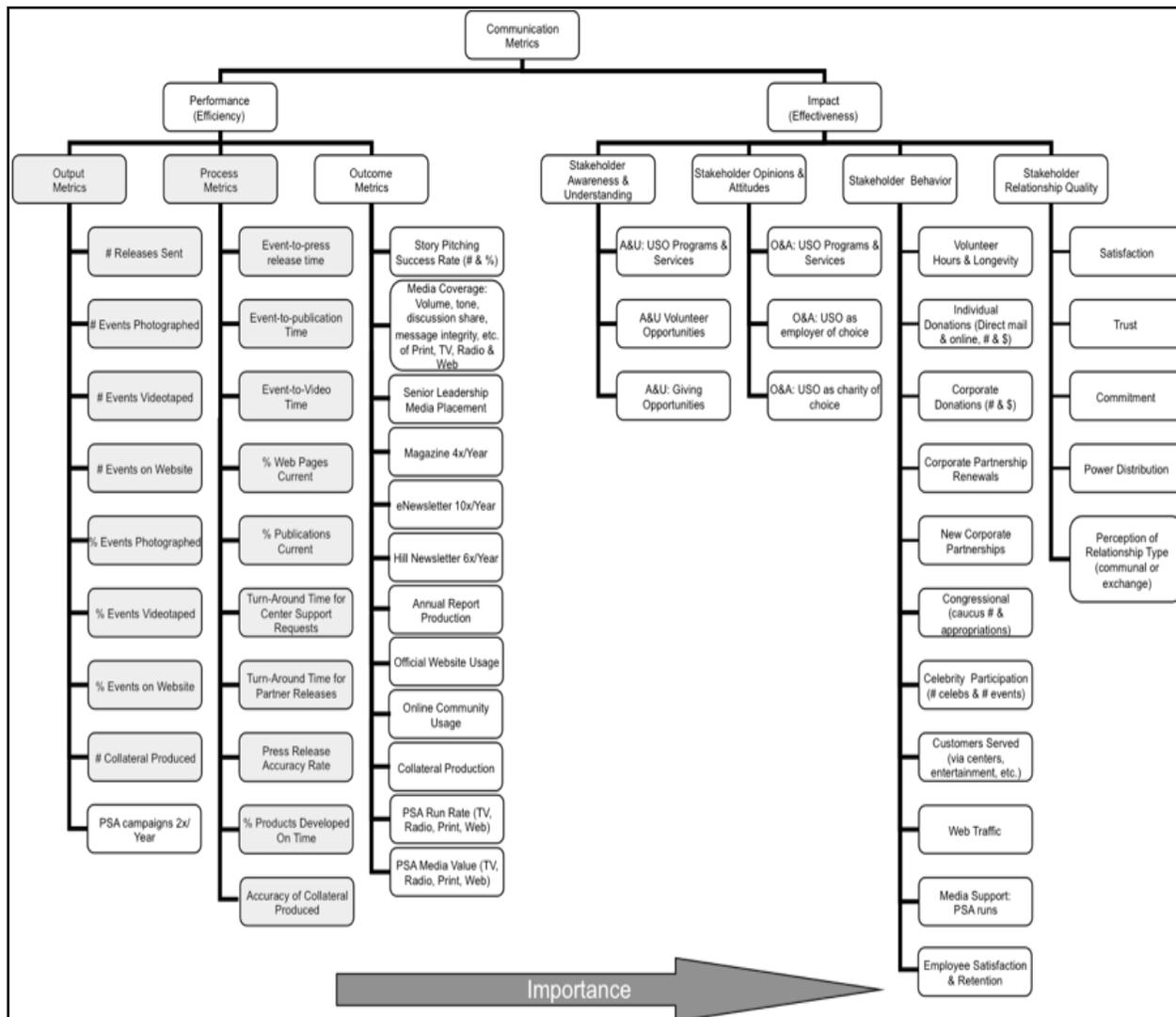


Figure 3. USO metrics schema from a communication department perspective.

Based on this metrics schema, Mark surmised that the more fundamentally important (e.g., assessing stakeholder relationships) a metric might be for the overall organization, the more it measures how well the organization as a whole is performing and, therefore, the less discretely it measures the effectiveness of any particular department within the organization.

How then should the activities of the communication department be assessed? To answer this question, Mark developed a set of “Performance” metrics (Figure 3) or assessments of the efficiency of the communication program. These are broken down into output metrics, process metrics and outcome metrics. Output metrics are simple tallies of activities or things produced. Alone, they only give an indication of the busyness of an individual or department. Process metrics begin to give context and meaning to the output metrics. For example, counting the number of press releases produced and distributed only indicates the level of activity; when considered along with event-to-press-release times and press release accuracy rates, one can

begin to get at efficiency. By also considering outcome metrics, such as media coverage that resulted from the press release activity, one can better determine the efficiency of the process.

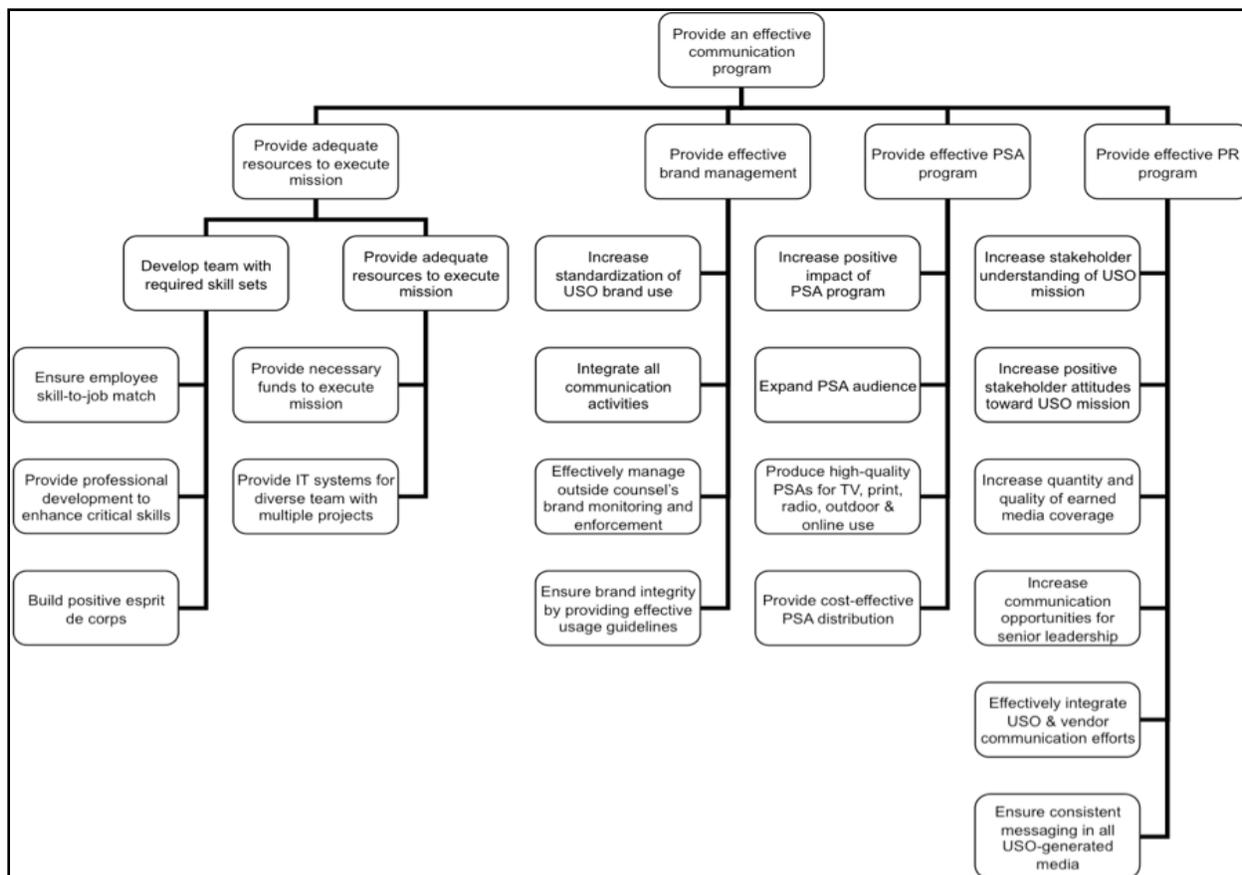


Figure 4. Goals of the USO communication department.

Going hand in hand with the metrics development discussed above, Mark also laid out a set of goals for the communication department. By definition, these goals are conceptual and not directly measurable as stated. Their value is in the clearly articulated end states that they represent. To make these goals measurable, one must determine an appropriate path of activities that would lead to each of the objectives, as well as a specified time frame for particular milestones. For example, if a goal is to provide an effective public relations program for the organization, supporting objectives could include increasing the quantity and quality of earned media coverage by a certain amount by a certain point in time. As will be discussed later, this objective was broken down into increasingly discrete measurements (e.g., assessing the tone, dominance, share of discussion, subjects and so forth of media coverage). Additionally, specific targets would need to be set to be able to determine the successful attainment of any given objective.

Constructing a dashboard with new data and fresh analysis

As Mark developed metrics, goals and objectives that would drive the USO's communication efforts, it became apparent that there was no single mechanism to use in collecting data, conducting analysis and reporting findings. Being aware of the communication measurement work in which Katie Paine's company was engaged, he contacted Katie to find out whether her media assessment and dashboard capabilities would meet the USO's burgeoning measurement needs. After surveying and reviewing the capabilities of the major providers of communication monitoring and assessment, he determined that the work KDPaine & Partners' approach most closely meshed with his efforts.

In late-2007, the USO and KDPaine & Partners began working together to develop a dashboard that could be used initially to assess the USO's media relations efforts (i.e., measuring earned media) and eventually to correlate other data sets that were important to the organization. The first order of business was to clearly articulate exactly what was to be measured. This would drive data collection and analysis decisions.

Based on the metrics schema (*Figure 3*) and the goals and objectives (*Figure 4*), they determined that it would be necessary to monitor and assess print, television, radio and online media nation wide. They would need to be able to examine these media data to determine, among other things, dominance of coverage, key message content and integrity, share of exposure, subjects covered, tone of coverage and visibility of coverage. They also would need to be able to assess the USO's share of coverage by article type, department, dominance, media campaign, media type, prominence, subject, tone, and favorable or unfavorable positioning on key issues. They would also need to be able to determine the extent of subject coverage by tone, share of quotes by quote type and message integrity by media type. Additionally, the dashboard system would need to be able to facilitate correlation of other, non-earned media data (e.g., public service announcement program data, donor activity, customer feedback and so forth).

With this broad view of the dashboard and its supporting data and assessments, it would be instructive to examine how it fits with the USO's communication metrics. The metrics schema (*Figure 3*) calls for an assessment of the tone of coverage and the communication goals (*Figure 4*) require the ability to determine both the quantity and quality of media coverage. *Figure 5* illustrates how tone of coverage is reported. The assessment criteria for all of the USO's communications measurements are intentionally conservative. For example, in this chart, coverage must be wholly positive and tantamount to an advertisement for the USO to be considered positive. Otherwise, even though it might be a good, balanced article that appears favorable overall, it is rated as neutral coverage. Negative coverage is self-explanatory.

One might well ask how the tone of coverage is determined. That is a very important question. Although some organizations currently offer automated coding, we decided to have human readers assess each print article or broadcast story. We did this for two reasons. First, was the belief that the automated processes are not yet sophisticated enough to accurately differentiate nuances in the coverage. Although there are certainly those who would argue differently, Mark needed to quickly choose a service provider and was confident in the abilities of human eyes connected to human brains. Second, the readers were provided with very clear criteria for each of the assessments and results are rigorously checked for rating consistency across readers and over time.

Another point that should be mentioned here is how the dashboard handles the link between the charts and the supporting data. Both the data and the dependent charts are live in the sense that the database is constantly updated as media assessments flow in, and the charts

pull from this live database. Because the dashboard is web-based, it is available to all team members, regardless of location.

When presenting findings to the organization's leadership, it is important to be able to answer "show me" requests. To do this, one can select a section in any of the charts in the dashboard and click through to the original data. For example, in reviewing the information in *Figure 5*, as a public relations practitioner, it would be important to see the articles that resulted in negative coverage in any of the months. With this dashboard, all that requires is a simple mouse click on the chart and the original articles are instantly available.

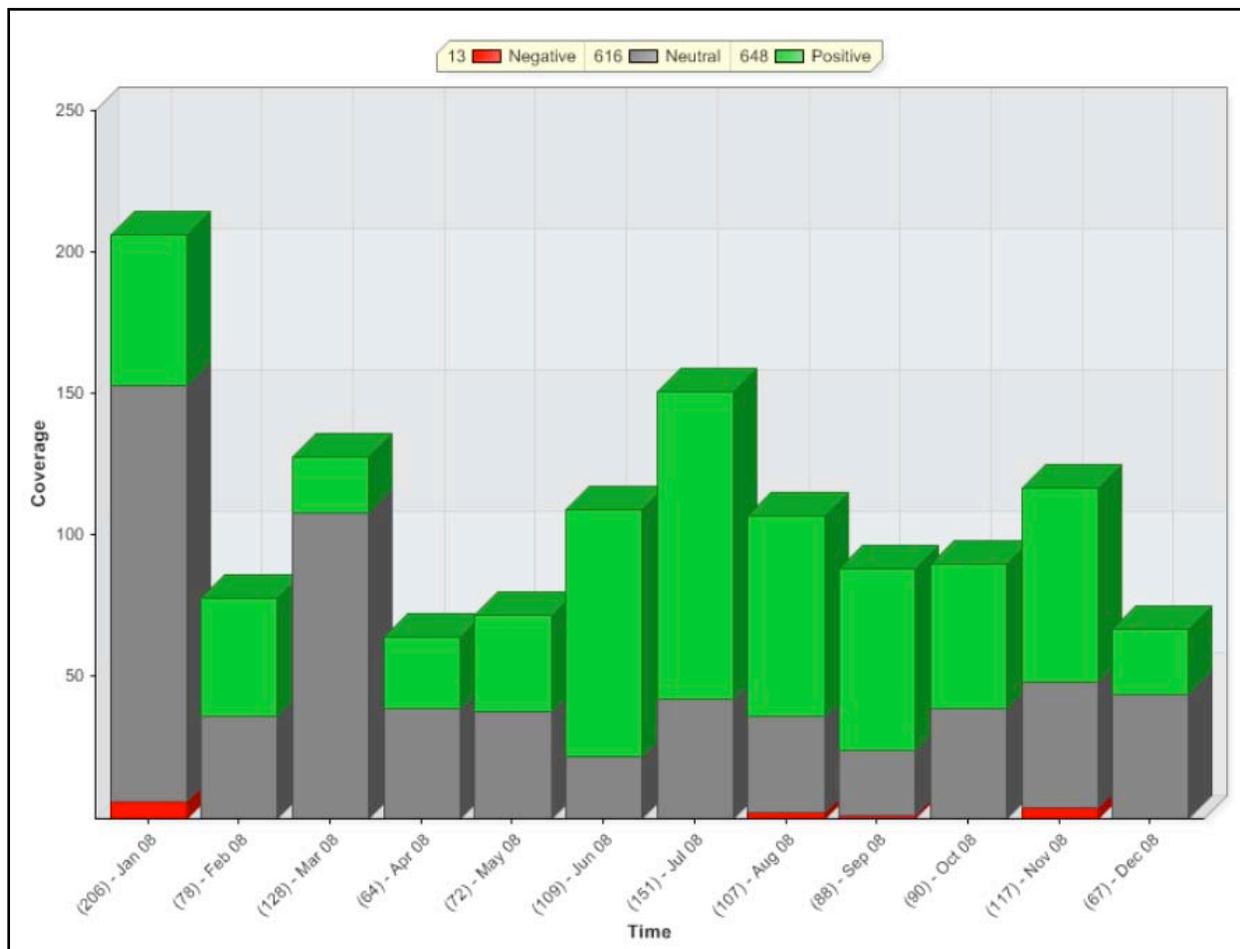


Figure 5. Tone of USO coverage over time.

Review of first year top-line metrics (January-December 2008)

Based on the communication metrics and goals outlined above, this section contains a review of the top-line metrics based on data collected during the first year of assessments. This first year forms the baseline for future assessments that will include both month-to-month trends and year-over-year comparisons. The data populating the following charts are real and are presented here not so much as a review of how the organization is performing, but rather to

illustrate how these data are currently being used and how they will be used as the USO's communication measurement program is expanded in the future.

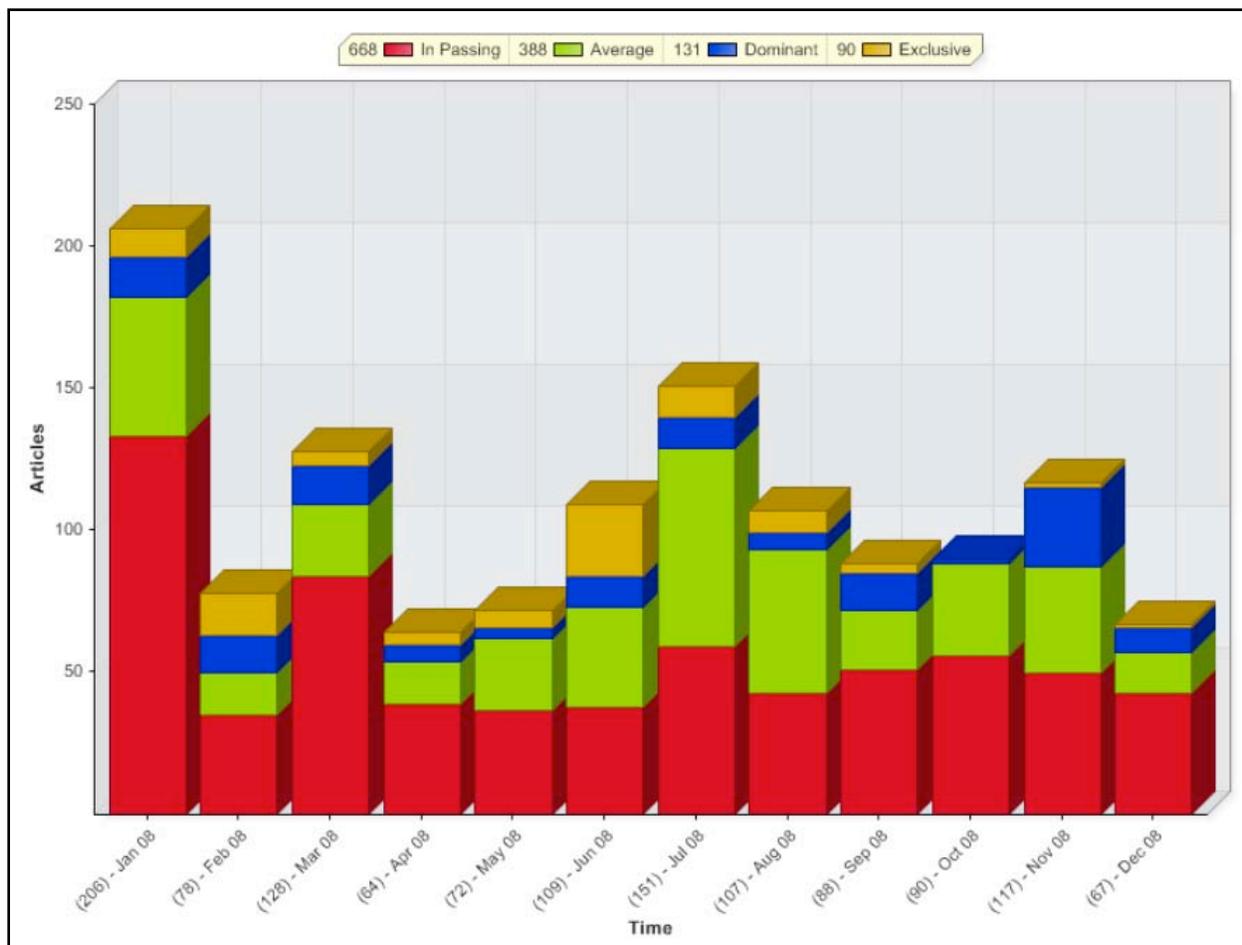


Figure 6. Dominance of USO coverage over time.

Figure 6 illustrates how the level of dominance of USO mentions in earned media coverage are assessed. The gold segments at the top of each column represent news articles that focus entirely on the USO, without any mentions of peer organizations. The blue segments represent coverage in which the focus is predominantly on the USO. Green segments represent coverage in which the USO shares the spotlight fairly evenly with at least one other organization. In the articles behind the red segments, the USO is mentioned only in passing.

Knowing that one's organization is the focus of a news story is good to know, but like most of these measurements, it takes on much greater meaning when considered in light of other measures. For example, an organization being dominant (Figure 6) in specific articles of coverage takes on very different meanings if the tone of that coverage (Figure 5) is negative versus positive. Thus, it is important to have access to, and to consider, multiple facets of the data.

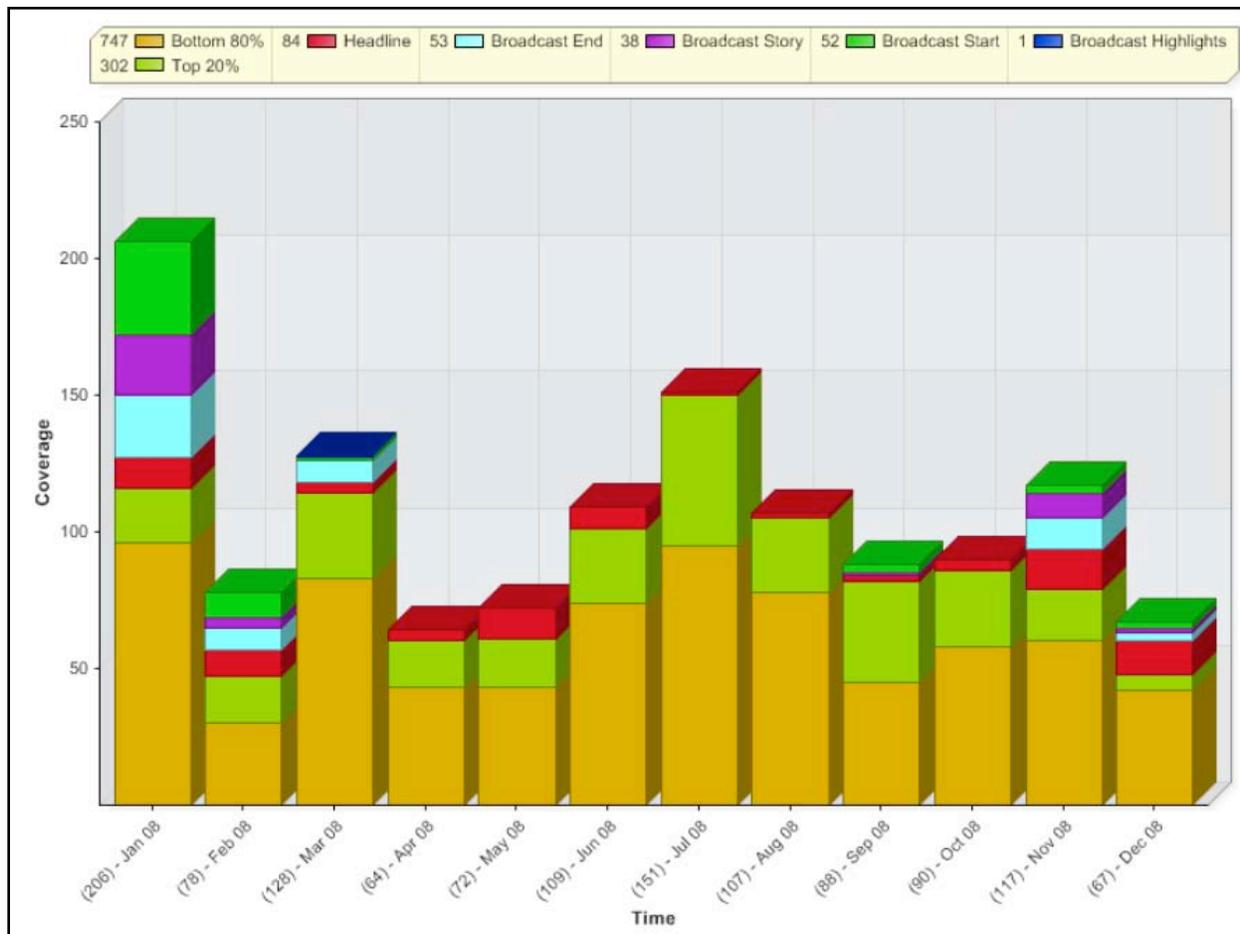


Figure 7. Visibility of USO coverage over time.

Knowing which organizations are in the news media and the tone of that coverage is important; so, too, is knowing the visibility of the organization's coverage. In this context, visibility is the term of art used to describe where an organization is mentioned in a print article or broadcast report. The assessment in *Figure 7* combines visibility in both print (i.e., the bottom three segments of each column) and broadcast news coverage (i.e., the top four segments of each column). The idea is that it is most desirable for an organization to be in the headline or top 20% of a print article, or in the highlights or start of a broadcast report. This assumes one is dealing with positive news coverage and the desire is to have a lead story and not to have it "buried" deep in a publication or broadcast.

Clearly, it is important to understand the quantity and quality of media coverage for one's organization. However, because organizations exist within an environment that also includes peer, and frequently competitive, organizations, it is also important to understand how coverage of an organization compares to that of its peers. *Figure 8* is an example of how the volume of USO's media coverage compares to that of two of its peer organizations.

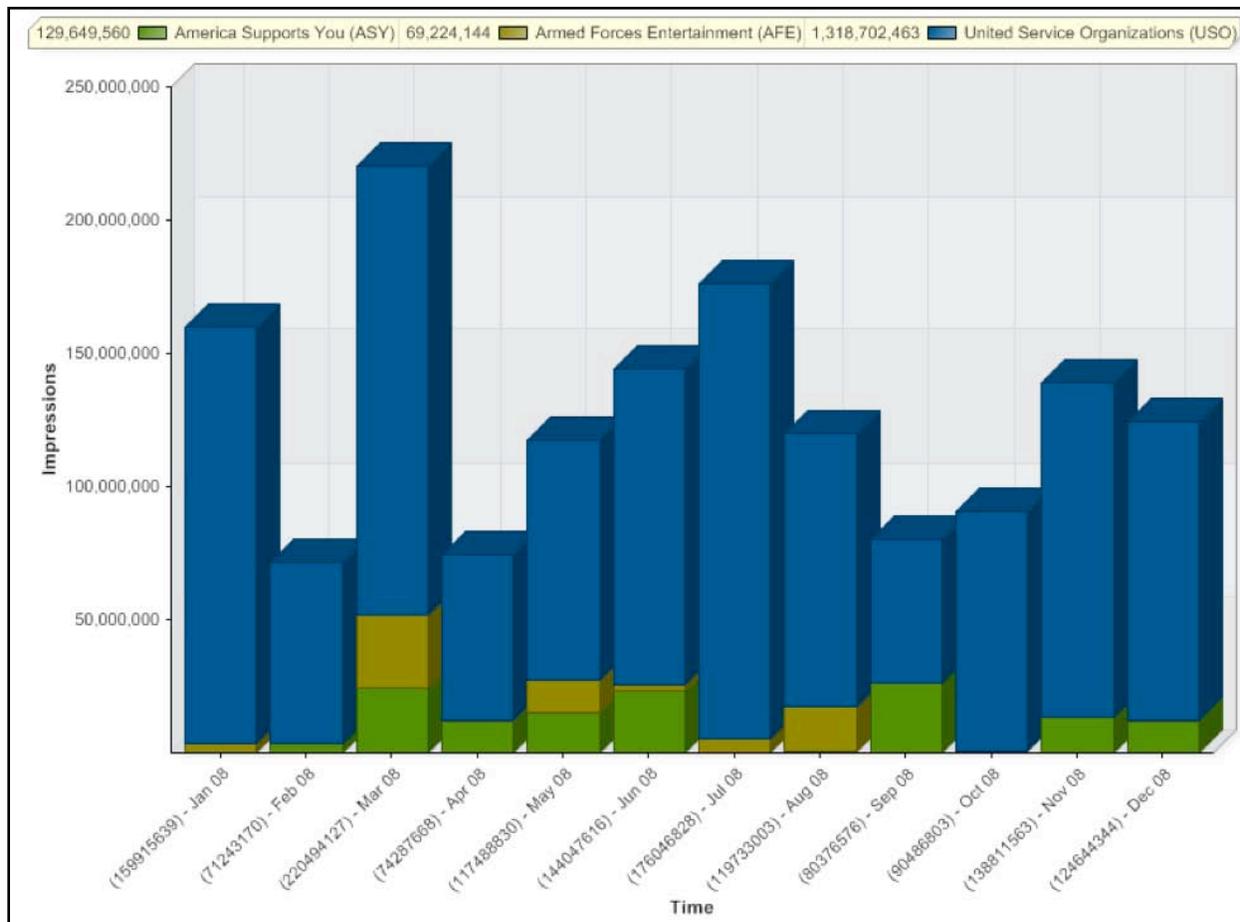


Figure 8. Share of coverage over time as compared to peer organizations.

In addition to knowing how the organization as a whole is covered by the news media and how it is covered relative to its peers, it is also important to be able to examine the data in more detail. To strategically manage the USO's overall communication program, it is useful to know how specific programs and elements of the organization are being covered. For example, public opinion surveys in 2003 and 2004 found that, although the USO brand was well recognized, there was far less understanding of the USO's operation, aside from the entertainment tour program (Williams Whittle Associates, 2004, p. 2).

Although entertainment tours constitute a core program, they are a small part of the USO's overall mission. These tours present easy to tell, "sexy" stories with celebrity recognition and compelling photographs. Additionally, each of the celebrity volunteers has managers and publicists working on their behalf. The highly visible nature of the USO's tour program recalls the iconic image of Bob Hope and other celebrities on USO tours in combat zones and reinforces the perception that entertainment tours are the sum of what the USO does.

To help the USO's stakeholders understand the full range of programs and services offered by the organization, there is considerable effort to tell "the rest of the story." This can be challenging, particularly as some of the programs are, by definition, difficult for reporters to cover. For example, a new program called "USO in a Box" (i.e., a modified military trailer that

provides satellite-based Internet links to home, telephones, video games, a small theater and refreshments) is being delivered to very small, remote operating bases in Afghanistan. These bases might be home to only 100 or so service members and it is very difficult to get there, both for news reporters and for USO photographers. Thus, it is easy for this program to go unnoticed without creative ways to tell the story. One of these ways is to provide inexpensive video cameras for the troops on the ground to record themselves using the USO in a Box and to upload that to the USO Community website at www.usocommunity.com. The imagery and testimonials can then be used in more traditional media pitches and collateral publications, such as the new “Your USO at Work” newsletter and the upcoming “On Patrol” magazine.

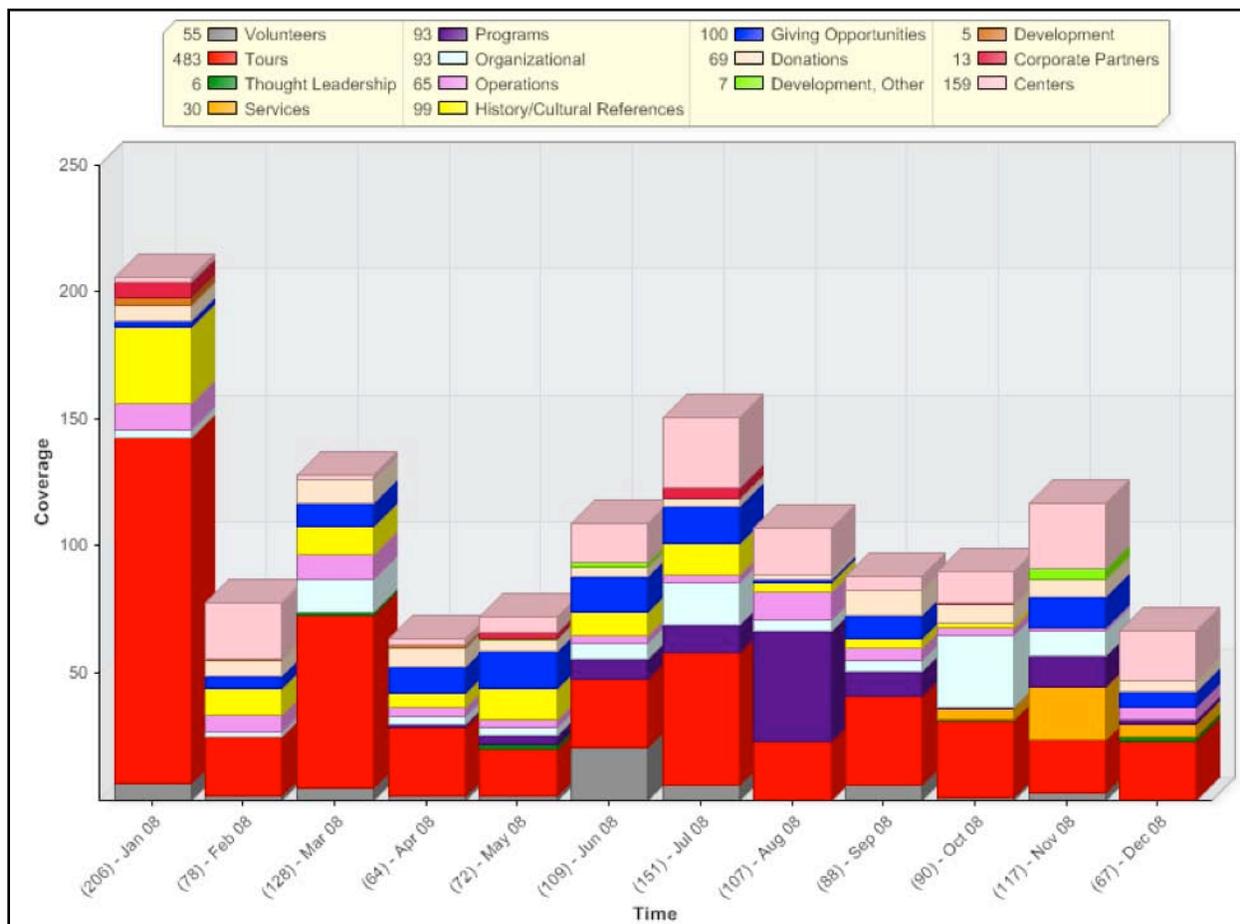


Figure 9. Subject coverage over time.

To determine how well different facets of the USO are covered in the news, it was necessary to break down the coverage by subject matter (see *Figure 9*). The example of the USO in a Box program fits within the “Programs” area. Other subjects germane to the USO’s communications management are also broken out. This enables an examination of the extent to which USO centers, for example, are being covered relative to entertainment tours. It should

also serve as an indicator of which communication areas require more concentrated effort and resources.

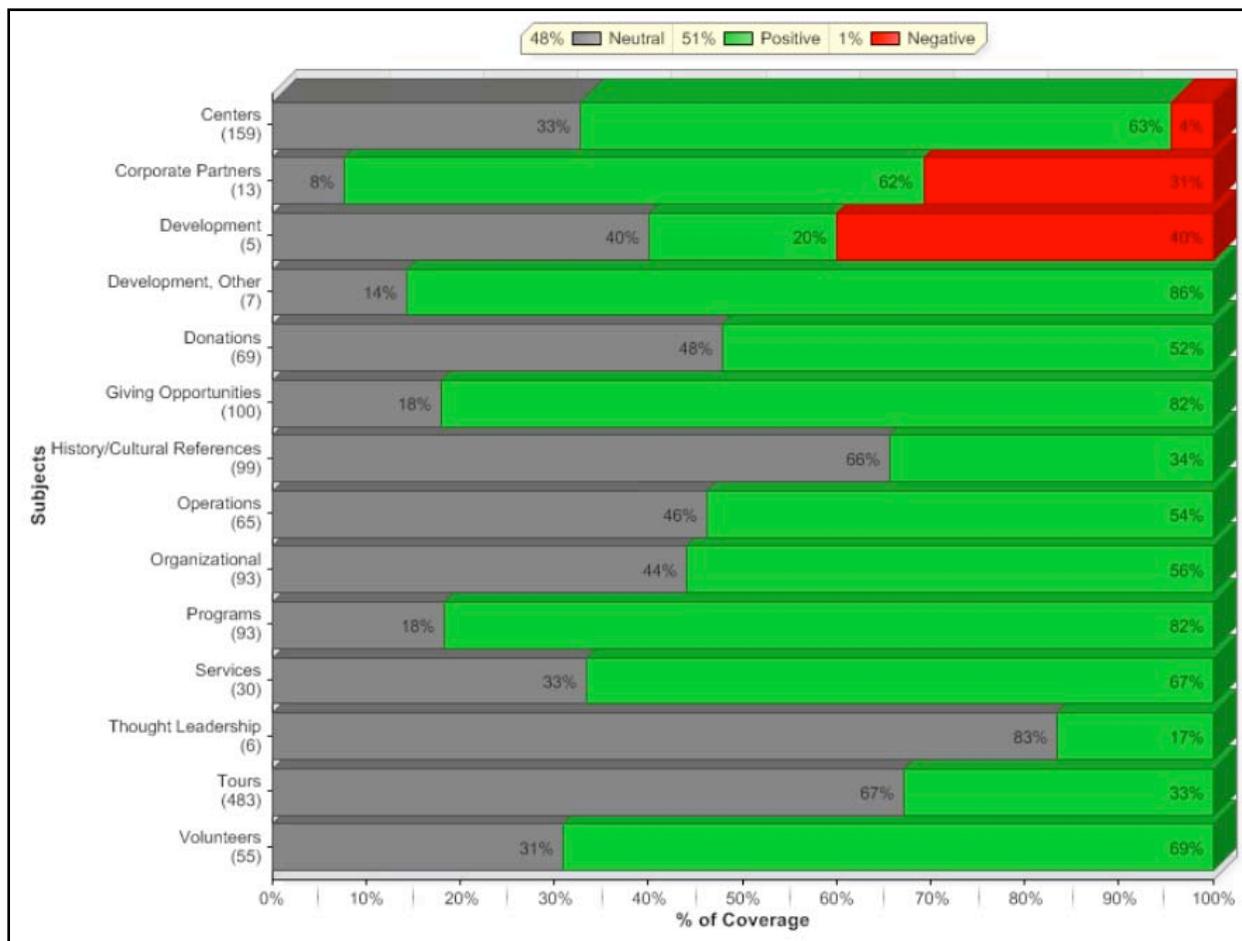


Figure 10. Subject coverage by tone.

The chart at *Figure 9* provides a way to assess the relative volume of news coverage among various aspects of the USO organization and operation. Going hand in hand with this is *Figure 10*, which provides information on the tonality of this coverage. *Figure 9* gives an indication of which stories are, or are not, being told; *Figure 10* sheds light on potential problem areas in which the organization is being reported on in a negative way.

In addition to the volume, tone and subject matter of news coverage, it is also important to know the extent to which the organization's key messages are present in the coverage. Before this could be assessed, it was imperative to provide the readers at KDPaine & Partners with a clearly articulated, unambiguous set of key messages. Incidentally, this was important to provide to the communicators (e.g., public relations practitioners, senior leaders, employees in field centers, board members and so forth) throughout the organization as well.

Within the USO, media preparation had traditionally been presented as a communications toolkit. Each toolkit comprised a set of "elevator speeches" of various lengths, talking points,

fact sheets and back up documentation with more detailed information on the organization's history, programs and services. It was incumbent on the receiver to digest the entire packet, which might be more than a half-inch thick, and synthesize all of the data into sound bites in their own style. Based on feedback from those who were expected to carry out this process and speak on behalf of the USO, this was determined to be an overly cumbersome way to prepare people to represent the organization.

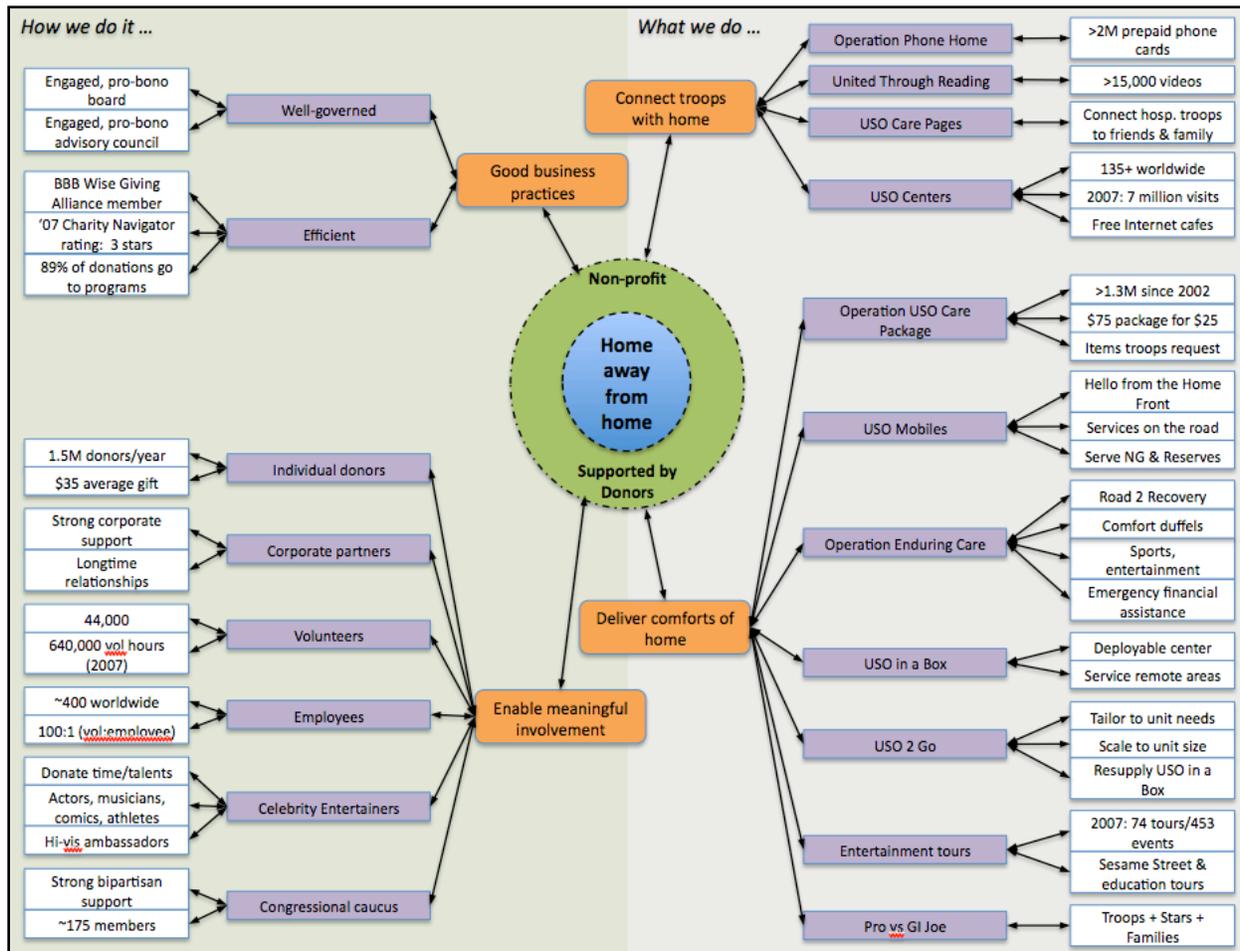


Figure 11. USO message map (as of October 31, 2008).

To provide USO representatives, which could include not just senior leaders and employees in the communications department, but also any of the 400 employees, 44,000 volunteers, corporate partners and board members, the communications department developed a message map (presented at *Figure 11*). In this map, key messages are in the center of the diagram, with supporting information out on the ends of the branches. The map is updated periodically to ensure it is correct and current. It is also disseminated throughout the organization, from the board of governors and the president to the employees working at centers around the world.

For the purposes of assessing message content and integrity, “full messages” were those that included at least one statement from the set at the center of *Figure 11* (e.g., “The USO provides home away from home for troops,” or “The USO connects troops with home”). This assessment is depicted in *Figure 12*.

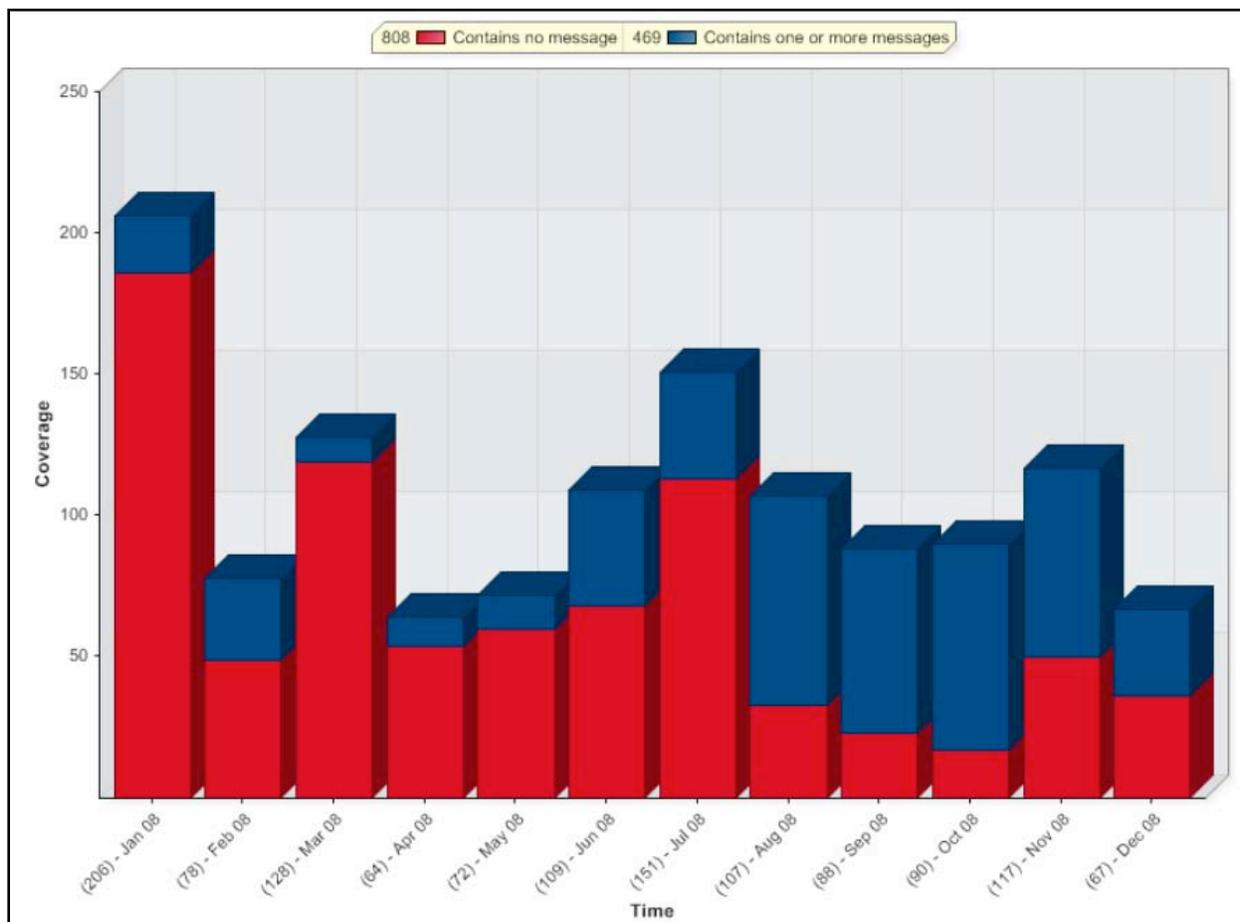


Figure 12. Key message content over time.

During the initial assessments in early 2008, the question arose about how to handle coverage that included key messages along with additional information. Thus, we created the concept of amplified messages, which are key messages plus additional information. The rationale is that, if a key USO message in news coverage is good, a key message with supporting information is better.

Using the chart on *Figure 11*, an example of an amplified message would be coverage that includes “The USO connects troops with home” through its “Operation Phone Home” program that has distributed “more than two million prepaid international phone cards.” This would qualify as an amplified message.

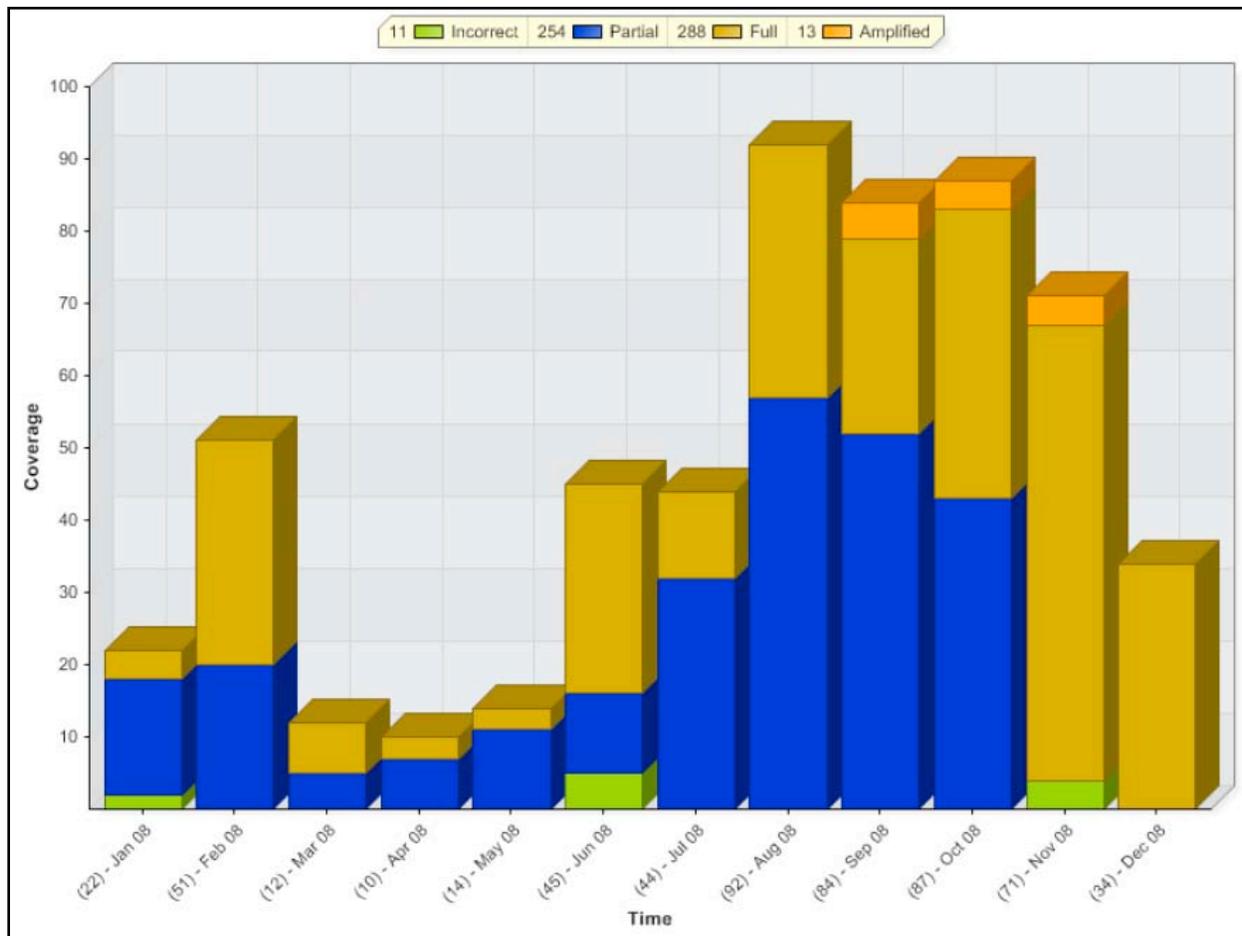


Figure 13. Message integrity over time.

Figure 13 illustrates how key messages are tracked over time and also introduces the tracking of incorrect messages. An example of this would be coverage that indicates that the USO provides health care to military retirees. As this is beyond the scope of the USO's charter and operations, it is not reflected in the message map. To ensure that media coverage is accurately assessed requires that the readers at KDPaine & Partners be intimately familiar with the USO's mission.

Figure 14 provides detail of some of the USO communication program's key performance indicators, particularly with respect to the organization's media relations activities. This chart gives an indication of both the quantity and quality of the USO's coverage in the news media over time. Volume is communicated in both terms of the number of articles (i.e., print and broadcast) and in opportunities to see, which is a function of the number of articles and the media outlets' reach (i.e., circulation or viewership). This chart also gives an indication of how well the USO's key messages were evident in this coverage, as well as the relative tonality of the coverage.

Key Performance Indicators

Month	Articles	OTS	Message Resonance		Coverage Tonality		
			One Plus	% Full	Positive	Neutral	Negative
January 2008	206	156,433,780	10.36%	0.73%	27,710,539	126,025,370	2,697,871
February 2008	78	67,694,477	36.17%	31.03%	27,290,665	40,403,812	0
March 2008	128	168,596,916	22.41%	22.25%	21,787,432	146,809,484	0
April 2008	64	61,988,337	24.45%	20.09%	43,986,001	18,002,336	0
May 2008	72	90,009,090	4.70%	1.11%	62,280,458	27,728,632	0
June 2008	109	118,451,682	67.28%	54.67%	104,147,430	14,304,252	0
July 2008	151	171,092,979	5.14%	1.25%	119,454,108	51,638,871	0
August 2008	107	102,008,505	73.64%	25.06%	76,136,975	25,799,491	72,039
September 2008	88	54,267,649	91.64%	70.33%	33,813,371	20,180,875	273,403
October 2008	90	90,120,230	45.83%	25.18%	23,252,958	66,867,272	0
November 2008	117	125,472,595	35.55%	34.60%	57,918,791	66,408,883	1,144,921
December 2008	67	112,566,223	30.90%	30.90%	29,754,042	82,812,181	0
Total	1,277	1,318,702,463	32.75%	23.10%	627,532,770	686,981,459	4,188,234

Figure 14. Key performance indicators.

Do the assessments presented here answer all of the important questions about the USO's communication program? No, but they are much more valuable than having only a pile of raw media clippings from which to discern the effectiveness of the organization's communications. So what is next?

Where We are Going

Taking an organization-wide view of measurement

During the past 20 months, the USO has made tremendous strides in being able to clearly articulate what should be communicated, with whom and to what effect. With the help of KDPaine & Partners, we have established important data and assessment baselines, particularly with respect to determining many of the outcomes of the USO's media relations program.

With the second year of this communication measurement program, the USO-KDPaine team has launched into the next phase of development. This phase is three-fold: First, we will begin to incorporate additional types of data that will enable ever more meaningful assessments of the effectiveness of the communications department and the USO overall. Second, we will provide theory based and data-driven formative research to guide communication program planning. Third, we will conduct evaluative research to determine the effectiveness of communication programs.

Based on the metrics schema detailed in *Figure 3* and *Figure 4*, this phase of measurement seeks to move beyond measuring data (e.g., media coverage) that are typically thought of as belonging to the communications department. The next step is to include operational data from throughout the organization. Such data could include information on customer, donor and partner behavior; customer, volunteer and employee satisfaction; and organizational culture and climate, along with many other potentially relevant sets of data that, when viewed as a whole can provide operationally useful insight.

Incorporating organizationally important data

The ability to incorporate new data sets into the overall assessment program holds tremendous potential, because of the myriad ways it can inform organizational decision-making. For example, with the USO's customers (i.e., the stakeholder group that includes service members and their families), goals include increasing awareness and understanding, improving attitudes and opinions, encouraging use of USO programs and services, and fostering long-term positive relationships between the USO and its customers. Given the assessments previously discuss in this paper, we know which messages to which they might be exposed and how those messages are available via news media. Combining data from news media coverage with data from the USO's public service announcement (PSA) program enables more thorough understanding of the ways in which stakeholders in particular geographic areas might be exposed to key messages.

Taken a step further, data from feedback surveys of customers using USO centers and non-center based programs could enable the determination of the degree to which they are aware of, understand and value the programs and services provided by the USO. So, too, would assessments of customer use of specific programs, services and communication tools. With respect to program use, the USO participates in the United Through Reading Military Program, in which deployed military parents record DVDs of themselves reading children's books on camera. The DVDs and books are mailed to the children at home, who can follow along in the book while their parent reads to them on the television. The parent at home is encouraged to photograph or videotape the child doing this and send the photos or video to the deployed parent, thus completing the circle of communication. Tracking use of this program, along with collecting feedback from the service members and the parents at home will allow the USO to fine tune this program to best meet customer needs and expectations.

This principle applies to all of the organization's programs and services. Likewise, customer traffic and feedback from USO centers in airports and in combat zones overseas can be fed into the system to be correlated with the other relevant data sets. Finally, to determine the health of the relationship between the organization and its customers, service members and their families can be surveyed to determine their perception of satisfaction, trust, commitment, control mutuality (i.e., the degree to which the distribution of power in the relationship is acceptable to each party) and relationship type.

Similar processes of correlating various data sets can be used to assess awareness, understanding, opinions, attitudes, and, ultimately, the nature of their relationships with the USO for each of the strategic stakeholder groups. For example, volunteer behavior (e.g., number of hours donated, longevity with the organization, and so forth) can be correlated with relationship and organizational climate data from volunteer surveys to paint a more detailed picture of how well the USO is maintaining relations with this critical group of stakeholders. Additional detail

can be added by also including data on volunteers' use of the USO's new social networking site (i.e., www.usocommunity.com), as well as their use of other social media.

As the USO-KDPaine team moves into more sophisticated assessments of the organization's communications programs, we will include regular waves of public opinion data, the baseline of which has just been established with a national survey conducted at the end of 2008 to gauge awareness of the USO mission and interest in specific communication initiatives, such as the USO electronic newsletter and a USO magazine. Additional data on the use of the USO website and other social media will be incorporated. The dashboard was structured to also include such disparate data as stakeholder feedback, PSA program data, donation and partnership activity and so forth; the intent is to incorporate all available data that could better inform the USO's programmatic and organizational decisions.

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Public Relations in High Profile Family Crisis Situations

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Crisis management is an important public relations organizational function but families in crisis situations could also benefit from such assistance while they require a whole different approach to crisis management. This paper discusses the theoretical basis for merging crisis communication with family crisis literature, and from psychology and sociology as well. There have been a number of high profile cases recently where families going through situations of murder, kidnapping, legal allegations, illnesses etc. quickly catch and remain in the media spotlight. Most likely, these families have never received appropriate training for such media exposure.

In addition to theory this study is a multiple case analysis that follows such cases as the Laci Peterson and Lori Hacking murders, as well as Elizabeth Smart's kidnapping, and Terri Schiavo's legal controversy over life-prolonging measures and others. In several of these cases the family turned to a public relations professional, often pro bono, to get key messages out to the public through the media and seek some resolution to a particular tragic situation.

As a result of the multiple-case analysis a model, called the audience-interaction family crisis model, was developed for handling family crises communication that can help public relations professionals deal with similar critical situations. The author(s) believe that this is an important model that will help forward public relations theory and practice as it applies to crisis communication involving families in the media focus.

Introduction

When Elizabeth Smart finally returned to her family in March 2003, after having been missing for nine months, the tireless efforts of her family and friends as well as professional public relations representatives became widely known as an example of a new successful public relations function - family crisis communication. Among many other functions of public relations, one of the most important is preparation, mitigation and response to a crisis situation. Crisis management research has been developing through practitioner experiences, research on apologia and impression management. It has focused primarily on understanding and improving the public relations role as issues management and developing proactive crisis plans for organizations (Ulmer, Sellnow, & Seeger, 2007). Issues management is viewed as a proactive approach to organizational crises (Gaunt & Ollenburger, 1995; Heath, 1997; Sellnow, Seeger & Ulmer, 2001) and research on apologia adopted rhetorical approaches from individual to corporate situations since "the modern corporation is unique in the degree of audience diversity and nature of their [audience members'] interests" (Schultz & Seeger, 1991, p.51) and apologia is adopted from a single speaker to "rhetoric which is corporate rather than individual centered" (p.51).

High-profile family crisis communication requires a similar preparation and assistance as corporate crisis management. This research will be taking the well-established function of

corporate communication in crisis and adapt it to the more private setting of family crisis situations like Elizabeth Smart's kidnapping case. This study will develop a theoretical and practical basis for the management of crisis from a public relations standpoint for the families who are going through murder, kidnapping, legal allegations or extraordinary health and legal issues. Just like corporate crises, such family events tend to attract intense media attention that keep family members in medias' focus. In addition to internal stress, family members have to communicate to the public around the nation and sometimes, around the world about each development in the story. Most likely, such families never received appropriate training about media appearances, nor do they have access to professionals in crisis management. This circumstance adds to family stress while trying to deal with a crisis and public scrutiny at the same time. There are an increased number of instances where families find themselves in terrifying crisis situations because of the emergency nature of crisis events. Family crisis communications management should be a wide-spread pro bono practice among public relations professionals to help families in need to cope with their particular crisis.

Significance

There has been almost no theory related to family crisis situation developed in the field of public relations. The intensity of these situations expand the interest in the event, "when the magnitude of such harm is high or when the event is unusual, the media give the story front page treatment, which amounts to certification that a crisis is under way" (Lerbinger, 1997, p.3). Social sciences have already developed many strategies dealing with families that are going through such traumatic experiences but there is no theoretical base that prepares such families and their public relations representatives to face the media. Many of the families in such tragic situations never had to deal with such a great amount of national and international media and it becomes difficult for the family to find the proper way to face the media, while simultaneously, going through a period of pain, grief and uncertainty. Public relations professionals, who are usually experienced in corporate crisis management, do not have a specific crisis management plan for family crises and are usually not prepared to help the families with all their potential issues.

Corporate crises management in public relations is a significantly developed discipline and a developing field of family crisis management can borrow from this knowledge base. Both of the fields have similarities as they strive to provide stability for a group of people who work or live with each other on daily basis. Both types of crises have an unpredictable nature, causing the process in which "managers in all kinds of organizations are slowly-all too slowly- recognizing the likelihood that at some time they will face a crisis." (Lerbinger, 2007, p. 2) Usually corporate crises are defined by extensive media attention, negative publicity, stress and impaired judgment (Lerbinger). The same description can be applied to family-related crises.

A crisis situation can become more complicated in the atmosphere of high media involvement, where journalists are trying to continuously communicate with the primary sources. One of the established ways to provide stability and protection for the corporation in this situation would be to organize a media crisis center (Lerbinger, 2007). The same principles apply to family crisis communication when at the time of a high profile crisis, a family falls under extensive media scrutiny. As seen from cases such as the one dealing with Elizabeth Smart's kidnapping, the family turned to a public relations professional to get key messages across, and through the media build the agenda for the public to stay current on the issue that

eventually led to the recovery of the Smart's daughter. In this case, media were important for the progress of getting leads on the case and by continuously updating journalists with new developments, the Smart family increased its ability to keep Elizabeth in the news.

Literature Review

The following theories were selected for use in this multiple-case study: crisis communications, relationship formation, social exchange theory, role theory of public relations, agenda building, issue-attention cycles theory, models of public relations, and complexity theory, all leading to the development of the audience-interaction family crisis model. Selection of these theories was based on the theories' abilities to explain the following: how groups form and interact, how the media can influence the public, and how a group can account for unpredictability in crisis.

Crisis Communication

Fearn-Banks (2001) stated that "since the term public relations was coined early in the 20th century, the profession has been crisis driven" and most of the programs aimed on dealing or avoiding crisis situations (as cited in Heath 2006, p.479). Ulmer et al. (2007) included the working definitions of the general crisis describing that crisis is a "specific, unexpected, and non-routine event or series of events that create high levels of uncertainty or are perceived to threaten an organization's high-priority goals" (p. 7).

Considering the nature of the crisis as an unexpected event, crisis communication is a recommended part of proactive measures in the organizational process. Fearn-Banks (2001) defined crisis communication as "verbal, visual, and/or written interaction between the organization and its publics (often through the news media) prior to, during, and after the negative occurrence" (as cited in Heath 2006, p.480). The better an organization plans for such events and uncertainty, the more successfully its leaders will be in coping with dangerous or threatening situations. General communication strategies when dealing with crisis include "reducing uncertainty, responding to the crisis, resolving it, and learning from it" (Ulmer, Sellnow, Seeger, 2007, p. 15).

Each crisis situation is different but at the same time, they are similar because of an increased level of uncertainty a crisis brings. Crisis communication strategies are aimed to decrease the level of uncertainty by providing needed information. Ulmer et al. (2007) stated that to prepare for crisis, the managers in an organization need to realize the nature of the crisis. The crisis starts quickly and unexpectedly and most of the preparation has to be done ahead of time. After the crisis occurs, the crisis management team has a responsibility to communicate a consistent message early and often. The crisis team needs to be prepared to create these messages with little or no factual information about the nature and effects of the crisis and without relying on routine solutions. However, before sufficient information becomes available, it is important to avoid absolute answers to the public through the media and realize that in crisis situation it is permissible to state that there is no information available at the current time.

Ulmer et al. (2007) noted that in a case when an organization is not responsible for a crisis, it is much easier to regain the trust and recover from the crisis, than in an event of intentional crisis. The crisis communication team needs to incorporate into the message that the crisis was not caused by the organization and if possible, build the case about who is responsible

and why. While managing the crisis, it is important to acknowledge the stakeholders of the organization, such as media, consumers, employees, and competitors since each of these stakeholders plays an important part in efficiently handling the crisis. Fearn-Banks (2001) emphasized the importance of the public relations head as part of top management in dealing with a crisis situation, since such a public relations representative will be responsible for making decisions about the case using all available information (as cited in Heath, 2006).

The theory and norms of crisis communication in public relations practice serve as a base to family crisis communication. Similar to an organizational crisis, family crisis requires planning and preparation for each possible event where public relations professionals can step up and help coordinate the crisis management. The family needs to ascertain the facts of the crisis and be prepared to take or deny blame as the case may be. A family crisis deals with much uncertainty and risk of the reputation of family members where media can both help to resolve the case or deepen the crisis.

Relationship Formation

Public relations practice is built on a relationship perspective that balances the interests of organizations and publics' "through management of organization-public relationships" (Ledingham, 2003, p.2). This notion of relationship management substitutes traditional impact measurement based on the number of placed stories to how public relations initiatives influenced the quality of the relationship between an organization and its publics (Ledingham).

The relationship-formation theory suggests that organizations and key publics need to adapt to one another in order to establish a strong organizational relationship. The relationship formation theory "views all the parties of an organizational relationship as one holistic unit, which means that the relationship between the organization and its audiences can be studied as a separate entity from the organization or any one of its key stakeholder groups" (Baldwin, Perry, & Moffitt, 2004, p. 366). Basically, organizations and key publics should be considered as one entity, like a team or family of sorts. There are several different aspects of the organization or team but they should all be considered as part of one team (Bentley, Christiansen, Miller, Law, Sargent, & Tiek, 2004). These relationships between an organization and its key publics can become stronger and weaker, just as the relationships within an organization can also impact the relationship with key publics for better or worse (Bentley, et al.). This theory suggests that the "whole relationship can be studied to identify factors that impact it, factors and held images influencing each of the parties in the whole unit, and the ongoing interaction of all the parties within the unit" (Baldwin et al., 2004, p. 366).

Family crisis communication relies heavily on relationship theory, since in the event of the extreme crisis the family is not only looking inward for support in a difficult situation but also outward. At this time it is important to help the family realize that media and other stakeholders in the situation can contribute if strong relationships among the various key publics are built and maintained.

Social Exchange Theory

Along with the relationship-formation theory that explains organizational interaction as a whole, the social exchange theory can help explain the relationship interaction that takes place on the micro level, between the organization and each of its stakeholders. People are motivated

by self-interests and attempt to maximize rewards and minimize costs that vary and change from person to person and also over time (Roloff, 1981). Since “the exchange of social and material resources is a fundamental form of human interaction” (Illman, 1996), the social exchange theory explains that a relationship can be built when one party provides something to the other party in exchange for something else (Baldwin et al., 2004). Self-interest and interdependence are two of the central properties of the social exchange. This theory is a good example of the manner in which the media and a party involved work with each other (Widdison, Lehtikoinan, Jacob, DeHart, & Kane, 2004). For example, public relations professionals provide quality and timely information to journalists, while journalists use that information in their stories. However, it is important to remember that while relationships are built upon social exchange, there are no specific obligations that parties take from such an exchange. According to Blau (1964), “in contrast to economic commodities, the benefits involved in social exchange do not have an exact price in terms of a single quantitative medium of exchange, which is another reason why social obligations are unspecific.” (pp. 94-95).

Even in the event of high media attention during a crisis, a family might have a hard time understanding why the media would need continuous updates on the situation. It might seem to be an invasion of privacy and a family might want to withhold intimate information about family members. Social exchange theory helps the public relations representative keep a sufficient and appropriate exchange of information among family members, the media, law enforcement officials, and other involved parties for a mutually beneficial result the crisis situation.

Role Theory

Role theory in public relations began in the 1970s (Broom & Smith, 1978). Broom developed a typology that would account for the many roles of a public relations practitioner in day-to-day activities. This theory is included here because a PR practitioner as a family communications crisis consultant is yet another one of those many roles a practitioner can play. In 1984 Grunig and Hunt developed the model with two levels: the technician (writes press releases) and the manager (tells the technician what to put in the press release and where to send it) (as cited in Brown, J., Davis, J., Lee, B., Packer, M., & Skousen, T., 2004). Within two years it developed into a more sophisticated model when Broom and Dozier conceptualized four different leadership roles: Expert prescribers (strategists) communication facilitators (“go-between” the organization and key publics, problem-solving facilitators (do research) and communication technicians (create messages) (as cited in Brown, et al., 2004).

For this role of family crisis communicator, the communication facilitator role seems most appropriate because those individuals monitor and improve the flow of information both quality and quantity between a family and the media, and in turn the key publics interested in a particular family crisis case (Broom & Dozier, 1986).

Agenda Building

One prominent theory concerning limited, but powerful, media effects is the agenda-setting theory. The basis of this theory is Bernard Cohen’s statement in 1963 that “the media may not be able to tell audiences ‘what to think,’ but they could tell them ‘what to think about’” (Baldwin, Moffitt, & Perry; 2004, p. 196). According to these same authors, “at the macroscopic level, the issues people think are important for America to deal with will be correlated with the

issues the media most often presents as problems for the society” (p. 196). In the stressful situation of family crisis that is displayed by the media, viewers usually have only media to make sense of the situation and therefore, they are vulnerable in front of media to form their opinions. Gavin Bentley, et al, (2004) stated the following:

Those who subscribe to agenda setting theory believe that the public opinion, when left alone, is nothing more than ingredients being mixed together and a catalyst is needed for any type of action to ensue. The agenda-setting theory comes from a scientific perspective, because it predicts that if people are exposed to the same media, they will place importance on the same issues. The O.J. Simpson [case] was a historic event, and is an excellent example of agenda setting. The placement of full page, color articles and top stories on news programming made it clear that Americans should place these events as important issues. Some people believed O.J. was guilty, and others believed he was innocent. Therefore, the media wasn't extremely successful in telling us what to think on these issues, but most Americans did believe these were both important issues for a long period of time (as cited in Bentley, et al., 2004, p. 4).

However, just as in the case with the Elizabeth Smart kidnapping, it is not enough to just rely on the media for agenda-setting. The family and a public relations professional who is working with a particular family crisis needs to proactively plan the news coverage by agenda building. According to Johnson et al., (1996) this process means that media and those who are influenced by the media, are also influenced by one another. Corbett and Mori (1999) described the model of agenda building, stating that at first the issue raises in society, next, the interest groups pick the position and become involved with the issue, next, the positions of interest groups are influencing the news media and the public and lastly, the news media coverage is influencing interest groups.

Issue-Attention Cycles Theory

The issue-attention cycles theory discusses the reaction of society to major public events and scrutinizes the agendas spurred by these events. According to Chyi, the theory is made up of five different stages. The first stage is called the “pre-problem stage.” This stage holds that there are always latent issues in society. While the issue exists, it is often not discussed and even unnoticed. The second stage in the issue-attention cycle is known as “alarmed discovery and euphoric enthusiasm.” This is the stage when the latent issues become forefront in the public’s mind. This happens when violent tragedies, horrific accidents, natural disasters, or controversial events take place. These incidents are called triggering events. The public will notice and then dissect the issues, hoping to find some sort of solution to act on. Next, the public makes a “realization of the cost of significant reform.” This is when the immensity of the issue and its inability to be solved is realized by the public. That stage is followed by a “gradual decline of public interest.” Eventually, the issue goes back into a form of latency called the “post-problem stage.” A new tragedy or controversy will soon spark a different discussion (as cited in Brown, et al., 2004, p. 4-5).

According to Kazoleas, tragedies, frequently linked with violence, are often the triggering events in the issue-attention cycle (as cited in Brown, et al., 2004). Brown, et al., (2004) state the following as examples of the issue-attention cycles:

The Columbine shooting steered the country toward gun control, media control, better parenting skills, etc. Likewise, the tragedy of 9/11 made the war on terrorism, national security, and Iraq top priority in the United States. Controversial events, such as the O.J. Simpson case, also trigger eruptions of discussion about items such as racism, civil rights, abortion, etc. Terry Schiavo's case where her husband took her off of life support involved numerous stakeholders from the political, religious and judicial authorities resulting in public debates, wide media coverage and a new law. Environmental disasters are also triggering events. All of these issues seem very important to society directly following the triggering events; however, the public soon becomes overwhelmed or disinterested with the issue and lays it aside until some other triggering event sparks an interest. (p. 5)

Models of Public Relations

According to Grunig and Hunt in 1984, the models of public relations created four of them to use in public relations: publicity, public information, asymmetry, and symmetry. In the publicity model, corporations have no pressure to tell the truth, but rather tell any lie to the public about their company. The purpose of this model is to send as many positive messages to the public as possible. The public information model has the same purpose as the publicity model; however, truth telling is required. The asymmetry model's purpose is to communicate corporate messages to the public, but filter out all negative information through audience research, therefore limiting the amount of information to the public. The symmetry model includes equal communication between the corporation and the audience. The messages created using the symmetry model require careful research about the target audiences as well.

In a crisis situation, the ideal model in a corporate or family crisis would be the two-way symmetrical model above, where transparency and honesty remain paramount in the given situation, and information is shared with the media as soon as it is appropriate especially where criminal investigations are concerned

Complexity Theory

According to Murphy (2000), most public relations theories deal with strategically predicting and planning how to handle crises that may arise; however, the complexity theory does not focus on linear planning, but rather takes into account the unexpected events, public responses, and other such issues that are bound to take effect. Because of this, the complexity theory is one based on change or flux (as cited in Widdison, et al., 2004).

This theory focuses on the reaction of the individual players and how they react to their immediate circumstance. How each of those individuals act will eventually form a larger pattern that will affect the different communities (as cited in Widdison, et al., 2004).

Individuals who are in a crisis situation are going to react differently as different events come to their attention; therefore, you cannot plan how people are going to respond to the unexpected. Murphy states that we cannot predict the way that those directly involved in the crisis, those who reside in the community, or how the media will respond to different events as they arise. The purpose of this theory is not to strategically plan but rather to "aid intuition, and deepen our understanding of fundamental processes" (as cited in Widdison, et al., 2004). In other words, the purpose of this theory is to explain the workings in a crisis scenario and prepare

for the unexpected (Widdison, et al., 2004). That would typically be the scenario in a family crisis situation.

The Audience Interaction Family Crisis Model

As previously mentioned, a few general themes arose upon examination of the family crisis models and other general crisis models. Each case-study model touched upon the following elements (the supporting theory/theories for each theme is/are in parentheses):

1. The plan presents correct and truthful information (crisis communication, agenda building).
2. The plan quickly generates interest and support (relationship formation/social exchange, agenda building, and issue-attention cycle).
3. The plan assigns and keeps specified roles throughout the crisis, especially a spokesperson (crisis communication, role theory).
4. The plan is flexible to different situations (interpersonal perception, models of public relation, and complexity theory).

The Audience Interaction Family Crisis Model was formulated based upon these criteria. Figure 1 is a visual representation of the model and displays the general flow of information and the physical structure of the model (King, 2005).

The model works around the following four categories of events that should take place throughout the life of the crisis: prepare, organize, execute, evaluate. Each one of these basic categories contains a set of actions that should guide the crisis team and the family through the tragedy.

On a basic level, the Audience Interaction Family Crisis Model begins with the formation of the crisis team. The crisis team *prepares* information and *organizes* itself into a spokesperson and groups assigned to handle key audiences. The crisis team and each key audience group then *executes* the management plan through contacting the key audiences and then *evaluates* based upon the reaction of each key audience. Evaluation can then determine if new courses of action need to be taken and each key-audience group can adapt a new plan if necessary (King, 2005). A more detailed description of the Audience Interaction Family Crisis Model and an explanation of how theory influences the model are as follows:

Prepare. When a family crisis arises, those dealing with the crisis should start in the preparation stage. *This stage must start immediately after a crisis occurs.* In figure 1, this stage is represented by the red circle in the center. The preparation stage includes the following actions:

1. ***Gather resources, facts, and information and make sure all information is correct and truthful*** (crisis communication, relationship formation/social exchange and public relations models). The interdependence of the crisis team, the media, law enforcement law, and the public becomes evident here as all facets are needed to gather all correct information and publicize it. Public relations models, specifically the public information model and the need for truth telling, also come into play as the information that will be released is gathered at this point.
2. ***Set goals and objectives*** (crisis communication, relationship formation and issue-attention cycle). By looking at a potential cycle for the whole crisis and the relationships

that will be formed, the crisis team can better formulate goals and objectives and vice versa.

3. **Identify key audiences** (crisis communication, agenda building and relationship formation/social exchange). The crisis team will set agendas and call attention to issues through the key audiences. They should recognize the relationships that should be formed with these key audiences and how they can interact with these audiences to achieve the goals and objectives.
4. **Decide on what information to release and stick to it** (crisis communication, issue-attention cycle, public relations models, and agenda building). The information should relate to the goals and objectives but be truthful at the same time. If some information is not available at certain time, acknowledge it.

Organize. Immediately after preparation, a crisis management team must be formed. In figure 1 this stage is represented by the three circles labeled group 1, group 2, and group 3. The spokesperson is positioned in the center, where all the circles overlap. The crisis management team must contain the following elements:

1. **Name a spokesperson to represent the family** (crisis communication, role theory). The spokesperson will provide a consistent and unified representation of the family. While the entire family and members of the crisis team will provide consultation, the spokesperson is the only one authorized to speak publicly. The role of the spokesperson is vital to the success of crisis management as he or she is the face and the voice of the family and the crisis.
2. **Split the crisis team into groups that will handle each key audience and will direct the crisis team** (relationship formation and role theory). For example, if the selected key audiences are the media, the general public, and the law, then crisis team members should be assigned roles that will deal with the media, work with the law, and inform the general public. Each group should also include positions discussed in role theory, such as expert prescribers, communication facilitators, problem-solving facilitators, and communication technicians. While groups have specific responsibility with their respective key audience, the groups still function as a holistic unit and all information will ultimately flow through the spokesperson.
3. **Each group will “prepare and organize” for their assigned key publics** (role theory, complexity theory, and models of public relations). This will allow the crisis management team to micro-manage and customize plans for all the different key audiences according to research performed on each audience. The plans determined for each key audience should be in accordance with the set goals and objectives. Each role within the group will perform the functions of strategy, research, liaison, and technician.
4. **Recognize and account for the interactions that exist exclusively between key audiences** (relationship formation, complexity theory). The media, law, and the publics will interact with each other independent of the crisis team. The crisis team should be able to look at all the key audiences holistically as well to account for these interactions. Communication between groups and focus on the goals and objectives are important.
5. **All roles that are assigned should be maintained throughout the entire life of the crisis** (crisis communication, role theory). This will ensure the consistency and power of the message and help accomplish the goals and objectives.

While these groups are responsible for their assigned key publics, they still overlap in the center, which represents cross-group communication and representation by the spokesperson.

Execute. In the execute stage, all members of the crisis team must begin to implement the plans formed in the preparation and organization stages. In figure 1 this stage is represented by the arrows labeled group 1, group 2, and group 3. As the crisis management moves into the execution stage, the following should occur:

1. ***Each group assigned to a key public will begin to implement the respective plans for each key audience*** (issue-attention cycle, agenda building, and role theory). This can involve contacting the media, working with the law enforcement, or generally informing the public in order to set the agenda and create interest. The functions of strategy, research, liaison, and technician apply here as well.
2. ***All information released should be truthful, communicated through the spokesperson, and should be part of the information predetermined for release in the preparation stage*** (crisis communication, issue-attention cycle, public relations models, and agenda building). Successfully communicating this information will ensure generated interest and the ability to present the family's viewpoint.

Evaluate. The crisis team must then evaluate the success of the plans in relation to the goals and objectives. In figure 1 this stage is represented by the gray arrows labeled "reaction." Throughout the crisis all the key publics must be monitored in order to accomplish the following (interpersonal perception, models of public relation, and complexity theory):

1. *Determine the next step of action;*
2. *Ensure all information is correct;*
3. *Achieve the goals and objectives.*
4. *After evaluation, the "prepare, organize, execute, evaluate" can cycle through as many times as needed during the life of the crisis.*

Crisis team actions and key audience reactions should be evaluated in order to determine the perceptions that each party has of the other. From these perceptions the crisis team can assess the management of the crisis and make necessary adjustments. Also, because not all situations are predictable, the audience-interaction family crisis model must allow for unpredictability.

This dynamic element of the model is evident during the *evaluation* stage of the model when the rules and resources set forth in the *preparation, organization, and execution* stages create behavior and interaction that, after evaluated, can determine a change in the rules and resources. In turn, the duality of structure permits the adaptability required by the complexity theory, which calls for adaptability based on participant reaction even if the reaction is unexpected.

The holistic and adaptability ideas from relationship formation also influence the structure of the model as the crisis team is encompassed by one large circle that represents the interactions between all the key audiences. This allows the model to be viewed as a whole, as every part of the model must learn to adapt to the encompassing interactions. The interactions that take place in the organization as a whole then also affect the interactions that take place on a more micro level, between the crisis team and individual key audiences (King, 2005).

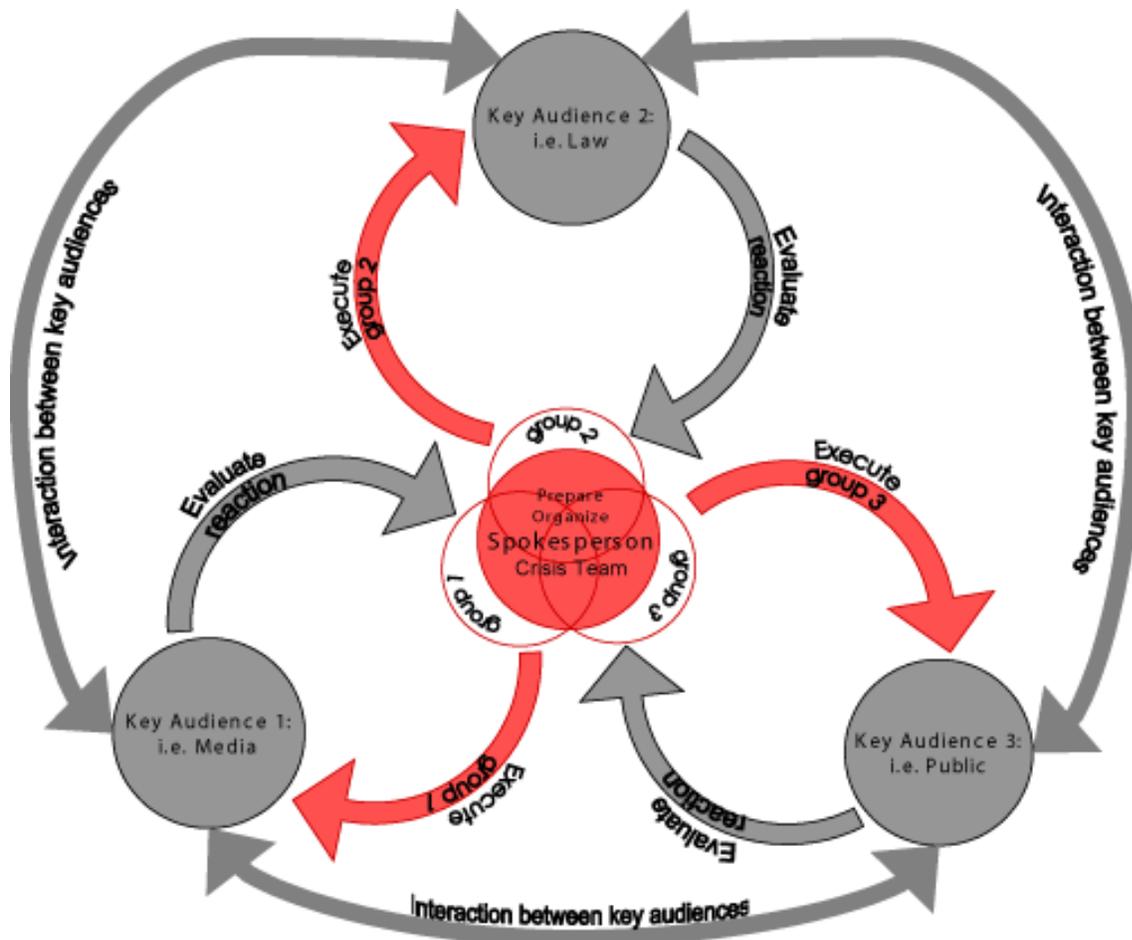


Figure 1. The Audience-Interaction Family Crisis Model

Methodology

Research for this paper came in the form of a multiple-case analysis, which is a form of research that involves a comparative examination of numerous case studies. In multiple-case analysis, data is collected and triangulated from multiple sources and the data can be analyzed through pattern-matching (Yin, 2009).

Advantages and Disadvantages of Multiple-Case Analysis and Meta-analysis

Multiple-case analysis and meta-analysis are similar in the process of research but differ in the type of data that is studied. Regardless, the advantages and disadvantages of each parallel the other. Mark W. Lipsey and David B. Wilson named four general advantages to meta-analysis. For purposes of this qualitative research we can focus on two of these:

1. "Meta-analysis procedure impose a useful discipline on the process of summarizing research findings; (p. 5)
2. "Meta-analysis provides an organized way of handling information from a large number of study findings under review" (p. 6).

As a disadvantage Lipsey and Wilson also found that meta-analysis calls for greater effort, expertise, and specific knowledge (2001). For purposes of this research we applied these same advantages and disadvantages to multiple-case analysis.

Common Criteria and Data Sources

Data was analyzed based on common criteria or themes which surfaced throughout the research process. Sources that were researched included family-crisis case studies, material written for crisis and family-crisis management, periodicals regarding family-crisis situations, and web-based news archives which included interviews, news-affiliated timelines for family-crisis situations, and statements from families involved in crisis situations as documented in press releases and periodicals.

Common criteria formulated based on this research concluded that family-crisis situations typically include the following:

1. Members involved take on specified roles throughout the crisis, in particular the role of a spokesperson.
2. Information disseminated throughout the crisis is truthful and accurate, at least to the involved members' knowledge.
3. Publicity of the crisis generates interest and support from the public.
4. The crisis centers on latent issues either within the family or within society as a whole.
5. In some manner, deception surfaces throughout the life of the crisis.

Advantages and Disadvantages of the Data Sources

The data sources used have significant advantages because documentation is constant and provides a broad coverage while the interviews provide a more focused insight into the issue. While the sources have their advantages it would be unwise to fail to recognize that there are disadvantages as well. Documented sources raise the issue of biases created by that particular author's viewpoint as well as his selection of material. It is important to recognize the possibility of this bias and take it into account throughout analysis. Interview bias can surface because of interviewers' questioning techniques and the interviewee's particular perspective.

Results

This section documents the manner in which the selected theories relate specifically to the Hacking case. The application of theory to specific instances in the Hacking case can help identify the general themes that, in addition to the theories help build a family crisis model.

Relationship Formation and Social Exchange Theory

The relationships formed between the family/crisis team and various audiences were evident throughout the crisis. The media, law, family, and general public all had to adapt to one another in order to maintain mutually beneficial relationships. One example of the mutually beneficial relationship came in the early stages of the Hacking case. Over the first week of the search, the families did an excellent job of keeping the public informed so that they would be interested in the case and willing to volunteer. This is evident by the amount of people who

showed up to help search for Lori Hacking. According to www.ksl.com, this search effort was “second only to the number of people who helped search for Elizabeth Smart two summers ago” (as cited in Bentley, et al., 2004). As the family offered information, the general public offered assistance with the search which, as mentioned by the social exchange theory, formed an interdependent relationship. Looking at the situation holistically, this is also an example of relationship formation, as the family, media, law, and general public all had to exchange information and services and adapt to one another in order to release information and coordinate a volunteer search party.

Creation of Roles

This criterion was generated after examination of role theory and its place in all family-crisis case studies which were examined. Roles are important because it keeps consistency in the messages that are being conveyed to the public. A spokesperson is one of the most important roles that must be fulfilled. The spokesperson will provide a consistent and unified representation of the family. While the entire family and members of the crisis team will provide consultation, the spokesperson is the only one authorized to speak publicly. The role of the spokesperson is vital to the success of crisis management as he or she is the face and the voice of the family and the crisis. The creation of roles helps avoid confusion and displays unity in a family where a crisis may seem to be pulling everything apart. Giving one person authority to speak on behalf of the family helps achieve the second criteria of family crisis situations; information that is disseminated is true and accurate.

True and Accurate Information

This criterion generated after examination of the case studies as well as the majority of the theories researched, mainly issue-attention cycle theory and agenda building theory. This criterion builds public trust in the family and in the crisis. When it comes to the broadcasting or publishing of any information, it is in the public’s interest to receive the truth no matter what the information entails. In a family crisis it then becomes the responsibility of the family members to ensure that this interest is filled. The public relations model emphasizes the need for truth-telling. All facets of the crisis (family crisis members, the media, the law enforcement, and even the general public) are needed to gather correct information. It is through disseminating correct and accurate information that public interest and support is generated.

Public Interest and Support

As is discussed in the issue-attention cycle, family crises involve the public’s concern over the event and their hope to find a solution to the issue. This also ties directly into the agenda setting theory. Though the media may not be successful in telling the public what they should think they are incredibly successful at being responsible for what the public thinks about (Cohen, 1963). Therefore, this criterion is achieved by establishing an equally beneficial relationship between the crisis team and the media involved. Relationship formation theory describes this established relationship as one holistic unit that should be considered together.

The Lori Hacking crisis can be used to clarify this criterion. Over the first week of the search, the families did an excellent job of keeping the public informed so that they would be interested in the case and willing to volunteer. This is evident by the amount of people who

showed up to help search for Lori Hacking. Similar examples are found in the crises involving Laci Peterson, Terri Schiavo, Hugh Nibley, Brooke Wilberger, and Elizabeth Smart.

Latent issues

This criterion was generated after careful examination of the first stage of issue-attention cycle theory. This stage is referred to as the pre-problem stage. In this stage it is discovered that there are issues in society that are unrecognized by the public but that still exist. These latent issues are always present in society, but go unnoticed until the second stage of the issue-attention cycle referred to as the alarmed discovery and euphoric enthusiasm stage. This stage involves triggering events that move the latent issue into the forefront of the public's mind. These events are usually violent tragedies, extreme accidents, or disasters or otherwise controversial occurrences in society. As stated by Downs, the media involvement is key during this stage since it has been acknowledged that news coverage tends to move in issue-attention cycles (1972). It is when these latent issues surface that the crisis comes into full swing. In the example of the Laci Peterson crisis, the public learned that the couple's relationship was embedded with latent issues such as domestic disturbance and infidelity. It was these issues that, as the court concluded, set the stage for Laci's disappearance and death.

Deception

In research it was discovered that latent issues were typically linked with deception either to those involved in the crisis such as the victim or to the media and public. In many cases it was the presence of deception that kept public interest and support. In the Laci Peterson crisis the revealing of truth alarmed the public and spurred them to stay interested in solving the mystery of Laci's disappearance and death as the stage following the latent issues existence in the issue-attention cycle details. These revealed facts brought the public's attention to the element of deception in the tragedy. Similar revelations in the Lori Hacking case had the same effect on the public. Mark's [Lori Hacking's Husband] confession of the murder also triggered the media and public's discussion of the symptoms of a pathological liar, domestic problems, and murder scenarios.

Conclusion

Based on the results, several conclusions can be drawn among between the family-crisis case studies researched. There is a strong need for specified roles to avoid miscommunication and repetition of messages. These specified roles must include a spokesperson for the crisis. Many case studies cited the absence of this role as a source of complication throughout the crisis. This role must be developed early to have the needed effect. As demonstrated in the Elizabeth Smart case, the family acted proactively, involving Chris Thomas as opposed to Lori Hacking case where the Hacking family waited too long before appointing Scott Dunaway as their spokesperson.

A different conclusion was drawn concerning a spokesperson in the Laci Peterson case. An official spokesperson was never clearly established but Scott Peterson's mother Jackie took on the role of unofficial spokesperson in which she was only consistent in maintaining the opinion that her son was innocent. On March 16, 2005, Scott was found guilty of murder in the first degree and sentenced to death. Consequently, Jackie Peterson's role as a spokesperson was

discredited and this also demonstrates the importance of crisis team disseminating truthful and accurate information.

A successful crisis management team must generate public interest and support. It is through the development of interest and support that family-crisis situations are able to receive the attention necessary to ultimately establish a sound family-crisis management plan. At this point it is important for the crisis management team to have knowledge of the latent issues. Latent issues in family-crises are often revealed through surfaced deception including but not limited to lies, domestic abuse, and infidelity. These latent issues pose challenges for which the crisis management team must prepare.

While common criteria, through research and analysis, have been established it is important to realize that no case is alike, therefore, consequently, any crisis management plan formed needs to take into account each case's individuality and unpredictability. While taking this fact into account, this paper correlates case studies and concludes that family crises maintain the common themes of the creation of roles, dissemination of truthful and accurate information, generation of public interest and support, surfacing of latent issues, and embedded deception.

Only recently have the family-crisis and the need for public relations influence become a national issue and consequently, a current family-based crisis management plan has not officially been published. The establishment of common criteria among family-crisis situations has the potential to aid in the development of such a plan for today's society and help families in the complicated crises situations.

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The Impact of the Dominant Coalition on Health Care Public Relations Practitioners

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Abstract

This study is an exploratory investigation into the relationship between power, leadership, and membership in an organization's dominant coalition using Finkelstein's (1992) four dimensions of power, salient research in leadership theory, and input from public relations practitioners who work for Indiana Hospital Association members. This study ascertained to what degree health care public relations practitioners understand and participate in the dominant coalition of hospitals. This coalition is traditionally defined as the informal group of individuals who influence how an organization functions, how it responds in the time of a crisis and how it makes decisions regarding organizational policies and procedures.

Previous work in the field has discovered that the dominant coalition is important in shaping organizational policies and responses. Previous work has also demonstrated that a strong and steady public relations effort can mitigate potential problems between an organization and its many publics. In addition, a previous study involving members of the PRSA College of Fellows found that members of the College strongly agreed that the dominant coalition is a source of power for a public relations practitioner, but prestige power was the only significant predictor of tenure in the dominant coalition.

This body of research spawned the exploratory study to more closely look at one industry. The survey showed that neither membership in the dominant coalition nor time spent as a member was indicative of the level of the importance assigned to the dominant coalition. The results also showed health care public relations practitioners understand the concept and importance of the dominant coalition to their role and perceive there is an advantage of membership within the group. These practitioners also perceive experience and internal relationships were significant predictors of power. This demonstrates that dominant coalition membership can be gained through providing valuable skills and services to the organization.

This study contributes to the public relations body of knowledge by providing greater understanding of the antecedents of membership in the dominant coalition. The results reinforce that PR practitioners value membership in the dominant coalition and believe they can gain access through a combination of experience, expertise and organization-spanning skills regardless of their hierarchical position. This study deepens our understanding of the practice of excellent public relations by beginning to explore the importance of membership in this group to professionals in other functional areas of public relations beyond the pure corporate sphere.

Introduction

Public relations in the health care and life sciences sector is one of the fastest growing segments of our profession today. Within the Public Relations Society of America, the Health Academy is the association's largest professional interest section, including members from a wide range of roles within the sector. The pace of this growth can be seen in the Society for Healthcare Strategy and Market Development, a diverse group of health care professionals with roles in business development, marketing, planning, physician relations, sales, public relations and public affairs. It is one of eleven personal membership groups associated with the American Hospital Association and has grown since 1996 to more than 4,500 members. In an informational, non-scientific survey of its members in 2008, 20 percent said they are primarily public relations/communications practitioners; the third largest category behind marketing and planning (SHSMD, 2008).

Scholars have long held that public relations efforts are influenced by the culture of the organization (J.E. Grunig et al., 1992, Spicer, 1997). The unique culture of health care and life sciences makes it imperative for public relations practitioners within this sector to have influence in order to be successful. In the current state of our economy, that becomes even more important as Gordon & Kelly (1999) found in a national survey of the heads of public relations departments in hospitals. Using two scales unique to the study, the researchers determined that public relations departments must contribute to the organization's effectiveness in order to survive budget cuts and help the organization succeed.

Public relations scholars also accept the pre-eminence of a dominant coalition and its influence (cf. Berger & Reber, 2006; Berger, 2005; Bowen, 2006a, 2008a, 2008b; Dozier, 1984; Dozier & Broom, 1995; Dozier, L.A. Grunig, & J.E. Grunig, 1995; J.E. Grunig, 2006; L.A. Grunig, 1992; Lauzen, 1992; Lauzen & Dozier, 1994). The power-control perspective of public relations (cf. Berger & Reber, 2006; Dozier, 1984; Dozier & Broom, 1995; Dozier, L.A. Grunig, & J.E. Grunig, 1995; J.E. Grunig, 2006; L.A. Grunig, 1992; L.A. Grunig, J.E. Grunig & Dozier, 2002; Lauzen, 1992; Lauzen & Dozier, 1994) acknowledges the concept of power as an integral part of influence in an organization and of particular advantage to the public relations practitioner. However, the idea that a particular source of power might contribute to a public relations practitioners' inclusion in the dominant coalition has seldom been investigated in public relations, although this appears to be an emerging research area for some scholars (cf. Berger et al., 2007; Berger & Reber, 2006; Berger, 2005; Bowen, 2008a, 2008b, O'Neil, 2004).

Leadership, more commonly explored in the business literature, has been largely excluded from the dominant coalition equation in public relations research. What literature that does exist conceptualizes leadership as a process and merely notes that it offers a path to success (Berger et al., 2007; Bowen, 2008).

Our previous work [Blind Cite] involving members of the PRSA College of Fellows found that members of the College strongly agreed that the dominant coalition is a source of power for a public relations practitioner, but prestige power was the only significant predictor of tenure in the dominant coalition. While we believe these findings have merit on their own, we also acknowledge that the College is a unique group within PRSA and carries with it an inherent power of prestige. To that end, we wanted to expand our examination of the dominant coalition to assess a group of practitioners that are vital to the profession and yet not as exclusive as the

College of Fellows. In other words, we wanted to assess the issue of power and the dominant coalition with a group of professionals more typical of public relations practitioners at large.

This study is an exploratory extension of that work investigating the relationship between power, leadership, and membership in an organization's dominant coalition. We seek to ascertain to what degree health care public relations practitioners understand and participate in the dominant coalition of hospitals. We use Finkelstein's (1992) landmark work on power here in an attempt to discern whether this concept from the management literature provides any additional granularity into how one gains entry into the dominant coalition. We also draw from some of the most salient work in leadership theory, specifically the work of Kanter (1992) and Binney & Williams (1995) in an attempt to determine whether certain leadership qualities can predict inclusion in the dominant coalition.

Literature Review

Dominant Coalitions

Influence within organizations has been a popular topic of exploration for business, psychology, and sociology for decades (cf. Brass, 1984; Gundelach & Tetzschner, 1976; Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2002; Stevenson et al., 1985; Thompson, 1967; Vecchio & Sussmann, 1991; Wilkinson & Kipnis, 1978; Mintzberg, 1983). One of the most widely used concepts from this body of literature is Stevenson et al.'s (1985) concept of dominant coalitions, defined as "an interacting group of individuals, deliberately constructed, independent of the formal structure, lacking its own internal formal structure, consisting of mutually perceived membership, issue oriented, focused on a goal or goals external to the coalition, and requiring concerted member action" (p. 256).

This inner circle, or subset, of management most responsible for setting policy (Thompson, 1967) through its self-selecting and non-hierarchical nature is acknowledged as an important path to influence, power, and participation in decision making for the public relations practitioner (Berger, 2005; Berger & Reber, 2006, Bowen, 2006a, 2008a, 2008b; L.A. Grunig 1992; L.A. Grunig, J.E. Grunig & Dozier, 2002). In the landmark Excellence study, L.A. Grunig (1992) was among the first to recognize the importance of the dominant coalition as a means of gaining power within the public relations department. While Berger (2005) notes that dominant coalitions often shift and change over time, both he and L.A. Grunig (1992) acknowledge that having a "voice" heard by the dominant coalition is a critical dimension of a public relations practitioners influence within an organization.

O'Neil (2004) argued that public relations practitioners must rely on "upward influence tactics" (e.g., assertiveness, coalition, exchange of benefits) to "shape the negotiations process of the dominant coalition" (p. 29). Bowen (2006a) made the case that "inclusion in the dominant coalition is desired because the top communicator then plays a crucial role in strategic planning and organizational policy (p. 331). Berger & Reber (2006) noted that membership is "organizational power circles" provided the public relations practitioner several important advantages including signifying "that formal authority has been granted to the public relations professional" (p. 7). Further, they stated that "being present in strategic circles also provides professionals the opportunities to speak, advocate, debate, resist and participate in decision making" (p.7). Kanter (1977) found that membership in the dominant coalition provides regular access to decision makers and to more strategic information for use.

Dozier, et al. (1995) acknowledged the critical role of and demands placed by the dominant coalition in achieving excellence in communication. But in terms of achieving standing within the dominant coalition, the authors could offer only this advice:

Dominant coalitions tend to value and support communicators who first demonstrate their worth. Certainly, excellent communication programs first require cutting-edge expertise as a prerequisite to implementation. Top communicators can parlay such expertise to reposition the communication function if they can get the attention of dominant coalitions. (p. 104)

Contemporary research on dominant coalitions has examined the roles of gender (O'Neil, 2004), judgment and trust (Plowman, 2005), and strategic decision-making (DeSanto & Moss, 2004) in public relations practitioners' attempts to gain access to this important group of decision makers.

RQ1a: What is the relationship between perceived benefits of membership in the dominant coalition and the practitioner's view regarding their own membership in the dominant coalition?

RQ1b: What is the relationship between perceived benefits of membership in the dominant coalition and the number of years a practitioner has been a member of the dominant coalition?

Power

Berger & Reber (2006) argued, "power relations that weave through and around the practice of public relations must be examined and understood if the profession is to advance and achieve its greater potential" (p. 9). While scholars may separate the terms "power" and "influence," we agree with Berger & Reber (2006) that the two mean essentially the same thing and thus rely on their definition for this study: "The ability to get things done by affecting the perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, opinions, decisions, statements and behaviors of others" (p. 5).

Aldoory (2005a) recognized that although power, along with identity and difference, is a predominant concern of public relations practitioners and organizations, it has "not always been explicated, critiqued, and highlighted in public relations research" (p. 89). Despite its importance to the practice of public relations, power has been examined infrequently in the public relations literature. When studied, it has been investigated from a variety of perspectives, including individuals, groups, and organizational structures. For example, Serini, et al. defined power, whether personal or organizational, as "the heart of the sexual harassment issue" (p. 194) for women in the workplace. Christen (2004) investigated the role of perceived power as it relates to group dynamics in negotiations and found when a group's perception of its own trustworthiness is high, its own perceived power may lead to a stronger inclination to negotiate with another party. Lauzen and Dozier (1992) used environmental-imperative and power-control perspectives to study how consequences emanating from a firm's external environment can affect power for the public relations function. Berger & Reber (2006) examined power and influence within organizations, arguing that the use of traditional and nontraditional influence tactics including resistance, dissent and activism can help the public relations practitioner be successful in their organizational "power relations." Similarly, Spicer (1997) identified a number of organization power bases and called upon public relations practitioners to understand and effectively use organizational politics to their advantage.

Research focusing on the roles of gender, power, and influence in public relations is pervasive in the literature (cf. Aldoory, 1998; Aldoory, 2005b; Aldoory & Toth, 2002, 2004; Choi & Hon, 2002; Grunig, Toth, & Hon, 2000; O'Neil, 2003, 2004; Serini, et al., 1998; Sha & Toth, 2005). Power has been analyzed from a roles perspective (cf. Broom, 1982; Broom & Dozer, 1986; Toth & L.A. Grunig, 1993; Toth et al., 1998); in terms of differences between organizations and their publics and supervisors and employees (cf. Aldoory, 2001b; Creedon, 1993); from a Postmodernist perspective (cf. Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002; Holtzhausen, 2000); using feminist theory and a structural framework (O'Neil, 2003) and as a part of advancing a feminist paradigm for public relations scholarship (Aldoory, 2005b).

O'Neil (2004) did not find any gender-based differences in how public relations managers use upward influence tactics. She concluded that power, rather than gender, had an intervening effect and was more predictive of upward influence tactic choice. Our primary focus in this research is the individual view of power and how practitioners seeking entry into dominant coalitions could use it.

Of particular interest to this work are Finkelstein's (1992) dimensions of power. He argued that the power a top manager possesses plays a key role in strategic decision making. He defined power as "the capacity of individual actors to exert their will" (p. 506) and identified four types, or dimensions, of power that top managers attain: structural, ownership, expert, and prestige. In turn, these dimensions of power allow them to manage the complex uncertainties inherent to organizations. The degree of uncertainty generated by an organization's publics is positively related to enactment of the manager role in public relations (Lauzen & Dozier, 1992). In turn, practitioners able to reduce uncertainty possess power in organizations (Crozier, 1964, as cited in Lauzen & Dozier, 1992).

Finkelstein's (1992) concept of structural power is the equivalent of formal organizational structure and hierarchical authority. It relates to the legislative right managers have to exert influence. The CEO has the greatest power, with each level of workers below him or her retaining gradually less power. Reliance on this power is tantamount to relying solely on the individual's rank order to prevail in a dispute. "The greater a manager's structural power, the greater his or her control over colleague's actions" (Finkelstein, p. 509). Rarely do public relations practitioners derive power from structural sources. Lauzen and Dozier (1992) instead suggest "top practitioners become powerful through the control of scarce and valued resources and through close liaisons with members of the dominant coalition" (p. 207). Feminist public relations scholars (L.A. Grunig et al., 2001; Hon, 1995; Hon et al., 1992; Serini et al., 1998; O'Neil, 2004) have found that female public relations practitioners typically have even less formal structural power than males, preventing some from advancing in the profession.

If a manager has the ability to act as an agent on behalf of shareholders, one has ownership power (Finkelstein, 1992). Power in this dimension accrues depending on where a manager falls on the continuum of the agent-principle relationship; in other words, ownership power flows from the manager's personal ownership interest in the organization and/or his or her associations with the owners of the firm (e.g., family relation to the founder(s)). Top managers with extensive share holdings will hold more power than others. Likewise, founders or relatives of the founder(s) hold powerful positions in the organization. Ownership power extends over the board of directors as well.

Finkelstein's (1992) explanation of expert power, which follows from the French & Raven typology (1959), has significant implications for public relations practitioners. Managers

with the ability to deal with unforeseen events in the organization's operating environment and contribute to the organization's success have a valuable source of power. Likewise, a source of significant influence, particularly over individual strategic choices, is relevant or critical expertise. Managers with specialized experience in a particular area can be considered "experts" in that area. Plowman (1998) asserted that an increase in expertise will be accompanied by an increase in power. Conversely, he noted that a *lack* of expert power could be detrimental to relationship building with the dominant coalition, warning that "when professionals in public relations do not have the expertise in their own field, it is difficult for them to persuade the dominant coalition to enact ill-conceived programs" (pp. 243-44). Both L.A. Grunig (1992) and Serini (1993) argued that expertise is a part of professionalism in public relations and agreed that practitioners with expertise are more likely to be influential with, rather than controlled by, upper management. Breadth of experience is an additional element of expert power (Finkelstein). Managers with broad backgrounds are typically better able to cope with multiple demands from multiple stakeholders. Highly developed contacts and relationships within the organization's sphere of operations are also important in helping managers deal with the exigencies of the operating environment and are thus sources of expert power (Finkelstein, 1992).

A case study by Plowman and Powelson (1998) supports this within the hospital industry. In a case study of a typical hospital, the researchers utilized interviews and document review to determine the public relations department leader was a part of the hospital's dominant coalition - primarily based on her expertise, experience and internal relationships. As a result, this helped her organization not only survive, but thrive during rapid organizational change.

Finally, Finkelstein's (1992) dimension of personal prestige, or status, can also be a source of power for the public relations practitioner. This dimension tends to include the executive's reputation, external contacts, and the ability to acquire information. For instance, the suggestion that a manager has superior qualifications and friends in high places, as well as the cachet of one's college degree, confers prestige power. Members of the managerial elite may garner prestige power by gathering information critical to operations. Typically, this is associated with relationships with entities external to the organization that affect it (e.g., government, financial institutions). This ability to function as a "boundary spanner" (Aldrich & Herker, 1977) enable elites to provide information critical to operations. As such, the elite's power is enhanced, particularly when the organization would not otherwise be privy to such information. J.E. Grunig & L.E. Grunig (1992) broadened the definition of boundary spanners to include anyone who has contact with both internal and external groups. Likewise, Leichty & Springston (1996) apply boundary spanning to the public relations function as communication activities that convey information and influence between one's internal group and external groups. Thus, by extension, these boundary spanning activities can be seen to confer prestige power. Prestige power can be gained by anyone with extensive contacts outside the organization (Finkelstein, 1992).

We examine the relationship between membership in the dominant coalition and Finkelstein's (1992) four dimensions of power in our second research question, which explores whether possession of any particular dimension of power (structural, ownership, expertise, or prestige) contributes to membership in the dominant coalition:

RQ2: Which sources of power would best predict an individual's membership in the dominant coalition?

Leadership

The concept of leadership is understood today, after much debate and a recent outburst of both scholarly and practitioner publications, as central to determining the success or failure of an organization (cf. Lennick & Kiel, 2005; Maxwell, 2006; Price, 2006; Sadler, 2003, Northouse, 2007). The term leadership is occasionally applied to an attribute of a person, but according to Sadler (2003), it is “more usefully employed to refer to a social process involving influence and persuasion” (p. 15). Because influence and persuasion are in the province of public relations, leadership stands to have a direct impact on a practitioner’s effectiveness within an organization. We use Northouse’s (2007) definition of leadership here: “Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (p. 3).

In their extensive research on leadership, Bennis & Nanus (1985) identified five leadership myths. First is the myth that leadership is a rare skill. Bennis & Nanus opined that although great leaders may be rare, anyone has the capacity to be a leader. More importantly, they have found that a person might be a leader in one organization, but not in another. These authors concluded that leadership opportunities are plentiful and available to just about anybody. The second myth they challenged was that leaders are born, not made. Bennis & Nanus asserted that the major qualifications and aptitudes of leadership can be learned, and everyone has the capacity to learn them. Third is the myth that leaders are charismatic; some are, but most are not according to Bennis & Nanus. Fourth, and of particular interest to this study, is the myth that leadership exists only at the most senior levels of an organization. Bennis & Nanus believed that, in fact, the larger the organization, the greater the opportunity to lead. Finally, the researchers found that leadership is commonly equated to controlling and directing. They instead discovered that “leadership is not so much the exercise of power as the empowerment of others” (as cited in Sadler, 2003, p. 8). Their extensive study of leadership revealed that one’s ability to lead directly correlates to one’s ability to inspire; orders do not allow people to use initiative and experience (Bennis & Nanus, 1985).

Berger et al. (2007) interviewed 97 top U.S. public relations leaders, all arguably members of the dominant coalition. In addition to excellent communication skills and a proactive approach, these leading practitioners commented that the leadership characteristics they exhibited were instrumental in helping them overcome negative stereotypes of the profession.

Bowen (2008) examined the qualitative data provided by an international survey funded by the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) Research Foundation (Bowen et al., 2006). In addition to the open-ended responses from 1,827 respondents, she also conducted 32 long interviews with executive practitioners and examined data from four focus groups, one of which was exclusively executive-level practitioners. Her analysis found that leadership (conceptualized as the process of leading) played an important role in helping the executives gain membership in the dominant coalition. Bowen went on to say:

Although it can be an impressive way to enhance authority and credibility with the dominant coalition, a strong sense of leadership is less of a route of access and more a method of gaining credibility with the CEO once access has already been granted....Still, leadership skills do play a part in dominant coalition access and inclusion, and perhaps

can enhance the ability of public relations professionals to remain in the dominant coalition once access has been granted (p. 51).

Berger & Reber (2006) reported on their 2003 online survey of public relations professionals, academics and graduate students in their book *Gaining Influence in Public Relations*. Among the recommendations of the executives they interviewed was the creation of more institutes dedicated to leadership development. The researchers noted that “the influence and effects of leadership – good and bad – cannot be overstated” (p. 236). In their mind, leadership issues are central to the legitimacy and credibility of the public relations profession.

Sadler (2003) opines that in the evolving nature of business today “Demonstrated flexibility and empathy, while remaining true to the core values of the organization and finding ways to circumvent unpredictable impediments, will be characteristic of tomorrow’s leaders” (p. 153). In a huge study of 30 years of Fortune 500 companies (1965 to 1995), Collins (2001) found that one of the drivers to lasting transformation of performance he called ‘level 5 leadership’ was critical to success. Level 5 leaders, says Collins, “are characterized by a seemingly paradoxical combination of humility and shyness on the one hand (Ying) and willfulness and fearlessness on the other (Yang)” (as cited in Sadler, 2003, p. 155).

This new kind of leader is best exemplified through Kanter’s (1992) model. Kanter (as cited in Sadler, 2003) notes that these new leaders need to develop the following knowledge, skills, and abilities: a) The ability to operate without the might of the hierarchy behind them; b) the knowledge to compete so as to enhance cooperation; c) the ability to operate with high ethical standards; d) the humility that accepts there is always more to learn; e) the awareness of the importance of process as distinct from substance or content; and f) the ability to derive satisfaction from achievement of results.

Binney & Williams (1995) describe the effective leader of tomorrow as one who both leads and learns. Identified for the purposes of this study as the Leader/Learner, Binney & Williams see this kind of leader as one who approaches leadership from a confident ‘knowing’ position, but being willing at the same time to remain open to challenges and new ideas. Leader/Learners exhibit four characteristics:

- a) Operational credibility, which is a function of having a deep understanding of the business, its products and the issues to do with it;
- b) Being ‘connected to their organization – being in close touch with employees and customers;
- c) Leading by example: If leaders practice ‘Do as I say’ rather than ‘Do as I do,’ they will fail to be effective;
- d) Consistency under pressure: For example, in being willing to communicate bad news as well as good news. (as cited in Sadler, 2003, p. 159)

In our final research question, we add leadership to our equation to determine whether a particular type of power or a certain leadership style makes a greater contribution to membership in the dominant coalition:

RQ3: Which is a better predictor of tenure in the dominant coalition – power or leadership?

RQ4: Do any leadership variables predict how strongly a participant rates their membership in the dominant coalition?

Method

Sample

We conducted an online survey of public relations practitioners who were employed by members of the Indiana Hospital Association. These practitioners were chosen because the association represents nearly all of the hospitals within Indiana and would give a strong cross-section of facilities including rural, community and academic medical centers. Since the 1925 Middletown Studies, Indiana has often been labeled as where “average Americans” live and work. Using the Indiana Hospital Association was the best way to reach the largest numbers of health care practitioners in Indiana, who may be thought to represent the average health care practitioner. It was also a way to choose health care practitioners regardless of their membership in public relations, communications, marketing and other associations and organizations. After receiving university-level IRB approval for the research project, we forwarded a copy of the survey instrument to Marcia Couet, the organization’s Director of Communication, who then sent a blast e-mail to the association’s membership.

E-mail survey requests were sent to all 140 public relations practitioners who were employed by members of the association in November 2008. We received 48 responses, for a 34 percent response rate. The association sent three additional follow-up e-mails to its membership.

Instrument

The survey instrument mirrored that used in the researchers’ previous College of Fellows study and comprised 46 questions divided into 3 sections: 9 items regarding the dominant coalition, 16 items regarding sources of power, and 14 items regarding perceptions of one’s own leadership style (called “effectiveness” on the survey). The remaining 7 items captured demographic and descriptive data. The dominant coalition items were drawn from the work of Stevenson, et al. (1985). Items regarding organizational influence were based on Finkelstein’s (1992) four dimensions of power, and items regarding effectiveness were grounded in leadership theory research conducted by Bennis & Nanus (1985), Binney & Williams (1995), Sadler (2003), Collins (2001) and Kanter (1992). Where appropriate, survey statements were accompanied by a 7-point agreement scale, with 1 indicating strongly disagree and 7 indicating strongly agree.

Data Analysis Procedures

Upon the completion of the collection process, we received a total of 48 usable surveys. Missing data points were replaced using means substitution. No more than 10 percent of any one variable was replaced in this fashion.

The survey consisted of three specific areas: items outlining the presence, value of and membership in the dominant coalition, items outlining the sources of personal influence for the participant and items addressing the participant’s leadership (referred to in the survey as (effectiveness) as a public relations practitioner. To create variables from each of these groups, we conducted several factor analyses.

The first analysis on dominant coalition consisted of five items that loaded into two factors, which collectively accounted for 80.8 percent of the variance. The first factor consisted of three items and accounted for 48.9 percent of the variance (eigenvalue= 2.45). The items spoke to the importance of access to and influence within one's own group (e.g. "Being a member of the dominant coalition can help the public relations practitioner gain a seat at the decision-making table.") The second factor contained 2 items and accounted for 31.9 percent of the variance (eigenvalue= 1.60) and spoke to the power associated with membership in the dominant coalition (e.g. "Membership in the dominant coalition can be a source of power for a public relations practitioner.")

The second analysis dealt with sources of influence from which the individuals felt they drew their power within their organization. We selected those items that were of greatest interest to this study and conducted a second factor analysis and after removing two cross-loading items, four variables emerged that accounted for 67.2 percent of the variance. In the process, we split the "prestige" power variable into three parts based on the data.

The first variable accounted for 25.1 percent of the variance (eigenvalue= 3.26) and contained four items that spoke to the individual's expertise and skill as a practitioner ("I derive a great deal of my influence within the organization from my expertise in public relations."). The second variable accounted for 15.1 percent of the variance (eigenvalue= 1.96) and contained three items that spoke to influence garnered through the prestige that results from relationships with external sources, such as friends in other companies or professional relationships with outside stakeholders ("I derive a great deal of my influence within the organization from my membership on outside boards (for-profit and non-profit)."). The third variable contained three items (variance= 14.6 percent; eigenvalue= 1.90) that spoke to the prestige power that accrued based on an individual's ability to work with others inside the office or how the individual had relationships with multiple people throughout the organization ("I derive a great deal of my influence within the organization from my boundary-spanning role in the organization."). The final variable contained two items (variance= 12.4 percent; eigenvalue= 1.61) and spoke to influence garnered through prestige power gained by having a degree from a prestigious institution or being a member of high-level groups ("I derive a great deal of my influence within the organization from having a degree from an elite university or college.")

The third analysis contained items that examined what the individual felt contributed most to his or her effectiveness as a public relations practitioner. The factor analysis accounted for 57.4 percent of the variance and yielded two variables.

The first variable accounted for 33.6 percent of the variance (eigenvalue=3.36) and contained items related to what we will define as a Level Five management style (Collins, 2001; Kanter, 1992).

The second factor contained four items and accounted for 23.8 percent of the variance (eigenvalue= 2.38) and spoke to a Leader/Learner style of leadership (Binney & Williams, 1995).

In each case, we created variables out of the items by summing the items associated with each variable and dividing by the total number of items in the variable.

In addition, we had several single item demographics, including gender, age, years in PR and years in health care PR. We also had items that asked whether the participants felt a dominant coalition was present their workplaces and if they felt they were part of the dominant coalition.

Results

Research question #1 asked what the relationship is between perceived benefits of membership in the dominant coalition and the number of years a practitioner has been a member of the dominant coalition. To begin our analysis of this question, we began by conducting a correlation matrix that included the years the individuals stated they believed they were members of the dominant coalition and the two dominant coalition benefit variables we had constructed (dominant coalition power and dominant coalition access). This correlation matrix revealed no significant correlations between the years spent in the dominant coalition and either of these variables ($p > .2$).

To more fully confirm these findings, we took all six items that helped comprise the two variables and placed them in a correlation matrix with the years spent in the dominant coalition variable. Again, no items significantly correlated with the years spent in the dominant coalition (all $p > .2$). Thus we conducted no further analyses regarding this question.

Research question #2 asked which sources of power would best predict an individual's membership in the dominant coalition. To assess this, we used the item that asked individuals to rate how strongly they believe they possess membership in the dominant coalition and used Finkelstein's four sources of power as predictor variables within a linear regression. Again, we split the "prestige" power variable into three parts based on the data.

The regression was strong and predictive, even with the small sample size (adj. R-square = .38, $p < .001$). Of the four influence variables, expertise was the strongest significant predictor (beta = .54, $p < .001$) with internal relationships also serving as a significant predictor (beta = .30, $p < .05$). Neither external relationships nor prestige were significant predictors ($p > .2$).

Research question #3 asked whether the power variables or the leadership variables would significantly predict the number of years the participants reported spending in the dominant coalition. To examine this, we conducted a correlation matrix that included the four power variables and the two leadership variables along with the item measuring the number of years the individuals reported spending in the dominant coalition.

The matrix revealed only one significant correlation between the years in the coalition and the other six variables; the influence based on experience variable ($r = .30$, $p < .05$). No other correlations were significant.

However, we did assess as part of a post hoc analysis any additional correlations among the remaining six variables. Interestingly, we found the Level Five variable was significantly negatively correlated with the prestige variable ($r = -.32$, $p < .05$). Additionally, the experience variable strongly correlated with the Leader/Learner variable ($r = .43$, $p < .01$).

Research question #4 asked whether any of the leadership variables would predict how strongly participants believed they were members of the dominant coalition. A correlation matrix revealed that neither variable correlates with the membership variable ($p > .2$).

Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to analyze to what degree the dominant coalition was a key component of the lives of health care public relations practitioners. In a variety of ways, the results here were both interesting and reassuring.

In examining the first research question, we found that time spent as a member of the dominant coalition was in no way indicative of the level of importance assigned to the dominant coalition. We believe this to be a reassuring finding and a case in which non-significant statistical outcomes led to important realizations. The lack of predictive data, coupled with the mean scores associated with the dominant coalition variables (DC Action $M= 5.96$; DC Influence $M= 5.89$), demonstrates the participants' clear understanding of the importance of the dominant coalition. Regardless of whether the participant is a member of the dominant coalition or the length of the participant's tenure in the coalition, the participant recognizes its vital nature. In other words, the dominant coalition isn't a group in which only its members tout its value. Thus, continued study of the dominant coalition is in the best interest of those seeking to better understand organizational interactions and is of special interest to public relations practitioners who hope to help guide those interactions.

The analysis of data for the second research question also provided some reassuring information. Of the four types of power we analyzed (expertise, prestige, internal relationships and external relationships) experience and internal relationships were significant predictors, with expertise being the stronger of the two predictors. Neither the prestige of an exclusive degree nor the sense of having friends in high places outside of the organization predicted the outcomes. In this, we see that public relations practitioners are relying on the bedrock of the profession when it comes to becoming valued members of the coalition: their skills and their ability to communicate. This demonstrates that membership in the coalition is not a function of elitism or of "who you know" in many cases, but that membership can be gained through providing valued skills and services to the organization and confirms previous research on the subject (Berger et al., 2007, Bowen, 2008).

The confluence of power, influence and the dominant coalition we studied in the third research question yielded some interesting results. Power as a result of experience was significantly correlated with the dominant coalition, leading us to surmise that with experience comes access. In addition, our post hoc analyses found that certain leadership styles are more or less likely to rely on certain types of power derivatives. The Leader/Learner is likely to rely on the power of experience, while the Level 5 leader is likely to eschew power derived from prestige. This would seem to make sense intuitively as the Leader/Learner approaches effective leadership from the standpoint of knowledge including understanding the business inside and out and being plugged in internally and externally with what's going on. The Level 5 Leader, on the other hand, is not the type of leader who is interested in prestige. This type of leader tend to shun publicity and place their ambitions for the company above self, giving credit to others for successes, while taking full responsibility for failures.

Taken as a whole, our results suggest that the dominant coalition is a real phenomenon, recognized as important by those in organizations from which a dominant coalition has emerged. Furthermore, the public relations practitioners surveyed here value membership in the dominant coalition and believe they can gain access to it through a combination of experience, expertise and organization-spanning skills. Thus, PR practitioners who seek to influence the direction of the organizations they serve appear to be capable of gaining access to this "shadow cabinet" of decision makers, regardless of their hierarchical position, which is critical for those in this profession who often must prove themselves to senior leadership before earning access to and influencing the c-suite.

This study has a number of drawbacks, the first and most obvious being the sample size. With this limited sample, it's difficult to provide wide-reaching conclusions, however, what we have revealed here is a valuable first step in this research. Even with this small sample, we've found significant outcomes that fall in line with the larger framework from which we've drawn our research ideas. Second, the limited number of respondents prohibits us from running additional analyses. Our earlier work (BLIND CITE) demonstrated gender differences in the types of power used by PR practitioners in order to influence the dominant coalition. However, we received only nine male responses, making gender analyses impossible. Furthermore, we need to better collect and parse demographic data so that we can more fully analyze differences based on degree type, matriculation source, current position, years within a particular field and so forth. This will allow us to better build models that will help us point practitioners in the right direction when it comes to how best to use specific sources of power and influence based on their background and skills.

That said, we believe this data reveals important patterns in terms of the sources of power utilized by practitioners, particularly in the healthcare field, and a better sense as to how to gain access to the dominant coalition. In identifying these patterns, we broaden our understanding of the unique roles both power and leadership play in gaining and maintaining membership in the dominant coalition. This data also adds to the growing body of evidence that membership in the dominant coalition is a critical issue for public relations practitioners.

There is still much to be done to understand the dynamics of gaining and maintaining membership in the dominant coalition. We need to understand whether these patterns remain consistent regardless of functional area. In addition, examining membership of the public relations practitioner from the perspective of others in the dominant coalition could be quite telling. We also need to continue exploring whether there are gender differences in the types of power used by PR practitioners to influence the dominant coalition. In addition, we need to continue to examine the impact of leadership on inclusion, but in terms of key leadership competencies. It's not enough for public relations practitioners to desire membership in the dominant coalition; we must determine the most effective and permanent means with which to gain admission. Only then can we fully secure our rightful place as a part of the strategic management team.

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The Impact of Antecedents and Relationship Maintenance Strategies on Perceived Relationship with Political Parties During the 2008 Presidential General Election

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Introduction

Relationships form between organizations and publics when the “actions of either entity impact the economic, social, *political* [italics added] and/or cultural well-being of the other” (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998, p. 62). Certainly, this is descriptive of the interaction and interdependency that exists between voters and their political parties. Because these relationships have consequences for those involved, organizations, including political parties, are compelled to take action to successfully manage these relationships. Understanding the interaction of antecedents and relationship maintenance strategies and their influence on perceptions of organization-public relationships (OPRs) within a political context serves to advance best practices in political communication and government relations.

To that end, this study examined the relationship between registered voters and their political parties against the backdrop of the 2008 presidential general election. It extends existing research on OPRs by investigating them within a political context and by moving beyond current approaches that typically focus on an individual organization and its publics (e.g., Ki & Hon, 2007a; Ki & Hon, 2007b; Ledingham, 2001; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000; Ledingham, Bruning, & Wilson, 1999; Seltzer, 2007a; Seltzer, 2007b).

This study sought to investigate the interaction of antecedent conditions, the relationship maintenance strategies utilized by political parties, perceptions of the organization-public relationship between voters and their party, and attitudinal and behavioral outcomes of the relationship. Antecedent variables that were considered included time in the relationship, interpersonal trust, and strength of party identification. Relationship maintenance strategies include communication activities that the organization uses to manage its relationship with the public; Excellence Theory and relationship management theory both suggest that two-way symmetrical, or dialogic, communication is the ideal means for facilitating quality OPRs. Relationship outcomes included voters’ attitudes toward their party and their intention to vote in the general election.

Literature Review

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In their analysis of the role of public relations in politics, McKinnon, Tedesco, and Lauder (2001) note that “since the birth of American democracy, public relations practices have played a key role in shaping our politics” (p. 557). Textbooks used in introductory public relations courses typically begin with a discussion of the historical evolution of public relations and identify the American Revolution as the birth of public relations in the US. Examples such as the Boston Tea Party, *Common Sense*, *The Federalist Papers*, and others are cited as evidence of the central role that public relations has played in the early development of American politics (e.g., Broom, 2009; Wilcox & Cameron, 2007). These techniques have changed little over the years in regards to their application within the realm of political communication; public relations strategies and tactics have been used “to promote candidates and key campaign issues, to stage political events, to provide media contacts, to prepare promotional materials (e.g., news releases, ads, brochures, posters), to counsel clients in media relations, to spin political information to candidates’ advantage, and to offer advice on packaging political policies” (McKinnon et al., 2001, p. 558)

McKinnon et al. (2001) used a Delphi panel of political communication experts to locate the role of public relations within the sphere of American politics. The panelists agreed that increased media competition, importance placed on researching publics, and the rise of online communication have placed increasing significance on the role of public relations in politics. There was also strong agreement with the statement “public relations is central to a political campaign,” especially noting its importance in conducting research, setting strategy, developing messaging, and ensuring the consistency of those messages across mediated and unmediated as well as earned and paid channels of communication. Additionally, panelists mentioned establishing and maintaining relationships with various constituencies as a key responsibility of public relations practitioners in politics.

McKinnon et al. (2001) observed that “as the US political system has evolved, public relations practices have continued to grow in importance as those pursuing or wielding political power seek ways in which to communicate their messages to the voting public” (p. 557). This has spawned numerous opportunities in the political communication field for public relations professionals, including work in public affairs, government relations, lobbying, and public information (Broom, 2009; McKinnon et al., 2001; Wilcox & Cameron, 2007). Not only are public relations tools and strategies utilized in some form or another by political campaigns, government agencies, and corporations, but they are utilized by political parties as well in an effort to build support for or fight policy initiatives, raise funds, recruit volunteers and new members, and of course, gain support for the parties’ candidates.

Political parties can be defined as “organizations that seek to control government by recruiting, nominating, and electing their members to public office” (Welch et al. 1998, cited in Rozell, Wilcox, & Madland, 2006). Some political scholars claim that the influence of political parties has declined in recent years (Dalton, 2006); however, others believe that political parties still play a key role in American politics by providing citizens with opportunities to become involved in the political process (Dennis & Owen, 2001). Political parties provide a venue for interest groups to get involved in politics, turning American political parties into loose coalitions of interest groups. The intersection of political parties and interest groups provides not only a channel through which individual citizens can donate money and other resources, but also provides an access point for citizens to participate in the political process and develop political skills (Rozell et al., 2006).

This interaction between political parties and the constituencies on which they depend for supportive behavior presents an opportunity for public relations to contribute to the success of political entities, in this case by building and maintaining relationships with strategically important publics, i.e., citizens, voters, and party activists. Broom, Casey, and Ritchey (1997) state that *relationships* form between entities when they “have perceptions and expectations of each other, when one or both parties need resources from the other, when one or both parties perceive mutual threats from an uncertain environment, and when there is either a legal or voluntary necessity to associate” (p. 95). This conceptualization of the public relations function within the political realm reflects recent efforts to redefine public relations as “the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends” (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2000, p. 6). Adopting this view of public relations, political parties can utilize public relations strategies and strategically based communication programs to manage relationships to produce desirable attitudinal and behavioral outcomes; these outcomes will not only have consequences for the party and for its supporters, but for the larger political-social system as well through enactment of legislation, election of candidates, and setting the policy agenda.

To understand the role of public relations in this citizen-party relationship, this study uses the relational perspective and relationship management as a theoretical framework. The relational perspective has its roots in Ferguson’s (1984) declaration that public relations research should seek to develop a dominant paradigm of its own. She felt that within this perspective, relationships, and specifically *organization-public relationships* (OPRs), should constitute the unit of analysis for public relations research. According to Ferguson, “It is difficult to think of any other field where the primary emphasis is on the relationships between organizations, between organizations and one or more groupings in society, or, more generally, with society itself” (p.16). This signaled the beginning of the steady progression toward what would eventually become known as the *relational perspective* (Ledingham, 2003, 2006).

The relational perspective acknowledges that public relations is not solely a communication function, but uses communication strategically in an effort to manage relationships (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998). Ledingham and Bruning (2000a) elaborated on the importance of such a perspective stating that “the relationship paradigm also provides a framework in which to explore the linkage between public relations objectives and organizational goals, for constructing platforms for strategic planning and tactical implementation, and approaching programmatic evaluation in ways understood and appreciated by the ruling management group” (p. xiii). In reviewing the literature on organization-public relationships, Ledingham (2003) summarized existing knowledge of OPRs and suggested a theory of relationship management that states “effectively managing organization-public relationships around common interests and shared goals, over time, results in mutual understanding and benefit for interacting organizations and publics” (p. 190). Public relations researchers have sought to continue to develop this perspective through the identification of methods for measuring relationships (e.g., Hon & Grunig, 1999; Bruning and Ledingham, 1999) and by proposing models of organization-public relations (e.g., Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997; Grunig & Huang, 2000).

There have been extensive efforts to identify the dimensions that compose OPRs and to create and test scales for measuring these dimensions (e.g., Ledingham, Bruning, Thomlison, & Lesko, 1997; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998; Bruning & Ledingham, 1999; Ledingham, 2001;

Bruning & Galloway, 2003; Grunig, Grunig, & Ehling, 1992; Huang, 1997; Hon & Grunig, 1999; see Seltzer, 2007a, for a review). Hon and Grunig (1999) developed quantitative measurement scales for the proposed dimensions of control mutuality, trust, satisfaction, and commitment. They found these scales to be “good measures of perceptions of relationships, strong enough to be used in evaluating relationships” (Hon & Grunig, 1999, p. 5). Since then, these measures have been found to be reliable in other studies (e.g., Hon & Brunner, 2002; Huang, 2001; Jo, Hon, & Brunner, 2004; Ki & Hon, 2007; Kim, 2001b; Seltzer, 2007a). The *control mutuality* dimension represents the extent to which parties in the relationship agree as to who is authorized to exercise power and control. In a healthy OPR, each entity will be allowed to exercise power in the relationship. The *trust* dimension includes concepts such as integrity, dependability, and competence. The *satisfaction* dimension represents the degree to which each party perceives the expected benefits of being in the relationship exceed the costs as well as perceptions that each party is actively attempting to maintain a positive relationship. The *commitment* dimension includes both the belief that the relationship is worth maintaining as well as the amount of emotional energy used to maintain the relationship (see Hon & Grunig, 1999, for a full discussion of these dimensions).

In addition to the refinement of methods for measuring OPRs, researchers have sought to develop models of OPRs. Broom, Casey, and Ritchey (1997) proposed a three-stage model consisting of antecedents, relationship state, and consequences of OPRs. Antecedents of relationships included perceptions, motives, needs, and behaviors of parties within the relationship. Consequences included the outputs of relationships that could affect the organization or the environment in which it operates and include “goal achievement, dependency/loss of autonomy, and routine and institutionalized behavior” (p. 94). Grunig and Huang (2000) also proposed a three-stage model of organization-public relationships that includes situational antecedents, maintenance strategies, and relationship outcomes. Here, situational antecedents describe the types of behavioral and situational factors that link publics and organizations. Maintenance strategies include the efforts of the organization to manage the relationship through communication efforts. Relationship outcomes include goal attainment and perceptions of relationship state.

Based on these models, this study conceptualizes *political organization-public relationships* (POPRs) between citizens and political parties as having politically relevant antecedent variables; as being mediated by the one- and two-way asymmetrical and symmetrical maintenance strategies employed by political parties; as being measured along dimensions of control mutuality, trust, satisfaction, and commitment; and that the quality of the POPR between citizens and political parties results in attitudinal and behavioral outcomes that have political consequences for political parties as well as the larger political system.

In regards to politically relevant antecedents, this study considers three: time in the relationship, interpersonal trust, and party identification. Ledingham, Bruning, and Wilson (1999) found that time in a relationship influenced perceptions of the dimensions of an OPR; they concluded that building relationships requires a long-term commitment. Similarly, Ledingham (2003, 2006) acknowledged that relationships are dynamic and evolve over time. Therefore, the following hypothesis is offered in regards to the effect of time on perceptions of POPRs.

H_{1a}: Respondents who report longer time spent in the relationship with their political party will perceive more favorable relationships with their party than respondents who have spent a shorter period of time in the relationship.

Interpersonal trust is also suggested as a possible antecedent of POPR state. The US is becoming an increasingly cynical and mistrustful country. Slightly over half of all Americans believed that “most people can be trusted” in the 1960s; this view was only shared by a third of all Americans by the 1990s (Uslaner, 2004). Interpersonal trust, also referred to as social trust, is important because it provides the social capital that allows citizens to collaborate to solve societal problems (Beaudoin & Thorson, 2004; Brehm & Rahn, 1997; Kwak, Shah & Holbert, 2004; Kanervo & Zhang, 2005; Putnam 1993, 1995a, 1995b, 2000). Interpersonal trust has been positively linked with both civic engagement (Hooghe, 2002; Kwak, Shah, & Holbert, 2004; Shah, McLeod & Yoon, 2001) and political participation (Beaudoin and Thorson, 2004). Political parties, like all organizations, are comprised of individuals; thus, to trust an organization is to trust the people who make up that organization. It is possible that higher levels of interpersonal trust will result in citizens having more positive perceptions of their relationship with these organizations, especially since these parties presumably are working to resolve political issues and present opportunities for political and civic engagement. Thus, the following hypothesis is offered in regards to the effect of interpersonal trust on perceptions of POPRs.

H_{1b}: Respondents who report higher levels of interpersonal trust will perceive more favorable relationships with their political party than respondents who report lower levels of interpersonal trust.

If antecedents include situational and behavioral factors as well as motives, needs, and perceptions of OPRs, then surely partisanship should be considered, especially within the context of examining POPRs during an election. Party identification has been defined as “a sense of personal, affective attachment to a political party based on feelings of closeness to the social groups associated with the parties” (Goren, 2005, p. 881); thus, identification with a group exhibiting partisan leanings leads to closer identification with that party. Partisanship is influential in forming policy positions, evaluating political actors, and, of course, voting behavior (Alvarez & Brehm, 2002; Feldman, 1988). Given the power of partisanship to affect perceptions, attitudes, and behavior, the following hypothesis is offered regarding the effect of party identification on perceptions of POPRs.

H_{1c}: Respondents who report stronger levels of party identification will perceive more favorable relationships with their political party than respondents who report weaker levels of party identification.

The relationship management perspective supports the use of organizational communication to manage relationships between an organization and strategically important publics (Grunig & Huang, 2000; Hon & Grunig, 1999; Ledingham, 2003; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000b). Maintenance strategies include the efforts of the organization to develop and nurture its relationship with the public through symmetrical and asymmetrical communication efforts. Models of OPRs suggest that the use of relationship maintenance strategies should improve perceptions of the organization-public relationship (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 2000; Grunig & Huang, 2000; Hon & Grunig, 1999).

H_{2a}: Respondents who report higher levels of exposure to the relationship maintenance strategies employed by their political party will perceive more favorable relationships with their party than respondents who report lower levels of exposure to maintenance strategies.

Beyond mere exposure to strategic communication efforts, both Excellence Theory and relationship management theory suggest that adopting the two-way symmetrical model of public relations practice is the best way for public relations to contribute to organizational effectiveness and to build mutually beneficial relationships with strategically important publics (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002; Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2006; Ledingham, 2003; Ledingham, 2006). In communication programs based on the two-way symmetrical model, feedback from publics is utilized to facilitate a two-way exchange of information. This exchange is symmetrical if the organization uses communication not just to influence the public, but also to understand the public (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2006; Grunig & Hunt, 1984). The use of two-way symmetrical strategies is likely to result in dialogic communication between the organization and the public (Kent & Taylor, 2002).

H_{2b}: Respondents with greater exposure to relationship maintenance strategies perceived as two-way symmetrical communication (i.e., dialogic communication) will perceive more favorable relationships with their political party than respondents whose interaction with their party is not perceived as two-way symmetrical in nature.

Various OPR studies have identified relationship outcomes such as attitude formation and behavioral intention (Ki & Hon, 2007a), loyalty (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998), satisfaction with the organization (Bruning & Ledingham, 2000), and reputation (Yang, 2007). Ki and Hon (2007a, 2007b) found that stronger perceptions of OPRs lead to more positive attitudes and behaviors. Therefore, the following hypotheses are offered regarding the effect of perceptions of the POPR on relationship outcomes:

H_{3a}: Respondents who perceive more favorable relationships with their political party will report more favorable attitudes toward their party.

H_{3b}: Respondents who perceive more favorable relationships with their political party will report engaging in behavior that supports their party to a greater degree than will respondents who perceive unfavorable relationships with their party.

The 2008 presidential general election provided an opportunity to test the hypothesized linkages among politically relevant antecedents, relationship maintenance strategies utilized by political parties, citizens' perceptions of political organization-public relationships, and attitudinal and behavioral outcomes of POPRs within a political context in which multiple political parties were employing strategic communication to achieve favorable political objectives.

Methodology

A telephone survey of 508 respondents residing in a mid-sized city and its surrounding county was conducted between October 20 and November 3, 2008, by trained interviewers in a research methods course at a university in the Southwestern United States. Respondents were

selected randomly from a database of county residents. The response rate was approximately 40%.

The respondent pool was 63.2% female, and the median age was 53. Education was assessed on a seven-point scale ranging from “8th grade or less” to “graduate degree.” The sample median was four, which meant “having attended some college.” The sample was 78.6% Caucasian, 12.6% Hispanic, 6.7% Black, 1.0% Native American, and 0.2% Asian. 24.4% considered themselves to be Democrats, 17.8% Independents, and 57.8% Republicans. About 51.7% of the respondents identified themselves as conservative, 38% as moderate, and 12.4% said they were liberal. The average number of years respondents considered themselves to be affiliated with their current political party or considered themselves to have been independent was more than 10 years.

Interpersonal trust was a composite measure of two variables. Respondents were asked the degree to which they agreed with the statements “most people are honest” and “you can’t be too careful in dealing with people” (reverse coded) on a five-point scale where “1” meant “strongly disagree” and “5” meant “strongly agree.” The two statements were summed to form the *interpersonal trust* variable.

A slightly modified version of Huang’s (2004) Public Relations Strategy Assessment (PRSA) was used to measure exposure to four categories of relationship maintenance strategies: (1) mediated communication, (2) social activities, (3) interpersonal communication, and (4) online communications. *Mediated communication* was an additive measure of three items that asked how frequently the political party the respondent most closely identified with: (1) held press conferences; (2) distributed flyers, brochures, pamphlets, letters or other publications expressing their position; and (3) used the mass media, for example, TV, radio, newspapers, magazines, etc. *Social activities* was an additive measure of two items: (1) how often the political party gave respondents gifts or tokens of appreciation, and (2) how often it held lunches, meetings, parties, or get-togethers. *Interpersonal communication* was a composite measure of two items: (1) how frequently the political party contacted the respondent in person, that is, face-to-face, and (2) how often it contacted the respondent by telephone. *Online communication* was a single measure which asked how often the political party contacted the respondent online, whether via e-mail, social networking sites, blogs, or instant messaging. Responses were measured on a four-point Likert scale where “1” meant “never” and “4” meant “often.”

The PRSA was also used to assess whether the relationship maintenance strategies employed by the political parties were two-way symmetrical, or dialogic, in nature. Dialogic communication was measured along two dimensions: (1) two-way communication, and (2) symmetrical communication. *Two-way communication* was an additive measure of three items that asked how often one’s political party: (1) conducted research before they started communicating with the respondent to find out what their attitude was toward the party or the respondent’s position regarding issues; (2) made an effort to understand the respondent’s opinions and suggestions while communicating with the respondent; and (3) contacted the respondent to get the respondent’s feedback after the party completed their political activities. Responses were measured on a four-point Likert scale where “1” meant “never” and “4” meant “often.” The three items were summed to an index.

Symmetrical communication was measured using four items drawn from Huang’s (2004) PRSA scale that asked how often respondents felt that the party: (1) consulted the respondent while the party was making decisions, (2) took into account the possible impact the party’s

decisions could have on the respondent, (3) considered both the party's and the respondent's positions during communication; and (4) considered the possible influence that the party's communication activities had on respondents. Responses were measured on a four-point Likert scale where "1" meant "never" and "4" meant "often." The four items were summed to an index.

Relationship with political party consisted of four dimensions identified by Hon and Grunig (1999): (1) trust, (2) satisfaction, (3) commitment, and (4) control mutuality. Respondents indicated agreement with statements drawn from previous OPR research intended to measure each of these dimensions using a five-point Likert scale where "1" meant "strongly disagree" and "5" meant "strongly agree." *Trust* was an additive measure of five items. Respondents were asked to rate five statements describing their relationship with the political party with which they most closely identified with: (1) whether the party treated people fairly, (2) whether the party considered the impact of its decisions on people, (3) whether the party could be relied on to keep its promises, (4) whether the party took the respondent's opinions into account when making decisions, and (5) whether the party had the ability to accomplish what it said it would do. *Satisfaction* was an additive measure of four items: (1) whether the party and the respondent both benefitted from their relationship with each other, (2) whether the respondent was dissatisfied with his/her interaction with the party (reverse coded), (3) whether the respondent was happy with the party, and (4) whether the respondent was pleased with the relationship that the party had established with him/her. *Commitment* was a composite measure of four items: (1) whether the party was trying to maintain a long-term commitment to the respondent, (2) whether the party wanted to maintain a positive relationship with the respondent, (3) whether the respondent valued their relationship with the party more compared to other organizations, (4) and whether there was a long-lasting bond between the respondent and the party. *Control mutuality* was an additive measure of five items: (1) whether the party believed the respondent's opinions were legitimate, (2) whether the party neglected the respondent (reverse coded), (3) whether the party had a tendency to throw its weight around (reverse coded), (4) whether the party really listened to what the respondent had to say, and (5) whether the party seemed to ignore respondent's opinions when making decisions that affected the respondent (reverse coded).

Attitudinal and behavioral outcomes were the dependent variables. Attitudinal outcomes consisted of two items. Respondents were asked to think about the political party with which they most closely identified and rate the party in general on a scale of 1 to 10 where "1" meant "negative" and "10" meant "positive" ($M = 6.80$, $SD = 2.24$). Then respondents were asked to rate the party again on a scale of 0 to 10 where "0" meant "strongly dislike" and "10" meant "strongly like" ($M = 7.99$, $SD = 2.19$). The two items were standardized before they were summed to form the *attitude toward political party* index.

There were three elements comprising the behavioral outcome. The first two elements were the combination of two questions measuring party affiliation and intention to vote for one's party's candidate. Respondents were asked to indicate their strength of party affiliation where "1" meant "strong Democrat," "2" meant "Democrat," "3" meant "Independent," "4" meant "Republican" and "5" meant "strong Republican." Democrats and strong Democrats were collapsed, as were Republicans and strong Republicans. Other categories were recoded as missing so a direct comparison between Democrats and Republicans could be made. Respondents were then asked who they intended to vote for in the general election: John McCain, Barack Obama, or another candidate. All other categories were recoded as missing. Democrats

who intended to support their party by voting for Barack Obama were coded as "1," all other choices were coded as "0;" this process was used to construct the dummy variable *Democrat supportive behavior*. Similarly, Republicans intending to support their party by voting for John McCain were coded as "1," all other vote intentions were coded as "0;" this created another dummy variable called *Republican supportive behavior*. Finally, all voters were coded in terms of the third and final behavioral outcome *intention to vote*. Respondents' intention to vote in the general election was indicated by either "1," which meant "intention to vote," or "0," which meant "no intention to vote."

Results

Hierarchical regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses (H_{1a} – H_{3a}) after controlling for the demographic variables of gender, race, education, and age. H_{1a} proposed that respondents who report longer time spent in the relationship with their political party will perceive more favorable relationships with their party than respondents who have spent a shorter period of time in the relationship. Table 1 showed that time spent with one's political party was not a significant predictor of a favorable relationship with one's party. Therefore, H_{1a} was not supported.

H_{1b} predicted that respondents who report higher levels of interpersonal trust will perceive more favorable relationships with their political party than respondents who report lower levels of interpersonal trust. As seen from Table 1, interpersonal trust was a significant predictor of one's relationship with one's political party ($\beta = .09, p < .05$). Therefore, H_{1b} was supported.

H_{1c} predicted that respondents who report stronger levels of party identification will perceive more favorable relationships with their political party than respondents who report weaker levels of party identification. Strength of political party affiliation was not a significant predictor of one's relationship with one's political party. Thus, H_{1c} was not supported.

H_{2a} proposed that respondents who report higher levels of exposure to the relationship maintenance strategies employed by their political party will perceive more favorable relationships with their party than respondents who report lower levels of exposure to maintenance strategies. As seen in Table 1, mediated communication was a significant predictor of favorable relationships with political parties ($\beta = .12, p < .05$), but not social activities, interpersonal communication, or online communication.

H_{2b} asserted that respondents with greater exposure to relationship maintenance strategies perceived as two-way symmetrical in nature (i.e., dialogic communication) will perceive more favorable relationships with their political party than respondents whose interaction with their party is not perceived as two-way symmetrical in nature. According to

Table 1, both two-way communication ($\beta = .17, p < .01$) and symmetrical communication ($\beta = .41, p < .001$) were significant predictors of favorable relationships with political parties.

Therefore, H_{2b} was supported.

H_{3a} predicted that respondents who perceive more favorable relationships with their political party will report more favorable attitudes toward their party. Table 1 shows that all four dimensions of organization-public relationships were significant predictors of favorable attitudes toward their party: trust ($\beta = .21, p < .01$), satisfaction ($\beta = .32, p < .001$), commitment ($\beta = .15, p < .01$), and control mutuality ($\beta = .19, p < .01$). Therefore, H_{3a} was supported.

H_{3b} proposed that respondents who perceive more favorable relationships with their political party will report engaging in behavior that supports their party to a greater degree than will respondents who perceive unfavorable relationships with their party. As seen in Table 2, those respondents who perceive that they have positive relationships with their political party did engage in activities that supported their political party: Democrats intending to vote for Obama ($\beta = .14, p < .001$) and Republicans intending to vote for McCain ($\beta = .05, p < .05$). Therefore, H_{3b} was supported. As expected, the more one leaned Republican, the more likely one would intend to vote for McCain ($\beta = .88, p < .001$; GOP coded higher); the more one leaned Democratic, the more likely one would intend to vote for Obama ($\beta = -.83, p < .001$; GOP coded higher). Also, when all respondents were considered, perceived relationship with political parties alone did not have a significant impact on the reported intention to vote, although exposure to relationship maintenance strategies did ($\beta = .11, p < .05$).

Discussion

In general, the findings support our proposed model of political organization-public relationships (POPR) by identifying significant political antecedents to POPR formation, the important role of relationship maintenance strategies on perceptions of the POPR, and the impact of POPR perception on attitudinal and behavioral relationship outcomes.

In regards to antecedent variables, demographics (for which there was no hypothesis *per se*) exhibited some, albeit small, influence on perceptions of the POPR, attitude toward one's party, and behavior. Looking at perceptions of POPR, age, gender, and education were significant predictors while race was not. Only gender was significant in regards to attitude toward the party. Race was significant in terms of Democrats exhibiting supportive behavior; African Americans were more likely to vote for Obama. Age was significant in predicting overall vote intention; older respondents were more likely to vote. Overall, the demographic variables were significant, but explained very little variance in perceptions of POPR ($R^2 = 2.7\%$) and attitude toward party ($R^2 = 3.3\%$); demographics played a greater role in determining supportive behavior for one's party ($R^2 = 11.9\%$ for Democrats; $R^2 = 11.1\%$ for Republicans).

Similarly, some of the political antecedents were also significant, but explained very little variance in terms of perceptions of the POPR ($R^2 = 4.8\%$) and attitude ($R^2 = 4.1\%$). We found support for the proposition that higher levels of interpersonal trust would result in more favorable perceptions of the relationship with the party; i.e., as interpersonal trust increased, favorable perceptions of the POPR also increased. This supports our contention that more generalized trust helps lay the basis for forming healthy relationships with political organizations. This also confirms findings from social capital research that propose that trust in one area appears to spill over into other areas; interpersonal trust leads to more trust in social and political institutions (Kanervo and Zhang, 2005; Putnam, 2000). This is important for political parties in that theorists have argued that political trust provides the legitimacy that leaders need to launch government initiatives for solving the nation's problems (Easton, 1965), that it affects compliance with governmental authority (Scholz & Lubell, 1998), and that it influences voting behavior (Hetherington, 1998).

Party identification and longer time spent in the relationship with one's political party were not identified as significant predictors of more favorable perceptions of POPRs. There seems to be a disconnect between partisanship and perceptions of the relationship with one's political party. One explanation could be that self-identified partisans have fairly stable

perceptions of their relationship with their political party; otherwise, they would not consider themselves party members. The more surprising finding was the lack of significance of time in developing positive perceptions of POPRs. This could reflect a “what have you done for me lately” attitude; voters will “stick” with a party for as long as they are enjoying a satisfying relationship with the party. If not, then they’ll switch allegiances come the next election.

The second group of hypotheses sought to test the linkage between the use of communication strategies by parties to maintain the relationship with voters and voters’ perceptions of the POPR. In general, increased exposure to strategic communication emanating from the party served to strengthen the party’s relationship with respondents, accounting for over 30% of the variance in OPR strength. Increased exposure to mediated communication (e.g., mass media, brochures, pamphlets, letters, etc.) in particular served to enhance perceptions of the POPR. Increased exposure to social activities, interpersonal communication, and online communication did not exhibit a significant influence on perceptions of the POPR. One reason for this could be due to the fact that the study was conducted during the height of the presidential election; there may have simply been increased opportunity to be exposed to mediated communication by the parties as they ramped up their output of this type of political messaging.

More interestingly, perceptions of engaging in two-way symmetrical communication with one’s political party had a significant impact on perceptions of the POPR as demonstrated by the high coefficients for both two-way communication ($\beta = .17$) and especially symmetrical communication ($\beta = .41$). This provides continued support for the assertion that the two-way symmetrical model of public relations practice provides the best strategy for establishing and maintaining healthy OPRs. However, this finding is tempered by the fact that none of the channels that would seem to be conducive to facilitating two-way symmetrical strategies, i.e., social activities, interpersonal communication, and online communication, were significant, but mediated communication was. This seems to indicate that the perception of two-way symmetrical communication may be divorced somewhat from the actual channel used, whether or not that channel is inherently suited for two-way symmetrical communication with publics.

Two possible explanations are offered. First, it could be that some other factor is at play here; it may be possible that people who support a particular party are more likely to view the relationship maintenance strategies as inherently more two-way symmetrical in nature; i.e., partisans may be biased toward perceiving their party’s communication efforts as dialogic. For example, if someone views himself as a Democrat, he may see any communication from the Democratic party as evidence that the party truly cares about him and wants to engage in an open, honest dialogue regardless of whether that message is communicated in a face-to-face conversation at a party meeting or whether it is communicated via a direct mail piece. Second, the content of the message itself could play a role in fostering the perception of two-way symmetrical communication. For instance, the direct mail piece mentioned previously could state that the party cares about the voter’s concerns and wants to hear their voice (regardless of whether or not any dialogic feedback loop is provided). That is to say, the message is perceived as being dialogic because the message itself argues that it is in fact dialogic.

This poses an interesting question for advocates of the two-way symmetrical model: are relationship maintenance strategies two-way symmetrical only if they are authentically two-way symmetrical in nature, or are they two-way symmetrical if the receiver perceives them as such? Conversely, what if an authentically two-way symmetrical strategy is perceived as one-way asymmetric in nature? In short, what matters more – perception or reality? While we would like

to advocate for the employment of authentically two-way symmetrical strategies and fostering dialogic communication, it appears that within the context of a political organization-public relationship, mediated communication may be sufficient to generate perceptions of two-way symmetrical communication to enhance favorable perceptions of POPR state. This suggests that political bias may be a potential antecedent variable to consider in future POPR research (and possibly even in more general OPR research).

The third group of hypotheses investigated the linkages between perceptions of POPR state and the attitudinal and behavioral outcomes of the relationship with one's political party. As predicted, more favorable perceptions of the POPR were related to increasingly favorable attitudes toward one's political party. In fact, all four individual OPR dimensions were significant predictors of attitude with the coefficient for satisfaction being the highest ($\beta = .32$), followed by trust ($\beta = .21$), control mutuality ($\beta = .19$), and commitment ($\beta = .15$). Overall, perceptions of the POPR explained over 38% of the variance in attitude toward the political party. This is particularly striking given that the demographic variables and political antecedents only explained 3.3% and 4.1% of the variance in attitude toward the political party respectively. This suggests that fostering healthy relationships, particularly engendering feelings of relational satisfaction, is incredibly important in regards to generating positive attitudes toward the party and reinforces findings from existing OPR research (e.g., Bruning & Ledingham, 2000; Ki & Hon, 2007a).

Perceptions of POPR state were also linked to exhibiting behaviors that were supportive of the party; however, this explained very little variance ($R^2 = 1.7\%$ for Democrats; $R^2 = 0.2\%$ for Republicans). In regards to actual behavior, political antecedents, and specifically strength of party identification, were the most significant predictors ($R^2 = 64.8\%$ for Democrats; $R^2 = 68\%$ for Republicans). These findings, considered in conjunction with the findings regarding POPR's affect on attitude and the role of the political antecedents, seems to point to perceptions of the POPR as having a greater influence on affective outcomes while partisanship exerts a greater influence on behavioral outcomes.

These findings have implications for practitioners engaged in political communication and suggest that political parties would benefit from adopting a relational perspective. In the short term, relational consequences such as behavioral outcomes may be a function of party identification; however, OPR is a long-term measure of public relations effectiveness and may be a better barometer of excellent public relations practice than short-term outputs and outcomes (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Relationship maintenance may result in stronger OPRs and more favorable attitudes over time that pave the way for short-term behavioral outcomes, as suggested by Ki and Hon (2007a). This would suggest that long-term relationship maintenance *between* elections is critical for retaining members and growing the party through addition of new members who identify themselves as being aligned with the party. It would be interesting to see that if, over time, positive perceptions of the POPR led to decisions to stay with or leave the party in a manner similar to the study conducted by Bruning and Ledingham (2000).

Additionally, the findings suggest that a combination of both mediated communication and two-way symmetrical communication could prove to be fruitful in relationship building with political constituencies. While mediated communication may be sufficient in the short run leading up to an election, the groundwork for this approach may be laid over time by utilizing two-way symmetrical communication with voters to establish and maintain healthy relationships

and favorable attitudes that keep those voters satisfied with their party membership and who will in turn vote based on party identification come election day.

This study also has implications for the relational perspective itself. First and foremost, this study situates the investigation of OPRs within a political context, specifically exploring the linkages between political antecedents, relationship outcomes, strategic political communication, and political organization-public relationships (POPRs). Exploring these linkages within the context of a presidential election allowed us to test the influence of antecedents that are relevant to perceptions of POPRs, specifically identifying interpersonal trust as an influence on perceptions of political OPRs.

Additionally, our study lends broader support for developing models of OPRs by not limiting our study to the investigation of one specific organization. Respondents were asked to evaluate relationship maintenance strategies, attitudes, and perceptions of OPRs for the “political party that they most closely identified with” and not with a specific party. This allows us more freedom to generalize our findings to other political organizations and not just to one specific OPR. This moves the investigation of OPRs beyond the case study like approach generally employed in OPR research; we studied a *type* of OPR – in this case, political organizations – and not a *specific* OPR.

Perhaps the most interesting finding with implications for the development of the relational perspective was related to the use of specific strategies for maintaining and enhancing perceptions of the OPR. The literature on Excellence Theory and the relational perspective both operate under an assumption that two-way symmetrical practice is the best approach for establishing and maintaining long-lasting, healthy relationships. The findings in our study seem to undermine this perspective by suggesting that mediated communication was more influential in fostering favorable perceptions of the OPR than were interpersonal, social, and online communication – all channels that should provide more opportunities for dialogic communication. This suggests that either one-way, mediated communication channels are still capable of facilitating two-way symmetrical communication or that *perceptions* of two-way symmetrical communication may be more important than engaging in actual, authentic two-way symmetrical communication; that is to say, a properly crafted mediated message may be just as capable of managing strategic relationships and engendering favorable perceptions of an OPR as two-way symmetrical strategies. Alternately, if authentically two-way symmetrical strategies are employed, but implemented improperly, they could fail to have the impact on an OPR that the practitioner was seeking. This could have serious ethical and practical implications for practitioners seeking to apply the two-way symmetrical model, for educators seeking to promote the use of two-way symmetrical models, and for scholars seeking to study the role of two-way symmetrical communication.

Obviously, as with all studies, these findings are tempered by the limitations of the methodological design; however, these limitations suggest avenues for future research. One drawback was the use of a regional sample that was skewed toward voters who perceived themselves as conservative. While our intention was not to forecast the results of the election, this could present a problem in attempting to generalize our findings to the broader population. Further investigations of POPRs need to be expanded to national samples. An additional limitation was conducting the study during a particularly highly involving presidential election. The most immediate consequence was that since practically every respondent indicated that they intended to vote in this historic election, there was very little variance in the vote intention

variable. This suggests that the behavioral outcome variable should have been operationalized differently; for instance, we could have asked whether the respondent intended to contribute money to the party, to volunteer their time to helping the party, or whether the respondent intended to stay with or leave the party. Furthermore, it would be interesting to replicate the study outside of the context of a national presidential election by expanding the investigation of POPRs to not only mid-term elections at the national, state, and even local levels, but also replicating the study during non-election years as well.

This study also suggests future research for the more general investigation of OPRs. For instance, the findings regarding time bear further study; while time may be a factor in some situations and for particular types of OPRs, this may not hold true in all cases. The findings regarding the influence of the maintenance strategies on perceived OPR state suggest another area for potential OPR research. The fact that two-way symmetrical communication was significant coupled with the significant influence of mediated communication suggests that further research is needed regarding the factors that might affect publics' perceptions of the two-way symmetrical nature of organizational communication regardless of channel and whether or not such communication is indeed representative of two-way symmetrical public relations practice; i.e., it doesn't matter what you say, how you say it, or the ethical basis for the rationale behind the organization's efforts to engage in communication – some publics may be predisposed to perceive the organization as two-way symmetrical and engaging in a dialogue whether it really is or is not.

Finally, while this study focused on relationships with political parties, other types of political organizations could be studied to continue the development of models of POPRs. For instance, the role of voter relationships with interest groups and the relationships between interest groups and political parties could be studied. Also, there is the potential for integrating OPR research with other political theories, such as Zhang and Seltzer's (2008) efforts to integrate OPR measures into models of social capital. This is especially relevant given the influence that interpersonal trust had on shaping perceptions of POPRs and because social capital focuses on building relationships between citizens and their communities. Another possibility lies in the area of measurement of POPRs. For instance, the use of a coorientational approach in which the perceptions of both entities in the POPR – voters and party leaders – could be assessed to understand the level of agreement, accuracy, and perceived agreement that exist between the direct and meta-perspectives of the relationship (e.g., Seltzer, 2007a; Seltzer, 2007b; Seltzer & Mitrook, in press).

Conclusion

In summary, this investigation of politically oriented organization-public relationships will hopefully act as the impetus for the further study of POPRs as an important area to focus on within more general OPR research. While the findings by and large support our proposed POPR model, future research can further refine the model, particularly in regards to identifying additional politically situated antecedents and outcomes and possibly even additional politically relevant OPR dimensions. Additionally, in our view, one of the key findings was related to the influence of mediated and two-way symmetrical communication to maintain the relationship between voters and their political parties. The possibility that perceptions of dialogic communication may trump the use of authentic dialogue in building relationships with certain publics is cause for some concern; future studies should more thoroughly investigate this

phenomenon, not only within the context of political communication, but within broad-based research on OPRs and two-way symmetrical communication.

In the end, perhaps the most important conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that public relations, and the adoption of a relational perspective in particular, has continued relevance for political communication. Broom (2009) observed that “the tools and techniques of public relations have long been an important part of political weaponry. Sustained campaigns to shape and move public opinion go back to the Revolutionary War” (p.86). Certainly, this still holds true for those engaged in modern political communication as well. Cultivating a healthy relationship between voters and political parties via strategically based communication efforts has important consequences for political parties, namely, fostering positive attitudes toward the party. Political parties should look beyond the immediate short-term outcomes of their communication strategies and consider the adoption of a relational perspective in which effectiveness of political communication and other public relations activities are measured in terms of long-lasting, mutually beneficial organization-public relationships. It is precisely these types of relationships that will help the party continue to *grow* and *thrive* over time by satisfying the long-term relationship needs of their constituents and not merely *survive* the next election cycle.

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Table 1. Hierarchical regression predicting OPR and attitudes toward political party.

	OPR	Attitudes toward Political Party
Demographics		
Age	-.12*	-.003
Gender (female coded higher)	.10*	.08*
Education	-.09*	-.01
Race (dummy variable, Caucasian coded higher)	-.07	.001
R² (%)	2.7*	3.3*
Political Antecedents		
Time R affiliated with political party	.09	.08*
Interpersonal trust	.09*	-.07*
Strength of party ID (GOP coded higher)	.05	-.01
Incremental R² (%)	4.8***	4.1**
Relationship Maintenance Strategies		
Mediated communication	.12*	.03
Social activities	.003	-.10*
Interpersonal communication	-.03	.04
Online communication	-.01	-.06
Two-way communication	.17**	-.07
Symmetrical communication	.41***	.04
Incremental R² (%)	30.6***	17.6***
Organization-Party Relationships (OPR)		
Trust21**
Satisfaction32***
Commitment	---	.15**
Control mutuality	---	.19**
Incremental R² (%)	---	38.4***
Total R² (%)	38.1***	63.4***

* p<.05 ** p<.01 *** p < .001

Table 2. Hierarchical regression predicting engaging in supportive behavior.

	DEMs for Obama	GOPs for McCain	Intention to Vote (all voters)
Demographics			
Age	-.04	-.004	.11*
Gender (female coded higher)	.04	-.02	.10
Education	.01	-.05	-.01
Race (dummy variable, Caucasian coded higher)	-.05*	.03	.01
R² (%)	11.9***	11.1***	2.7*
Political Antecedents			
Time affiliated with political party	-.02	.04	.05
Interpersonal trust	-.01	-.04	.01
Strength of party ID (GOP coded higher)	-.83***	.88***	.04
Incremental R² (%)	64.8***	68.0***	.7 (n.s.)
Relationship Maintenance Strategies			
Incremental R² (%)	.3*	.1 (n.s.)	1.5*
Organization-Party Relationships (OPR)			
Incremental R² (%)	1.7***	.2*	.4 (n.s.)
Total R² (%)	78.7***	79.3**	5.4*

* p<.05 ** p<.01 *** p < .001

Measuring and Evaluating an Intranet Designed to Enhance Employee Communication and Two-Way Communication

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was twofold: (1) to describe how a hospital garnered input from its employees to design an intranet that enables its employees to do their jobs more effectively and to communicate with management and with each other, and (2) to test whether employees' level of satisfaction and perceived input into the decisions of the hospital increased after using the new intranet. Research included a baseline survey (n= 718), a follow-up survey (n= 393), and interviews with a purposive sample. Hospital communication effectiveness, perceived employee voice, and employee satisfaction increased after employees had used the new intranet.

Public relations professionals and senior management have traditionally controlled internal communication tools, such as newsletters and Web casts, leaving employees to merely receive and react to the messages. The intranet, an internal Web site geared for an organization's employees, offers the potential to transform the internal communication process by enabling two-way communication. An intranet empowers employees to participate on message boards and wikis in order to share information and to provide feedback via polls. However, although an intranet has the potential to encourage dialogue among management and employees, the majority of companies still utilize a highly controlled intranet whereby management pushes communication messages to employees (Holtz, 2008). The purpose of this case study research was twofold: (1) to qualitatively examine how one organization used employee feedback to construct an intranet designed to increase work productivity and to enable employee communication, and (2) to analyze whether employee usage of an intranet designed to foster two-way communication yielded enhanced hospital communication effectiveness and increased employee satisfaction and employee voice into the decisions of the organization.

Review of the Literature

Intranets function as internal Web sites providing Internet technology and content for the exclusive use of the organization's employees. Their purpose is to disseminate information, increase productivity, and facilitate knowledge sharing, collaboration, and teamwork among an organization's staff. If used correctly, intranets can build a common culture and enhance information flow within an organization (Global Intranet Strategies, 2006; Howard, 2000; Lehmuskallio, 2006). An intranet serves as a company-wide mass medium that circulates content to the entire organization simultaneously across the world, maintained within company firewalls (Lehmuskallio).

Intranet technology is a relatively young phenomenon. Technology firms were the first to create internal networks for business purposes. In 1992, Cisco Systems was one of the earliest companies to create an intranet system. “Our intranet was originally conceived to help employees support our customers,” (cited in Howard, 2000, p. 17) said Nicolle Henneuse, employee communications intranet manager for Cisco Systems. IBM soon followed with an intranet site of its own in 1994, and three years later Intel, 3Com, and Dell all launched their intranets (Howard).

Benefits of Intranets

An intranet can streamline communication within an organization. A 2006 survey of 101 companies from around the world found that 52% of intranet managers polled perceived the intranet to be the primary means of delivering information within the organization, which signals a change from a reliance on printed communication or e-mail. Twenty percent of intranet managers found intranets to be a collaboration platform and knowledge-sharing tool, and 19% thought they enhanced productivity (Global Intranet Strategies, 2006).

The intranet not only fosters communication, it radically changes the way people communicate. Management can still disseminate pertinent communication to employees in a timely manner with official content written and published by communication staff. But the exciting thing about the intranet is that it also allows staff members to find information they want and need to do their jobs, providing for a bottom-up communication form that features unpolished content written for internal use and generated by employees in the field. Examples include internal employee blogs, feedback forms, user-specific dashboards, and shared video (Frankola, 2009; Fugere, 2009; Howard, 2000; McConnell, 2007).

Intranets also allow for horizontal information flow, including collaborative tools such as wikis and message boards, for employees across the organization to exchange information and best practices with one another (Holtz, 2008; McConnell, 2007). When information is shared among co-workers via the intranet, organizations may experience increased productivity, better customer service, and less troubleshooting.

The intranet has opened up communication and empowers employees to take part in an ongoing conversation with management and with each other (De Bussy, Ewing, & Pitt, 2003). It provides a forum for dialogic, two-way communication between staff and management, allowing the two parties to foster a communication spirit with a commitment to open, two-way communication, a willingness to listen, and a willingness to share best practices (De Bussy et al.). This opportunity for two-way dialogue makes the information on the intranet more relevant to employees’ daily activities and provides them with a feeling of ownership in the organization. If employees perceive the intranet as a management tool with only top-down communication, it may reinforce an “us” versus “them” mentality (McConnell, 2007; Weiss, 2007).

Barriers to Intranet Success

All employees should have access to the company’s intranet. If employees are excluded, these workers may miss important information and feel left out or less valued by management. Restricting usage reinforces the privileged position of those with intranet access and intranet access can become a status symbol within some organizations, leading to social inequality (Lehmuskallio, 2006).

A challenge with the intranet is ensuring that employees understand how to gain access to information they need in order to do their jobs better. Employees must be aware of the intranet tools available, and those tools must be relevant. Intranet gatekeepers must act as tour guides to ensure that employees fully understand how to navigate the site and find the information they need (Grates, 2005). An intranet is most effective when it becomes the entry-point for basic tasks performed daily by staff at all levels of the organization, including job instructions, regulations, policy documents, demonstrations, and customer files (Cozijn, Maes, Schackman, & Ummelen, 2007). Intranets must also be used to enhance employee work productivity, not to encourage excessive non-work related online usage (Anderberg, 2008).

An employee population with limited knowledge or a fear of Web technology must be educated to use new technology and understand how to navigate it to easily find the tools available. Intranets are not an “If we build it, they will come” phenomenon (Weiss, 2007, p. 23). Employees must be convinced that the effort it takes to master the intranet will eventually lead to a more efficient and satisfactory job performance. If not, these users will eventually turn to alternative ways of executing their tasks, and the intranet will be underutilized and irrelevant (Cozijn et al., 2007; Royal & SunAlliance, 2000). Intranet developers should avoid using technical language and instead educate employees on individual components that will quickly enhance job performance (Weiss). If employees understand the intranet, it has a better opportunity to succeed (Royal & SunAlliance)

An intranet should be organized in such a way that it becomes intuitive for the end user. It should enhance task performance by allowing users to locate information quickly and efficiently. There are many ways a company can organize and label its intranet structure. Research has shown that organizing intranet content based on the company’s organizational chart is more intuitive for employees because they are more familiar with that structure. Yet, with training, eventually employees can become equally as familiar with a task-based structure as well (Cozijn et al., 2007).

Intranet Ownership

The literature reveals two primary approaches to intranet control. Some organizations practice tight control by only a few developers, while others allow for viral updates by all users to create material that is more user-specific and relevant. There are pros and cons for both approaches.

A centralized, tightly controlled approach to content publishing ensures a cleaner, better organized intranet with higher content quality. Many companies with looser controls complain that their intranets have grown too large, responsibility for who maintains each content section is unclear, and information is out of date. By having few content publishers, information remains more manageable. However, under this model, content is also less specific and more generalized, which may not provide useful to individual employees looking to the intranet to make their jobs easier. Also, because few content creators serve as gatekeepers, the information communicated may convey a strong top-down feeling, reinforcing an “us” versus “them” mentality among staff (Lehmuskallio, 2006). Another potential negative ramification may be that employees don’t receive relevant information quickly enough to maintain their competitive advantage (Holtz, 2008).

Several case studies feature organizations with tight publishing controls. Royal & SunAlliance, an international company with more than 50,000 employees, uses an intranet

council of core business representatives to keep its intranet from being clogged with irrelevant material (Royal & SunAlliance, 2000). Halifax Bank of Scotland (HBOS), a company with 45,000 employees, re-launched its intranet site, which had grown unwieldy from years of allowing anybody to publish information. The company identified a team of eight publishers who took 47 internal sites and combined them to one more manageable intranet (France, 2007).

Melcrum's 2006 online survey of 1,149 companies from various industries all over the world found that 87% of companies surveyed had a highly centralized model for internal communications. However, only 53% thought it would be structured that way in the future (Dewhurst, 2006/2007). More companies are planning to progress toward a less structured, less centralized model that allows for more contributors.

A decentralized approach to content publishing risks a lack of content control and a drastic increase in the amount of information published, which can lead to information overload (Lehmuskallio, 2006). However, benefits include a dispersed maintenance load, faster content updates, and contributions by employees closest to the issues, providing for more specific content and more job-related information (Holtz, 2008; Lehmuskallio). If employees can navigate through the noise of more information, then the result can be a tool that is more meaningful and useful for employees.

Metrics for Success

Companies employ various methods for measuring success and return on investment for their intranet sites. They measure a combination of hard and soft benefits:

- Increased usage/readership (Global Intranet Strategies, 2006; Lehmuskallio, 2006; Prime & Williams, 2007; Ward, 2007)
- Amount of discussion (Royal & SunAlliance, 2000)
- Amount of content and the amount of employees with access to the intranet (Global Intranet Strategies, 2006; Lehmuskallio, 2006)
- Dollar savings and streamlining due to maintenance tips and best practices shared (Global Intranet Strategies, 2006; Ward, 2007)
- Improved efficiency and effectiveness (Cozijn et al., 2007)
- Improved user satisfaction (Cozijn et al., 2007; Haithi, 2007; Prime & Williams, 2007)

These measurements are taken through various means, including Web statistics (Prime & Williams, 2007; Ward, 2007), user surveys (Haithi, 2007; Prime & Williams), quality audits that ask users if the intranet helps them do their job better (Gleba & Cavanagh, 2005), and informal feedback from users, focus groups, and telephone interviews (Global Intranet Strategies, 2006). The Global Intranet Strategy Survey found that only 29% of the participating organizations conduct formal evaluations on an annual basis, while almost half (48%) do not conduct regular evaluations, and 9% have not done any type of formal evaluation.

In summary, much of the research on intranets has focused on large companies with thousands of employees and multiple locations. Although smaller organizations don't typically have as many resources to fund their intranets compared to larger companies, they nonetheless must design intranets that are capable of providing timely and relevant information and enabling employee dialogue. This study seeks to examine how one medium-sized organization designed an intranet from the ground up to reflect the needs and wants of its employees. This study describes the initial research conducted to identify the organization's needs, the grassroots

planning and implementation of the new site, the testing, and finally, how employees rated the employee-friendly intranet and their perceptions of how much feedback they now have into the decisions of that organization and their level of satisfaction.

Method

Overview of the Subject Company

North Hills Hospital is a 176-bed hospital located in a suburb of Dallas-Fort Worth. By industry standards, North Hills is a medium-size hospital with approximately 8,200 admissions, 42,000 emergency room visits, and 36,000 outpatient visits each year. It offers a broad spectrum of health care services including emergency services, surgery, cardiac care, women's services, therapy, and a rehabilitation unit. The hospital, in operation since 1961, has enjoyed a stable leadership team, with its CEO at the helm for the past 18 years. Of the hospital's 800 employees, 80% are female. The average North Hills employee is 42 years old and has been working at the hospital for 14 years.

Data Collection

In phase one of the study, a baseline survey was disseminated to all employees in May 2008 via a telephone and Internet survey. The hospital had 718 employees participate, for a 92% response rate. In phase two, informal interviews and open-ended surveys were conducted with a purposive sample to gauge input into the intranet design process. In stage three—five weeks after employees had been using the new intranet—a follow-up survey was posted on the intranet site for one week in December 2008. Three hundred and ninety-three employees responded to the survey, for a response rate of 49%.

Measurement

Five items measured communication effectiveness, employee voice, and employee satisfaction in both the baseline and follow-up survey. Communication effectiveness of the hospital was measured by asking respondents to rate this statement on a scale from one to five: "I am kept well informed of what is happening here." Employee voice was measured by responses to these three statements: (a) "I am satisfied with the amount of voice I have in the decisions that affect my work," (b) "My facility is a place where differences are valued and people feel included," and (c) "All employees are treated with respect regardless of their job." Employee satisfaction was measured by asking employees to rate their level of agreement with this statement: "I would recommend North Hills Hospital as a great place to work." These five statements were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale with "strongly agree" and "strongly disagree" serving as anchors.

Informal interviews and open-ended survey questionnaires constituted the qualitative portion of this study. The results section provides the wording of the qualitative questions.

In the follow-up survey, four Likert type-scale statements (see Table 2) and two open-ended questions measured employee satisfaction with the intranet (see Table 2).

Results

Phase One: Baseline Survey

Results from phase one of the study indicated that North Hills Hospital had room for improvement in both its communication effectiveness and in its effort to secure feedback from employees. As indicated in Table one, 31 percent of employees were either neutral or negative when asked to respond to the statement, "I am kept well informed of what is happening here." Thirty-five percent of employees indicated they were not satisfied with the amount of voice that they have in the decisions that affect their work. More than a quarter of employees did not believe that the hospital "is a place where differences are valued and people feel included."

The results of this baseline survey did not surprise the hospital communications director. In recent years, the hospital had practiced a scatter-shot communications strategy, utilizing newsletters, bulletin boards, poster campaigns, letters to employees' homes, and a disproportionate reliance on email. The hospital had no single communication channel that consistently reached every employee, making it difficult to ensure that employees received and understood important messages.

The hospital faced major barriers to implementing a consistent communications strategy. First, employees had inconsistent access to technology. Staff in business operations had access to e-mail, but most clinical staff and support services employees did not. Electronic messages sent to clinical staff had to be sent using an antiquated DOS-based communication system unable to support graphics or text formatting. It was difficult to communicate important messages in a creative and efficient manner; with this system, every message looked the same.

Another communication challenge stemmed from the round-the-clock nature of hospital staffing. Employees could work days, nights, weekends, holidays, or part-time. This made interpersonal communication between hospital leadership and employees difficult because many employees rarely interacted with their department directors, much less senior leadership. Except for the occasional evening leadership rounds, night and weekend employees received most of their communication through either formal hospital communication or through a secondary source, such as a shift supervisor. As messages were disseminated, key components were changed or dropped, meaning that employees did not receive consistent messaging.

At the time, the hospital had an antiquated intranet site consisting of just five pages, each a white screen featuring a grid filled with links to various nursing, managerial, and educational resources (see Figure 1). It was not used to communicate messages to employees, but rather as a resource library for information. It was run by the information technology department and had no involvement from human resources, the communications department, or senior management.

Phase Two: Qualitative Research Used in the Planning Stage

In order to address some of the problems identified in the baseline survey and to formalize a communication structure at the hospital, the communications department set out to design a user-friendly, all-inclusive employee intranet site. The goal was to provide a way to seamlessly communicate a consistent message to all employees, regardless of email access, shift, age, department, or comfort with technology. By creating a tool to improve communication, both two-way and top-down, the communications department expected to see an improvement in the hospital's employee scores regarding communication, voice, and satisfaction. By employing a grassroots approach, the communications department hoped to increase employee buy-in and adoption of the new site. Additionally, the hospital planned to measure and trend usage rates to see if employees were receiving the messages disseminated.

Before starting work on the hospital's intranet, the communications director conducted extensive research to find best practices for other corporations' intranets. After analyzing research on intranet trends, she conducted a content analysis of other hospitals' intranets and of large businesses from several different industries. The communications director used the information gleaned from the content analysis to identify a list of the items thought to be most beneficial for the hospital. Additionally, creating opportunities for two-way communication and extensive, meaningful measurement was made a priority.

The communications director next selected a reputable communication agency to design an intranet. Then, armed with a plan and a price, the next step was to propose the project to the hospital's Administration team, whose response to this unbudgeted and unprecedented project was overwhelmingly positive because of the site's ability to measure communication effectiveness. Each administrator was consulted individually to discover what features he or she felt would be important to include. Administrators helped promote the project to the leadership team to emphasize the importance of participating in the research and testing phases of the project.

After meeting with Administration, the communications director presented the project to the hospital's leadership team of 30 department directors. The communications director emphasized that she was not changing the intranet for the sake of change, but that she was altering the intranet to enhance communication and employees' access to information. In order to secure buy-in, the communications director then provided a handout with planned features for the intranet site to the directors and asked for their feedback. She then gave each director a survey that enabled administrators to recommend additional features that could make their job easier if added to the intranet site. Finally, the communications director asked the leadership team to go back to their staff to solicit their ideas as well.

Once the leadership team was educated on the project, the hospital's key employee committee, the Employee Advisory Group, was given a similar presentation, and those members identified several previously unconsidered issues. These committee members were then asked to return to their respective departments and solicit ideas for features that would make the new site more valuable. Each employee received the same written survey given to the directors that asked for her or his feedback. As the results of the director and staff surveys were compiled, some individual passionate supporters of the project who could act as staff resources were identified. These employees answered specific, clinical questions about the current site and its resources, provided heavily used documents that could be added to the site, and acted as informal focus groups as questions arose throughout the design phase.

These employee surveys produced many new and previously unplanned features for the new site, including a hospital-wide events calendar, with a news feed on the homepage promoting the most current events, a human resources page, filled with frequently used forms and links, and the addition of a FAQ's section on the existing education page, helping users understand how to log into various education Web sites, something that department receives calls about frequently. Not only were these resources important additions, but they also showed that staff could have ownership of this new site and that the staff's feedback could be heard, valued, and implemented, reinforcing the grassroots approach to development.

Once all of the content had been written and provided to the advertising agency, the site took about four weeks to design. After that, the communications department and the agency spent another two weeks testing and revising the site.

After both parties had agreed that the site was ready to be viewed, the communications director took the site to the Employee Advisory Group to solicit testing feedback. The employees on the committee received a common password to allow them access to the site, and they were asked to fill out a short survey telling what they loved about the site, what they hated about the site, what they would like to change, what they would like to add (referred to each time as an intranet “wish list”), and then they had the opportunity to provide additional comments. Not only were the employees asked to test the site, but they were also asked to identify other opinion leaders within their respective departments and have them test as well. Employees were encouraged to ask as many people as possible to test and provide feedback, with the understanding that the more feedback given, the better the site would be. The same survey was emailed out to all of the hospital directors, and they were also asked to involve opinion leaders from their departments. A one-week deadline was given. The site link was added to the hospital’s current intranet homepage for the staff without access to email. The whole process was purposely casual and uncontrolled so that staff could start to build excitement and “pass along” the link, building momentum, excitement, and a sense of ownership before the site’s roll-out, reinforcing the grassroots adoption approach.

Thirty-one employees in 14 departments completed a survey or sent an email with their feedback from the testing. The communications director sent a personal response to all employees who submitted feedback, thanking them for their involvement and reinforcing the importance of having staff input to better the site. The employee feedback was then compiled, and changes were made based on those recommendations. Some of the staff’s wish list items were tabled until after the initial site was rolled out, but staff provided some valuable ideas, and many could be implemented quickly.

Before the new site was launched, the hospital posted a banner ad at the top of its current intranet site with a countdown clock to promote the launch of the new site. Emails were also sent to all staff with email access, information was posted on the clinical employees’ DOS-based computer system, and information was posted in the hospital’s weekly newsletter. Directors were asked to promote the launch to their staff individually, prompting a word-of-mouth campaign. A few days before the launch, an email was sent out providing a sneak peek of the design of the new site (see Figure 2), and that communication included a question and answer section, promoting the fact that the site was built based on feedback and ideas provided by their employee peers, and alerting staff that the old site would still be available temporarily until employees grew accustomed to the new site navigation.

Lessons Learned in Phase Two

The Roll-Out: Taking a grassroots approach to collecting ideas and testing the site allowed employees to feel ownership and eased the strain that accompanies any transition. In a fast-paced hospital environment, employees have little time to spend learning a new program, but knowing that the site was created with input from coworkers, with the purpose of improving communication, made them more willing to experiment with the new site. Continuing to make the old intranet available during the initial roll-out was a key factor in reducing push-back from users.

During the testing phase, the communications director personally emailed and called key opinion leaders in different departments to solicit feedback concerning the site. Involving the staff and making changes based on feedback created a sense of empowerment and ownership

before the site ever went live. In a post-launch survey, one employee said, “My feedback has been taken and was included in the new site.” Even those adverse to change have shown an unexpected level of acceptance of the site’s intuitive design. “It (the intranet) is something new. I was used to the previous site, but I’m sure I will get used to this one.” Another said, “The format is easy to navigate and is simple enough for the less adept computer user.” Another said, “I love that it is so easy to navigate and all the information is readily available.

Culture: Employees have quickly embraced the more personal aspects of the site. The photo slideshows had more than 1,500 hits in the site’s first two months, the most of any of the new non-clinical pages. The “fun” survey on the homepage consistently receives more than 200 votes per week, allowing staff to weigh in on their favorite sports teams, New Year’s resolutions, and even their initial opinion of the new site. In the post-launch survey, one employee commented, “The links for pictures are fun to look at. I enjoy seeing the camaraderie that is present here at North Hills.”

Consistent Messaging: One of the site’s key goals was to create a consistent messaging tool for all staff so that everyone had access to the same information communicated in the same way. Since the site has launched, participation has increased. For instance, one director wrote, “Thanks so much for adding the link to the blood drive on the home page. We had 17 donors sign up for the drive today. That is a first! I am lucky to have two or three people call me to sign up. This was a great idea and has really helped bring in donors. Thank you!” Other staff members have commented on the site’s consistent messaging. “I love that the information is so readily available,” said one employee. Another said, “This is one stop for all pertinent information.”

Two-Way Communication: The site was created to improve two-way communication between employees and between employees and management. Features included a process improvement page, a CEO blog where staff could ask candid questions and get answers straight from the CEO, and a page for employees to submit topics to be discussed by the Employee Council. Staff members have responded with enthusiasm. One employee said,

The new site seems like an open door to the powers that be and will be used a lot by those anxious to communicate with [administration]. My job will be easier because people I work with will have a forum to speak freely... they will be more contented employees. Happier nurses make better coworkers and therefore better caregivers. It is a win-win situation.

Improving employee voice is especially important for the night and weekend shifts. One employee said, “I can convey any opinion at any time.” In the first two months, the site had 18 suggestions for its process improvement section, aptly named “What’s bugging you?” All suggestions were followed up on and responses were posted for all staff to see that their feedback was heard and taken seriously. In the first three months of the intranet, the hospital completed 31 process improvement projects based on feedback from the Bug Zapper process improvement page.

Phase Three: Follow-up Survey

As indicated by the descriptive results in Table one, mean scores for communication effectiveness, voice, and satisfaction increased from the time of the baseline survey to the time after the new intranet was used by employees.

Descriptive results of the questions measuring employees' perception of the intranet were also positive. The Likert-scale statements were measured on a five-point scale. As indicated by Table two, responses to each statement ranged from 3.68 ("The new intranet site will make my job easier") to 3.89 ("The new intranet site has made it easier for me to find information"). Although the results are positive, there is still room for improvement.

In response to the open-ended question, "What do you like most about the Intranet site?", 93 employees provided comments. Nearly half of the comments related to employees' satisfaction with the intranet's ease of use. Typical comments included "easier to find information," "information is easily available," "it has easy links and is user friendly," and "very user friendly." Almost one fourth of employees praised the appearance of the intranet, using phrases such as "I like the colors," "more professional appearance," "the layout," and "It is beautiful." Ten percent of employees talked about how the new intranet effectively streamlines the communication process. More specifically, employees mentioned liking the "central site for information," "everything that is important to know is on the home page," the intranet "is more streamlined," and the intranet is a "one stop for all pertinent information." Finally, another 10 percent of employees mentioned the two-way communication afforded by the intranet. Employees used phrases such "it is able to provide feedback," "interactive opportunities afforded by the Bug Zapper," "increased communication," and the intranet is more "inclusive."

Although sixty-six employees provided feedback to the question, "What do you like least about the intranet?", nearly twenty percent of the comments were either positive ("I like everything") or neutral ("I have to get used to it"). Twenty percent of employees said that they found the new intranet difficult to navigate. More specifically, employees said they had to do "lots of scrolling to find what they are looking for," and that the new intranet requires more "scrolling and clicks" and "more navigation to find what I need." Fifteen percent of employees mentioned the difficulty in using the drop down boxes of the intranet. Finally, five employees said they did not like the appearance. Specific comments targeted a dislike of the "colors," the "blandness of the site," and the "arrangement of items on the screen."

Measurement of Success

In order to measure the future success of the intranet, a variety of tools will be employed. Usage statistics will be measured to understand how many employees are exposed to specific messages and site components. The hospital also plans to tailor usage statistics to specific departments, allowing management to better understand who is using the site and which areas need further education. Additionally, responses to items posted on the intranet will be measured, including event attendance, online form submissions, and program participation. Semi-annual employee surveys, similar to those in phases one and three of this study, will also be implemented to show the impact of the intranet.

Discussion

This case study illustrates the importance of using grassroots planning for designing and implementing an employee-friendly intranet. The results of the grassroots planning process

helped to increase employee buy-in and adoption of the new intranet. The planning process also yielded new ideas that the hospital communications director was able to incorporate into the intranet design. Other companies may want to consider a similar intranet development process.

The fact that perceived communication effectiveness, employee voice, and satisfaction increased after employees had time to use the intranet is noteworthy for many reasons. First, the increased mean scores illustrate the value that can be gained from an intranet that enables two-way communication and that helps employees to share best practices. Corporate communicators should not view an intranet merely as a tool to electronically disseminate information in order to save money on traditional print pieces (Holtz, 2008). Rather, an intranet should be used to build employee collaboration and communication, which may ultimately result in increased satisfaction and perceived voice, as in this study. Long-term, increased employee satisfaction and voice may result in better employee retention and enhanced productivity. Employees in this study offered suggestions via the intranet that resulted in 31 process enhancements in a three month time period.

The quantitative results also indicate the importance of developing and implementing a measurement and evaluation system for an intranet. Less than one third of organizations currently measure their intranets (Global Intranet Strategies, 2006), which is surprising because measurement does not have to be expensive or time consuming. Measurement can be beneficial to corporate communicators for many reasons. First, measurement enables communicators to discern which intranet messages are reaching and resonating with employees. Second, measurement helps communicators know if they are reaching the goals and objectives that they initially identified prior to a program launch. Third, measurement may help to secure management buy-in of future communication initiatives, as was the case with the hospital highlighted in this study.

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Table 1

Employee Perception of Communication Effectiveness, Voice, and Satisfaction

	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>		<u>Somewhat Disagree</u>		<u>Neutral</u>		<u>Somewhat Agree</u>		<u>Strongly Agree</u>		<u>Mean</u>		% Change of Mean
	Dec 2008	May 2008	Dec 2008	May 2008	Dec 2008	May 2008	Dec 2008	May 2008	Dec 2008	May 2008	Dec 2008	May 2008	
<i>Communication Effectiveness</i>													
I am kept well informed of what is happening here.	5%	-4%	7%	-9%	13%	-	37%	43%	37%	-	3.94	-3.8	4.2%
<i>Voice</i>													
I am satisfied with the amount of voice I have in the decisions that affect my work.	7%	-5%	8%	-	16%	-	31%	41%	39%	-	3.86	-3.7	4.9%
My facility is a place where differences are valued and people feel included.	5%	-4%	8%	-7%	13%	-	31%	42%	42%	-	3.96	-3.9	2.3%
All employees are treated with respect regardless of their job.	8%	-5%	8%	-7%	11%	-	28%	45%	46%	-	3.96	-3.9	2.6%
<i>Satisfaction</i>													
I would recommend North Hills Hospital as a great place to work.	3%	-3%	6%	-8%	12%	-	28%	39%	51%	-	4.18	-3.9	8.0%

Note. Statements were measured on a five-point scale (1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree).

Table 2

Employee Perception of the 2008 Intranet

Statements	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>Somewhat Disagree</u>	<u>Neutral</u>	<u>Somewhat Agree</u>	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Mean</u>
The new intranet site has made it easier for me to find information.	2%	8%	24%	31%	35%	3.89
The new intranet site provides more opportunities for my voice to be heard here at North Hills Hospital.	2%	3%	34%	29%	32%	3.86
The new intranet site has improved communication at the hospital.	1%	5%	36%	28%	30%	3.81
The new intranet site will make my job easier.	3%	5%	40%	25%	27%	3.68

Note. Statements were measured on a five-point scale (1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree).

Figure 1. North Hills Hospital's former intranet site

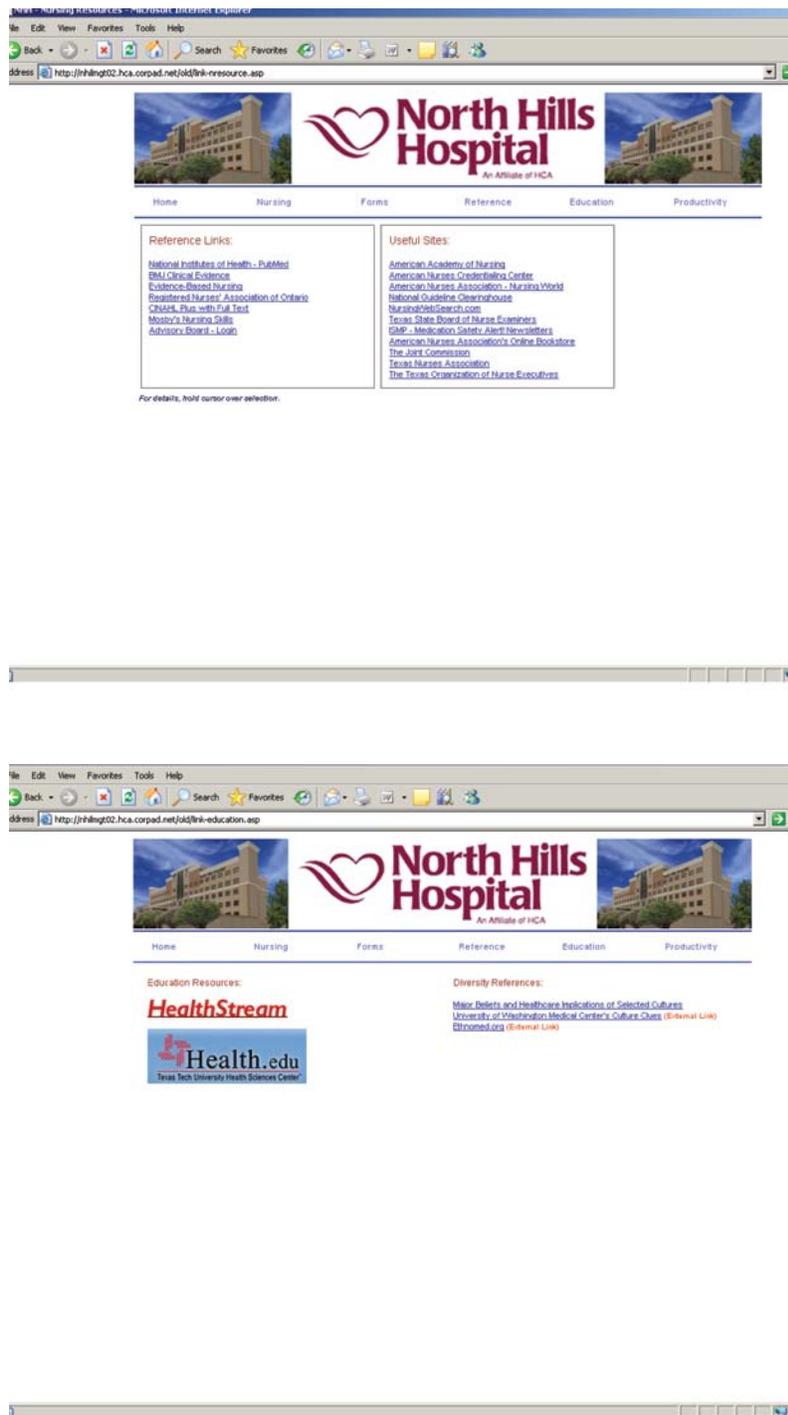
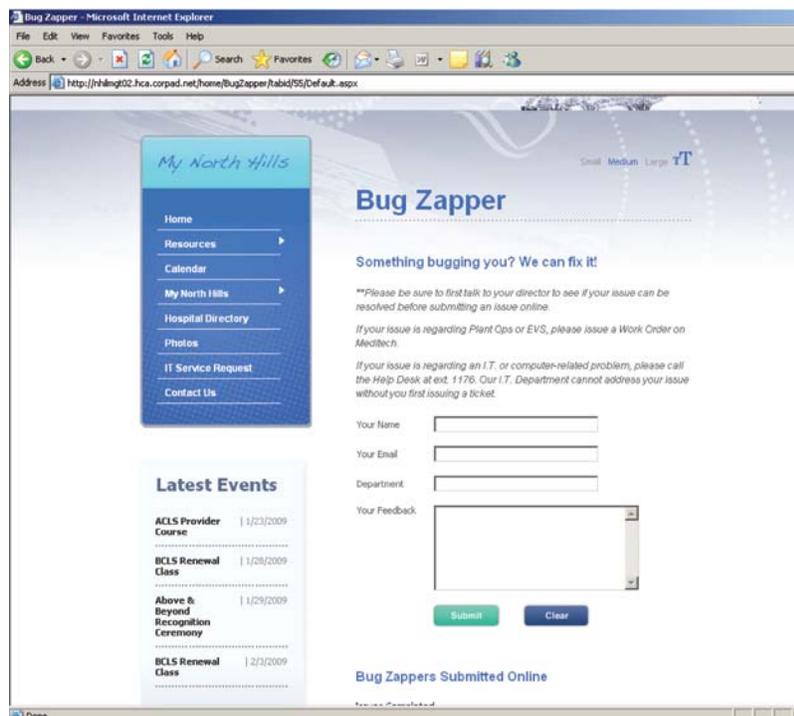
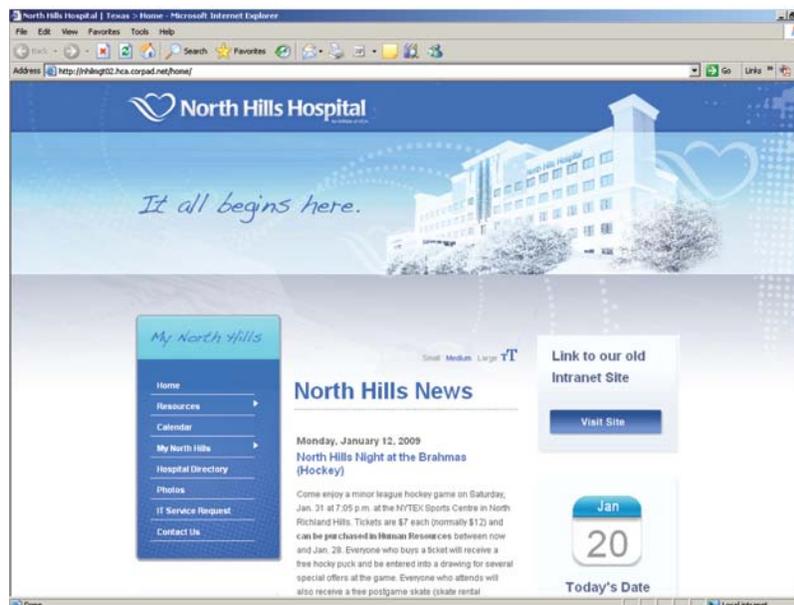


Figure 2. North Hills Hospital's new 2008 intranet.



Corporate Compassion in a Time of Downsizing: The Role of Public Relations In Cultivating and Maintaining Corporate Alumni Social Networks

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Abstract

This paper contends that corporate alumni networks serve a public relations purpose more than they do a human resource purpose. Through interviews with two developers of corporate social networks and a former employee who started an alumni network, the paper shows that these networks represent an opportunity and a moral imperative for public relations. By institutionalizing an ethic of care, which emphasizes responsibility and compassion, public relations can enable these relationships to provide value to those inside and outside the organization.

Universities put a lot of time and money into cultivating alumni networks. They recognize that the relationship with one's undergraduate and graduate institution inspires alumni to give back. Indeed, many alumni include in their wills large financial endowments for their alma maters. But corporations do not look to maintain their relationships with former employees and retirees. On the contrary, the norm for the corporate world is to sever relationships with downsized employees and discourage survivors from staying in contact with former colleagues.

This philosophy is reflected in two examples cited by Simon (2006). In the first example, the new brand manager for Ivory soap recalled the first day he joined Procter & Gamble Co. in 1977. He visited the personnel department and found the photo of the man he had replaced already deposited in the wastebasket. In another example, a former employee of Electronic Data Systems [EDS] Corp. noted that when he left he received no more formal communication from the company. He was not surprised; it was part of the company's culture. "An old joke within the company went, 'When you leave EDS, they scrape your car off the parking permit'" (p. 1).

Given examples like these, when a company actually cares about staying in touch with former employees it still qualifies as news. In 2007, *Business Week* reported that in December Dow Chemical Company would launch four corporate-sponsored social networks for women on maternity leave, retired workers, employees, and alumni (Green, 2007). Dow's motivation came from the changing face of its company: 40% of its workforce retiring in the next five years. "We want to keep in touch with the brainpower of past employees, and frankly it's also a great group to consider for new hires," the corporate vice president for human resources and marketing told *Business Week*.

Alumni networks are not a new phenomenon. They have been loosely organized as long as there have been companies and employees who leave them. Prior to the age of social media, retirees and other former employees of corporate America continued their association through

everything from barbecues to Christmas letter mailing lists to volunteer groups—gathering and communicating with one another to share memories, experiences and friendships.

The advent of social media has made this even easier to do. Today's alumni networks utilize Email lists, wikis, listserves, blogs, and Yahoo, Google, LinkedIn, and Facebook groups. These alumni networks, driven primarily by the interested individuals themselves, are "not captive networks," says Ross Mayfield, president of Socialtext, a Palo Alto firm that creates virtual workspaces for online collaboration. "They consist of people who can come and go as they wish. In a sense, they are like ethnic diasporas" (Mayfield, 2009, personal communication). Whatever their current situation, these former employees retain much of the identity that bound them to their fellow alumni.

From a human resource standpoint, alumni networks make sense because former employees are a resource that can be tapped for operational knowledge, corporate history, and veteran counsel. The company also has a pool of potential hires when the economy rebounds. In a time of massive layoffs, however, it remains to be seen whether a concern for engaging former employees remains high on a company's priority list. Says Mayfield (Feb. 16, 2009, personal communication): "In today's companies, so much of HR's focus is on on-boarding new employees, as opposed to out-boarding former employees. They tend to [place] less value [on] those who are no longer at the company."

Former employees use alumni networks to keep in touch with former colleagues, share knowledge and job leads, organize events, and keep abreast of what is going on inside the company. For example, when Oracle acquired PeopleSoft in 2004, PeopleSoft alumni self-organized a network, and one of the employees asked Socialtext to donate a hosted private wiki workspace for the group. The group subsequently obtained Socialtext's consent to use the network for non-profit purposes, such as hosting events. The Peoplesoft network has grown to a success story, with over 3,000 members (Mayfield, Feb. 16, 2009).

The difference in how human resource departments and former employees view social networks explains why layoffs have such a profound public relations impact on companies. Human resource departments care about staffing, while current and former employees care about each other. In other words, people view relationships as valuable, long-term ties that even workplace separation does not sever. Companies may view these relationships as temporary, expendable, and utilitarian, but survivors and victims of downsizing care about these relationships and act to maintain them.

Research on downsizing shows that organizations that do not value or care about existing and former relationships damage those who remain with the company as well as those laid off. Through alumni networks, the public relations function of an organization can institutionalize an ethic of care and can protect and promote the reputation of the company even in times of dramatic downsizing.

This paper argues that corporate alumni networks serve a public relations purpose more than they do a human resource purpose. Through interviews with two developers of corporate social networks and a former employee who started an alumni network, this paper will show that these networks represent an opportunity and a moral imperative for public relations in the new media age. By institutionalizing an ethic of care, which emphasizes responsibility and compassion, public relations can enable these relationships to provide value to those inside and outside the organization. Further, effective alumni social networks can maintain and enhance an organization's reputation even in a time of downsizing and economic recession.

Downsizing

Grimshaw and Kleiner (2002) defined downsizing as “actions of management resulting in the involuntary displacement of a substantial portion of an organization’s workforce” (p. 128). In other words, the term downsizing is not applicable when one or two positions are cut from a company, unless that company only consists of a handful of positions in the first place. Grimshaw and Kleiner focused on the legal obligations in downsizing and found that legal responsibilities fall on top management, human resources, managers and supervisors, and employees. Legal counsel also plays an important role because there are a number of federal and state laws that apply to layoffs.

Although the public relations function is not mentioned specifically, Grimshaw and Kleiner noted that communication plays a critical role at all phases of a layoff. Indeed, August (1991) cited communication as one of the crucial steps in meeting legal requirements of downsizing. Communication also decreases wrongful termination lawsuits. August urged managers to meet face-to-face with employees on a regular basis to provide information and updates. Though communication does not negate the impact of job loss, it does ameliorate employee fears and reduce the impact and number of unfounded rumors. The final step of the downsizing process also carries public relations implications: Laid off employees should be given priority over other applicants if the firm has future openings. Thus, communication is critical not just at the beginning and middle of the layoff process but even at the end and six months after the separation has occurred.

Spellman (2008) contended that news about layoffs needed to be communicated to affected employees and the entire company. “Tell as much as you can, as quickly as you can,” Spellman wrote in *PR Week*. “Look for ways to regularly show how the company is staying afloat as a result of the difficult measures it has taken” (para. 7). Pfeil, Setterberg, and O’Rourke (2003) noted that this kind of approach helped a company facing layoffs. The company communicated its financial problems early to its employees and showed by its efforts that it had tried every other possible alternative before making layoffs. These efforts included salary cuts for top management, cost cutting, and the reduction of temporary and part-time personnel. Employees preferred to get the message from their front-line managers and were loathe to learn about downsizing through email, newsletters, and other impersonal methods.

Pfeil, Setterberg, and O’Rourke (2003) added that companies might want to hire the former employees back and thus should show concern when letting them go. The former employees want to be treated as people and not as managed human resources. In their conclusion, the authors noted the importance of keeping communication lines open so that laid-off and retained employees could ask questions of the company. But absent from the discussion was any counsel or information about using communication to maintain relationships with laid-off employees.

The absence of any need to maintain communication networks may be explained by the relative lack of discussion about an organization’s social responsibility to its former employees. In 2000, Buren noted that relatively little academic work had been done on corporate downsizing and social responsibility. In the years since that time, however, particularly in light of the bursting of the dotcom bubble and the economic woes following the terrorist attacks on 9/11, more research has been done on corporate downsizing. However, there seems to be a general lack of information dealing with the ethical and moral responsibilities associated with employee

termination. Little is said about an organization's moral responsibility to its laid off employees, except in regards to severance pay and other elements of a separation package. Despite this fact, re-employment of former employees was considered a pragmatic possibility as it negates the need for retraining and would seem to indicate a need for continued interaction between the company and current and former employees.

Research indicated that there are three groups directly affected by downsizing: victims (those laid off), survivors (fellow employees who remain), and downsizing agents (those who personally laid off the victims). Most companies have recognized the need for communication with the survivors and even downsizing agents, but few have realized the importance of maintaining relationships with the victims--the former employees. An examination of the research on each of these groups revealed that the one common denominator mediating the negative effects of the downsizing experience was whether the organizations cared about those involved in a layoff.

Survivors

After downsizing takes place in an organization, survivors may appreciate that they still have jobs, but they do not come away from the experience unscathed. Indeed, Doherty et al. (1995) found that survivors felt less loyal toward the organization but felt greater their loyalty to colleagues, including those no longer employed. Vinten and Lane (2002) interviewed employees at a company in which layoffs were handled poorly. One person referred to the company as a slaughterhouse, another witnessed what was done to "friends and colleagues" and stopped taking seriously management reassurance of the survivor's importance. Survivors experienced a personal loss, not only in terms of lost work associations, but in terms of their faith in the organization's commitment to its mission and values. Many of the survivors expressed that they had experienced a loss of loyalty to the organization and had quit working extra hours or taking an interest in the quality of their work and work environment.

Additional research also revealed that survivors respond negatively when they perceive that the layoffs were handled unfairly, when they had little trust in management, when they lost friends to layoffs, and when they feared further layoffs (Spreitzer & Mishra, 2002; Brockner et al., 1994; Brockner et al., 1993; and Brockner et al. 1987). Brockner et al., 2004 found that the negative effects on organizational commitment and performance were moderated by employees' perceived control. In other words, if employees felt they could still have an influence on the company, they remained committed and willing to work as hard as they had before the layoffs.

Vinten and Lane (2002) noted that another moderating factor in alleviating survivor trauma was communication. Effective internal communication was important before, during, and after the experience. A senior person trusted by fellow employees should handle communication. They also emphasized the importance of open discussion. The authors urged organizations to allow for two-way communication in which employees, both those staying and those leaving could vent their concerns and feelings. Management must communicate that the pain is shared through voluntary pay cuts or other actions. One of their final recommendations was for the establishment of a mutual support network for those let go and a continuation of help from human resources.

Organizations moderate the negative effects of downsizing by making the process transparent and fair. But the research offers little guidance on how to handle the relationship issue between survivors and their former colleagues. The suggestion to establish a mutual

support network reflects something different than being fair in a negative process such as downsizing. It represents a relationship component that doesn't emerge as much in the literature. Human resources may be ill equipped to deal with the relationship question because it calls for something distinctly different from fairness and justice; it calls for care and concern.

Downsizing Agents

Those managers assigned to break bad news to colleagues, and sometimes even having to determine which colleagues to send packing, experience negative emotional baggage. Most of the research, according to Claire and Dufresne (2004), has focused on the victims of layoffs, but they chose to look at the survivors, and in particular, the downsizing agents. Claire and Dufresne examined the experiences of forty surviving members of a company that incurred major layoffs and found that downsizing agents faced intense, negative circumstances during and after the downsizing process. Indeed, the authors compared the emotional experience to that of doctors telling patients about a death in the family. The emotional impact of the experience was heightened by the closeness of the relationship that existed between downsizing agent and victim. Those who dealt with the experience in a peripheral way, writing up departure documents or working out severance and insurance issues, tended to experience less emotional distress. Thus, one's role and proximity to the actual downsizing experience affected how one responded as a downsizing agent.

Claire and Dufresne (2004) discovered that managerial anxiety was increased by the fact that they had to keep the identities of those being downsized confidential until official announcements. This meant that they often had to deceive fellow employees who wanted to know whether they were to receive the axe. They experienced dissonance because their commitment to confidentiality conflicted with their personal and community loyalties. Further complicating the problem was the task of deciding whom to lay-off. Finally, the downsizing agents were stigmatized as grim reapers, executioners. As a result of these experiences, Claire and Dufresne found that downsizing agents coped by emotionally distancing themselves from the situation in three ways: emotionally, cognitively, and physically. It helped that some found that those downsized were satisfied with company compensation and the opportunity to move on to other jobs. In other words, the amount of care and concern expressed by the company, through compensation and re-employment support, moderated the negative effects of the experience for downsizing agents as well as victims of layoffs.

Gandolfi (2008) replicated Claire and Dufresne's findings in a study on the effects of downsizing at an Australian bank. Gandolfi explained that executioners represented the second category of victims in a downsizing event. The first victims, of course, were those let go from the organization, but the second victims are the executioners who coped with the experience by distancing themselves emotionally, cognitively, and physically. He also found that the severity of the distancing depends on the closeness of the relationship, the proximity of the person affected, and previous experience with the person. Veteran executioners also tended to become emotionally numb to the experience. Like Claire and Dufresne (2004), Gandolfi found that executioners generally showed empathy and compassion for those who were downsized but after the event had to distance themselves in order to deal with the emotional stress caused by handing out a pink slip.

Again, the downsizing agents may have considered the process fair, but it did not lessen the effect of layoffs, especially if people leaving were close to the agent. Handling the process

with fairness, justice, and compassion moderated the negative effects but still did not prevent agents from distancing themselves emotionally, cognitively, and physically. Somehow there needed to be an element of emotional support that would allow for downsizing agents to reconnect with their feelings and their relationships severed through layoffs.

Victims

The effect of layoffs on victims depended on how well their organization lived up to the psychological contract existing as a part of their employment. Pugh, Skarlicki, and Passell (2003) defined the psychological contract as “a mental model or schema comprising beliefs about the exchange relationship between employee and employer” (p. 202). Every employee and employer establishes ground rules for their work relationships. Traditionally, employers felt little obligation to employees, viewing the exchange of pay for work rendered sufficient for demanding employee loyalty and commitment. However, this perspective fails to take into consideration the emotional aspects of the contract. Employees develop a sense of belonging and self-worth, common mission and values, friendships, and self-identity through their employment. More recently, organizations have come to realize that the psychological contracts include emotional and moral components.

Bies, Martin, and Brockner (1993) found that the effect of a layoff on those losing their jobs depended upon how fairly they felt they were treated by the organization. Brockner et al. (1994) noted that those who felt they were treated fairly were less negative about the layoffs than those who felt the action unfair (see also Naumann et al., 1998). Laid off employees considered management actions fair if the leaders provided an adequate explanation for the layoffs and expressed sincere concern (Bies et al, 1993). Naumann et al. (1998) reinforced these findings by showing that organizational support of laid-off employees, even those expected to stay and work for a time before separation, mediated the relationship between interactional justice and organizational commitment. In other words, if downsizing agents treated laid-off employees with care, concern, and fairness, employees remained committed to the organization despite the fact that they knew that they were to be laid off. This research indicates that organizations that care for their employees, even those laid off, reap benefits in loyalty, commitment, and understanding.

The opposite is true as well. Pugh, Skarlicki, and Passell (2003) found that laid-off employees who felt that the organization had violated the psychological contract carried “attitudinal baggage” to their subsequent jobs. If they experienced a violation of the psychological contract, they became more cynical about their work experience and less likely to express as much trust in their new company and management. Little research has been done on how laid-off employees cope with the trauma of losing their jobs. But recent research has shown that how laid-off employees react to the job loss influences their success in dealing with the stress and finding a new job (Leana, Feldman, and Tan, 1998).

The experience of having been laid off also affects how one perceives future layoffs. Sronce and McKinley (2006) discovered that former victims viewed downsizing in a more negative light than those who had never been laid off. The former victims saw downsizing as not as financially effective and a breach in the psychological contract. In the same study, those who strongly believed in the ideology of employee worth also viewed downsizing as a violation of the psychological contract and less inevitable than those with weak beliefs in employee worth.

The research indicates that treating downsized employees with fairness, care, and concern ameliorated much of the negative weight associated with downsizing. However, people who

have experienced layoffs always retain a view that downsizing is a breach of the psychological contract between employee and employer.

The ethic of care

Corporate alumni networks have the capability of maintaining an informal psychological contract with former employees even though the formal relationship has ended. Social networking offers organizations a chance to show they still care about former employees, survivors, and downsizing agents. A morality founded on justice and fairness fails to address the needs of people wanting to maintain relationships. The ethics theory that best describes the need for organizations to maintain relationships with former employees is the ethic of care developed by Carol Gilligan (1993). Gilligan argued that, “the logic underlying the ethic of care is a psychological logic of relationships, which contrasts with the formal logic of fairness that informs the justice approach” (p. 73).

In interviews with women, Gilligan found that they “saw morality as a matter of preserving valued ties to others, of preserving the conditions for the care and mutual care without which human life becomes bleak, lonely, ... not self-affirming, ...” even if the women (and the men interviewed as well) were successful in achieving their self-interests (Baier, 2003, p. 106). In other words, human relations have meaning beyond a contractual, exchange, or reciprocal relationship. To simply cut off these relationships ignores the importance of human interactions in the workplace but not of the workplace.

The ethic of care revolves around the understanding that self and others are interdependent. Gilligan offers the example of a woman who does not see a future in her relationship with her boyfriend and realizes she must do what is in her best interest. At the same time, she does not want to hurt her boyfriend’s feelings. She feels a commitment to self along with a responsibility to the relationship. While the morality of rights emphasizes equality and fairness, the ethic of responsibility recognizes equity and differences in need (Gilligan, 1993, p. 164-165). Conflicts and disagreements are resolved through compassion and nurturing (Christians et al, 2005).

Thus, an organization focused on the ethic of rights would consider its work done if it handled layoffs fairly and with respect. But a commitment to the ethic of responsibility would recognize that victims still have a need and a claim for care and compassion. The psychological contract established through employment would require organizations to continue to show care and compassion even after a morality of rights justified separation. Stated another way, even though the organization has a need to look out for its own survival, it still has a responsibility to the other, the result of organizational action that creates relationships between people and an institution. The ethics of care would place the creation and maintenance of alumni networks under the auspices of public relations.

Methodology

To test the assumptions of this paper, the authors conducted three initial interviews with a social networking company executive, a public relations professional, and a public relations practitioner who began an alumni network following his layoff. These initial interviews were analyzed to determine the public relations implications of alumni networks. In addition, the

relationship aspects of these networks were examined to determine the applicability of the ethic of care as a theoretical justification for organization involvement in them.

The role of public relations—the professionals speak

Public relations research has long contended that the development of long-term, mutually beneficial relationships is critical to organizational success. The establishment and maintenance of alumni networks can be an opportunity—as well as a responsibility—of the corporate PR department and PR practitioners. The HR department is busy with the mechanics of redesigning the downsized organization. The PR department has the unique capability to build stakeholder relationships by encouraging companies to become involved in corporate alumni networks. They can also articulate to management the “PR” case for doing so.

In all three interviews conducted with public relations professionals on this subject, professionals strongly supported the notion of fulfilling public relations imperatives—not just cost or operational imperatives--when establishing and maintaining corporate alumni networks.

Public Relations Imperative #1—Maintain Stakeholder Relationships

One of the most basic definitions of PR is that it seeks to establish *mutually beneficial relationships*. This includes relationships with all key stakeholders—including, in this case, former employees. This is, however, not the mission of any other function peripherally involved in corporate alumni networks. Management’s role is to ensure long-term profitability. HR’s role is to ensure staffing levels (hiring and firing) in support of management’s goals. (The HR function, particularly, is usually already significantly overworked in the midst of downsizings, and has little to no time and energy to devote to the well-being of former employees.) The sales and marketing function is charged with looking out for the well-being of customers—not people who used to work at the company.

Public relations professionals can help their companies become committed to helping form and participate in alumni networks. Companies should feel this obligation not only out of a desire to promote good business, but also to “tend to” important ongoing relationships with and among former employees.

Perhaps the primary reason that companies are—or should become—involved in forming alumni networks is that relationships—including those with and among former employees—are intrinsic to its business. Noted Kate Lukach, director of public relations at SelectMinds, a global provider of corporate social networking solutions:

Organizations are viewing the employee lifecycle, which once used to be seen as “hire to fire,” as a “lifelong” employee lifecycle – one that needs to be nurtured, even after someone leaves the organization. Generating a sense of goodwill among former employees, showing a genuine sense of wanting to remain connected, and sharing knowledge, resources and information is becoming the new way of thinking. Forward thinking organizations realize that their business relies on and is run by relationships. Maintaining them once someone has left, and enabling former employees to maintain these relationships, is just good business. (Lukach, K., Feb. 24, 2009, personal communication)

Bruce Lidl, a former marketing specialist for digital media company DivX, who started his own alumni network, noted, “From a PR perspective, former employees can be incredibly

important for creating and affecting a company's reputation--particularly today, as social networking makes it trivially easy to disseminate information online” (Lidl, March 2, 2009, personal communication).

However, Lidl went on to note, a company’s sense of commitment to alumni networks should extend beyond simply a desire to countermand negative information by joining the conversation directly. Lidl believed that some of that sense of corporate obligation lies in recognizing the importance of workplace relationships. “The relationships that people form with and within a company have real value, and should be tended to in my opinion” (Lidl, March 2, 2009, personal communication).

The idea of tending to important workplace relationships takes on added significance when we stop to consider just exactly how pervasive workplace relationships are. A report from the American Sociological Association noted that, according to U.S. Census figures, in the year 2000 the average American male worked 43.5 hours per week, and the average female worked 37 hours per week (Anonymous, 2004). This averages over five hours per day for both genders, which is at least equivalent to, if not more than, the remaining hours available to those workers for personal and family time. So, in other words, many Americans spend more hours of the days with their colleagues than with any other group of people, including their own families. Consequently, it is logical to expect that these relationships will take on great significance, particularly over a long period of time. Co-workers share successes, failures, milestones, crises, and events. And, they do not forget or cease to honor those relationships just because they move on to other jobs or circumstances.

Public Relations Imperative #2—Identify and Speak to Audience Self-Interests

As they engage in corporate alumni networks, PR departments and practitioners can strive to discern the self-interests of a critically important public (former employees) and serve in a counseling role to remind management of its responsibilities and obligations to all key publics, including current employees. This is the high ground that can be claimed by corporate PR.

The benefits of corporate alumni networks to both current and former employees are clear. Corporate alumni networks provide former employees with a unique and highly specialized networking environment they simply can’t obtain in any other way. Explained SelectMinds’ Lukach:

These alumni networks are highly vetted and highly useful for former employees as a resource of trusted knowledge and information – the keyword here being *trusted (italics added)*. Unlike public social networks (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc), corporate alumni networks are open only to those people who are invited to the network – making them highly vetted and valuable. (Lukach, K., Feb. 24, 2009, personal communication)

Recent research conducted by SelectMinds showed that 42% of employees turn to a current or former colleague for information if they have a work-related question (Lukach, K., Feb. 24, 2009, personal communication). Alumni networks help accomplish this by enabling current employees to easily access knowledgeable, trusted people. This need for trust and knowledge is a critical self-interest for remaining employees, particularly in a post-downsizing work environment where they may be taking on new and less familiar work tasks with fewer experienced co-workers who can provide guidance.

Corporate alumni networks also enable companies and recruiters to provide job opportunity information—either on behalf of the alumni’s former company or on behalf of other hiring companies. An October 1, 2007 *BusinessWeek* article noted that KPMG (a SelectMinds client) credits its network with helping it hire 137 former employees, or around 14% of the company’s total hires, since its network started, up from 72 people in the 3 months prior (Green, 2007).

Other companies and prospective employees can also utilize alumni networks for recruiting, re-recruiting, and reputation-building. The Oracle site is tapped into by 80 recruiters (Mayfield, Feb. 16, 2009, personal communication).

Bruce Lidl noted that the DivX network has enabled one group of former employees to form a freelance consulting group (Lidl, March 2, 2009, personal communication). Clearly, the establishment of alumni networks helps meet former employees’ self-interests of securing future employment—and this self-interest extends to the prospective employee audience as well. Simon (2006) noted that the law firm Latham & Watkins LLP gives lawyers it is interviewing access to the alumni directory before they’ve been hired, so they can start networking with former employees before they even start work. Former employees have a high level of corporate knowledge and often remain stockholders in publicly traded companies. These former employees’ opinions of the organization can be powerful persuaders in a prospective employee’s decision as to whether to accept a job offer.

Public Relations Imperative #3—Articulate the Value of What You are Doing

Maintaining alumni relationships through social networks can be of direct value to companies in recruiting and staffing efforts. For example, one SelectMinds client (an accounting firm) says its alumni network helped it pull in \$180 million in new business from former employees. Another SelectMinds client saved \$1.6 million in headhunter fees in one year alone, thanks to 31 recruits it found through its alumni network (Lukach, K., Feb. 24, 2009, personal communication). Even in a down economy, Lukach said, companies should look to the future when contemplating alumni networks:

The reality is, these same organizations are going to be faced with hiring thousands of people in a few years – which can cost millions. By maintaining these relationships through alumni networks, these organizations will have a huge advantage once the market turns – and will be able to easily and cost effectively re-recruit talent back into the organization. (Lukach, K., Feb. 24, 2009, personal communication)

An organization’s public relations department can and should take a lead role in communicating the value proposition for alumni networks, both to the company’s management and to the users (former employees).

Public Relations Imperative #4—Maintain Ongoing Communication

One of the corporate PR department’s most important tasks is to regularly and consistently develop alumni network content that is helpful, meaningful and relevant. Lukach explained,

All networks should have a dedicated person to run and manage the network, ensure that new content is posted, that members are active and engaging, and that information is relevant, newsworthy and interesting to the members. These networks need a dedicated person to mine these relationships and information for business value. These networks cannot be launched and then not nurtured and maintained – it is not technology for technology’s sake. (Lukach, K., Feb. 24, 2009, personal communication)

Indeed, companies who refuse to engage in conversation with their alumni do so at their peril—because the conversation will take place with or without them. Mayfield noted that speaking up is a far preferable alternative to simply standing by while a “rant” against the organization is perpetuated:

Companies who do not engage in alumni networks to share information and engage alumni in their brand themselves stand a far greater chance of seeing someone else do it for them. The cost of writing and publishing via social media is minimal, and virtually anyone can participate in this space as a citizen journalist. PR professionals can remind management that articulating messages and telling the company’s story is no longer the sole province of the company, its management, or its PR department—anyone can initiate the conversation. If the company is going to have any voice in that conversation, it must speak up clearly and frequently to all its key publics—including former employees. (Mayfield, Feb. 16, 2009, personal communication)

These public relations imperatives reflect good PR theory and sound principles of practice, but they also reflect something more—an ethic of care. The ethic of care moves beyond thinking about the relationship in terms of organizational or personal rights and places an emphasis on relationships and an organization’s responsibility to relationships created under its care. While the need for the organization to survive and succeed is understood as an ethical goal, the organization also has a responsibility to reduce and alleviate harm. This means that relationships do not end with the severing of employment. Former employees still have a claim on the organization for compassion and care. Through alumni networks, the organization can communicate its compassion and continue a relationship that pays off in long-term public relations benefits.

Thus, the need for corporate alumni networks is not only good business but a moral imperative. By institutionalizing an ethic of care within an organization, public relations can enable these relationships to provide value to those inside and outside the organization. By so doing, public relations can help to ameliorate the breach of the psychological contract between former employee and employer and protect and promote the organization’s reputation—even in a time of downsizing and economic recession.

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Profile of Public Relations Practice in Kyrgyzstan: Public Relations Purpose, Mission and Function

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In Kyrgyzstan, public relations evolved after 1991 when Kyrgyzstan became independent country. However it has not been institutionalized yet. There is no agreed definition of public relations and its purpose, mission and function have not yet been determined in the local conditions and needs of the country.

The researchers have not adequately studied public relations in Kyrgyzstan. In order to extend the knowledge about public relations model and profile in Kyrgyzstan, this study aims to explore the practice of public relations in a Central Asian country, Kyrgyzstan.

This research analyzes the practices of public relations in Kyrgyzstan, a culture that has not been adequately studied before. Through the use of a questionnaire instrument, the researcher will survey public relations practitioners in Kyrgyzstan. In the current study, the following research questions are offered: (1) what is the purpose of public relations in Kyrgyzstan; (2) what is the mission of public relations in Kyrgyzstan; (3) what is the function of public relations in Kyrgyzstan; (4) what roles are public relations practitioners in Kyrgyzstan are performing in their organizations; (5) what is the most important skill for public relations practitioners in Kyrgyzstan; (6) what are the relations between public relations and marketing functions in Kyrgyzstan.

The results of this study will extend the knowledge about public relations practices in Kyrgyzstan.

Literature and practice review

Public Relations in Kyrgyzstan

For Kyrgyzstan, public relations are a new developing field of professional activity. The few practitioners do their first tries in the recently emerged market of the country. The practical experience in the area yet is little. The scientific research base is even shallower. Even though public relations field received considerable attention in western academic literature, in Kyrgyzstan it has not been the focus of academic interest. Thus, every study of public relations in the context of Kyrgyz market has a great significance (Lihosherstova, 2007).

The Kyrgyz Republic is one of the five countries of central Asia made independent, in 1991, from the Soviet Union, and found itself right at the forefront of economic reform (Dana, 2000). This shift from planned economies to market economies had furthered the emergence of public relations business in Kyrgyzstan.

Definitely, due to its early development stage, the Kyrgyz public relations model differs to some extent from the Western one. Leo Paul Dana, who has been exploring the change and circumstances in Kyrgyz market, has said that foreigners often fail to realize that transition to a market economy requires more than legislation and infrastructure (Dana, 2000). "Business takes place between people, and the interaction between the parties does not take place in a vacuum,

but rather it is part of a social system” (Hakansson, 1982). Leo Paul Dana has implied that Western theories, which are often implied to Kyrgyz practice, need to be modified by local contexts as environmental contexts differ. Some public relations truisms, accepted in the Western part of the globe, cannot be applicable in Kyrgyzstan, and some of the commonly used techniques in Kyrgyzstan should be revised.

From 2000 to 2008 about 30 agencies appeared in Kyrgyzstan, which position themselves as the providers of advertising or marketing services. Field of their activities range from providing services on placement and production of advertising products, to services in the field of conducting research and consulting. Thus, on the market there has been formed a supply as a result of increase in activity of trade and slow increase of purchase ability of people and increase in prices of food and nonfood products(MCA, 2008).

In the capital city of Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek, there work about 30 companies specialized on BTL (Consumer Promotion, Trade Promotion, Direct Marketing, POSM and In-Store Visual Communications, Event Marketing). There are also companies which work with PR-services (mostly providing PR-services is realized through outsourcing, i.e. attracting journalists from media, although the palette of PR-instruments far beyond of traditional media).

The standard commissions taken by agencies for providing services range between 10 to 30 % of total budget of realized activities. According to the MCA (Marketing Communication Agency) today at the market of Bishkek there is no marketing (advertising) agency of full cycle in its classic presentation. There are agencies of outdoor advertisement which are considered as ordinary advertisement, there are a range of firms that organize promotion and there are a few companies which are able to provide their clients with event and PR services.

In Kyrgyzstan, the companies only begin to understand the importance of PR for the promotion of products and services. PR technologies in Kyrgyzstan have been used since the 1990's. For example, already in 1994 National Bank of Kyrgyzstan successfully organized Open Door Days and educational seminars for journalists. Today the number of the agencies which offer PR-services has been increased dramatically during the last 3-4 years which is related to the increase of business activity in the country when the companies transited from the stage of survival to the stage of development and availability to invest in PR appeared (Temirbekova, 2008).

PR specialists are hopeful about the future of PR in Kyrgyzstan (Ataol, Turdubaeva, Mombekova 2005).

The Peculiarities of Using PR Technologies in Kyrgyzstan

Companies in Kyrgyzstan except for international organizations and partly foreign companies just started to understand the importance of PR for promotion of products and services. That is why during the work with the representatives of small and average business, PR-agency has to convince the clients that the PR technologies are necessary for them (Temirbekova, 2008).

Today in Kyrgyzstan PR technologies are mostly used by commercial banks, construction companies, mobile phone operators, tobacco companies, producers of drinks and international organizations (Temirbekova, 2008).

In Kyrgyzstan political parties during the elections as a rule, prefer to invite Russian PR specialists who do not take into account local mentality. It is very difficult to say about the existence of successful political PR in Kyrgyzstan (Temirbekova, 2008).

PR agencies in Kyrgyzstan mostly use foreign, in particular Russian experience. However, they are not adapted to local conditions. For example, in Kyrgyzstan the space of Internet trade is not developed and TV advertisement can be successful only when it comes from the clients who can cover all TV space, or else TV advertisement not always gives a result. As for information agencies, in Kyrgyzstan the articles which come out on news lines considered to be more effective than the advertisement on websites (Temirbekova, 2008).

Using Internet in PR activities is a new development in Kyrgyzstan (Ataol, Turdubaeva, Mombekova, 2005).

The newspaper usage in disseminating ideas arouses a question. Firstly, it is because one of the greatest duties of a public relations practitioner is to tailor and communicate a message. Secondly, newspapers are most employed media by PR practitioners in the country (Ataol, Turdubaeva, Mombekova, 2005).

Lihosherstova, conducted an experiment to find out whether the difference in effectiveness of public relations articles and print advertisements exist and whether factors proposed by western theories matter in Kyrgyz reality and found out that the both publications fail to arouse readers' credibility. However, advertisements produce a greater positive attitude change, as they use clear language and present a straight message (Lihosherstova, 2007).

Local modern practice

The formation of the PR market in Kyrgyzstan taking into the account the mentality of people in Kyrgyzstan, is going very slow. Besides, the market is still not formed yet, it continues its spontaneous development. In Kyrgyzstan there are only a few professional companies who offer PR services. Different groups do PR; these can be advertisement agencies, information agencies and media itself. There are also definite single-specialists who offer their services in this sphere (Tregubova, 2008).

A look at the current state of public relations in Kazakhstan in its interconnection with culture of the Central Asian former Soviet republic offered by Valerie Terry, the independent researcher from London, can contribute dramatically to the understanding of the situation with public relations in Kyrgyzstan, which is also Central Asian former Soviet republic.

Researcher has revealed following distinctive trends: gatekeeping in the country is a "monetary proposition;" journalists expect to be paid for positive mentions of an organization in any article and there is no message quality control; at the same time, "Kazakhstanis are not dummies" and can recognize propaganda (Terry, 2005, p. 34).

The first National Public Relations Conference "PR in Kyrgyzstan: Theory and Practice" held in Kyrgyz-Turkish Manas University, particularly, Daniar Amanaliev's, the travel & business shop Kyrgyz Concept representatives' speech has proved that finding of the early mentioned Valerie Terry's research can be applicable to Kyrgyz public relations as well. According to him, any mentioning of organization's name is paid. Publishers provide organizations with price lists, where, for example, a half of the page in editorial section costs about 2,000 of US dollars (Amanaliev, personal communication, 2007).

Mobile operator companies' PR practitioners (SkyMobile, 2007) and even governmental organizations' employees (Ministry of Health & National Bank, 2006) stated that they are forced to pay for article even if there is a newsworthy event, such as charity, sponsorship, annual report or appeal for respect to national money.

Post Soviet practitioners invented kind of new term for paid newspaper stories that is public relations article (PR articles). These publications simulate news or feature stories by means of using third voice, placing in the editorial of topical sections (to get third-party endorsement), rather than in commercial one. The message is latent, rather than straight and obvious. What's more, editors still have some control over these materials, although radically smaller than it is in the west (Lihosherstova, 2007).

Along with this form of publicity, the advertising still exists here. Moreover, the Kyrgyz practitioners conform to the rules and legislations similar to western ones in their work with advertising. That is the method of identification as a commercial information and true presentation of the product/person/service. That is why Daniar Amanaliev has implied that advertizing in Kyrgyzstan gives more objective and useful information (answers the questions what, where and how much), when the journalists, writing the articles, foster more self interests rather than true principles of the profession.

Still, paid public relations articles are not a completely untraditional way to communicate the message to the western audiences. There are companies that are able to create the placements anytime they want and it is worth the price. A client can pick the magazines s/he wants to be placed in, they work it out and s/he pays when the placement is complete (Wright, 2005). However, it is far not common practice as the price of such publicity is extremely high. .

“Feature advertising: policies and attitudes in print” study has pointed even more interesting fact. A decade ago, something like Kyrgyz PR articles existed in USA. The authors Glen T. Cameron and John Eric Haley defined “print advertisements that looked like a short feature article in a page of editorial copy” as feature advertising (Cameron & Haley, 1992, p. 47). These simulating editorials content ads precisely corresponded to public relations articles by description. On the time of research (1992), feature ads were running in most media categories with no or unnoticeable identification of material as advertising (Cameron & Haley).

However, Kyrgyz public relations articles are under control of paying organization, as advertising is. Then, print advertising and public relation articles are analogous as this way of payment for ads and PR Articles is identical in Kyrgyzstan (Lihosherstova, 2007).

Advertising copies affect people more than public relations articles, because third party endorsement fails in credibility arousal and because ads use clear, straight, understandable language, when the public relations articles present the message latently, reducing reader comprehension ability (Lihosherstova, 2007).

The results of Lihosherstova's study turned out to be consistent with Leo Paul Dana research of local market, particularly with her idea that some major approaches used in western business are not applicable in Kyrgyz environment due to different contexts (historical, cultural, etc). Indeed, unlike situation described in many public relations studies (Baskin et al., 1997), advertising (Burnett et al., 1999), marketing (Kotler, 1991) books, the Kyrgyz public does not trust a material just because it is published in newspapers verified by editors. Readers are not against the companies' control over the publication because they trust businesses more than mass media. At the same time Kyrgyz people, like Kazakhstanis, in accordance with Valerie Terry 's findings, can recognize propaganda (Terry, 2005).

At the same time, it is important to keep the professional ethics. Several Kyrgyz companies already have a mandate, forbidding media bribery (Asian Universal Bank, Asian Bank of development, etc, 2007).

If in developed countries PR agencies mostly are narrow specialized, in Kyrgyzstan they provide all possible services. Now they are not developed yet: companies guarantee that they can provide all set of services, but as a result it turns out that the work is done not in the highest level which damages the image of PR agencies in Kyrgyzstan (Temirbekova, 2008)..

The most widespread service of PR agencies in Kyrgyzstan today is a consulting. Besides this PR companies work in such directions as the corporate design, adaptation of creative idea to advertisement carrier, media relations and initiating discussions and debates in print publications on themes which indirectly show the competitive privilege of one company at the market (Temirbekova, 2008)..

The key factors of the success of PR agencies in Kyrgyzstan are the “phenomenon of personality” and “acquired relationships” (Temirbekova, 2008).

For the development of this sphere in the country the main thing is that the clients attained a new qualitative level. Having a small amount of production, it is not rational to apply to PR agency, but if a company widens its network and introduces new product, then it is not possible to do without the help of professionals in the sphere of PR (Temirbekova, 2008).

PR Education in Kyrgyzstan

The reason for the high demand on the educational PR course is the fact that in the country there is a sharp shortage of qualified specialists and managers in the sphere of PR who possess necessary professional and personal competencies (Business Academy, 2008).

During the last years PR activity has been formed into independent profession, the existence and necessity of which not only are not subject to suspicion, but also entrenched conceptually.

In 2000 in Kyrgyzstan appeared the first specialization in PR at the Communication faculty of Kyrgyzstan-Turkey Manas University. The same year journalism faculties of seven other universities included courses on PR in their programs. In 2004 journalism faculties of two main state universities in Bishkek opened specialty in PR.

In 2003 the first Student PR Club was opened under the Department of PR of Communication faculty of Kyrgyzstan-Turkey Manas University.

In 2006 this department organized the First National Conference “PR in Kyrgyzstan: Theory and Practice”.

In 2007 students of journalism faculty at American University in Central Asia opened PR Association of Kyrgyzstan.

PR in State and Private Organizations

The aims which are achieved as a result of PR activities in public organizations in Kyrgyzstan are: positioning, informing, building good relations with other organizations, corporate communication, and quality development. The aims which are achieved as a result of PR activities in private organizations in Kyrgyzstan are: positioning, corporate communication, relationships with clients, image development, making profit and building good relations with partners (Ataol, Turdubaeva, Mombekova 2005).

In private companies PR is more close to marketing and advertisement, when in state organizations there are “public relations in its pure form” in its classic understanding. More scaled character of activities in state organizations “directed on the development of relations

between socially and politically active groups of people”. Besides, PR specialists in state organizations as opposed to their colleagues from business sphere have administrative resource. As a rule, they do not have problems with media relations. Journalists themselves show interest in them, while the private companies have to use finances in order to attract their attention.

However the activity in state sector is strictly regulated. Here PR specialists are very limited in choosing and taking decisions in particular “they are not free in choosing the information, in methods to present it, in the direction of PR-campaign”. Besides, they have less opportunity for creativity which is conditioned both by schedule of work and limited budget.

Here also there is very narrow sphere of obligations in state organizations. PR specialists fulfill functions not more than of a press secretary. Mostly they are occupied with media relations and organizing special events.

Opposed to the owner-companies of well-known Western brands, big business in Kyrgyzstan is represented mostly by companies in the sphere of wholesale trade, which often develop retail directions. Most of such companies exist more than ten years and felt on themselves the change of economic regime and necessity to survive in market conditions, regulating the market, attracting the specialists and reducing expenses. That is why the lack of contact with final consumer of the product often leads to that all relations of company with external world are done by advertisement, periodically in narrow-specialized media and in some cases by launching a website with minimum information on it.

Political information wars in Kyrgyzstan at the end of 1990’s discredited the trust in the industry of PR services, forming negative public opinion towards the concept “PR”. However, now we can say about “golden age” of political PR in Kyrgyzstan is coming to the end. According to the evaluations of most specialists working in the sphere of PR, the situation is changing to the better side. PR technologies are taking more civilized forms; the level of their need is increasing in different spheres of business.

Existing advertising and marketing agencies which also offer PR services in Kyrgyzstan can be symbolically divided into 3 types. Agencies of the first type are the ones which think in the category of event. They are specialized in the standard set of PR services; organization of press conferences or round-tables followed by the coverage of the event in necessary media. Such structures sometimes are formed to realize single corporate events and under some special projects. For these agencies, a detailed understanding of strategic and global tasks of the client and the outcome is not very important.

Another type of agencies is more oriented to the sale of coverage (saturation coverage) or the channels of communication. They have good relations with print and TV media and often they can provide good information support in any region of the country.

There is one category of agencies to which only two PR agencies which exist in Kyrgyzstan can be included. They can do everything that must do the standard PR agencies; however they differ from them by principally another approach to the work: they do not start working with client until its business tasks are not transparently formulated.

The Challenges of PR in Kyrgyzstan

The need for the PR specialist as a separate staff entity in companies is minimal. PR mostly is realized by the manager of the company, advertising and marketing manager or press services. In Kyrgyzstan the image of a company is still an unimportant condition for the development and prosperity. PR departments of big companies and international organizations

are slowly becoming branched off from advertising and marketing departments into independent structures. This gives an opportunity to have several specialists in the sphere of PR in the staff diversifying their functions.

Another problem is the lack of access of PR specialists to the strategic information of the company and total dependence of actions and decisions on the opinion of top-management. Mostly in crisis situations PR specialists being afraid of the management, answer to the questions of journalists with the cliché phrase: “We do not comment this information” (Kuznetsov, 2005).

The period when it was possible to pass any information to journalists for not too much money ended. Now chief-editors quickly figured out that huge money are passing by their budgets. That is why they invented such principle of partnership work with their newsmakers as information support. Unconditionally the relation to those companies who signed such an agreement is different than to the companies who did not sign. Analogical scheme: advertiser or not (Kuznetsov, 2005).

Most often PR services of big companies are distanced from the top-management; because of the lack of coordination of information activity PR specialists can not participate in the process of taking important decisions by top-management for business decisions and can not operatively react to information challenges in time (Kuznetsov, 2005)..

One of the main problems of big companies is their closeness for media and public at all. One of the reasons of this is the lack of knowledge about the rules of game, inability to give the information correctly. That is why they say “no comments” during crisis periods (Kuznetsov, 2005)..

Ataol et. al. analyzed public relations model in Kyrgyzstan and argued that PR in Kyrgyzstan is on the way of becoming a profession and the positions of PR specialists in organizations are diverse and rich (Ataol, Turdubaeva, Mombekova 2005). This analysis provided some preliminary information about public relations practice in Kyrgyzstan.

As in any rapidly-evolving sector, there are also challenges as new practices meet tradition. Since the industry is so young, media relations is still the core of most public relations work in Kyrgyzstan. The CEOs have not understood the importance of PR yet, which sometimes makes it difficult to conduct high-level corporate and crisis management campaigns.

Clients still approach agencies first for help with media relations, but are increasingly stepping up their activity to include marketing communications and events, and then corporate communications. The offices of global corporations and international organizations are much larger buyers of communications expertise than local companies, who tend to rely on their own personal relationships with journalists, forged through money and entertaining.

The market tendency of outsourcing development in PR in Kyrgyzstan is being formed not for the benefit of PR agencies. It is not a secret that big clients for whom the perfect communication policy is one of the main components of the cost of actives define the weather on the market of business PR. This market has its own rules and principles of work. Big companies form their own PR structures first of all because in most situations they are not satisfied with the quality of work of PR agencies in Kyrgyzstan. Especially the leaders of sectoral markets which develop long-term reputation projects and oriented on high technological western standards of business, including the issues of disclosure and spread of information in the environment of international investors. PR programs of such companies are directed at forming perfect image and because of the difficulty of the task and the given level of quality; it is not possible for one local PR-agency to realize them. Moreover it is still difficult for big clients to be orientated on

the market of supply, because the market has not formed the objective criteria of success of agencies yet, and it is not possible to estimate the effectiveness of PR services if not to consider as a result the number of mentioning on media.

Another challenge in Kyrgyzstan is that there are still misconceptions as to what PR is all about. PR is synonymous with organizing events and entertainment and there is much to be done to change the image of the industry.

In the job announcement published in newspapers in 2004 the following skills were required for the position of PR specialist in Kyrgyzstan: To know the rules of (protocol) organizing events (meetings, seminars, celebrations etc.), of hosting foreign and local delegations, building relationships with print media and radio and to possess PR technologies (Ataol, Turdubaeva, Mombekova, 2005).

“Modern” or “western” public relations practice has only been used in Kyrgyzstan since 2000. In the 1990’s Kyrgyzstan experienced political and economic changes that “paved the way for this western concept and profession”. The concept of public relations in Kyrgyzstan has not revealed its value to companies yet. The western approach to public relations has not been spread to the country and is now only begun to grow in the universities.

The teaching of public relations started out in Kyrgyzstan formally in 2000. Public relations courses started in 2005. Consulting agencies conducted one week courses where PR specialists from Russia tutored their colleagues in Kyrgyzstan. There were organized 4 trainings until 2009 in Kyrgyzstan. These trainings offered instruction on subjects such as the technologies of media relations, methods of preparing the materials which attract the attention of journalists and for publication of which there is no need to pay, how to write press release, how to prepare short and effective self presentation, and develop marketing and PR campaigns and how to become a PR-agent, also the PR-technologies developed by classic of American management Ron Habbard.

Universities in Kyrgyzstan are educating students for the PR profession apart from practice. They have theoretical knowledge about PR in Western countries which are not adapted to the realities of Kyrgyzstan.

Research Methods

Sampling

The purposive sampling method was used. Private companies, international organizations, public foundations and state organizations which have PR departments and two PR agencies (there are only two PR agencies in Kyrgyzstan) were selected as a sampling of the research. Total 64 questionnaires were sent by email to top 64 organizations (Akipress Industry Rating) have been selected to represent companies with in-house PR setups. In addition 2 interviews were conducted with the managers of two PR agencies. In each organization, one public relations practitioner served as the representative of the organization/agency and filled out the questionnaire. Two respondents did not want to fill out the questionnaire referring to the confidentiality of the answers to the questions of questionnaire.

Three days after the questionnaires were mailed to participants, a reminder message was sent by email to those who did not answer to the first message. With close follow-up interpersonal communication, the total number of questionnaires collected was 32 (%58 response

rate). Out of 64 questionnaires 9 were rejected because of the secrecy of company information. They said that they can not answer the questions of questionnaire because it was company secret information.

Data Collection

The questionnaire which consisted of 5 parts was developed and used in order to analyze the profile of PR in Kyrgyzstan.

- Part I. Demographic Characteristics of PR specialists
- Part II. Characteristics of PR departments/branches of organizations
- Part III. Professional Activities of PR specialists
- Part IV. Peculiarities of activity in local market of PR services
- Part V. PR education in Kyrgyzstan

Results

Demographic Characteristics of PR specialists

The demographic characteristics of PR specialists were evaluated by 8 questions about gender, age, place of work, position, work experience, education, additional education and the need to take additional education.

The data is based on responses from 32 participants. Fifty-nine (59%) participants are female. Thirty-seven (37%) participants are male. One participant did not indicate the gender. The average age of participants is between 26-30 years old. Seven (22%) participants work at marketing departments of companies. Five (16%) participants work at PR departments of public organizations. Four (13%) participants work at PR departments of private companies. Three (10%) participants work at consulting agencies. Two (7%) participants work at PR departments of state organizations. Ten (31%) participants work as PR specialists under different departments of organization. Respondents' titles include director (31%), department manager (25%), specialists (19%), assistant (7%) and the other titles. Thirteen (41%) participants have been working at this department for 1-3 years. Nine participants (29%) have been working at this department for less than one year. Seven participants (22%) have been working at this department for more than 5 years.

Nine (28%) participants have higher education in economy, six (19%) participants in journalism, two (6%) participants in public relations and the remaining have higher education in fields such as sociology, political sciences, history, pedagogy, technical, etc. Seventeen (54%) participants do not have additional education in public relations; eleven (35%) participants have taken additional training courses in public relations. Three (10%) of them are taking courses. Twenty-three (72%) participants would like to take the course of increasing qualification in the field of public relations.

Characteristics of PR departments/branches of organizations

Characteristics of PR departments/branches of organizations were evaluated by the questions concerning the place of PR department in organizational chart, how long exists PR department, the number of staff in the department, the task of PR department, how PR and marketing are related, the functional obligations/duties of PR specialists, the function of PR department, the level of participation of PR specialists in developing marketing strategy of the

organization, the change in the amount of marketing budget and its PR part in particular, who is responsible for the formation and control of PR budget, the necessity to conduct researches during the realization of PR projects, who conducts the researches.

PR departments in most organizations (44%) are under other departments. Twelve (38%) participants answered that PR department in their organization “is an independent department and is under CEO”; six (19%) participants answered that PR department “is under marketing branch of organization”. PR departments of most organizations have been existing for *more than five years*. The number of staff in the PR department is 1-3 (57%) and more than five (16%).

The most important tasks of PR department are *to form public opinion about organization, to form and support positive image of organization and to promote organization and its products and services*. PR specialists were asked how PR and marketing are related. Fifteen (47%) participants answered that PR is an independent field of activity; twelve (38%) participants said that PR is one of elements of marketing complex. The functions of PR and marketing are not separated in most organizations (63%); they are separated only in eight organizations (25%). The functional obligations/duties of PR specialists are *reputation management, client relations management and working out key messages*.

The main functions of PR department are *media relations, building relations with publics, government relations, taking part at conference, exhibitions and forums and organizing sponsorship and charitable works*. The level of participation of PR specialists in developing marketing strategy of the organization is *high* in most organizations (41%) and *average* in about one-third (29%) of organizations. The amount of marketing budget and its PR part in particular during the last year “has been increased at some level” in most organizations (29%). In most organizations (41%) the manager of organization, in twelve organizations (38%) the manager of PR department is responsible for the formation and control of PR budget.

PR specialists were asked their opinion concerning the necessity to conduct researches during the realization of PR projects. Most of them (57%) answered that “research is necessary” and about more than one-third of participants (35%) answered that “research is necessary only in definite stages of work”. In more than half of organizations (57%) own specialists conduct the researches, only five organizations (16%) give it to specialized research agencies.

Professional Activities of PR specialists

The professional activities of PR specialists were measured by the questions concerning previous work experience, the reason for working in the sphere of PR, the field of their competency/obligations, the main three auditory with whom they communicate mostly, three media they cooperate mostly, methods of media relations they use most often, their critiques towards media, additional methods they use in order to attract the media, membership at PR associations, sources of information about PR, skills and knowledge they need mostly, knowledge about the international PR market, PR activities of which countries they want to get information, difficulties they face during professional activities, what disturbs them during their work, the criteria of professionalism in the sphere of PR.

Participants were asked in which field they worked before. Nine (28%) participants worked as journalists before. Four (12%) participants worked as university teachers, the remaining worked as press secretary, interpreter, program coordinator etc.

The reason for working in the sphere of PR was evaluated by asking the question “What first of all attracts you in this profession?”. *Creativity* was the first reason, *communicating with*

many people was the second reason and *intelligent character of activity* was the third reason for working as a PR specialist.

The field of their competency/obligations is first of all *media relations*, secondly *corporate communications*, and thirdly *creative works*. And *client relationships* also were one of their spheres of competency.

PR specialists were asked to write down main three auditory with whom they communicate mostly. The main auditory with whom they communicate mostly are *clients*, *partners* and *journalists*. They were also asked to write down three media they cooperate mostly. Out of media they cooperate mostly with *newspapers*, *television* and *information agencies*.

PR specialists were asked to indicate the methods of media relations they use most often. They answered, *preparing texts*, *press releases and messages*, *organizing interviews*, *press conferences and briefings*, *placing information about company on media for money and for free* and *daily media monitoring*.

PR specialists were asked whether they had critiques towards media. Eleven (35%) participants said that they do not have any critique towards media. Ten (32%) participants criticized media by saying that they *distort materials and they are uncompetitive*, seven (22%) participants indicated to the *extortion and rejection to publicize materials without money*. PR specialists were asked which additional methods they use in order to attract the media. They answered that they use such methods *as information support of their website*, *personal meetings with journalists* and *help journalists to write materials*.

Most of PR specialists (88%) does not have membership at PR associations. The sources of information about PR for them are *internet*, *personal communication with colleagues* and *business print media*. The skills and knowledge they need mostly are *PR technologies* (44%), *experience* (22%) and *theoretical knowledge about PR* (13%). They were asked whether they had knowledge about the international PR market. Twenty (63%) participants answered that they *know a little bit about the history of PR and the current situation in PR market abroad*. PR specialists were asked PR activities of which countries they want to get information. Most of them (82%) answered that they want to get information about PR activities in *Russia*. As second country they indicated to *Western European countries*. The difficulties they face during professional activities are *low level of understanding the meaning of PR by employers*, *lack of unified criteria of evaluating the activities of PR specialists* and *low level of their qualification*. They were asked what disturbs them during their work. They answered that *the low level of professionalism of media*, *journalists' perception that PR is advertising and the necessity to pay it* and *lack of understanding the meaning of PR by clients*.

The criteria of professionalism in the sphere of PR are *ability to communicate*, *creativity of thinking* and *activeness and mobility*.

Peculiarities of activity in local market of PR services

Peculiarities of activity in local market of PR services were evaluated by the following questions: important changes happened during 5-10 years in the market of PR services in Kyrgyzstan, main advantages of the market of PR services in Kyrgyzstan, main shortcomings of the market of PR services in Kyrgyzstan, the difference of methods and technologies of work used by local and foreign PR- specialists, the level of qualification of PR specialists in Kyrgyzstan, the conditions to form unified market of PR services in Kyrgyzstan, future

tendencies in the sphere of PR in Kyrgyzstan and the future PR directions in the next 3-5 years in Kyrgyzstan.

PR specialists were asked their opinions concerning the current situation of market of PR services in Kyrgyzstan. More than half of them (60%) answered that “PR market in Kyrgyzstan is just being developed”, about one-fourth of them think that “the first stage of its development is ended” and only four of them (13%) answered that “there is no PR market in Kyrgyzstan. It should be built”. They were asked what are the most important changes happened during 5-10 years in the market of PR services in Kyrgyzstan, to which most of them (60%) answered, “The level of understanding the meaning and necessity of PR both by the clients and public”.

The main advantages of the market of PR services in Kyrgyzstan are “its active development and increasing demand for PR services” and “lack of competency in the market”. The main shortcomings of the market of PR services in Kyrgyzstan are “lack of adequate understanding of clients about PR” and “PR specialists are isolated, by not participating in the life of international and regional PR community”.

PR specialists were asked their opinions concerning the difference of methods and technologies of work used by local and foreign PR specialists. Most of them (72%) answered that they differ by justifying it with the following opinion “environment in Kyrgyzstan is less prepared for Western methods” (44%) and “Western methods are more formalized than ours. Here in Kyrgyzstan we rely more on intuition, but they rely more on methodology”. PR specialists were asked to valuate the level of qualification of PR specialists in Kyrgyzstan between 1 and 10; the given average level is 3.43. They justified their answers by indicating at “they are less creative” and “they show low results”.

Participants were asked their opinions concerning the conditions to form unified market of PR services in Kyrgyzstan. More than half of them (57%) think that there are no conditions to form unified market of PR services in Kyrgyzstan. About half of the participants (44%) think that the future tendencies in the sphere of PR in Kyrgyzstan are “development of PR specialists’ qualifications” and “appearance of freelancers of high qualification”. PR specialists were asked their opinions about how will develop market of PR services in Kyrgyzstan in the next 3-5 years. About half of the participants think that “there will not be important changes” and justified it with “it depends on economic and social changes, and there is no change now.” The participants were asked their opinions about the future PR directions in the next 3-5 years in Kyrgyzstan. More than half of them (60%) think that business PR will be the future direction, and reputation management and interaction with government structures were indicated equally, about 16%.

PR Education in Kyrgyzstan

The respondents were asked for their opinions about the quality of PR education in Kyrgyzstan, the necessity to have special education for a PR specialist and the necessity to give academic degree in the sphere of PR.

About half of the participants (41%) think that it is enough to have education in related spheres, only about one-third of participants think that PR education is compulsory. More than half of PR specialists (54%) think that the quality of PR education in universities of Kyrgyzstan is low and more than one-third of participants (35%) think that “PR is a science and academic degrees in the sphere of PR should be given” and about one-third of participants (32%) think that “there is no necessity to give academic degrees, PR is not a science”.

Conclusion

By collecting empirical data in Kyrgyzstan, this exploratory study has provided information about public relations practices in a culture which has not been adequately studied before. The significance of this study is that it discusses various contemporary research issues, including the roles that public relations practitioners perform in Kyrgyzstan, the most important skills for public relations practitioners, the relationship between public relations and marketing, peculiarities of public relations activities in local market and public relations education in Kyrgyzstan.

Public Relations Purpose

The first research question of this study asks what the purpose of public relations in Kyrgyzstan is. Previous literature (Ataol, Turdubaeva, Mombekova 2005) suggested that the aims which are achieved as a result of PR activities in public organizations in Kyrgyzstan are: *positioning, informing, building good relations with other organizations, corporate communication, and quality development*. The aims which are achieved as a result of PR activities in private organizations in Kyrgyzstan are: *positioning, corporate communication, relationships with clients, image development, making profit and building good relations with partners* (Ataol, Turdubaeva, Mombekova 2005).

As a result of current study the functional obligations/duties of PR specialists are *reputation management, client relations management and working out key messages*.

Public Relations Mission

The second research question asks what the mission of Public Relation in Kyrgyzstan?

As a result of current study the mission of PR department is *to form public opinion about organization, to form and support positive image of organization and to promote organization and its products and services*.

Public Relations Function

The third research question asks what the function of public relations in Kyrgyzstan is.

The main functions of PR department are *media relations, building relations with publics, government relations, taking part at conference, exhibitions and forums and organizing sponsorship and charitable works*.

Practitioners' Roles

The fourth research question asks what roles public relations practitioners in Kyrgyzstan perform in their organizations.

The field of their competency/obligations is first of all *media relations*, secondly *corporate communications*, and thirdly *creative works*. And *client relationships* also were one of their spheres of competency.

Most Important Skills

The fifth research question asks what the most important skills are for public relations practitioners in Kyrgyzstan.

The criteria of professionalism in the sphere of PR are *ability to communicate, creativity of thinking and activeness and mobility*.

Relations between Public Relations and Marketing Functions

The last research question of this study asks what the relationships between public relations and marketing in Kyrgyzstan.

PR specialists were asked how PR and marketing are related. Fifteen (47%) participants answered that PR is an independent field of activity; twelve (38%) participants think that PR is one of elements of marketing complex. The functions of PR and marketing are not separated in most organizations (63%); they are separated only in eight organizations (25%).

Because of its broad research scope, this study has built a profile of public relations in Kyrgyzstan and extended the knowledge about public relations in post Soviet country Kyrgyzstan. However this study has limitations. The major limitation of this study is that all of the organizations surveyed in this study are located in the capital city of Kyrgyzstan, because all major organizations which have public relations departments or specialists are located in Bishkek. Future studies may discover what roles public relations practitioners perform in smaller organization outside the capital city of Kyrgyzstan and compare the results with the results of this current study.

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Looking for Institutionalization Italian Public Relations and the Role of Credibility and Professionalism

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to revise recent discussions on the need for institutionalization of public relations in Italy, by presenting different conceptual claims against the need for this postulation. Through critical argumentative discourse, I will show how the question of institutionalization within the Italian PR context is rather difficult to put forward at the current stage of Italian PR development, since other problems related to professional credibility and professionalism are still unsolved. In this paper, I intend to discuss the impact of credibility and professionalism on the process of professional recognition of Italian public relations and on its institutionalization, by referring to the results of a qualitative and quantitative investigation about Italian PR practitioners' opinions on the perceived need and possible means for regulating PR profession and on the role of professional PR codes of ethics.

Introduction

The concepts of credibility and professionalism have been widely discussed in public relations literature in the past thirty years (for example Callison 2001, Grunig 2000, Pieczka 2000, Serini 1993, Grunig & White 1992, Judd 1989, Brody 1988), especially in relation to the capacity of public relations practitioners to be effective in different communication actions (Sinaga & Callison 2008, Schwarzkopf 2007, Sharpe 2000) and on ethics (Lieber 2005, Hickson 2003, Kima & Choi 2003, Fitzpatrick 1996, Aronoff 1975). However, the concept of credibility and professionalism should be reconsidered to explain other emerging questions about institutionalization of public relations that have been recently discussed by professionals and academics. Institutionalization is perceived as the process of embedding something within an organization, social system, or society as an established custom or norm within that system. For public relations, this means having recognized the status of a 'profession' that plays an important and strategic role within organizations.

Some scholars (Invernizzi 2000, Corvi 1993) think that being part of the dominant coalition is an indicator of institutionalization and professional recognition, as the real value that public relations can provide to organizations is related to PR strategic, reflective and educational functions, which can be performed only when PR managers are members of the dominant coalition (Grunig et al. 2002, White & Dozier 1992). Institutionalizing public relations does not necessarily involve demonstrating the value of PR practitioners at organizational level, but rather it involves providing the parameters that ground public relations as a profession and through which the CEOs can value practitioners' effectiveness. If for institutionalization it is meant the process towards attaining a certain state or property (Jepperson 1991), then, when public relations become an 'institution' - that is it retains a status of profession - it should not be

necessary to question every time its functions, values and professionalism in order to grant legitimization to PR practitioners to do their jobs. In addition, the problem of evaluating case by case PR roles, functions and added values to organizations is still a doubtful method to gain legitimacy, as this approach is strictly dependent on personal performance rather than professional practices. Yet, it is still the most common approach. In today's business life, the dominant coalition decides the roles and tasks of public relations in respect to other organizational functions and strategic decisions on the basis of the performances of PR practitioners, rather than considering the added value which public relations as a profession can offer. The profession is thus evaluated more on individual basis than on general normative rules and professionalism.

This sort of 'individualistic paradigm of public relations' is truer in countries where public relations is not yet fully professionalized nor institutionalized by the society. In countries like Italy, the majority, besides some cases of large companies where PR practitioners have managerial and strategic functions, believes that public relations is a supporting profession to marketing and advertising activities. Because of this imprecise distinction of public relations from marketing and advertising activities, public relations in Italy still suffers from problems with credibility and legitimacy at the societal level. Can we then talk about institutionalization of Italian public relations when PR is not fully professionalized nor legitimized at the societal level? Would it be more appropriate to re-conceptualize the question of institutionalization with an issue of PR professionalism and modes by which it is performed by PR practitioners?

This paper discusses the process of institutionalization of public relations in Italy through the concept of credibility and professionalism. Through critical argumentative discourse, I will show how the question of institutionalization within the Italian PR context is rather difficult to put forward, at the current stage of Italian PR development, since other problems related to professional credibility and professionalism are still unsolved. By referring to the results of a qualitative and quantitative investigation about Italian PR practitioners' opinions on the perceived need and possible means for regulating PR profession and on the role of professional PR codes of ethics, I will demonstrate the impact of credibility and professionalism on the process of professional recognition of Italian public relations and on its institutionalization.

Credibility and Professionalism

Besides the fact that institutionalizing a profession can take place either internally or externally in organizations (Sandhu 2008) and that external institutionalization, either by law or public recognition, does not imply an internal institutionalization (within an organization, among the dominant coalition and clients), the process of institutionalization is inevitably reconnected to the level of credibility and professionalism that a profession has. The institutionalization of public relations in organizations is very much dependent on the credibility of PR managers among the dominant coalition.

Credibility is the probability of being believed (Gili 2005: 3). In contemporary psychology and sociology, credibility, like authority, is not only a personal characteristic, but rather something that is attributed, recognised by others. Even if credibility is dependent on the personal values and morality of individuals, it is not a natural characteristic of the communicator, but a result of relations. Credibility is a result of relationships between a source and a receiver. The extents and modes of credibility vary depending on different types of relationships. Frequently, a person who is credible for a public is not credible in the same way or for the same

reasons for another group of people. Credibility also relies on contexts and situations (*ibid*: 4-5). In certain situations, even the most credible individuals may change their behaviour because of different interests, pressure or external power and become less credible. The same is true for those who are generally less credible.

Credibility plays an important role in professional life. In activities concerning communication, credibility refers to the judgments made by a message recipient concerning the believability of a communicator (Callison 2001: 220). Among the features that make a profession more credible, scholars indicate trustworthiness, expertise and ethics (Boynton 2006; Pieczka & L'Etang 2001; Fitzpatrick 1996). A recent study of Sinaga and Callison (2008) shows how still today a professional journalistic background contributes to the credibility evaluations of public relations practitioners as regards expertness and the capability to meet journalistic values and expectations. However, having a professional journalistic background does not necessarily render public relations practitioners any more trustworthy than not having such credentials.

Credibility per se is not enough to reach a level of institutionalization and recognition at organizational and societal levels. Another important element is professionalism. Professionalism has been understood by different scholars (*i.e.* Grunig 2000; Cutlip, Center & Broom 1994; Wylie 1994; Ehling 1992; Grunig & Hunt 1984) as a necessary and important parameter to assess the quality of PR practices as well as to legitimize the existence and need for this occupation. Since 1973, American academics and practitioners have striven to develop and implement common standards for public relations education (Pieczka 2000: 213), in other countries, like in Italy, the definition of common standards and norms for public relations education have not yet been completely reached. An important contribution in identifying the main characteristics of PR professionalism was given by Grunig and Hunt (1984). According to the two authors, the PR profession should have: a set of professional values; strong professional organizations that socialize practitioners into these values; professional norms -such as those provided by a code of ethics - that can be used to enforce values; technical skills acquired through professional training; an intellectual tradition and an established body of knowledge (Grunig 2000: 26). Other scholars (*i.e.* Niemann-Struwega & Meintjes 2008; Gupta 2007) agreed that an established body of knowledge, ethics, and certification are the pre-requisite of profession, but the profession needs also to have the power to do what it is meant to perform (see Serini 1993; Beam 1990). Similarly, Sandhu (2008) sees the levels of power, independence and specialisation of public relations from other organizational functions as the internal indicators of PR institutionalisation. In this respect, power within the professionalism discourse is very much linked to the concept of institutionalization. It is possible to argue that a combination of professionalism and power within organizations or with clients paves the way for institutionalizing public relations. Professionalism provides PR managers with the credibility needed to negotiate for autonomy whereas power allows them to negotiate with and bring about change in management, as opposed to being controlled by management (Serini 1993). Institutionalization of public relations is therefore a further step from the achievement of professionalism. If PR managers have been recognised professionalism and certain power within the organization, and they do not need to reconceptualise, explain and motivate their actions to the dominant coalition each time, then a claim of PR institutionalization, at least in that specific professional environment, can be postulated. Therefore, an institutionalization of public relations can happen if beforehand conditions of professionalism, credibility and power are set up.

Italy and Public Relations: An Historical Overview

The history of public relations as a profession in Italy is rather recent. First signals which could be associated with the origin of this profession can be traced back to the years preceding WWII, when the propaganda machine was developed and largely implemented by Mussolini (Muzi Falconi & Kodilja 2004: 229). However, the first organized experiences that could be correlated to PR activities date back to the fifties. During this period, public relations was conceived either as activities supporting marketing, thus focused on product information, or as activities aiming at enhancing companies' reputation through cultural and social entertaining programs (Scarpulla 2006). As a support of marketing, public relations' main task was to provide and spread written informative texts about companies' products and services, whereas in the cultural and social entertaining function, its task was organizing remarkable events of high public visibility. Both approaches were, however, present only among big, multi-national corporations, like *Esso*, *Shell* and *Mobiloil*, and some public and private companies like *Italsider*, *Montecatini*, *Pirelli*, *Fiat* and *Olivetti* (Roggero 1997: 60). For the majority of Italian companies, which are small and medium sized, public relations was an unknown profession.

It was in the mid-fifties that the first PR agencies were constituted in Rome. Their methodologies and techniques of communication were strongly influenced by US approaches. Some scholars (Introvigne 2007; Muzi Falconi 2005) believe that it is exactly from the direct work with Americans at the Italian office of the United States Information Services (USIS) that some Italian PR professionals were trained and learned to do public relations. In its early conception, public relations was considered, in the best case, a more subtle and indirect form of publicity, or an 'activity' dealing with organizing dinners, receptions and events. As a result, PR practices were understood as something that was occasionally relevant to organizations' operations. There was no strategic approach of public relations, as there was no business interest in understanding stakeholders' opinions and needs. Business affairs were regarded as 'private matters' appealing only to owners, shareholders, stock market actionists and business men. Business matters were meant as something that only specialists could understand (Scarpulla 2006). No other public was relevant for companies. It should be said that until WWII, Italy was mostly an agricultural country with a high percentage of illiterate population. Interests in and participation to organizational activities and the influence of public opinion and groups in companies' decisions were limited to those who were, somehow, involved in companies' affairs, like shareholders and business men. The need for diffusing information outside the 'private circle' was therefore not so important. Actions of spreading information were even excluded in small and medium sized organizations. These were even more reluctant in disclosing companies' information to external publics. The situation started to change in the sixties, as a consequence of the economic boom and the increasing diffusion of mass media which brought education and development (Roggero 1997). In the new era, Italian working people increased their awareness of economical and political matters, and subsequently trade unions and worker associations played a crucial role in business life (Muzi Falconi 2005). From the original private circle of business men, companies started to include trade unions, workers associations and the political elite as their stakeholders. A new approach of public relations was developed, as a result of the rapid changes in the political, economical and social situations of the country. This new approach is recognized to have a more 'Italian style' of doing public relations than the previous. People and organizations became more and more interconnected. Companies realized the necessity of external communications; communications that could bring companies' opinions

into different aspect of citizens' life. The original PR mission of selling products and services became a mission of 'image management', where the main task of PR officers was to make customers associating products and services with companies' names (Scarpulla 2006). Media relations and lobbying activities were thus the PR practices of that time. In the sixties, public relations of the main public and private organizations also recognized the status of an occupation separated from marketing and advertising.

Public relations did not work only for increasing consensus upon organizations and in image management. By the late sixties, PR officers were asked to find out for companies possible reasons of conflicts and to change negative opinions scattered in the society. Especially in the seventies, public relations shifted again. It was within the movements of 'peace and love' that public relations acquired its new strategic mission of helping companies in avoiding conflicts, mediating interests, creating conditions for mutual and trustworthy relationships between different parties. In this phase, public relations activities also played a new role in employee relations. The situation, however, was not the same for Italian PR agencies, which continued to operate specifically in support of advertising and marketing (Invernizzi 2001).

A further step was made in the eighties, when public relations started to be seen as an important skilled occupation for managing relationships with different publics. It was in these years, public relations activities increased exponentially within larger private organizations and became more specialized according to particular branches of business goods or services. Companies spent more on market research into their effects of their communication, rather than into what consumers thought of their products (Muzi Falconi & Kodilja 2004: 233).

The nineties were characterized by further developments. The national scandals, which shadowed the PR profession too, led towards a more professionalized and regulated way to carry out public relations. When in 1992 the *Mani Pulite* scandal erupted⁷⁸, it involved several public relations professionals who were implicated in mediating illegal operations between businesses, political and media organizations (ibid: 233). This corruption scandal had a strong impact on the reputation of public relations as profession, specifically questions about ethics and legal practices raised among the Italian community. The activities of national PR associations and federations like FERPI and ASSOREL, which were created in the seventies and eighties, played a critical role to push forward the process of professional recognition, and professionalization of Italian public relations. Additionally, the nineties were characterized by an increment of agencies' activities as more and more small and medium sized companies recognized the importance, besides doing advertising and marketing activities, of engaging their publics through more specific public relations actions.

At the educational level, university degrees and specialized schools of public relations and communication management started very late. The majority of PR professionals of the past fifty years were thus people from different backgrounds; many were journalists, others were from economic and political areas. Hence, PR education and preparation was 'in the field'. The

⁷⁸ *Mani Pulite* [trans. 'Clean Hands'] was a nationwide Italian judicial investigation into political corruption held in the 1990s. *Mani pulite* led to the demise of the so-called First Republic, resulting in the disappearance of many parties. Some politicians and industry leaders committed suicide after their crimes were exposed. The corruption system that was uncovered by these investigations was usually referred to as *Tangentopoli*, or 'bribeville'.

first course in PR was offered in 1992 by IULM University in Milan. After a few years, more universities started similar courses. Nowadays, almost every university in Italy has a general program in Communication Science, where PR courses are also taught, and six universities have a specific program in Public Relations.

Current Pr Situation in Italy

For the past fifty years public relations in Italy has generally addressed selected stakeholders representing specific organizations' interests. These interests dealt mostly with organizations' key publics, such as consumers and customers, news media people and the political decision-makers at the local or national levels. PR practices widely concerned product information through media relations, lobbying and 'recreational' activities, like organizing dinners, parties, receptions etc. Accordingly, public relations were activities in support of marketing and advertising. For several years, PR professionals did not show an interest in differentiating their work from that of marketing and advertising people. This confusion allowed practitioners to engage in different types of activities behind PR traditional areas, on the other hand it created blurred perceptions and undermined the PR field's own professional identity. A typical association with the concept of public relations is of a manipulative occupation with no specific duty other than seeking to entertain companies' influential publics.

Even today, professional organizations like FERPI and ASSOREL are fighting to see recognized public relations as a real profession and are promoting a culture of best practices and professionalism among their members. The profession continues to suffer from a quite widespread ambiguity in the Italian society. Many people do not exactly know what public relations is about, or they have a misleading interpretation of its functions and roles. This is partly as a consequence of lacking a consistent proposition on the boundaries and contents of this profession. A proper communication on public relations has never fully reached the general public. It has principally remained inside professional associations (Valentini & Muzi Falconi 2008). Also, many specialists still tend to use diverse terminologies to define themselves. It is more common to use external relations, image, communication, press relations officer, etc. Such terms, which represent only some of the functions of public relations, may create the illusion that public relations is something different. Some changes are visible in the last few years (Assorel 2007a) showing that the role of communication as strategic component of organization' wellbeing is growing. Public relations is thus proving an effective tool to organizations, and as a result it is taking shares away from other marketing and communications disciplines.

Italy is paradoxically in a situation where some best practices and excellences in PR co-live with arcane PR activities focusing on press-agentry/publicity concepts. A recent study conducted by Invernizzi (2008) on PR/Corporate communication managers of some largest Italian public and private companies shows that among the 318 companies contacted, 240 have a PR or Corporate communication manager as part of the dominant coalition. However, in Italy, it is estimated that more than 100,000 people work on public relations fields (Valentini & Muzi Falconi 2008). The number of those actually practicing public relations is much larger as the above number, since it does not include journalists who still retain their professional status but

work in media relations departments of public institutions⁷⁹. So, the finding of this study represents only a specific typology of public relations practitioners, which is not representative of all PR activities. PR activities in Italy are not equally developed. Depending on the sector and on the size of the company, the roles and functions of public relations as well as its credibility and professionalism vary quite extensively.

Regarding the practices, public relations in Italy is mostly conceived as a technical/operative function. In some larger organizations, the managerial and strategic roles are present, whereas the reflective and educational roles are still at their infancy. In 2007, the top areas of public relations for share of revenue were media relations (27.3%), product communication (18.5%) and corporate communications (16.8%), with the three categories accounting for more than 60% of total turnover. Growing fields include public affairs (+35%), organization of events (+21%) and environment and social communications (+11%), (Assorel 2008b). If communication activities have generally increased in terms of companies investments, it is because more and more senior managers start appreciating and recognizing the utility of these activities for organizations. On the other hand, recognizing the utility of public relations does not translate automatically into a position among the dominant coalition. Senior managers still have some concerns about the role that public relations should have within the organization. The perceived image and role of public relations among CEOs of some large Italian organizations is not so promising; many describe public relations as something 'ephemeral, undefined', but still a 'useful means' for establishing 'relations' with different stakeholders (Assorel 2008a: 5). Public relations is considered an important element of companies' activities, but it is, generally speaking, still an 'accessorial', often 'not strategic' activity. It appears that public relations activities in Italy are very complex and surely differentiated, but at the same time ambivalent. Especially the occupation, although much more professionalized than in the past, is still looking for its own specific identity. As other scholars (Introvigne 2007; Scarpulla 2006) have also noticed, PR practitioners are more and more interested in obtaining specific qualifications and training. However, PR professionals are frequently considered to lack know-how, and their actions are seen as not so sophisticated, advanced and well-structured as in other Anglo-Saxon countries (Assorel 2008a: 13). Moreover, there is still a firm belief among CEOs that public relations is rather a job that is 'learnt by doing' than a real profession. Consequently, public relations is regarded as an activity that 'welcomes' specialists from disparate fields looking for a 'second chance' (ibid: 14). For some CEOs who have people with different backgrounds and experiences among their PR practitioners, it is an advantage for the organization, for others it is a weakness, as they believe that PR officers that do not come directly from PR training are deficient in specific competences.

The problem with identity and reputation of public relations is frequently associated by senior management with the corresponding neglected preparation of those practicing public relations. An earlier study made by Assorel (2007b) shows, in fact, that most of Italian PR professionals have not a specific PR degree. Accordingly, 39% of current PR managers has an economic or political science degree, 34% has a humanistic degree and only 27% has either a

⁷⁹ In Italy media relations officers working in the public sector need to be professional journalists registered in the Italian Journalist Guild (law n.150/2000). No other communication professionals can work if not registered in the Italian Journalist Guild.

communication and/or PR degree. Consequently, about two out of three PR managers in Italy have probably learned their profession by doing, since their education was neither in PR nor in Communication Science. The situation seems to improve, if we look at PR practitioners with less than seven years of experience. Of these practitioners, 44% has a communication and/or PR degree, 32% has a humanistic degree and 24% has an economic and/or political science degree (ibid: 7). Besides these evident changes, if professionalism and credibility of public relations stand today on education and training of current senior PR managers, it is rather difficult to demonstrate that Italian public relations is not simply a 'skilled occupation' but a real 'profession' like lawyers, engineers, doctors are considered.

Institutionalization without Credibility and Professionalism

The question of institutionalization of public relations in Italy is nowadays very important, since this country has seen, especially in the last decade, an increment of financial investments in public relations activities and a boom of new practitioners in the market (Assorel 2007a). However, institutionalizing public relations requires first and foremost that public relations are considered a 'real profession' and not only a mere occupation. It also requires a certain level of professionalism and credibility. As I will show with the following arguments, it is rather difficult to promote an idea of institutionalization of Italian public relations, if the basic requirements of professionalism and credibility are not fully met and above all the profession at societal level is not considered a 'real profession'. There is, in fact, a distinction in the interpretation of the term 'profession' between Italian and English languages. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the term 'profession' involves the application of specialized knowledge of a subject, field, or science to fee-paying clientele. Professionals are thus people with a high degree and intellectual knowledge, such as lawyers, doctors and engineers. Until the 1960s, the dominant paradigm of defining professions was the functionalistic-sociological one, where a body of knowledge was a powerful source of the profession's status and power (Pieccka 2000: 211). Later on, a post-functional approach, based on the idea of license and mandate, was the main paradigm. Although a common and agreed idea on how to define a "profession" and, specifically, on defining "PR" itself is not yet reached (Niemann-Struwega & Meintjes 2008). Today, the term 'profession' is frequently synonymous with the term 'skilled occupation'. Profession is characterized by the existence of determined qualities, such as competences, knowledge and reliability. The term, thus, has lost its specific intellectual component that differentiates 'professions' from 'occupations'. In Italian language, however, the term 'profession' still refers to the original meaning of a liberal, intellectual profession (Brambilla 1982: 17). Consequently, professionals are defined as "those who are in possess of a university degree, or higher diploma, and subsequent professional certification, engages independently and continuously in intellectual activities for which enrolment on a professional register is required" (Malatesta 1995: 8)⁸⁰. Along with this definition, Italian public relations of the past fifty years cannot be considered a real profession. In fact, the majority of its practitioners came from different backgrounds and experiences, they did not necessarily have a specific higher education, and learned their job in the field. Even today the term 'profession' is commonly used and

⁸⁰ For more information on the use and development of the term 'profession', see the book 'Society and the Profession in Italy, 1860- 1914' by Malatesta.

interchanged with the term ‘occupation’, thus closer to the current English definition of profession, the original definition still endures at societal level.

The Italian State recognizes the existence of different typologies of professions, beside those which are intellectual professions by definition. There are specific laws regarding, so called, ‘liberal professions’. In particular, those indicating the dimensions and identities of professions are very important. The Italian law conceptualizes ‘liberal professions’ in two distinct types: those which are regulated and protected by law and for which it is necessary to have a specific education and being member to a professional guild, which is controlled by public bodies; and those which are not regulated. Among the unregulated professions, a distinction is made between those for which a specific education degree is required and the others for which there is no need for a specific degree (legislative degree n. 115 of 01/27/1992 and n. 319 of 02/05/1994)⁸¹. Only the liberal professions belonging to the regulated group correspond completely to the original conceptualization of ‘profession’. On the contrary, those belonging to the unregulated group, like Italian public relations, lack some of the criteria for a professional characterization.

The current situation Italian public relations is thus of an unregulated profession with no specific degree requirement (O’Connor & Muzi Falconi 2004) – although this is slowly changing – which implies that it is seeking recognition and institutionalization, but still misses credibility and professionalism. Credibility in public relations is frequently a personal rather than a professional characteristic. PR practitioners are credible among their clients and companies, because they are perceived as competent, reliable, ethical and trustworthy as individuals. For Italian practitioners, the concept of personal credibility is more important than professional credibility (Valentini & Muzi Falconi 2008).

“About the credibility of public relations practitioners, I do not believe that codes and regulations can be a proof of their professionalism, but rather it is the way they conducts the daily PR activities that counts. Today to be credible, what it matters is the respect of rules....Being transparent with your influential publics is an agreement that each single practitioner does with them and not a question of codes. Hence, the credibility that comes from the respect of rules is more a personal question than a professional one” (Interviewee n. 6, quoted from Valentini & Muzi Falconi 2008).

At societal level, public relations fails to emerge as a credible profession for its past dark history, some implications with illicit cases, like those related to *Mani pulite* scandal, and above all because of the unethical practices of some practitioners, who claim to be public relations experts, but what they do is rather distorted and far from acceptable professional standards. The poor credibility of public relations in Italy is also related to a problem with accreditation and regulation of the profession at State level. As there is no specific law, anybody who has his/her own consulting business could theoretically claim to do public relations (O’Connor & Muzi

⁸¹ More information about these legislative degrees (in Italian) at URL: http://www.giustizia.it/cassazione/leggi/dlgs115_92.html, http://www.giustizia.it/cassazione/leggi/dlgs319_94.html

Falconi 2004; Introvigne 2007). Professional organizations, like FERPI, have, for several years, tried to present the need for a specific regulation at government level, but so far it has not happened. The poor credibility of public relations has also been created by some misleading interpretation of the original English name. During the past decades and much less today, the abbreviation 'PR' has been distorted and linked with a rather awkward occupation. The Italian 'PR' (pronounced *Pierre*) is a person that promotes the activities of clubs and discotheques, for instance, by distributing invitations to parties and events. The intensive work of PR professionals 'to educate' the public opinion on what public relations is all about is visible, as mistakes on the use of the terminology are reducing, but they have not yet completely disappeared.

In respect of professionalism, whether we look at the functionalistic-sociological definition of the term 'profession' within the Italian context (Malatesta 1995; Brambilla 1982) or whether we consider the five main traits identified by Grunig and Hunt (1984) distinguishing a profession from a mere occupation, in both cases Italian public relations do not completely meet the criteria to be considered entirely a profession. First of all, Italian public relations does not share its own intellectual tradition, an established body of knowledge. Professional associations and universities have only recently started to convene on the necessity to have organic and structured programs of qualification by providing specific training and knowledge in the field. An Italian body of knowledge is also not yet established. Some studies and publications of well-known PR experts⁸² have appeared especially in the last 10 years, but it is far from exhaustive. Also, most of practitioners that are trained today have an understanding of public relations mostly through American concepts and theories, which are not necessarily suitable in practical business life to explain specific Italian situations. Another factor that has delayed the development of a specific body of knowledge is that at present, the majority of practitioners has different educations and is formed in the field. Their knowledge is thus mostly a practical one. Especially in the last ten years, the situation seems to have changed, as organizations tend to ask young practitioners to have a PR/communication degree. It will probably take another 10 years before this new generation of PR people will be in senior positions and thereby a stronger say in companies' decision making and in the way public relations is perceived by the dominant coalition.

The second aspect of professionalization, that is the values underneath the profession, is also partly fulfilled. Today, PR practitioners' values are more frequently based on companies' and clients' values than on professional ones. There are professional associations like FERPI and ASSOREL, whose aims are to promote initiatives, to analyse and improve the awareness of public relations in Italy at professional and agency levels and to enhance the specific characteristics of the PR profession⁸³, but as they are not recognized by the State, their values and regulations compel only their members (Scarpulla 2006). Similarly, the third aspect related to professional norms is not enforced. Professional norms and code of ethics exist at the level of professional organizations, but they are not binding for two reasons. First, because the majority

⁸² Among the most active PR experts that have contributed to the Italian body of knowledge in Public Relations there are Toni Muzi Falconi, Emanuele Invernizzi, Giuseppe A. Roggero, Mauro Pecchinino and Giampietro Vecchiato.

⁸³ As defined in the 'Mission' of FERPI and ASSOREL webpages, www.ferpi.it and www.assorel.it

of Italian PR practitioners are not members of a professional organization, they are not obliged to conform to ethical codes (O' Connor & Muzi Falconi 2004). Second, there is not an external institution monitoring PR practitioners' activities and sanctioning unethical practices. In this respect, even if a practitioner, member of a professional organization, carries out some unethical activities, in the worst scenario he/she will be expelled from the professional organization, but he/she could continue practicing public relations.

Conversely, it is possible to see as fully reached in the current Italian public relations the other two traits, technical skills acquired through professional training and strong professional organizations. Italian public relations are robustly influenced by a tradition of learning by doing, as the past history of public relations has shown. Thus acquiring technical as well as strategic skills through professional training is the most common way to learn to do public relations. Most of the university programs nowadays include in their curricula a period of student's internship within an organization (Introvigne 2007: 71). This is also a response to the frequent request of companies to prepare future graduates, not only with theoretical backgrounds but also in practical matters. Furthermore, the presence of strong professional organizations in Italy has been essential, especially in the last years, to increase the awareness of public relations among different stakeholders, to provide specific training and requalification for those practitioners coming from different background and to encourage the development of best practices and the respect of international norms of conducting public relations.

PR Opinions of Their Professional Standards

The problem of institutionalization of Italian public relations is not only at conceptual dimensions, as described above. It is intrinsic in the way PR practitioners behave, think and consider the question of being a reputable and credible profession. If we look at some of the findings from a recent study (Valentini & Muzi Falconi 2008) which investigated PR opinions on professional regulations and code of ethics, we could see clearly these traits. This study which was supported by FERPI and FNSI (Italian National Press Federation) investigated different dimensions of public relations practitioners and journalists' self-perceptions and perceptions of the other profession and was based on qualitative data collected through depth-interviews with six senior journalists and six senior PR practitioners as well as quantitative data through an online questionnaire. 562 questionnaires were correctly completed, of which 245 were from PR practitioners. Specifically the data presented in Table 1 shows how important the question of professional regulations and law recognition is perceived by the community of public relations practitioners. The majority of respondents believe that Italian public relations could be more institutionalized, if knowledge on their profession and law recognition goes hand in hand. A deeper knowledge of what public relations is and does among the general public would help increase PR professional credibility and would work as a stimulus for further professionalism. The question of the State's recognition is not, however, so settled. Some believe that an increment of PR professional credibility will lead to a concrete recognition by the State; others think that it is the State's recognition that will lead to a professional credibility. Others would not consider State recognition so important, but rather legitimacy at societal level. In practice, it is probably a combination of the three together with the development of a body of knowledge and specific professional standards that would move Italian public relations towards institutionalization.

TABLE 1 *PR practitioners' opinion on professional regulations*

<i>Opinions on professional regulations of PR</i>	<i>PR answers</i>	
	<i>m</i>	<i>σ</i>
PR activities could be more institutionalised by the means of law recognition.	5.5234	144,291
PR could be more institutionalised by creating a professional guild similar to the National Journalism Guild.	3.6509	205,655
An authority that observes and supervises PR practices and has power of sanctioning organizations and professionals which employ PR activities against national and international codes is necessary.	5.1121	155,604
A wider knowledge among the general public of the roles and functions of public relations can help this profession to be more legitimised and credible.	5.9151	107,010
The credibility of public relations as profession does not depend on the existence of a professional code but on the quality of actions that each PR practitioner daily manages.	5.4112	152,311

Table shows mean (m) scores, their standard divisions (σ)

Response Scale: 1= strongly disagree; 4= neutral; 7= strongly agree

Sample: 245 PR practitioners

A further problem with the idea of institutionalisation is inherently related to a problem of current PR professional standards. It would be rather difficult to promote among the dominant coalition the idea of institutionalising public relations as one of the main company's functions, if the dominant coalition does not perceive that those working in public relations share the same professional standards. Frequently, PR professionalism, which is also the expression of collective professional standards, is perceived as something more personal rather than related to the profession per se. PR practitioners recognise that the problem exists, and they are even aware of the need for developing common professional standards, but yet a solution is far from being reached.

I would like to see recognised public relations' professional qualities for what they are and not by whom they are applied. I would like that trustworthy relationships between CEOs and PR/Corporate communication managers were less important. If compared with other professions, public relations managers' positions within a company are much more dependent on their relationship with the CEOs than on the recognition of PR professionalism. Today, the first person that changes position within an organization that has changed its CEO is the Corporate communication/PR manager. It is completely normal that this happens, but it seems to me that it happens too frequently. PR managers should be valued more on the basis of their professionalism rather than on their

relationships with their bosses (Interviewee n. 4 quoted from Valentini & Muzi Falconi 2008).

Furthermore, an inherent feature of professionalism and credibility is a question of ‘ethical’ dilemma. The dilemma is whether or not PR codes of ethics are required to prove that public relations is a profession and a reputable one; whether or not having and adopting a code of ethics means for PR practitioners to be more credible among the general public and above all among the dominant coalition and clients. Also, for this feature, PR practitioners prefer an individualist approach, that is they perceive it as being important to be considered credible, ethical and trustworthy as individuals rather than as members of a profession. PR practitioners do not believe that their professional codes of ethics would actually increase their professionalism nor would they necessarily increase their credibility and reputation among their clients and/or among the senior management of the company they work for (Table 2).

TABLE 2 *PR practitioners’ opinions on their professional code of ethics*

<i>Professional ethics for PR practitioners</i>	<i>PR answers</i>	
	M	σ
The PR code of ethics is effective in regulating the profession.	3.6263	111,196
PR practitioners’ priorities of professional ethics are: transparency in their actions, accuracy in informing and loyalty towards their publics.	5.5769	113,798
Being ethical does not depend on the existence of a professional code but on the characteristics of each person.	5.1058	167,748

Table shows mean (m) scores, their standard divisions (σ)

Response Scale: 1= strongly disagree; 4= neutral; 7= strongly agree

Sample: 245 PR practitioners

Discussion and Conclusions

“The aspect of my profession that I would like to change is the missed institutionalisation. In our job, trust is gained daily though our professional successes, but not being institutionalised like the marketing director makes hard to prove every day the added values that our profession give to the organization. This, I believe, it is a negative aspect of this profession.” (Interviewee n. 1 quoted from Valentini & Muzi Falconi 2008).

The question of institutionalization of public relations is rather important and concerns not only practitioners that need to negotiate their functions day-by-day, especially for those who are in managerial and strategic positions, but also public relations as a profession and as a field of study. We cannot deny the relevance and importance of public relations at global level, but we need to take into considerations that certain questions, like the institutionalization one, are not

exactly pertinent in all countries at the same time. In Italy, public relations is fully professionalized for certain traits and has nothing less than its counterparts in other Western countries. However, it still misses some dimensions, like having its own body of knowledge, legal recognition and law enforcement of ethical practices. Above all it misses public opinion's legitimacy. Can we then talk about institutionalization of Italian public relations, when PR is not fully professionalized nor legitimized at the societal level? No, we cannot. Far from saying that in Italy there are not cases where PR is not institutionalized – there are in fact excellent practices in some larger organizations – at a macro level, it is not possible to say so. Italy is a country of small and medium size companies, and these have only started in the last fifteen years to see the value of investing in communication. The value, they see, is still attached to the press agency/publicity practices. Sometimes, the reason is related to not knowing what exactly PR can do for clients and organizations; sometimes it depends on the resources and priorities of those small and medium sized organizations. It is evident from Valentini and Falconi's study (2008) that some practitioners are highly concerned with the lack of status they have within their organisations. The lack of professional credibility and thus legitimacy is felt as a strong barrier for further professional development. Many practitioners, who would like to see public relations more institutionalised, think a wider knowledge among the general public of the roles and functions of public relations could help this profession to be more legitimised and credible, as increased knowledge would help distinguish the professionals from those who are pretending to do public relations.

It appears that the question of institutionalization loses all its intrinsic positive connotations, if credibility and professionalism are not developed before. Specifically, it will be easier and more natural to see institutionalized public relations in organizations, when those who practice PR have acquired specific competences and knowledge and are supported by strong professional norms and regulations. The problem, however, is not to be blamed only on PR professionals. These should surely be accountable for lacking the strength to put forward a public discussion on their profession, standards and practices outside association and professional circles, but also companies and clients are responsible. Still too many do not demand and expect – perhaps unconsciously – specific preparation and expertise from PR practitioners. The little knowledge among some senior managers of what public relations is all about, what it can do for organizations, and which standards and norms should people practicing abide to, make those senior managers choosing even those who assert to be public relations practitioners, but are not fully trained to work as such. A larger knowledge on the profession at societal level would make it possible to limit the amount of unprofessional PR practitioners that continuously blur the image and reputation of Italian public relations. Additionally, a clear distinction between PR competences and fields of activities from those of advertising, marketing and journalism would serve as a starting point to legitimate this profession, at least at societal level. In conclusions, it is rather too premature to discuss institutionalization of public relations in Italy, as the profession is not yet ready for this. Institutionalization of public relations in Italy should be re-conceptualized with an issue of PR professionalism and modes by which it is performed by PR practitioners. Institutionalization at macro level would come at a later stage, as a consequence of the development and maturity of the profession.

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Friend vs. Foe: Viewing the Media as a Partner in Crisis Response

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Abstract

Prominent crisis communication researchers have suggested that practitioners should work with the media as partners when managing a crisis (Ulmer, Sellnow, & Seeger, 2007), and yet little research exists to support the argument. This essay focuses on crisis cases in which the media were embraced as partners in the crisis response. Literature on crisis communication and establishing partnerships is reviewed and four key examples are provided to detail how the media can serve as a resource in a crisis.

The examples provide context for the argument for media to be seen as partners not adversaries in the crisis response. Specifically, the cases highlight examples of the media serving as an information resource, resource manager, public safety official, and public advocate.

In crisis communication literature the media are often portrayed as entities to try to control. After all, the media frame can greatly influence how an individual understands or experiences a crisis (Heath & Millar, 2004). Evans (1987) even contends “if the object is to present the company’s message to the public with as little distortion as possible, the press must be manipulated” (p. xiv). Trade publications are awash with articles depicting how to get the media to run the organization’s scripted message in a crisis. And yet, little research has focused on the essential role of the media in crisis response.

As the media embrace twenty-four-hour coverage, evolving crises fill up time and space quickly. Despite the exciting nature and public relations practitioners’ complaints, not all coverage of crises is sensationalized. “When journalists go to the scene, they join other first responders—police, firefighters, emergency medical teams, and others trained and equipped to go to a disaster” (Simpson & Cote, 2006, p. 71). The media are there to cover the story. “In the initial phase of a crisis or emergency, people want information—*now*. They want timely and accurate facts about what happened, and where, and what is being done” (Reynolds, 2002, p. 8). Oftentimes, the media deliver those facts, whether the organization approves or not.

Organizational leaders embroiled in a crisis often view reporters as nothing more than attack dogs out to get them. Media become the enemy. Schmidt (2006) suggests that management should view reporters not as enemies, but as filters through which carefully prepared messages pass before they reach stakeholders. Ulmer, Sellnow, and Seeger (2007) go a step further. They suggest practitioners should view “stakeholders, including the media, as partners when managing a crisis” (p. 36)

Partnerships are equal communication relationships with groups or organizations that have an impact on an organization. Partnerships are established through honest and open dialogue about important issues for each group or organization. Partners may be advocates for the organization or they may be groups that are antagonistic toward the

organization (Ulmer et al., 2007, p. 35).

Because the media provide instructing information to stakeholders in a crisis, reporters become part of the crisis response, not just the sieve through which manipulated messages must pass. Seeger (2006) posits that best practices of crisis communicators are grounded in effective communication with the media. “Rather than viewing the media as a liability in a crisis situation, risk and crisis communicators should engage the media, through open and honest communication, and use the media as a strategic resource to aid in managing the crisis” (p. 241).

This essay focuses on crisis cases in which the media were embraced as partners in the crisis response. Literature on crisis communication and establishing partnerships is reviewed and four key examples are provided to detail how the media can serve as a resource in a crisis. The examples provide context for the argument for media to be seen as partners and not adversaries in the crisis response.

Crisis Communication

Communication is a key aspect of emergency response (Veil, 2007). Emergency communication, most often associated with natural disasters, is designed to “protect health, safety, and the environment by keeping the public informed” (Mileti & Sorensen, 1990, p. 4). Rapid and clear communication increases the quality of decisions in a crisis (Kahai & Cooper, 2003). Without timely information in a crisis, people must rely on rumors for their information, increasing uncertainty and exacerbating the situation. Breakdowns in communication can also increase harm (Veil, Reynolds, Sellnow, & Seeger, 2008). Indeed the literature is filled with examples of miscommunication making a crisis much worse.

The purpose of crisis communication is “to prevent or lessen the negative outcomes of a crisis and thereby protect the organization, stakeholders, and industry from harm” (Coombs, 2007, p. 5). The crisis response contains three key elements: instructing information, adjusting information, and reputation management. Instructing information includes messages on what stakeholders should do to protect themselves during a crisis (Coombs, 2007). This includes messages to increase physical safety and detail what happened, how it will affect stakeholders, and how business will continue. The immediate communication need is to reduce uncertainty so audiences may act appropriately (Reynolds & Seeger, 2005). Adjusting information helps stakeholders cope psychologically with the crisis (Coombs, 2007). Adjusting messages should include what is being done to prevent the crisis from recurring and what stakeholders can do to move beyond the crisis. Reputation management includes messages designed to reduce damages to the credibility and legitimacy of the organization. Much of the research in crisis communication, particularly in public relations, has focused entirely on the reputation management response (Benoit, 1995a, 1995b, 1997, 2000; Coombs, 1995).

Crisis communication also concentrates on being the first to communicate. Coombs (2007) accurately describes crises as creating an information void. The void must be filled. If the organization is not ready to respond when the media is ready to run the story, the story will be run without the organization’s response. The void can be filled by rumor and speculation instead of facts (Caruba, 1994). When an organization does not respond it gives the impression that it is not in control and opens the door for others to control the situation (Hearit, 1994; Brummett, 1980). Following the Challenger accident, NASA took five hours to call a press conference. The media continued running coverage without NASA, getting comments on the accident from

outside experts (Kaufman, 1988) and limiting the NASA's ability to regain their expert credibility.

Organizations must communicate quickly and consistently by providing accurate information to maintain credibility. The organization is already at a credibility disadvantage for being involved in the crisis. Crisis communication derives from "the need for skilled communicators to strategically defend and explain the organization's position in the face of crisis-induced criticism, threat, and uncertainty" (Reynolds & Seeger, 2005, p. 46). However, "As responsible members of the community, organizations have a right and, in some cases, an obligation to interact with their community" (Troester, 1991, p. 528). Media partnerships are needed, in most cases, as a conduit for that interaction.

Establishing Partnerships

Effective interaction with the media can be of critical importance in reducing losses. In disasters, information conveyed by the media can be decisive in preventing death and injury (Moreira, 2007).

The media can be used to convey instructions to the public, stimulate donations, reinforce efforts to gain broad public support for mitigating actions, engender confidence in community leadership, greatly reduce the number of enquiries from the public, and provide useful coverage that may facilitate future funding campaigns. (Moreira, 2007, p. 15)

Research has demonstrated there is value in inter-organizational linkages in public relations activities generally and in issues management specifically (Sellnow et al., in press). The benefits of establishing a partnership include the combining of resources and expertise, the sharing of good practice, and the spreading of costs and risks (Vangen & Huxham, 2003). Broom, Casey, and Ritchey (1997) suggest that "relationships represent the exchange or transfer of information, energy, or resources" (p. 94). If the organization can deliver its message more smoothly and the media can get the story without hassle, both entities are better off. These benefits constitute what Huxham (1996) terms "collaborative advantage" – positive outcomes not achievable by organizations working independently. The attributes of the resources exchange are what define the relationship (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997, p. 94). Inter-organizational projects can be risky, however, because, according to Newell and Swan (2000), they "are not governed by traditional hierarchical relationships [therefore] critical problems surround the development and maintenance of trust and the deployment of power amongst members" (p. 1288).

Trust is used to refer to the *expectation* that both parties will behave reliably and predictably (Tomlinson, 2005). Maguire, Phillips, and Hardy (2001) describe "identity based trust" as the strongest form of trust in which "trustees forgo opportunistic behavior not because of deterrents, penalties or rewards but because it is seen to be the 'right' thing to do" (p. 290). If trust is lacking in an inter-organizational partnership, power becomes the dominant quality in the relationship (Tomlinson, 2005). Hardy and Phillips (1998) highlight three aspects of power – formal authority, control of critical resources, and discursive legitimacy. Tomlinson (2005) explains that if one party in the relationships is better positioned to pursue self-interest, the risks will not be evenly spread in the relationship. In addition, if one party in the relationship can

exercise greater control of the communications process, it can limit the participation of the other party, thereby privileging the interests of the more powerful party and restricting the opportunity for the marginal party to exercise their discursive legitimacy.

The media must still do their job. They will report the facts they discover in their reporting. Organizations cannot expect the media to overlook details detrimental to the organization because there is an established partnership anymore than a reporter can assume the organization will not provide information to other reporters. The goal of the partnership is to streamline, not inhibit, the communication process from the organization to stakeholders and from the media to the public. The partnership allows both entities to establish rapport and credibility before the crisis.

Credibility is based largely on the organization's performance during normal times (Hurst, 1995; Seeger & Ulmer, 2002). Coombs (2000) asserts that "background is a part of initial credibility; hence, [organizations] are more believable during a crisis if there is a strong, favorable reputation prior to the crisis" (p. 82). A credible reputation creates a "halo effect" that extends to stakeholders during crises (p. 82). Relationships should be established with the media long before crisis strikes. But establishing relationships is not the same as establishing partnerships with the media. Knowing your beat reporter's name so you can call on him/her in a press conference is not the same expecting both parties to behave reliably and predictably (Tomlinson, 2005).

Sitting down with reporters during the crisis planning process allows for open communication in which both parties can ask questions to understand what will be expected in a crisis. Ulmer et al. (2007) note the battle over public access to information and privacy laws. Organizations can get a feel for the type of information reporters need while reporters can learn upfront what information must legally be withheld. Expectations can be set and uncertainty reduced as to how organizations will communicate and how media prefer to receive information from organizations (Ulmer et al., 2007).

Established partnerships create a protocol for communication. Utility companies often rely on the media to emphasize what customers can do to help them restore service as quickly and safely as possible (Brown, 2003). Partnerships also allow for a smooth process during the most chaotic times instead of a sudden onslaught of impersonal interactions and retroactive responses. Following Hurricane Katrina practitioners commented on the importance of media relationships.

Some practitioners fielded 100–150 media calls a day. For many of the practitioners, working with the local media was less of a challenge than working with the national and international media. The ease of working with local media appeared to be the result of working relationships built over time. Local media were also useful to practitioners for responding to rumors and misinformation. (Lundy & Broussard, 2007, p. 221)

Ropeik suggests that "Good risk and crisis communication should involve constant monitoring of the media, both to learn from what journalists have found (failure to do this played a role in FEMA's poor response to Hurricane Katrina) and to correct immediately mistakes or inaccurate information" (p. 256). As a partner in the crisis response, the media can be relied on as a resource. The following cases demonstrate how the media can be an essential partner to public relations practitioners in a crisis.

Media as a Resource

As the media become part of the first responder team (Simpson & Cote, 2006), they have the potential to play a variety of roles depending on the crisis type. The cases listed here detail examples of the media serving as an information resource, resource manager, public safety official, and public advocate.

Information Resource

The most common role of the media in a crisis is as an information resource. Ulmer et al. (2007) detail how investigators partnered with the media to help catch the *D.C. Sniper* by reporting the description of the suspect vehicle. The media not only relay essential information to stakeholders, however, they can also provide information back to the organization. During the 2003 San Diego wildfires, the media proved to be a valuable resource. The city did not have the means to track the widespread fires. Fire Chief Jeff Bowman held up to five press conferences each day, not only to report progress to the public, but to also gain information from reporters who often had better information about the location of the fires.

Chief Bowman had spent the year before the fires working with the media to report on fire risks and inadequate funding for the fire department (Ulmer et al., 2007). The relationships established with the media before the fires allowed for comfortable, candid responses under intense pressure. Even more, the media's field reporters were able to provide the location of the fast moving fires, understanding that the department did not have the resources to track that essential information. Bowman explained that "without a positive precrisis relationship with the media, an effective response would have been impossible (Ulmer et al., 2007, p. 135).

Resource Manager

The media assisted in the response efforts following the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995 by reporting what supplies were needed. Truckloads of flashlights and batteries arrived in addition to booties for the search dogs clambering over broken glass. A feature of the Oklahoma City National Memorial focuses on the role of the media in bringing together massive resources (OKC Memorial, 2008). For example, following a call for work boots for the rescuers, a volunteer accepted a pair of slightly worn boots from a citizen. As the individual was getting back into his vehicle, the volunteer realized he was wearing only socks. The calls for supplies relayed by the media following the tragedy inspired people to donate the shoes off their feet. People waited in lines for hours to give blood until the media reported the blood bank could not take anymore. The media also reported volunteer requests, which encouraged an overwhelming community response. Similar experiences following 9/11 were also reported (Sellnow et al., 2008).

Public Safety

When the Interstate 35W bridge collapsed in Minneapolis, Minnesota reporters were part of the first responder team to the scene before the area was cordoned off. The media provided much needed accident details and traffic directions for emergency responders and citizens to respond appropriately. News stations even collaborated on information to assure the details of the warnings and response were accurately reported to save lives and minimize chaos. "Normally, reporters respect each other's space...But in this emergency, most were accommodating to each

other to help get the information out” (Report, 2007, para 16). In the acute phase of the crisis the focus was not just on what happened and who was to blame, but on public safety and how to minimize the affect of the crisis on citizens. The media provided the initial instructing information to minimize harm until the Department of Transportation could respond to the crisis.

Public Advocate

Journalists have long carried the reputation of being the watchdogs for citizens, monitoring government and corporate giants for power abuse. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the media coverage was so intense and illuminated so many failures and disparities in the response and recovery effort that legislation was introduced to change how communities prepare for crisis. While FEMA and the Bush Administration no doubt felt the media was representing their attack dog persona, organizations that reached out to the media, in particular those who already had established relationships with reporters (Lundy & Broussard, 2007), were able advance their mission by filling the information void created by the crisis and left open by a slow government response to media concerns.

Conclusion

Researchers have suggested that practitioners should view “stakeholders, including the media, as partners when managing a crisis” (Ulmer et al., 2007, p. 36), and yet little research has focused on this role of the media in crisis response. Literature on crisis communication and establishing partnerships was reviewed and four key examples were provided to detail how the media can serve as a resource in a crisis. The examples provide context for the argument for media to be seen as partners in a crisis, specifically, as an information resource, resource manager, public safety official, and public advocate. Further research is needed to document the nature of these partnerships and the outcome of crises in which media partnerships were used.

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Formulation of a measurement scale from the perceptions a community has of a corporate brand based on the implementation of a Corporate Social Responsibility Program

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Introduction

The ongoing research is oriented to achieve a measurement scale that allows the measurement of results of a Corporate Social Responsibility program; particularly those directed to community, based on the community's valuations or perceptions of the organization's brand. There are several theoretical references that approach the concept of brand, brand from the product or service offered by the organization, but little for the organization as a whole.

However, less than a decade ago, Don and Majkea Shultz have been establishing new concepts oriented to the brand in a more integrated way, where the organization mobilizes to interact with all the stakeholders that the company wants to reach and engage in dialogue.

In this paper a conceptual frame is presented to expose the development of topics related to the research, where social responsibility is included, community stakeholders, as well as intangible attributes that constitute the organization's image and reputation, and the monitors that measure the corporate behavior.

Some preliminary results of the first case study, allows us to present some first approaches and basis about the importance for an organization to systematize, and value the attributes as intangible value for the organization's brand.

Objectives

General

To identify how a corporate brand is perceived by a community, based on the results of the implementation of a Corporate Social Responsibility program that will contribute to the formulation of a measurement scale. Case study of three local companies from Barranquilla, Colombia.

Specific

- To define the attributes that should be taken into account by an organization when measuring their corporate brand, from the implementation of a Corporate Social Responsibility program.

- To determine, to what extent, the perceptions a community has of their corporate brand, based on the results of the implementation of a Corporate Social Responsibility program, benefits the organization.

Research Questions

- ❖ Which are the perceptions formed by a community of a corporate brand, based on the implementation of a Corporate Social Responsibility program executed by a company?
- ❖ What is the importance of identifying a measurement system that will allow the companies to quantify their results in Corporate Social Responsibility, based on the community's perception?

Corporate Social responsibility

During the 1999 Davos World Forum, The Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, announced the Global Pact with the objective of promoting a social dialogue for the creation of a global corporate citizenship. A Citizenship that would allow conciliation between the interests of the companies and the values and demands of the civil society, the projects of the UN, unions and NGOs, over ten principles related with the areas of human rights, work, environment and corruption. Companies then passed from being considered a legal body which only purpose is to generate profits, to be considered a person with feelings, with responsibility for the rest of the society, and as a good corporate citizen (Carey, 2001). In other words, they turned into companies with Corporate Social responsibility.

Matten (quoted in Tracey, Phillips & Haugh, 2005) states that corporate citizenship can be seen in two ways: the limited vision and the equivalent vision. Under the limited vision, the company does voluntary work on communities. On the other hand, the equivalent vision considers that corporate citizenship equals Corporate Social Responsibility, through which corporations seek to minimize the negative consequences of their activities while maximizing the positive ones. The equivalent vision will be addressed in this study, where there is a major involvement of the company with the community, with the objective of achieving long term benefits for its environment.

The nonprofit organization Business for Social Responsibility (quoted by Abuderne, 2006), following this equivalent vision of corporate citizenship and Corporate Social Responsibility, defines CSR as a “set of policies, practices and programs that have financial success at the same time they honor the ethical values and respect people, communities, and the natural environment”. In words of the European Union, the social responsible companies are

Those companies that are environmentally and socially committed with their commercial activity. In other words, that not only pay attention to their productive process, but also to matters that before were not important, but today are fundamental, like it is to consider that what goes in there are not only machines but also human beings, and what surrounds it are not only goods to be consumed or used in the productive cycle, but also an environmental and social setting to identify with (Barrachina, 2003, p.23).

To follow this socially responsible behavior is, according to Patricia Abuderne (2006), the right way to proceed in a world where half of the population lives with less than two dollars a day, where one thousand million people can't write or read, and where five hundred million human beings never try a glass of pure water. As Corporate Social Responsibility contributes to the development of social and environmental conditions, it is also related to good financial performance of the companies in the market. Abuderne (2006) states that "Corporate Social Responsibility is the herald of a good administration, and a good administration is the best indicator of financial performance".

The Stakeholders in Corporate Social Responsibility programs

In order to materialize the responsible behavior of a company in a Corporate Social Responsibility program or action, Paul Tracey (2005) affirms that a company must include a dialogue with stakeholders, the search for long term solutions that build capacities, rather than fast contents, and must be receptive to the local needs and priorities. In the case of this research, we understand stakeholders as "a broad category of personas that can be affected or affect the managerial decisions of a company – such as employees, suppliers and community residents" (Grunig 2001). In agreement with the objectives previously established, this study will address social responsibility programs directed to community stakeholders.

- ▼ Taylor (quoted in Muthuri, Chapple & Moon, 2008) defines a community as a "relationship between elements of 'locality', 'alignments of interest' and 'collective action'". In this case, the community is a non geographic gathering of interests. In other words, a group with a common issue or interest, where geographic localization does not matter.

An organization can manage its social responsibility actions or programs with community in two ways: through the collaborative way or through the structure of an in house project. The authors establish that the collaborative form allows companies and third sector organizations to develop, and implement, joint strategies to deal with social problems, giving both, NGO'S and companies, a measure of responsibility and control in the delivery. Although this form builds capacities within an organization, such as developing real expectations in relation to social results, and the management of resources to support the third sector effectively, the barrier between the company and the community does not disappear. The third sector organization or NGO will always have more involvement with the community.

According to the objectives of this project, the criteria for the selection of the social responsibility program is the structure of a in- house project which, as Tracey (2005) affirms, through the establishment of a department or area within the organization, responsible of developing and delivering the company's social responsibility objectives, "allows to build a coherent group of integrated activities that are consistent to the company's strategic objectives and organizational capacities." This way facilitates the participation of the organizations in the community, due to the fact that the company interacts in a direct way with its local stakeholders. An in – house project is only viable when the Corporate Social Responsibility objectives are aligned with the company's main objectives.

The value of the corporate brand in Corporate Social Responsibility Programs

It is important that the Social Responsibility objectives are aligned with the organization's objectives, because there must be coherence between the company's behavior and its strategic vision in order to achieve an alignment between the perceptions of the external stakeholders and the way the organization wants to be defined. What the present study seeks to achieve is to be able to look at the results of a CSR program from what its brand represents to its beneficiaries. In order to do so, we will start by defining brand as:

Alignments between the origin and everyday practices of the organization (organizational culture); where the organization aspires to go (strategic vision); how the organization is perceived by external stakeholders (images); all nested in perceptions of who the organization is (identity). (Schultz, Antorini & Csaba, 2005, p. 24).

According to Schultz (2005), the brand originates from the different combinations of symbols, values and beliefs that come out from the organization and its dynamic relations with the internal and external stakeholders. In this sense, corporate branding is the way in which an organization can build relationships with its environment in a strategic way (Schultz, 2006, p. 26). It represents the idea that an organization and everything it stands for, mobilize to interact with the stakeholders the company wants to reach and engage in dialogue (Schultz, et. als., 2005).

Hatch & Schultz (2001) developed the Corporate Branding Tool Kit under the premise that every company should align three essential and interdependent elements – known as strategic stars – in order to create strong corporate brands: vision, culture and image. It consists of a series of questions designed to reveal the misalignments between these elements. The first series of questions look at the relationship between vision and culture; the alignment between the management and the employees. The second refers to the culture and image, finding possible gaps between attitudes of the employees and the perceptions of the outside world. The third explores the gap between vision and image – Is management taking the company into a direction that is supported by the stakeholders?

The authors define the vision as what the management aspires for the company. By culture they understand the organization's values, behaviors and attitudes; the way the employees feel about the company. And finally they conceive image as the general impression the outside world has of the company, including all the stakeholders: customers, shareholders, media, and general public, among others. The gaps between these “strategic stars” constitute an obstacle for the creation of a strong corporate brand (2001).

The gaps that, according to Hatch and Schultz (2001), may appear between these elements are:

The gap between vision and culture, that occurs when the top management takes the company into a strategic direction that the employees do not understand or support.

The gap between culture and image, which occurs when the lack of alignment between the image of the company and the organizational culture makes the clients confused about who is the company and what does it stands for. In most cases this means that the companies don't ‘walk the talk’ tarnishing its image between key stakeholders. (Hatch y Schultz, 2001).

The gap between image and vision is the third obstacle that hinders a strong corporate brand, and it consists of the conflict between the outsiders' images and the management's

strategic vision. Companies can't afford ignoring its stakeholders; even the vision most carefully built will fail if it is not aligned with what the clients want from the company (2001).

Hatch and Schultz state that even though the vision and the corporate culture are powerful tools, once these are aligned with the stakeholders' images, the corporate brand can become a center of power.

Corporate Social Responsibility in branding communication and strategy

Schultz (2005, p.29) states that the change from product branding to corporate branding has been reflected in theoretical developments within different academic disciplines that, when integrated, provide a more dynamic and complex understanding of how organizations express themselves and engage in simultaneous relations with their multiple stakeholders. In the authors' opinion, the disciplines that have contributed the most to the understanding of corporate branding are: marketing, visual identity, communication studies and strategy. Keller y Aaker (quoted in Schultz et.al., p.31) assure that corporate branding, under the integration of these disciplines, expands the range of image building activities as the brand opens to a new set of dimensions and attributes that can be more attractive and engaging to consumers. "For example, corporate branding enables companies to include their social programs and social responsibility activities, in the brand, thereby directly involving consumers directly" (Schultz et.al, p.32). Given the objectives of the present study, we will pay special attention to the communication studies discipline and the strategy, being these disciplines the ones that include the company's social behavior.

In the field of communications, corporate communication has contributed to the corporate branding by showing the growing interdependence between a variety of internal and external stakeholders.

The shift from consumers to all company stakeholders, implied in the move from product to corporate branding, has been reflecting within communication studies in the concern for the social legitimacy of corporations towards all of their stakeholders. Social legitimacy among all stakeholders is seen as necessary in order for companies to obtain a license to operate within societies and has imposed demands for more transparency and more explicit ethical standards for companies. Thus, corporate branding has required companies to link who they are with how they respond to the growing demands for legitimacy. These demands address everything from corporate governance to an improved documentation of corporate behavior in areas such as environment and social responsibility (Schultz, et. als., 2005, p. 36).

This demand for a greater transparency has generated a more holistic way of communicating who the company is and how does it contributes to its various stakeholders (Schultz, 2005).

In the other hand, the strategy discipline has focused in the value of the intangible resources generated by the company, considering its content as the ability of the company to mobilize these resources towards activities that generate a competitive advantage (2005, p.43). Schultz identifies corporate reputation as one of the recent developments concerning intangible assets. Forbrum & Van Riel (quoted in 2005, p. 43) define Corporate Reputation as "the longitudinal judgment of who the company is and what it stands for among multiple

stakeholders”. The authors state that the importance of corporate reputation as an intangible value for corporate brands lies in the fact that they are much more invested in their stakeholder relations than product brands, exposing their organizational culture in more direct and transparent ways (2005, p. 44).

The strong focus on corporate reputation has been enhanced by the growing mistrust and skepticism towards companies in the Western part of the World that was generated by a series of corporate scandals and a global ‘cult of greed’ among leading companies and executives. Those experiences have strengthened stakeholders’ demands for increasing corporate transparency and expectations that companies become more sincere. In essence, this implies that companies walk the talk and stand behind who they claim to be in their different stakeholder relationships. This pressure has forced companies into more and more situations where they have to care about the credibility of their corporate reputation. A deliberate move towards corporate branding implies that a company needs to be more serious when making identity claims about who it is and what it is going to deliver to its various stakeholders, as stakeholders have become more aware and attentive. (Schultz, et. al., 2005, p. 44).

The latter shows how in the corporate branding practices and methods the strategy goes from tangible to intangible assets through competitive analyses, stakeholder relations, and Corporate Social Responsibility (Schultz, 2006, p. 47).

Turning intangibles into tangibles : a value of a social responsibility program

Guiad and León (2001) define intangible as an aspect that can’t be easily perceived and can’t be assigned with an actual or approximate value, such as knowledge, intellectual assets, abilities, ideas and beliefs. How the organization is perceived by external stakeholders and the image they form of the company are important intangibles when measuring a corporate brand (Schultz, 2005).

Image is formed by a series of attributes and values that work as a stereotype, and that define the behaviors and opinions of the collectivity (2001). Paul Capriotti, defines attributes as the ones that identify the company as a social actor and distinguishes it from other entities of the sector. This attribute network is formed by information that the individual believes is right, and that as a consequence he or she will evaluate and probably act according to it.

Two components of the attributes are distinguished: functional attributes and emotional attributes. Functional attributes are related with tangible characteristics that can be easily measured, while the emotional component is associated with psychological dimensions that are manifested with feelings and attitudes towards the company. (Leblanc y Nguyen , 1996)

In this structure of beliefs there can be cognitive elements (aspects involving real knowledge or proved things) and also affective elements (of emotional type that don’t correspond to analytical matters). These two structures (cognitive and affective) are deeply related and they influence each other. Thus, it is difficult to determine until what point the image of an organization is constituted by cognitive or emotional aspects, it could be stated that each of the attributes by which an organization is identified or associated have both components, the cognitive element and the emotional aspect. (Capriotti, 1999, p.12).

However, after a broad bibliographical research, it can be stated that organizations haven't identified attributes that will allow them value how are they perceived in their social responsibility programs. There is no theory or bibliographic reference that supports it. Taking into account that credibility is one of the expectations to which corporate brands are faced (Schultz, p. 46) and that trust is one of the main attributes of the organizational reputation (Rawlins 2007), for the particular case of this research, these two attributes declared by the author are taken as elements that support the search of information with the case study stakeholders.

Nooteboom (quoted in Berens and Van Riel, 2006), defines trust as the "subjective probability that someone assigns to a benevolent action of an agent or groups of agents." In this sense, trust is related with the prediction of a social actor's behavior. Van Riel affirms that the three dimension of trust are reliability, honesty and benevolence.

Reliability, according to Berens, is understood as "the perceived ability to maintain explicit or implicit promises" while honesty is the "belief that an entity is reliable in its word, that would keep up promises and obligations, and that is sincere". Thus, honesty is not related to the ability to fulfill promises, but with the intentions of fulfilling them. Benevolence is the "good will perceived for behaving in a way that everyone is benefited" (Berens et. al, 2006). While honesty and reliability are related to the possibility of the organization to fulfill explicit promises, benevolence is related to the possibility that an organization behaves in a cooperative way, independent of the promises it makes.

Brad Rawlins (quoting Bradach & Eccles, 1989; Cummings & Bromily, 1996), affirms that trust, from an organizational perspective, can be defined as the collective opinion of a group from another group, in terms that the other one is going to be honest, is going to fulfill the commitments, and won't take advantage of others.

Hunt and Grunig (quoted in Rawlins, 2007), identify trust as the essential component of a satisfactory relationship between the organization and its stakeholders. These authors identify integrity, reliability and competence as the three dimension of trust. Integrity is the belief that an organization is fair, reliability is defined in a similar way to Berens and Van Riel, as the belief that an organization is going to do what it says it is going to do, while the competence is the belief that an organization has the ability and capacity of doing what it says is going to do.

According to Berens and Van Riel credibility is a very similar concept to trust. Newell and Goldsmith (2001) define it as the "expertise, trustworthiness, truthfulness of a company". Callison (quoted in Rawlins, 2007) states that "credibility refers to the judgment made by the message receiver in terms of how much he/ she believes in the communicator". Said in few words, to be credible is to be believed (Budd, 2000).

In this way we can appreciate how trust and credibility are attributes that can be adjusted to the community perceptions about the companies and their social responsibility programs. As stated by Stacks and Watson (2007, P.69) "credibility is dependent on the trust between the organization and it's publics, which is highly correlated with both, reputation and relationship." Relationships established through a Corporate Social Responsibility program, and the community's perceptions about it will determine the image of the corporate brand.

Monitors

In terms of perceptions, there are organizations or monitors that measure stakeholders' perceptions of different dimensions of the companies in order to measure corporate reputation. Corporate Reputation "is the result of a corporate behavior that harmonizes the organization's hard assets and soft assets" (Villafañe, 2004).

The reputation is the consequence of good economic results and social responsible behaviors, reputed companies usually possess a quality commercial offer, at the same time that they produce an emotional appeal to their present and future employees. (2004; p. 26)

Although not all the monitors measure Corporate Social Responsibility perceptions in a direct way, they do take into account the different variables and dimensions to measure the company's commitment with the social sector. Justo Villafañe (2004, p 100) states that all monitors share a common denominator that consists of assessing corporate behavior in order to establish rankings that classify companies followed by a hierarchy based upon the level of fulfillment of the evaluation criteria. Some monitors are the Reputation Institute, Merco, The most respected companies of the Financial Times, and the FTSE4 Good.

The Reputation Institute with the RepTrack tool evaluates the reputation of the biggest companies around the world through the consumer perceptions of 6 specific dimensions: financial performance, products and services, workplace, vision and leadership, emotional appeal and social responsibility. In the social responsibility dimension, the general public perceptions about the company's good causes, the environmental responsibility and the responsibility with the community are evaluated.

In the same way, The Merco Monitor of Justo Villafañe & Associates uses six variables similar to the ones employed by the Reputation Institute: Economic and financial performance, quality of the commercial offer, internal reputation, company's international dimension, innovations, and ethics and social responsibility. The last dimension is subdivided into ethical corporate behavior, commitment with community, and social and environmental responsibility.

This case shows perceptions taken from the top management's perspective of the highest incomes companies in the countries where the study takes place, followed by a documental analysis of annual reports and memories, and finally the evaluation of experts for each of the variables mentioned before.

The objective of the reputation monitor of the Financial Times Most Respected Companies, is to identify the most respected companies by their colleagues from other organizations and the reason why are considered this way. In relation to Corporate

Social Responsibility, the executives are asked about the importance of CSR in their business, and they are asked to number three companies they consider the most socially responsible.

FTSE4 Good and the Dow Jones Sustainability Monitors measure the Social Responsibility from the company's perspective based on its own performance. Then, it is evaluated by experts to finally publish a ranking. The FTSE4 Good has four variables: environment, sustainability, stakeholders' relations, and human rights. On the other hand, Dow Jones Sustainability Index promotes that investments should take place with social responsible companies. This monitor measures Corporate Social Responsibility having in consideration the following variables: corporate government, investor relations, strategic planning, measurement

systems, risk and crisis, conduct codes, customer relations, supplies procedures, bribe and corruption, social dimension, remuneration and job satisfaction.

This is how we can see that none of the monitors previously mentioned measure Corporate Social Responsibility from the perspective of the community benefited or affected by the organization's activities. Statement that is not coherent with the concept of corporate brand, which requires that the brand perceptions come from the stakeholder that directly relates with the organization. In the case of social responsibility programs the community is the stakeholder that directly relates and receives the organization's behavior.

There are also different measuring systems that have as an objective, to establish models that allow companies to measure performance in their Corporate Social Responsibility programs. These are created by non governmental organizations or consultancy organizations, among which you can find: Ethos, Acción Empresarial, United Nations Global Reporting Initiative.

The Brazilian NGO, Ethos, has the objective of mobilizing and helping companies to manage their business in a social responsible way. For achieving this, Ethos provides to interested companies a questionnaire to measure their social responsibility performance. The companies should answer yes or no to each of the questions in the following topics: transparency and government, internal public, environment, suppliers, consumers and clients, government and society, and community. Each topic is divided into indicators that help companies evaluate their performance in each of the areas. In the Community area, the indicators measure philanthropy, social investment, strategic actions and social area.

In Chile, the organization Acción Empresarial establishes that indicators allow companies to auto-evaluate their practices, policies and strategies in different aspects that involve the responsibility of a corporative citizen. The indicators cover five areas: corporative ethics, responsible marketing, work life quality, environment, and commitment with the community. Each one of these areas has its own indicators that are valued by the use of a likert scale. In the particular case of community commitment, it is divided into: impacts of the organizations' activities in the community, relationships with the community organization's (hospitals, Schools etc), mechanisms that support social projects, actions strategies and criteria in social investment, support to the voluntary personnel work, leadership and social influence, and participation in government's social projects.

GRI (Global Reporting Initiative) is a model developed by the United Nations for the elaboration of sustainability memories that allow companies to inform about their economic, social and environmental performance. In the social area, indicators focus their attention in the impact that organizations have in the community in which they operate. These indicators take into account the next aspects: community, corruption, public policy, disloyal competitive behavior, and normative fulfillment. The main indicator in the community topic is SO1, that refers to the nature, reach and effectiveness of the programs and practices to evaluate the impacts of the operations within the community, including the entrance, operation and exit of the organization" (Guide for the Elaboration of Sustainability Memories, 2006).

The majority of the organizations usually report performance indicators that can be quantified and easy to measure, but not necessarily indicators that are more meaningful when it comes to understand the impact on community in terms of changes in external conditions. Performance indicators monitor and evaluate the efficiency and determine if planned activities or expected results are achieved with a define budget and time. On the other hand, impact indicators evaluate the effectiveness of a particular intervention and describe if projects outputs have

intention or unintentional implications on the community (Reporting on Community Impacts, 2008). Implications reflected in the community's perception of the organization's corporate brand.

Methodology

The characteristics of this project are considered to be under an *exploratory study* model, due to the fact that there are very few theoretical antecedents of studies focused on the effect of Corporate Social Responsibility programs on corporate brand, particularly those programs intended for the development of communities in which an organization is interested. The studies that have been consulted direct the knowledge of corporate branding towards the product or service provided by the company, and only a few authors have developed proposals and generated new knowledge about corporate brands in a more integrated sense.

The first stage of the study, as it is stated in the first specific objective, seeks to identify variables or categories of analysis that will allow the development of a series of attributes or values related to the perceptions that a community has of a Corporate Social Responsibility Program over the brand. In order to do so, following this purpose, twenty in depth interviews took place with the recipients of the program Reiniciar, which is the first case study from the multinational company Electricaribe – Unión Fenosa located in the city of Barranquilla.

The qualitative interviews allowed the data analysis that was followed by the codification of topics. The relevant topics were grouped in relation with the questions from the interview and then in the form of answer categories. Some of the categories used in the interview are supported by the conceptual referents addressed in the Conceptual Frame.

Being consistent with the previous statement, the nature of the research problem indicates the need to find a better understanding of the effect of Corporate Social Responsibility on branding through the exploration and interpretation of the managerial perceptions (ontology) that the social actors have of CSR. That's why the qualitative approach was chosen and an empirical stage took place as a start point for this research.

Results

The following are some preliminary results of the perceptions delivered by the members of the group Reiniciar, based on their experiences as beneficiaries of a Corporate Social Responsibility program led by the multinational company Unión Fenosa. This program had as an objective to help an unemployed and vulnerable population with empirical knowledge on electrical work to reinitiate their live project with better opportunities of economic and social development.

1. All of the 20 individuals that participated in the two focus groups agreed that the program completely accomplished the objectives that the organization traced for the electrical training of a group of people in Santa Marta. More than the acknowledgement of the fulfillment of objectives that Reiniciar received from the community members, cognitive and emotional attributes were also valued, as stated by Capriotti (1992: 12), to refer to elements that influence an individual when forming an image towards an organization.

In the case of the program Reiniciar, the cognitive attributes are related to the degree of real knowledge that the members of the community showed about the nature and fulfillment of objectives of the program during the process. The emotional attributes are related to the significance and positive assessments that the consulted group assigned to the program related to better life, working and family conditions for them.

2. When looking to the perceptions that the members of the community have about Electricaribe – Fundación Unión Fenosa and Energía Social as a single organization or group that led the project, it was found that the members of the program only recognized Unión Fenosa as the only leader of the project interested in giving resources and initiatives to a vulnerable community. When referring to Unión Fenosa, they professed feelings of gratitude and appreciation, and acknowledged how the project Reiniciar showed them new employment perspectives through the expedition of a diploma that accredited them as ideal workers in the area of electrical installations. Contrary to this, they referred to Electricaribe and Energía Social as companies providers of electrical service that were chaotic and that charged too much for the service.

The latter shows the little clarity that the beneficiaries of the program had about the brand Electricaribe – Unión Fenosa and Energía Social as a sole company or group that led Reiniciar. As stated by Schultz (2005: 29), the difference between product branding and corporate branding lies in the way the organizations express and engage in relationships with their multiple stakeholders.

3. When comparing the attributes of remembrance that the organization would expect to achieve in the communities where Reiniciar was implemented, and the ones perceived by the benefited, it was found that there is no alignment between these two.

The organization seemed to be remembered as a brand that is close to them and that had recognition. It was found that there was a high valuation of the program, but it didn't meet what the company stated before. The community members identified the following attributes and defined them based on the experience they had with the program:

- **Credibility:** the degree in which Unión Fenosa fulfilled and materialized the promises they made at the beginning of the program.
- **Trust:** The autonomy and personal growth that the diploma gave them as carriers of a knowledge that allows them to have professional perspectives.
- **Closeness:** The communication that remains between the organization and the members of the community, even after the program ended.

These intangibles can be defined as those non monetary values, without material substance, that allow the organizations to capitalize assets in the minds of their stakeholders based on the actions that determine their organizational attitudes.

Communicating ‘dual citizenship’ – how do charities manage their reputation for ‘good works’ while undertaking commercial activities?

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Abstract

Charities and not-for-profit organisations have traditionally eschewed commercial operations in favour of direct fund-raising from supporters. Building on Goodall’s (2000) exploration of sectoral values, it can be said that competitive pressures are driving charities to take on ‘dual citizenship’ through activity in both profit (commercial) and nonprofit (voluntary) sectors.

In the United Kingdom, there are some 170,000 charitable organisations in England and Wales which generate £46 billion in annual revenue (UK Charity Commission 2008). There has, however, been little scholarly attention or professional focus on the impact that commercial trading by charities has on relations with key stakeholders, such as supporters, and upon the reputation of the community-focused organisations.

This paper reports a case study of a UK charity and explores, using document analysis and phone interviews with supporter-stakeholders, their perceptions of the impact of commercial trading upon the organisation’s reputation as well as their relationship and level of engagement with the organisation.

It found that donors are overwhelmingly in support of commercial activities, as long as these are aligned with the charity’s values. The study, however, also found that commercial activities should not deflect the charity from its perceived and announced mission. There were also lessons arising from the study on frequency and style of communication, and the relevance of models of communication, c.f. Grunig’s four descriptors, and measurements of relationships (Hon and Grunig 1999). The paper concludes with proposals for further research.

Introduction

Charitable organisations operate in an increasingly complex, market-driven environment. In England and Wales alone, 170,000 charitable organisations compete for over £46 billion in annual revenue (UK Charity Commission 2008). This intense competition means many charitable organisations are diversifying revenue by augmenting or supplanting traditional fund-raising with commercial, revenue-driven activities such as charity stores, branded products and ticketed events.

While not new, commercial trading by charities has only begun receiving scholarly attention in the last decade (Horne 2000; Horne and Maddrell 2000; Guo 2006; O’Neil 2006; Zimmerman and Dart 1998). Very little is known about how commercial activities—and the way charities communicate about them—impact organisational relationships with donors. Donors

bring much more than just financial resources to an organisation. As such, the interaction with an organisation is more than transactional and involves complex perceptions and expectations.

Cross-sectional view of reputation

With one foot in both the profit and nonprofit sectors (Goodall 2000), it can be said that many charities hold sectoral ‘dual citizenship’, a complex situation for practitioners managing the reputation building process. Academic scholarship strongly supports the benefits of positive reputational regard (Caruana 1997; Fombrun 1996; Fombrun and Shanley 1990; Fombrun and van Riel 2003; Porter 1985; Rindova and Fombrun 1999) in both sectors (Gainer and Padanyi 2002). Yet the reputation of nonprofits seems especially vulnerable to marketing missteps (Tapp 1996) as trust-building is of paramount importance in the nonprofit sector (Fenton et al. 1999; Greiling 2006; Ritchie et al. 1998; Sargeant and Lee, 2002). Effectively managing relationships with and perceptions of important stakeholders helps build trust, an essential element of donor-organisation relationships in the nonprofit sector (Paine 2003; Sargeant and Lee 2004). Relationships with these stakeholders are a strong component of reputation (Fombrun 1996; Ledingham and Bruning 2000; Spencer 2001). Meeting the expectations of stakeholders within these relationships is a vital component of a good reputation (Freeman 1984; Mahon and Wartick 2003; Saxton 1998).

Exchange models within relationships

The relationships in which an organization may engage are many-fold, particularly for human services charities whose beneficiaries are people. In describing a nonprofit model, Hankinson (2000) notes the existence of a three-way exchange process between a donor who funds the help, the charitable organisation that performs the helping action and the beneficiary who is the recipient of help. Balabanis et al. (1997) characterise the process as moving resources from a donor market to a beneficiary market with the charitable organisation mediating the exchange. They note the lack of attention paid to the beneficiary market in light of an overemphasis on the donor resource market. Their model, however, minimises the role of the organisation into that of mediator instead of equal participant in the exchange. Donor, charity and beneficiary are all vital parts of the nonprofit exchange process and a robust model is lacking to effectively capture this process.

Hon and Grunig’s (1999) typology of relationships offers an alternative model for relationship but does not adequately explain the three-way exchange process somewhat unique to the charitable sector. They note communal relationships are characterised by altruistic concerns for the welfare of each partner irrespective of receiving a benefit in return. It could be argued, however, that their example of fundraisers needing to “cultivate a communal relationship with potential donors before they can ask for money” (1999, p.22) is not communal at all. The fundraiser has the very real expectation that, in exchange for what might appear to be an altruistic overture, the ‘potential’ donor will actually become a donor. It would be poor stewardship for a charity to attempt to maintain a quasi-fund-raising relationship with people who are not donors or to remain communally attached to ‘potential donors’ into perpetuity. This organisation-to-(potential)-donor relationship would be better characterised as a ‘pre-exchange’ relationship with a potentially lengthy onset phase initiated by the organisation. Donor relationships can be even more complicated, and the communal aspect minimalised, in the case

of commercialized charities that can provide a direct benefit to the *donor* as a result of their financial support.

The argument could be made that nonprofit organisations do in fact engage in communal relationships, for example, with their beneficiaries. The counter-argument could also be made that this relationship can also be characterized as a pre-exchange relationship. For example, beneficiaries of a charity can be asked to speak well of it to donors at a fundraising event. The triplex relationship of donor-organisation-beneficiary is not easily characterized given the motivations of and intangible benefits received by the donor, combined with the expectations and actions of both beneficiary and organization. A robust model for these relationship interactions—critical to reputation management—is lacking in the extant literature.

Targeting the communications of commercialised charities

This gap in understanding regarding the reputation building process for nonprofits presents opportunity for exploration to which this study responds. Much of the existing research on donor expectations and perceptions has been carried out in random population samples (e.g. Bennett 2003; Bennett and Gabriel 2003; Bennett and Savani 2003; Schlegelmilch et al. 1997) and seldom amongst donors to a particular charitable organisation, that is, those who comprise its most salient stakeholder group (O’Neil 2006, 2007; Waters 2006). Scant research, if any, has been directed towards understanding how communication regarding a charitable organisation’s involvement in commercial trading affects the ongoing relationships it maintains with donors. In addition, much academic writing focuses on reputation but there is considerable debate as to whether the methods of its measurement proposed by Fombrun and others are robust. Their application is mainly in the commercial consultancy sector, which has less regard for statistical methodology and statistical significance.

Research objectives

Gronstedt (1997, p.34) notes that, rather than being evidence-based, the majority of public relations decisions are founded on “gut feelings, speculation and hearsay.” The research objectives for this study have been designed to address this over-reliance on instinct by providing an empirically-based exploration into one aspect of public relations within the nonprofit sector. The research objectives were:

- 1) To explore how donors perceive the commercial activities of a UK charity (hereinafter, the Charity)
- 2) To examine how the Charity’s communication regarding its commercial activities impacts its relationships—and consequently its reputation—with donors
- 3) To explore the application and adaptation of existing models of relationship to a nonprofit context

Practitioners can apply the findings to real-life situations within commercialised nonprofit organisations. The findings are also pertinent to researchers investigating developments within the charitable sectors of the UK and other Western, English-speaking nations.

Methodology

Using a case study approach for this research has enabled a focus on the relationships and processes within the context of reputation management. A case study approach allows for an in-depth study of a focussed area of inquiry (Bell 1999; Punch 2005). Case studies allow for an in-depth analysis of events, relationships and processes (Denscombe 2003). Similar to other UK charities, the Charity offers “intrinsic interest” (Denscombe 2003, p.35) because of its involvement in both charitable and commercial activities. The Charity is primarily a human services organisation that provides educational and informational resources designed to help UK families become more emotionally, spiritually and physically healthy.

Data collection

Data was collected through document analysis and semi-structured telephone interviews conducted in March and April 2007. The Charity provided communication pieces, including print magazines, newsletters, electronic and direct mail pieces, from the twelve months preceding the interviewing period for document analysis. Using Bell’s (1999) documentary evidence method to explore context, intended objectives, key messages and audiences, the document analysis provided evidence for formulating interview questions, and accurately analysing interview data.

Following document analysis, semi-structured interviews were carried out by telephone. Telephone interviewing has several advantages over in-person, not the least which includes convenience and time efficiency. More significantly, evidence suggests that respondents are more honest in telephone interviewing versus face-to-face (Denscombe 2003).

Sample

A sampling frame of approximately 20,000 donors to the Charity was used. ‘Donor’ in the case of the Charity refers to supporters who have contributed financially. This support may have been through donation, product purchase or attendance at a paid-ticketed event. From the sampling frame, a computerized data request generated 300 donor records which were used by the interviewer to solicit interviews. Thirty interviews were completed. Participants were located in all four regions of the UK. Several participants self-identified as non-white or non-British thus confirming that the sample was ethnically diverse. Additionally, participants divulged age characteristics such as pensioner, retiree, grandmother, new parent and so on indicating age dispersion.

Data analysis

Data from the document analysis were used to form the interview guide. At times, participants referenced communication pieces from the document analysis thus the researchers accessed them to assist in interpretation of the interview data. Document analysis allowed for triangulation between the Charity’s communications, interview data and the researcher’s interpretations.

Data was analysed while it was collected (Daymon and Holloway 2002) in an ongoing iterative process of analysing, interpretation and reflection. After all interviews were transcribed, transcriptions were verified for accuracy and the data was coded facilitating the data analysis process of reduction, display and identification of conclusions (Miles and Huberman 1984).

Limitations

While the research design contained some limitations, the researchers do not find that these limitations have jeopardised either the authenticity or trustworthiness of this study. The limitations include the timing of the project and the database constraints of the Charity and are explored below.

Timing

This project was designed to explore the Charity's reputation at one point in time and does not purport to track the Charity's reputation over time. The results should be interpreted in light of this limitation. The timing and context of the data collection is relevant (Daymon and Holloway 2002) as some respondents had trouble recalling specific communication from the Charity.

For further research, an alternative time to carry out interviews may be soon after correspondence has been dispatched to supporters to increase the chances that the Charity's communication pieces are fresh in their minds. Arguably, this might also result in data which disproportionately represent the salience of the Charity's mailings for participants; that is, they may perceive the Charity's mailings are more frequent or persistent simply because of recency. A longitudinal study may be one way to address both recall and recency limitations.

Database constraints

The sample used for this research consisted of supporters of the Charity who had been active supporters in the twelve months before the research began. Due to database constraints in retrieving donor records, the sample lacked what fundraisers term 'lapsed donors', that is, those who are no longer actively giving to the Charity. As a result, the perspectives on the communication activities that are offered are limited to participants who are likely favourably biased towards the Charity. This bias can be disputed, however, by the critical comments expressed by some participants. For further research, exploration of the perceptions of lapsed donors may provide more insight into how communication activities about commercial activities impact a charity's reputation.

Findings of the study

1. Donors are overwhelmingly supportive of commercial activities, and communications about those activities, which are in line with the Charity's values and help attain its mission.

The first research objective was to investigate donor perceptions regarding the Charity's commercial activities. The findings indicate that, overwhelmingly, donors to the Charity were supportive of commercial activities with two important caveats: the activities must align with the Charity's values; and the commercial activities must contribute to the attainment of the Charity's mission and not simply generate revenue. Commercial activities perceived as removed from the Charity's mission or undertaken for pure financial gain were viewed negatively. In fact, charities whose commercial activities were designed to only generate revenue were viewed as bothersome and noisy.

Donors indicated they were intolerant of charities that offered ‘premiums’ or items of token value used in fundraising. One participant expressed strong irritation at a pair of unsolicited slippers that arrived through the post from a charity. Feeling they were intended to elicit a “guilt gift,” she packaged up “the manipulative slippers” and sent them back to the organisation—only to be sent another pair a few weeks later. Another participant had received three umbrellas from the same organisation and noted wryly the uselessness of three umbrellas when she only had two arms. As one participant noted, when engaging in commercial trading, the Charity’s activities should keep close to its reason for being:

I think if [the Charity] were peddling jeans with [its] logo on them, I think I’d say forget it... There are plenty of other organisations that are dependent on people buying their jeans because that’s what they do. I mean, stick to what you do.

2. What donors perceived to be the Charity’s intentions greatly impacts how they interpret the messaging they receive from its communications.

Participants indicated that the Charity could overstep its boundaries, for example, by offering irrelevant materials to its supporters, as long as its intentions were deemed honourable. This finding is significant as it emphasises the importance of transparency in communication, particularly about commercial activities and also evidences a level of tolerance unique to the charitable sector. It also provides support to the collaborative meaning-making process that occurs with communication. As Gronstedt (1997) notes, research needs to be focussed less on what effect the communication of a message has on people and more on what effect people have on the message that is the object of a communication exchange.

3. Neither commercial activities nor revenue generation of any kind should distract from mission attainment.

Donors wanted to see that the Charity was focussed on achieving its mission and not distracted by revenue generating activities. Supporters emphasised the importance of the Charity focussing primarily on attaining its mission rather than promoting its financial needs to supporters, despite recognising that satisfying the latter largely enables the attainment of the former. They recognised that financial need is a constant state of affairs for the Charity but that it should appear to be secondary to the Charity’s focus on attaining its mission.

Financial astuteness on the part of the Charity, while of paramount importance to whether donors would give, was not a measure of success per se. Unlike many nonprofit managers who are charged with sustaining organisational operations, donors perceived success largely as mission attainment. While a reasonable level of financial acumen was assumed in order for the Charity to receive the donor’s ongoing support, attaining fund-raising goals did not indicate to donors that the Charity was successful.

4. “Service-oriented” communications can effectively enable, and even mask, the marketing of commercial activities.

The second research objective of this study was to explore the impact of communication activities about commercial activities on the donor relationships, and consequently the reputation, of the Charity. Charity marketing activities were viewed as negative but largely necessary. Given this discomfort with marketing and their affinity for the Charity, participants preferred to identify the communications from the Charity as “service-oriented” rather than “marketing-oriented”, even though the Charity regularly promoted its ticketed events and the products it sold through its communications pieces. “Service-oriented” communications were described as being largely informative and not obviously persuasive, while maintaining a promotional intent. Helpful information, as a service, seemed to offset the impact of a pure marketing pitch in the presentation of products the Charity was selling. In addition, as indicated by several participants, information from the Charity was perceived as an immediate tangible and personal benefit thus enriching the relationship, potentially accomplishing marketing goals and creating long-term satisfaction with the Charity.

5. Donors are annoyed with over-communication from the charitable sector as a whole but invite communication from charities they care about.

Participants indicated they were overwhelmed by the clamour from charitable organisations struggling to get their attention. Participants used various pejorative ways to refer to communication from the charitable sector in general: they felt “hassled” and “bombarded” by unsolicited, “intrusive” fund-raising requests from charities for which they had neither an affinity nor history of a past relationship. One participant referenced a meaningless “mail shot” he had received from a charitable organisation. Another participant expressed her desire for charities to “lower the tone” in their communication activities by asking for less and reducing alarmist appeals. Despite their irritation with other charities, all the donors in this study welcomed the communication they received from the Charity as they had *invited* it.

6. The ‘giving paradox’ complicates the exchange process within the donor-organisation-beneficiary relationship.

The third research objective for this study was to explore current models of relationship and their applicability and adaptability to nonprofits. Relationships between organisations and their publics are well-established as a crucial dimension of reputation. Using Ledingham’s (2003) theory of relationship management, for interviews the researcher adopted the view of relationship as a mutually beneficial exchange between two parties. The giving paradox, where a person chooses to become poorer to make someone else richer (Bracewell-Milnes 1990), is a complex dimension largely absent from for-profit relationship exchanges. Depending on how one typifies the benefits, giving may or may not be mutually beneficial. As Halfpenny (1999) notes, altruism may not be a rational phenomenon thus it is highly complex to analyse.

One complexity arises in regards to identifying exactly what benefit a donor receives from giving. Hankinson (2000) describes one benefit as the ‘warm glow’ that is the psychological reward for generosity. However, the benefit gained from involvement with a charitable organisation is often not a personal benefit. In this study, several participants explicitly indicated they supported the Charity because of what it was accomplishing in society as a whole. The reward or benefit could also be some level of involvement, through directed giving, into

how funds will be resourced to beneficiaries. While there is an exchange process, the benefit received by the donor is difficult to typify. Conversely, particularly with charities that are involved in commercial activities, the donor may receive an immediate tangible benefit such as an informational resource or a thank you gift for their financial contribution.

Building on Hankinson's (2000) notion of three-way exchange, another partner in the exchange is the beneficiary. Beneficiaries provide an organisation, the third partner, with its reason for being and without beneficiaries in need of help, it would likely not exist. It is, in one way, how the beneficiary 'gives' back within the exchange. Without them, the donor would have no reason to give and no way of deriving the benefit he or she receives from giving. Thus, the connection between the three parties is direct, even if not tangible. It is reciprocal as all three are active agents, even if the benefits traded between the donor and the beneficiaries are exchanged within the purview of the charitable organisation. Figure 1 provides a simple illustration of how these connections might be conceptualised.

Expectations are a well-established component of relationships within the reputation building process. Yet many of the donors in this study were uncomfortable with the notion of the Charity meeting their expectations, despite providing financial resources for it to carry out its activities. One donor stated he did not expect the Charity to respond to his "whims"; still others felt it would be inappropriate to place expectations on the Charity even though they likely held them, for example, in expecting the Charity to steward resources well and accomplish its mission as discussed previously.

This finding regarding expectations may evidence some incongruity with existing models of relationship. Personal expectations, such as those regarding communication preferences with donors, may be subservient when a charitable organisation is true to its mission in serving its beneficiaries. A higher level of tolerance, built through emotional attachment or affinity with the Charity may result in greater forgiveness for organisational gaffes. Donors may also perceive that a charity has fewer financial resources than a business and hope, as one donor observed, that it does the best it can. Additionally, returning to the giving paradox, expectations may be tied to motivations. Altruistically motivated transactions will likely differ greatly in terms of expectations from a service or product exchange relationship that is found in most for-profit interactions.

As this research is exploratory, a satisfying explanation may be elusive. In this three-way exchange context, donors may be willing to subvert their expectation of personal benefit and trust that, instead, a benefit will be provided to society as a whole or to specific beneficiaries whom the donor likely does not know personally. Does this still denote an 'expectation'? It is likely not an *expectation* of personal benefit or even communication needs, rather it is the *expectancy* of the Charity evidencing credibility and trust in fulfilling its mission.

Figures 2, 3, and 4 illustrate this contextual perspective on the contrast between transactions in the two sectors. Figure 2 shows a model of a simple, two-way business transaction where both parties are driven by self-centred motivations: the consumer pays a fee to obtain either a product or service that brings direct benefit to him or her which in turn provides revenue for the business with which the consumer transacts. The benefits obtained by the business may also include positive reputational regard and the personal satisfaction of the business owner and so on.

Figure 3 illustrates a three-way exchange process in a publicly owned corporation with shareholders: an investor provides capital to a corporation who provides dividends in return. The

corporation provides a product or service to a customer who pays a fee. The customer receives a product or service which has been partially developed by the investor's capital and, in turn, the investor's interests in the corporation grow as a result of the customer's action. It could be argued that the investor and members of the corporation receive the satisfaction of providing a customer with a worthwhile product or service. The return connection from customer to investor is likely weak or non-existent as customers often are not aware of public or private ownership.

In a nonprofit exchange, however, the product or service is fully funded by a donor, or more accurately, donors, thus strengthening the connection between beneficiary and donor. Figure 4 illustrates the three-way charitable exchange process using Hankinson's (2000) three-way exchange and Balabanis et al.'s (1997) model of market exchange. The investor becomes a 'donor' who gives a gift to facilitate a product or service of a charitable organisation to a beneficiary. Donors may receive tangible benefits directly from the charity such as a thank you gift, public recognition for support, or a tax incentive. Charities involved in commercial trade complicate the typology of benefits as supporters may also receive a product or a service in exchange for their financial support. Non-tangible benefits, such as the joy that can accompany giving, also factor into the exchange. Beneficiaries, while receiving tangible benefits from the charity, may also receive intangible benefits by knowing that donors care enough to give to help, a benefit akin to the 'warm glow' donors receive when they give to an organisation.

Conclusion

Dual citizenship within the for-profit and nonprofit sectors did not present a problem for donors to the Charity. Mission is the bonding agent which holds donor perceptions of an organisation's activities together. Communication that clearly presents commercial activities as part of the Charity's endeavours to achieve its mission, and not simply to fund its mission, is crucial to ongoing donor support. The exchange process within the charitable sector is unique and not adequately represented by existing relationship models which are inadequate for the giving paradox. Several areas for further research have arisen during this research and are found below.

Expectations: This project has provided some preliminary, exploratory findings regarding expectations but further research is needed to better understand the giving paradox and its impact on expectations.

Commercial activities impact on giving behaviour: This study demonstrated donor approval of commercial activities, but did not address how commercial activities impact giving behaviour, an area ripe for further exploration.

Charitable sector 'noise': Further research may provide insight into how charitable communication can become less promotional and more 'service-oriented', thus reducing the overall din of the UK charitable sector. Fund-raising premiums need further study to understand their role in the reputation and relationship building process over the long-term.

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Figure 2 Connections between donor, organisation and beneficiary

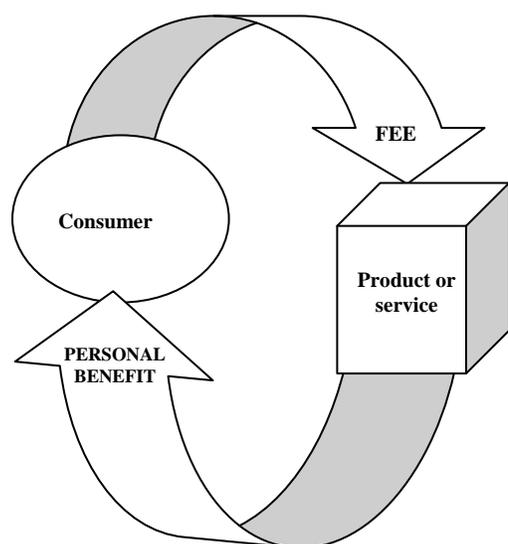


Figure 1 Suggested transactional model of a privately held company

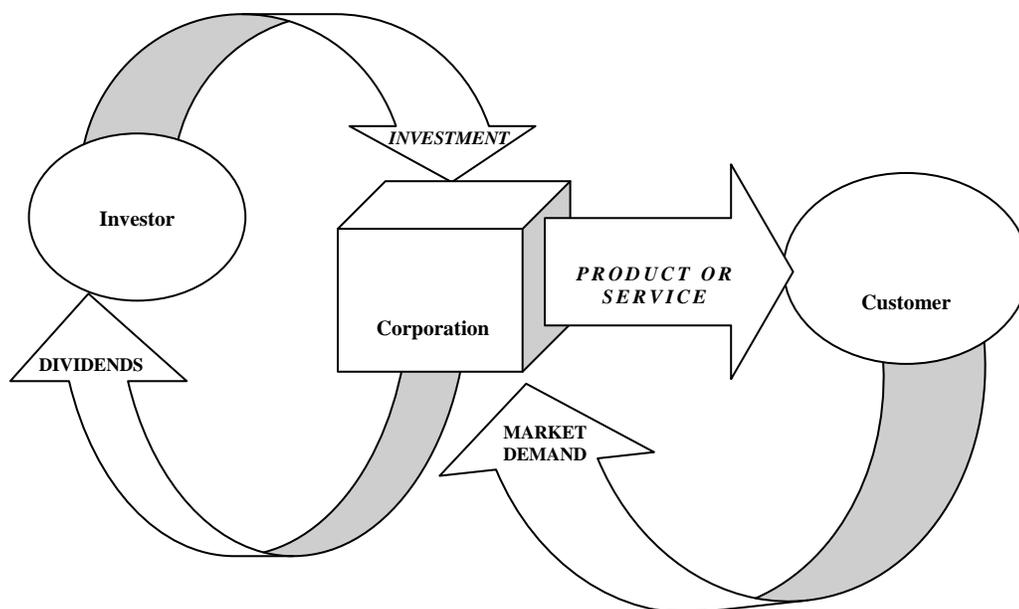


Figure 3 Suggested transactional model of a publicly held company

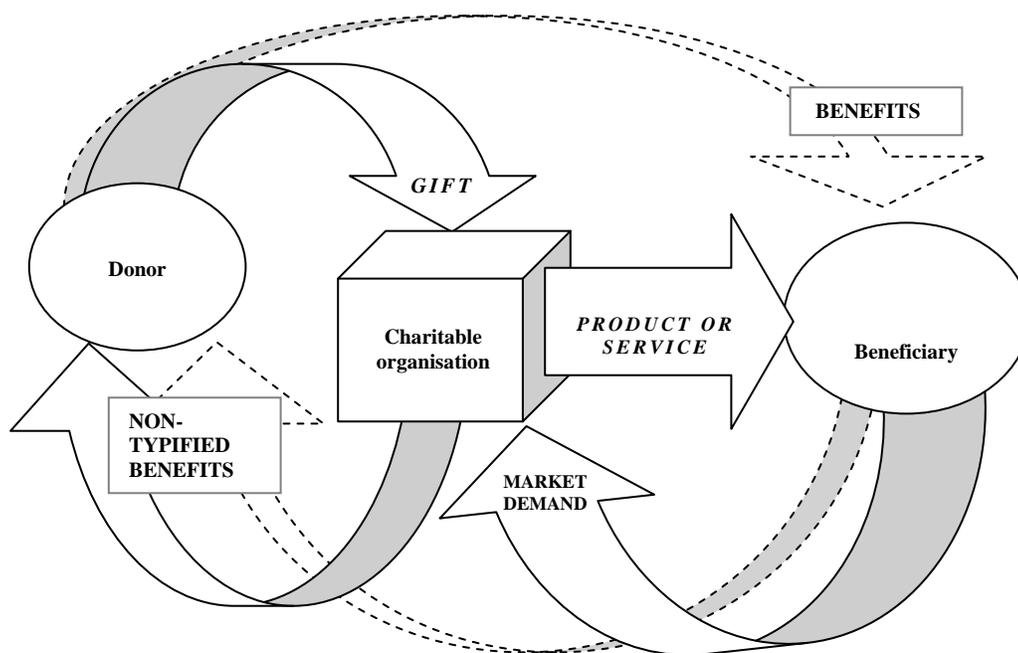


Figure 4 Suggested transactional model for nonprofit context

Comparing Winners and Losers

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If there is such a thing as an eternal quest in the conduct of internal communication audits, it is the idea that there is a “perfect” way to execute them. That is: What do I need to do? And what needs to happen during the process to assure some modicum of success with the project?

Theoretical Framework

One year ago, we (Williams & Dozier, 2008) studied at some length the impact that a supportive and involved management can have on the results of an audit. We determined that the more and stronger the involvement of management, the more likely the audit would end with a thorough and thoughtful analysis of communication dysfunctions, strengths, and needs. We also found that that management support would more likely than not result in a strategic plan for change in the organization. Our conclusion was that when management was looked at as a separate audience, equal to the audience being studied, that consequent steps would “force” a better methodology onto the study. This methodology ended in better information and buy in, resulting in better odds for any necessary changes (and reinforcement of strengths) going forward.

That study was, in a sense, the tip of the iceberg. It was a beginning look at understanding the dynamics at work in conducting internal communication audits, and the process that takes place. We used 22 studies that had been conducted by L.C. Williams & Associates over a period of several years. The mix of organizations included large and medium sized companies, as well as several large associations.

We ranked a study’s success based on one of two factors: Did the study have an instrumental or conceptual impact on the organizations that sponsor them? The more the perceived impact, the higher the ranking; the lower the perceived impact, the lower the ranking.

However, when thinking about audit success or failure, it seems fairly obvious that management involvement and support are but two factors among many that will help us understand the potential for success...and create guidelines for how to approach conducting an audit.

Our experience over the years has taught us that certain steps, if conducted properly, will increase the chances of success. These include some well-trying and considered ideas: thorough preparation and conversations with the communication staff, full cooperation of management through in-depth interviews, focus groups with employees and/or members, thoughtful questionnaire development, appropriate access for survey administration, objective and deep analysis of data, orderly feedback to management AND the surveyed audience, team building that includes agreement on steps to be taken as a result of the study, and, finally, follow through over a period of years after the study. One could, in fact, add one more important procedural step: an essential repeat of the entire process after an appropriate period of time, usually about two years.

The steps above are the logistical routine for conducting an audit, but there are, we believe, certain other attributes that may affect the end results in either a positive or negative fashion. We call these steps “Project Determinates.”

Project determinates can be rooted in organizational culture, such as ongoing management support for communication, politics, or openness to information sharing. Or they can be procedural/logistical determinants, such as appropriate budgeting or timing sensitivity. Finally, they can be relatively uncontrollable issues that simply need to be recognized and dealt with, including organization size and complexity, reporting relationships, and the organization’s financial soundness.

Methodology

In order to probe those issues, we reviewed our study of a year ago (Williams & Dozier, 2008), and selected three audits perceived as being most successful, and three audits perceived as being least successful. We analyzed the commonalities that seemed, for one reason or another, to have had an impact on the result. This use of case-study methodology followed the design of the Excellence Study, where the original survey data were used to identify *saturated cases*, those organizations that had extremely high and extremely low excellence scores. These organizations were then studied to determine the factors that differentiated the most excellent from least-excellent organization participating in the study. In a similar fashion, we used our 22 case studies of communication audits to identify saturated cases for follow-up research.

There are two judgments that need to be made as part of this analysis. The first is to agree on the factors that “make a difference.” The second is to assign a ranking of importance to each of those factors. Listed below are the factors the authors believe should be considered as important, as well as thoughts on the priority of each.

1. Budget—It goes without saying that having an appropriate budget will help ensure that the right steps are taken with the right methodology. We know, for example, of one study that uses mixed survey administration techniques (email/internet and one-on-ones). That was done to keep costs down...but, ultimately, does cast some shadow over the resulting data. We have assumed for the sake of this study that the higher the budget, the better. Truth be known, we have never seen too much budget; rather the opposite may occur. Given a paucity of funds, certain steps may be left out, or other shortcuts taken that will make success more elusive.
2. Experience level of inside coordinating communicator—One of the givens of our the experience is that, if the communicator in charge of coordinating the project has more and better experience, then better decisions are made along the way. Some organizations, for the sake of efficiencies, may assign the project to a less senior individual. It also follows that if the coordinator of the project has significant respect from peers and management, then things happen more effectively. For example, one of the keys to a good audit is the conduct of interviews with senior management. If the coordinator is unable (or, in some cases, unwilling) to identify and approach the right managers, there will be a resulting loss of not just context, but richer information.

3. Level of audit “buy” person—Just as the level of the coordinator has an impact on the decision-making process, so too does the level of the buyer. A sophisticated buyer, for example, knows where budget efficiencies end and project difficulties begin...and end. Thus it may be less expensive to leave out one step of the process, e.g., the employee focus groups, but doing so can have a very negative impact on the development of the survey instrument.
4. Cooperation of HR—Assuming for the moment that the communication department does not report to HR, then getting HR on board for the process is a very high priority. They can help identify appropriate focus group participants and make information available that will serve as input to survey development. For example, they can ensure that climate studies that may have been conducted in the past are available for study.
5. Complexity of the audit process—In very large organizations, it is difficult to get a solid understanding on an organization’s dominant coalition, geographic reach and implications, product variety, current communication channels, and even defined audiences. Therefore, the more complex the organization, the more sophisticated the effort must be.
6. Experience, or lack thereof, from previous communication audits—Organizations that have never conducted an audit tend to have fairly fuzzy estimates of what an audit can or can’t accomplish. On the other hand, if an organization has conducted an audit previously, they will have a very clear expectation (rightly or wrongly) of what they can expect. In either case, the audit must deal with the level of expectations, gaining consensus on the results to be made.
7. Company/Organizational financial strength—Experience would seem to indicate that the stronger the finances of an organization, the more likely the possibility of success. We’re not sure which comes first: Does an organization have success because they communicate well? Or is a wealthy organization more inclined to spend money on communication? Either way, it has proven true over the years that companies with higher margins tend to be companies that pay more attention to communication.
8. Conducting all phases of the “typical” audit—We have found through the years that there is a specific path that presages success in the audit process. If a company decides to shortcut that process, for whatever reason, the likelihood of success is reduced accordingly.
9. Captive vs. non-captive survey administration—This point could fall under the budget point, but is worthy of being called out because it is an extremely important decision point. In the captive methodology, you get an audience into a room and administer the questionnaire. That fact tends to provide stronger and better information than non-captive survey techniques, including snail mail, email, Internet, fax, or telephone. Captive is obviously more expensive but the closer we can get to the study subject, the better.
10. Organizational politics—Some organizations have more internal politics than others. As can be imagined, this has a powerful impact on the process of the audit. For example, we have seen organizations where a manager has refused to be part of the management interview process because they just don’t believe the results

will be helpful to decisions of the organization. In truth, they either don't support communication or worry that the process might uncover issues within their domain. One other aspect of this point is the question of division or departmental chimneys or towers. That is, in some organizations there is a "don't mess with my decisions" philosophy that is fostered by management.

11. Length of process—Our experience has shown that there is a normal lifespan of about 90 to 120 days to conduct most audits of major organizations. When the process takes longer than that, information gets stale, cost efficiencies suffer, and the results of the audit become blurred by vague memories.
12. Openness to oppositional or bad news—Some organizations just don't want to hear bad news, or news that argues with their worldview. It's a cultural attribute that is simply part and parcel of how such organizations do business. That culture predetermines what they believe, and can be a very powerful force. Sometimes this is caused by lack of communication empathy; sometimes it comes from lack of respect for the current communication team. Very often such resistance to a new worldview is due to organizational history: "We've always done things a certain way. No need to change." Understanding and managing openness, in our view, is one of the most important priorities for the auditor to understand.
13. Standing of the communication department within the organization. Since most communication audits are initiated by the communication department of an organization, the respect held for the department within the organization can greatly determine the way the process plays out, how far up the line the results will be heard, and how much change can be expected in the end.
14. Management support for communication. One could argue that this is a function of perceptions of competence about a department, but our experience suggests that those perceptions very often are heavily influenced by an organization's "belief" in communications. More often than not, this is a cultural issue. We find this is particularly true in certain kinds of companies: high tech, engineering, chemicals, and the like. We have seen perceptions changed in organizations that have lacked support, but it is fairly rare. More often than not, management support of the communication function is a predilection of management, rather than a "fault" of the communicator.

Certainly other attributes could be included, but these are the ones we believe will be most likely to influence the process either negatively or positively. The more difficult question is how to rank the importance of each of the attributes. We have decided that the cultural attributes are the most important. They are, after all, the most insidious; cultural factors are the most difficult to understand, let alone challenge or change. That, as you will see in Table 1, is reflected in the weighting scale. For each of the factors identified above, we have provided a "weighting factor," which is a reflection of the importance associated with that factor. A *base weight* of 1.00 is assigned to the two factors deemed the least influential to the overall success of the audit process. Those factors are: 1) the organization conducted a prior audit and 2) financial strength of the organization. All other factors are given somewhat greater weight, based on our expert judgment

about the relative importance of each factor. The factors weighted most heavily are the three cultural factors, which are given twice the weight (2.00) as base weight factors.

The second step in the process is to assign *scores* to specific organizations selected as exemplars of successful and less-than-successful audits. We elected to use a 1 to 10 scales, high a higher score indicating 1) how successfully the audit components were implemented or 2) how receptive or capable the organization was in assisting with the audit and putting the findings to good use. We did so with three organizations that were previously identified as successful audits and three organizations where the audit was less than successful.

The third step was to develop a simple algorithm for converting the 1 to 10 raw scores for each factor into a weighted score reflective of each factor's relative importance to a successful audit. We elected to generate weighted scores for each factor and then award bonus points for scores for 5 or more for each factor. That is, no bonus points are awarded for scores ranging from 1 to 4. A score of 5 earns one bonus point, a score of 6 earns two bonus points, and so forth. We decided that the overall score would consist of a two to one split between weight scores and bonus points. That is, 67% of the overall score is based on the score for each factor, times its weighting factor. This generates a *weighted score* for each item; the sum of the weighted scores for all 14 factors. The other 33% of the overall score is the sum of all the bonus points, weighted such that they total 33% of the possible overall score. All of the decision rules described above were operationalized in an Excel spreadsheet. With a touch of hubris, we named it the Williams-Dozier Audit Calculator. We hope to make the spreadsheet available as a free download at a suitable website, such as the Commission on Measurement and Evaluation, Institute for Public Relations.

Table 2 provides a breakdown of the scoring for a "perfect" organization and an "average" organization. A *perfect organization* is one that receives the highest possible score (10) on all 14 factors. A perfect organization is similar to a perfect vacuum or free competition. These are abstractions that are never achieved in the so-called real world. An *average organization* is one that receives a score of 5 (on a 1 to 10 scale) on all 14 factors. As shown in Table 2, a perfect score of 100 was generated by the perfect organization. The average organization, however, generated a score of 39 (i.e., 38.89). The reason that the score of an average organization is not 50, as might seem intuitively appropriate, is that the bonus points for a score of 5 is minimal. An organization with a score of 50 would, in fact, have had a relatively successful audit, with outstanding performance in one or more areas to accrue bonus points.

Results

Tables 3-5 display the scoring for three organizations with relatively successful audits. These are audits for a large business association, an international business association, and a midsized electric utility. They also display the scoring of three less-than-successful audits. These are for a food processing company, a large regional hospital, and telecommunications company. As expected, the three organizations that we had identified as having successful audits posted higher scores (81, 74, and 69 out of 100 possible) than did the organizations with less-than-successful audits (55, 51, and 39 out of 100). Note that two of the three less-than-successful audits still posted audit scores that were greater than those for an "average" organization (see Table 2). Only the telecommunications company posted audit scores equivalent to the "average" hypothetical organization in Table 2.

This makes sense. After all, the six organizations studied all had conducted an audit and expended organizational resources to engage in the audit process. This, in itself, indicates a relatively healthy organizational culture, when compared to organizations that would never conduct an internal audit. As with psychotherapy, the first step to getting better is the realization that you need professional help. Another parallel with psychotherapy: those most in need of help with their mental health are the ones least likely to perceive the need and ask for it.

Discussion

What do Table 3, Table 4, and Table 5 tell us? First, the results of this study certainly matches with the findings from our research last year (Williams & Dozier, 2008), which identified the audits above as the three most successful, and the three least successful, when our only true measure difference was the width and depth of management involvement. There could be a number of reasons for this but we believe the most important reason may be that a team that pays attention to an important arena such as management is very likely to have the wherewithal to conduct the rest of the study in an equally excellent manner.

Second, just imagine how much better the Food Processor study could have been had the three cultural issues been addressed properly/completely. In fact, the logistics segment of the effort was superb. It failed when one looks at the more difficult problem of meeting and matching management's expectations/needs/beliefs. This is a strong indicator as to how surely efforts that ignore the culture are doomed to, if not failure, at least a much more difficult path to success. A smart communicator is going to think twice before spending the money on an audit should the cultural issues not be under control. Not only would the money be likely to be wasted, but also the effort may even damage the communicator's own personal reputation. Strategic discussions on the cultural issues should be held with the team working on the audit before the audit is authorized, and even as the audit is proceeding. And, finally, any plan of action following the conduct of the audit must carefully consider how to take advantage of positive cultural attributes and how to minimize the negative ones. In fact, one of the side results of an audit is that it often allows a safe arena to discuss these issues which otherwise might not be broached.

Third, it seems pretty obvious that the Telecommunications Company was doomed to a less-than-successful from the beginning. It actually did not perform well by any measure. This project could easily be designated a waste of money.

Fourth, it's too bad that none of the studies included organizations that had had previous studies conducted. We'd like to know what affect that might have had on these audits, if any.

Fifth, it would seem likely that every audit is probably going to have weak areas to be addressed. What the data seem to tell us is that it is possible to overcome these weaknesses. Every audit faces a difficulty of some type; some are more difficult than others.

Sixth, although we had postulated that an inordinately long process could imperil the result, which would not seem to be the case. As it turns out, that factor was fairly negligible, with scores ranging from 7 to 9 in the six we studied. In fact, the actual times ranged from 70 days to 180 days. (We actually looked at all 22 of the original audits studied, and found corroboration for this point.)

Seventh, one of the interesting aspects of this study was the way a communication department's standing within the organization turned out to be a predictor of success. In the organization with the best audit (Large Business Association), the score on this determinate was

9; in the organization with the lowest audit score, the score on this determinate was only 5. One could make the case that standing goes with accomplishment, and that a department earns its stripes by getting things done well, in a timely manner and on budget. That may be true. We can't say for sure, but what we can say is that if one is thinking about conducting an audit it is worth considering how to either take advantage of the strength of a communication department's solid reputation or, alternately, how to minimize any issues that may exist.

Conclusions

Can we be sure that paying attention to our determinants will guarantee success in the conduct of an audit? Of course not. There are no guarantees in the public relations/communication business. What we do know for sure is that over the years we have seen certain indicators that, if addressed properly, will increase chances for success. They often are subtle (as in the case of cultural issues), and often have walls built around that make them difficult to address.

Using the matrix displayed in Tables 2-5 ensures that the audit effort is organized in a way that is understandable and acceptable to just about any organizational culture. There are attributes of success with any endeavor. Whether it's trying to understand what will make you a success in your career or, more simply, what will help you to be a better communicator for your organization, organized data exploration can and will help.

Speaking of careers, consider this: When looking at whether you are going to take a job somewhere, one of the truly deepest digs for information should have to do with the culture of that organization. Can you actually fit into the levels of expectations? Will support be forthcoming when you need it? Are the odds stacked against you? What is your unbiased evaluation of the prospective firm's communication? Is it changeable? Does it even need change? And if so, what kind of changes?

Auditing those questions thoroughly will provide a safer decision. Just as conducting an organizational audit provides you with the base for better communication decisions.

Limitations of the Study

One could argue that our rankings (and the determinants themselves, for that matter) are quite subjective. And, in truth, they are. They are, however, based on having conducted literally hundreds of audits over a 40-year career of the first author. They rise to the top of the many items that could share in the process.

Future Research

Our interest here is not in future academic research that our effort might engender. Rather, our goal is to encourage practitioners to consider using our matrix (Tables 2-5) as a planning tool. The 14 factors in the matrix alert the practitioner to the issues that require attention in the audit. We also hope that the Williams-Dozier Audit Calculator will be used as a tool for a self-evaluation of audits, once they are completed. As the Calculator is used, we can share information about organizations (respecting client confidentiality, of course) and their audits. The calibrating of the scores in this paper used idealized "perfect" and "average" organizations (see Table 2) to figure out how well the six organizations we studied fared. As noted above, five of six organizations posted audit scores that were above the average of an "average" organization. Better still would be to calibrate audit scores based on how real organizations actually perform. Further, the Williams-Dozier Audit Calculator is viewed as a work-in-progress. Our scheme for

weighting the 14 factors, as well as the assignment of bonus points, is certainly open to discussion, debate, and improvement.

References Cited

Williams, L. C., & Dozier, D. M. (2008). Triangular communications: The who, why and how. *Public Relations Journal*, 2(3).

Table 1.
Relative Weights of Project Determinants/Importance or Impact Potential

Logistics	Weight
Budget	1.20
All phases of audit conducted	1.80
Captive audience for data collection	1.60
Length of process	1.20
Complexity of organization	1.40

Coincidental	Weight
Coordinator's experience	1.20
Buyer's experience/level	1.40
Cooperation of HR	1.60
Organization conducted prior audit	1.00
Financial strength of organization	1.00
Status of communication dept.	1.40

Cultural

Politicization of organization	2.00
Openness to 'bad news'/candor	2.00
Mgmt. support for communication	2.00

Table 2.
 Audit Scores for a Perfect Organization
 Using the Williams-Dozier Audit Calculator

		Perfect Organization		
		Score	Weighted	
		(1-10)	Score	Bonus
Logistics				
	Budget	10	3.85	2.38
	All phases of audit conducted	10	5.77	2.38
	Captive audience for data collection	10	5.13	2.38
	Length of process	10	3.85	2.38
	Complexity of organization	10	4.49	2.38
Coincidental				
	Coordinator's experience	10	3.85	2.38
	Buyer's experience/level	10	4.49	2.38
	Cooperation of HR	10	5.13	2.38
	Organization conducted prior audit	10	3.21	2.38
	Financial strength of organization	10	3.21	2.38
	Status of communication dept.	10	4.49	2.38
Cultural				
	Politicization of organization	10	6.41	2.38
	Openness to 'bad news'/candor	10	6.41	2.38
	Mgmt. support for communication	10	6.41	2.38
Subtotals			66.67	33.33
TOTAL				100.00

Table 3.
 Audit Scores for an Average Organization
 Using the Williams-Dozier Audit Calculator

		Average Organization		
		Score	Weighted	
		(1-10)	Score	Bonus
Logistics				
	Budget	5	1.92	0.40
	All phases of audit conducted	5	2.88	0.40
	Captive audience for data collection	5	2.56	0.40
	Length of process	5	1.92	0.40
	Complexity of organization	5	2.24	0.40
Coincidental				
	Coordinator's experience	5	1.92	0.40
	Buyer's experience/level	5	2.24	0.40
	Cooperation of HR	5	2.56	0.40
	Organization conducted prior audit	5	1.60	0.40
	Financial strength of organization	5	1.60	0.40
	Status of communication dept.	5	2.24	0.40
Cultural				
	Politicization of organization	5	3.21	0.40
	Openness to 'bad news'/candor	5	3.21	0.40
	Mgmt. support for communication	5	3.21	0.40
Subtotals			33.33	5.56
TOTAL				38.89

Table 4.
Audit Scores for a Large Business Association

		Large Business Assn		
		Score	Weighted	
Logistics		(1-10)	Score	Bonus
	Budget	8	3.08	1.59
	All phases of audit conducted	8	4.62	1.59
	Captive audience for data collection	7	3.59	1.19
	Length of process	9	3.46	1.98
	Complexity of organization	10	4.49	2.38
Coincidental				
	Coordinator's experience	9	3.46	1.98
	Buyer's experience/level	9	4.04	1.98
	Cooperation of HR	9	4.62	1.98
	Organization conducted prior audit	1	0.32	0.00
	Financial strength of organization	9	2.88	1.98
	Status of communication dept.	9	4.04	1.98
Cultural				
	Politicization of organization	8	5.13	1.59
	Openness to 'bad news'/candor	9	5.77	1.98
	Mgmt. support for communication	10	6.41	2.38
Subtotals			55.90	24.60
TOTAL				80.50

Table 5.
Audit Scores for an International Business Association

		Internat'l Bus. Assn		
		Score	Weighted	
		(1-10)	Score	Bonus
Logistics				
	Budget	7	2.69	1.19
	All phases of audit conducted	7	4.04	1.19
	Captive audience for data collection	6	3.08	0.79
	Length of process	8	3.08	1.59
	Complexity of organization	8	3.59	1.59
Coincidental				
	Coordinator's experience	10	3.85	2.38
	Buyer's experience/level	10	4.49	2.38
	Cooperation of HR	9	4.62	1.98
	Organization conducted prior audit	1	0.32	0.00
	Financial strength of organization	3	0.96	0.00
	Status of communication dept.	9	4.04	1.98
Cultural				
	Politicization of organization	8	5.13	1.59
	Openness to 'bad news'/candor	10	6.41	2.38
	Mgmt. support for communication	10	6.41	2.38
Subtotals			52.69	21.43
TOTAL				74.12

Table 6.
Audit Scores for a Midsized Electric Utility

		Midsized Electric Utility		
		Score	Weighted	
Logistics		(1-10)	Score	Bonus
	Budget	8	3.08	1.59
	All phases of audit conducted	8	4.62	1.59
	Captive audience for data collection	9	4.62	1.98
	Length of process	9	3.46	1.98
	Complexity of organization	6	2.69	0.79
Coincidental				
	Coordinator's experience	7	2.69	1.19
	Buyer's experience/level	7	3.14	1.19
	Cooperation of HR	8	4.10	1.59
	Organization conducted prior audit	1	0.32	0.00
	Financial strength of organization	9	2.88	1.98
	Status of communication dept.	8	3.59	1.59
Cultural				
	Politicization of organization	6	3.85	0.79
	Openness to 'bad news'/candor	8	5.13	1.59
	Mgmt. support for communication	8	5.13	1.59
Subtotals			49.30	19.44
TOTAL				68.74

Table 7.
 Audit Scores for a Food Processing Company

		Food Processing Co.		
		Score	Weighted	
Logistics		(1-10)	Score	Bonus
	Budget	9	3.46	1.98
	All phases of audit conducted	9	5.19	1.98
	Captive audience for data collection	9	4.62	1.98
	Length of process	9	3.46	1.98
	Complexity of organization	9	4.04	1.98
Coincidental				
	Coordinator's experience	3	1.15	0.00
	Buyer's experience/level	3	1.35	0.00
	Cooperation of HR	5	2.56	0.40
	Organization conducted prior audit	1	0.32	0.00
	Financial strength of organization	8	2.56	1.59
	Status of communication dept.	3	1.35	0.00
Cultural				
	Politicization of organization	7	4.49	1.19
	Openness to 'bad news'/candor	4	2.56	0.00
	Mgmt. support for communication	6	3.85	0.79
Subtotals			40.96	13.89
TOTAL				54.85

Table 8.
 Audit Scores for a Large Regional Hospital

		Large Reg. Hospital		
		Score	Weighted	
Logistics		(1-10)	Score	Bonus
	Budget	8	3.08	1.59
	All phases of audit conducted	8	4.62	1.59
	Captive audience for data collection	9	4.62	1.98
	Length of process	9	3.46	1.98
	Complexity of organization	6	2.69	0.79
Coincidental				
	Coordinator's experience	7	2.69	1.19
	Buyer's experience/level	7	3.14	1.19
	Cooperation of HR	8	4.10	1.59
	Organization conducted prior audit	1	0.32	0.00
	Financial strength of organization	9	2.88	1.98
	Status of communication dept.	8	3.59	1.59
Cultural				
	Politicization of organization	6	3.85	0.79
	Openness to 'bad news'/candor	8	5.13	1.59
	Mgmt. support for communication	8	5.13	1.59
Subtotals			39.55	11.51
TOTAL				51.06

Table 9.
Audit Scores for a Telecommunications Company

		Telco Co.		
		Score	Weighted	
Logistics		(1-10)	Score	Bonus
	Budget	5	1.92	0.40
	All phases of audit conducted	4	2.31	0.00
	Captive audience for data collection	4	2.05	0.00
	Length of process	7	2.69	1.19
	Complexity of organization	6	2.69	0.79
Coincidental				
	Coordinator's experience	7	2.69	1.19
	Buyer's experience/level	5	2.24	0.40
	Cooperation of HR	6	3.08	0.79
	Organization conducted prior audit	1	0.32	0.00
	Financial strength of organization	8	2.56	1.59
	Status of communication dept.	5	2.24	0.40
Cultural				
	Politicization of organization	3	1.92	0.00
	Openness to 'bad news'/candor	3	1.92	0.00
	Mgmt. support for communication	5	3.21	0.40
Subtotals			31.86	7.14
TOTAL				39.00

An Analysis of the Increasing Impact of Social and Other New Media on Public Relations Practice

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Some people are predicting the day will come when social media will replace television as the main news source for Americans. Mike Elgan (2009), a technology writer and former Editor of *Windows* magazine, says that time already is here. He points out recent major news stories about the US Air flight landing in the Hudson River and the terrorist attacks in Mumbai were communicated much more quickly on Twitter and other social media sights than on the television screen.

Since first appearing about five years ago, social media networking sites have become increasingly popular each year. Bill Tancer (2008), the general manager of global research at Hitwise, the world's leading online competitive service, says social media have overtaken pornography as the number one use of the internet.

Since first appearing about five years ago, social media networking sites have become increasingly popular each year. Bill Tancer (2008), the general manager of global research at Hitwise, the world's leading online competitive service, says social media have overtaken pornography as the number one use of the internet.

In our previous research (Wright & Hinson, 2006a, 2006b, 2007a, 2007b, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2008d & 2008e) examining the impact new technologies are having on public relations, we found the phenomenon of blogging and other aspects of the social media already are bringing dramatic changes to many aspects of public relations. We have found the development of various new technologies has significantly empowered a wide variety of strategic publics by giving them dynamic new media many are using to communicate effectively with a variety of internal and external audiences.

An Overview of Our Previous Research

Since this is our fourth annual study examining how new technologies are impacting public relations practice, it makes sense to provide a review of what we discovered in 2006, 2007 and 2008.

Three years ago we claimed the rise of the blogosphere was significantly empowering employees and had provided a dynamic new medium many were using to communicate with a variety of internal and external audiences. That study also found employee blogging had become a common occurrence and that employees who blog were writing both positive and negative things about their organizations. Although we discovered most agreed it was ethical to discipline employees who write negative things about their organizations on blogs and most also believed it was ethical for organizations to monitor information their employees write on blogs, we found that only a limited amount of this research is being conducted. We also reported there was little,

if anything, in the literature discussing the impact the emergence of blogs and other aspects of new technologies are having on the science that is the communication process.

Building off of our 2006 research and using those results as a benchmark, our 2007 and 2008 studies asked a number of the same questions, permitting a comparison of the thinking during those years against what people formerly thought. Findings reported significant increases between all three of those years in the number of public relations practitioners who were aware of situations where employees of their organization (or a client's organization) had openly communicated on blogs.

Although we found that blogging employees were writing both positive and negative things about their organizations, the positive outweighed the negative. We also reported more positive things were being written in 2008 than was the case in 2007, and in that year compared with 2006. There also was a noticeable shift in responses between 2006, 2007 and 2008 on the question asking whether or not it is ethical for employees to write and post on a blog negative statements about the organizations they work for. This shift went in a negative direction with 49 percent saying this was ethical in 2006 with approval dropping to 29 percent in 2007 and 25 percent in 2008.

Since research is such an integral part of the public relations process, all three studies asked questions specifically related to measurement and employee blogs. One of these sought opinions as to whether or not it was ethical for an organization to conduct research that focused on information employees were writing on blogs. Results showed that a very large majority (89% in 2006, 73% in 2007 and 63% in 2008) believed it was ethical to take such measures. However, in spite of those results, only a very small number of organizations conduct such research or measurement and few predicted we're likely to see changes in this in the immediate future.

Other findings from previous years suggested the emergence of blogs was changing how people communicate. More than half (53% in 2007 and 69% in 2008) said blogs have changed how their companies handle external communications while another fairly solid number (40% in 2007 and 45% in 2008) suggested this also was the case with internal communications. Although there was some ambivalence in terms of whether or not organizations should let their employees blog during regular working hours, more than one-third agreed this should happen. At the same time, nearly two-thirds said employees should ask their organizations for permission to communicate on blogs before doing so during the regular work day. Many respondents to our previous studies said their organizations had no formal policy on employee blogging.

Through these studies, we also have examined the impact blogs and other forms of social media were having on the science that is the communication process. We suggested results of our first three studies enhanced the appropriateness of Lasswell's paradigm asking "Who says What to Whom through which Channel with what Effect." We also said blogs and other social media were in the process of impacting the state of several traditional communication models and theories especially two-step flow theory, the conceptual model, agenda setting theory, spiral of silence theory and excellence theory. We justified those statements by pointing out:

- Many bloggers are themselves becoming "influential's" or "opinion leaders," both crucial components of Lazarsfeld's two-step flow theory process.
- The instantaneous 24/7 nature of blogging brings new meaning to the concept of "feedback" initially introduced to communication theory through the conceptual model.

- Blogs bypass traditional news media and, as such, throw a major wrench in the suggestion that these traditional news media set any agenda for public thought.
- The potential impact for blogs in connection with spiral of silence theory is massive because it provides interesting options and opportunities for minority viewpoints.
- And, the ability of blogs to facilitate two-way symmetrical communication offers tremendous possibilities for the enhancement of excellence theory.

Purpose of the Study

Although our first two annual trend studies in the area of blogs and social media concentrated mainly on how employees communicate via blogs and ethical aspects of this communication, the 2008 and 2009 studies have taken a more broad perspective. Although some of the questions we asked in 2008 and 2009 are similar to measures explored in our 2006 and 2007 studies, a number of new questions were added in each of the past two years. While we still are able to compare current thinking against some of our earlier benchmarks this year's research also provides the opportunity to analyze important new ground.

Method

As has been the case with previous reports of this annual trend study, a sample of public relations practitioners from various parts of the world took part in the fourth annual version of this research. Invitations to participate in the study were extended via e-mail messages to random samples collected from organizations such as the Arthur W. Page Society and the International Public Relations Association (IPRA); and from donor, task-force and commission membership lists of the Institute for Public Relations. The study's measuring instrument contained 42 closed-ended and three open-ended questions.

Respondents came from many different parts of the world and represented a good cross-section of a wide variety of segments of the public relations industry. More (25%) worked with small agencies or consultancies than any other area but corporations (20%) and educational institutions (20%) also were well represented. Large agencies accounted for 10 percent of the respondents while seven percent worked in governmental public relations positions, five percent came from the not-for-profit area, five percent were research providers, one percent worked in health care and seven percent responded "other" when asked what kind of organization they worked for.

There was a fairly even split between female (52%) and male (48%) respondents. Most (67%) were based in North America with 15 percent from Europe, ten percent from Asia and Australia, ten percent from Africa, two percent from South America and two percent from "other." Responses were nicely distributed across various age categories with 15 percent being younger than 30, 25 percent were between 30 and 39, 26 percent were aged 40 to 49, 27 percent were 50 to 59 and seven percent were 60 or older. Usable responses were received from 574 subjects.

Results

In our research papers and articles about the impact of new technologies on public relations in previous years, we have reported findings that clearly indicated public relations

practitioners believed the emergence of blogs and social media have changed the way their organizations (or their client organizations) communicate. Our 2009 study not only confers with these previous results but also takes this agreement to a higher level.

Although the initial intent for these annual trend surveys was to use the same questionnaire year after year, the reality of the situation is social media has changed dramatically since we initiated this research project four years ago. Consequently, it became necessary to make considerable updates to our measuring instrument each year. In light of that, some of the findings reported in this paper represent benchmarks reflecting differences in answers from previous years while other results are for items we asked about for the first time this year.

As Table 1 indicates 73 percent of this year's respondents agree blogs and social media have changed the way organizations communicate, up from 61 percent agreement one year ago. The change in mean scores on this item grew from 3.3 in 2008 to 3.9 in 2009, all based on a five-point scale where "1" represents "strongly disagree" and "5" indicates "strongly agree."

Table 1

Responses to the question: "Please tell us whether you agree or disagree that the emergence of social media (including blogs) has changed the way your organization (or your client organizations)":

2009						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score
Communicates?	3%	13%	11%	47%	14%	3.9
Handles external communications?	3%	15%	14%	48%	11%	3.7
Handles internal communications?	5%	24%	26%	27%	11%	3.3

2008						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score
Communicates?	6%	19%	13%	46%	27%	3.9
Handles external communications?	6%	17%	18%	47%	21%	3.7
Handles internal communications?	10%	25%	28%	33%	12%	3.3

Note: (a) Percentage scores might not always total 100% due to rounding. (b) Mean scores throughout this report are based on responses to five-point Likert-type scales where "1" =

“Strongly Disagree” and “5” = “Strongly Agree.” Consequently, the higher the mean score the greater the agreement.

Agreement increases also were found on questions specifically asking about external and internal communications. In 2009, 68 percent felt the emergence of social media (including blogs) has changed the way their organization handles external communications compared with 59 percent agreement in 2008. Agreement on whether or not social media has impacted internal communications grew from 38 percent to 45 percent during this same period.

Even more agreement was found in both 2008 and 2009 when respondents were asked if they thought social media (including blogs) compliment mainstream traditional media or are in conflict with them. Results in Table 2 show 85 percent believe they complement each other in 2009 compared with 75 percent in 2008. At the same time, those who agree social media and traditional media are in conflict with each other decreased. There was 29 percent agreement on this item in 2008 compared with 26 percent agreement in 2009.

Table 2

Responses to the question: “Do you agree or disagree that social media (including blogs) and mainstream traditional media (newspapers, magazines, radio and television)”:

2009						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score
Compliment each other?	0%	6%	7%	59%	26%	4.1
Are in conflict with each other?	16%	48%	11%	24%	2%	2.5

2008						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score
Complement each other?	3%	13%	12%	52%	20%	3.6
Are in conflict with each other?	12%	42%	17%	24%	5%	2.8

Results also show there is considerable agreement suggesting blogs and social media have enhanced public relations practice. Table 3 shows nearly three-quarters (72%) of the study’s respondents believe social media have enhanced public relations. This is up from 66 percent in 2008. Furthermore, 65 percent feel the same way about blogs, up from 60 percent last year. This table also reports most (92% - up from 89% in 2008) of those surveyed think blogs and social media influence news coverage in the traditional media (newspapers, magazines, radio and television) while 76 percent say the reverse also is true (up from 72% a year ago). There is

very solid agreement (88% up from 84% in 2008) that blogs and social media have made communications more instantaneous because they force organizations to respond more quickly to criticism.

Table 3

Responses in 2009 to these questions: “Do you agree or disagree that . . .”

2009						
Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score
Social media have enhanced the practice of public relations?	1%	6%	20%	42%	30%	4.0
Blogs have enhanced the practice of public relations?	2%	8%	23%	43%	23%	3.8
Social media (including blogs) influence the traditional mainstream media?		2%	6%	63%	29%	4.2
Traditional mainstream media influence social media (including blogs)?	1%	4%	19%	54%	22%	3.9
Since social media (including blogs) have made communications more instantaneous they have forced organizations to respond more quickly to criticism?		2%	10%	45%	43%	4.3

Responses in 2008 to these questions: “Do you agree or disagree that . . .”

2008						
Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score
Social media have enhanced the practice of public relations?	1%	15%	18%	46%	20%	3.6
Blogs have enhanced the practice of public relations?	2%	16%	23%	45%	15%	3.5
Social media (including blogs) influence the traditional mainstream media?		5%	6%	60%	29%	4.1
Traditional mainstream media influence social media (including blogs)?	1%	10%	17%	54%	18%	3.7
Since social media (including blogs) have made communications more instantaneous they have forced organizations to respond more quickly to criticism?		8%	7%	46%	38%	4.2

In both 2008 and 2009, subjects also were asked a variety of questions about how social media compare with traditional news media in terms of accuracy, credibility, truth, ethics and so forth. Results from both years, displayed in Table 4, show respondents think blogs and social media have a long distance to go before they will be equal to traditional media in these categories. This table also shows respondents do not give blogs and social media very high scores in terms of truth telling or advocating transparent and ethical cultures. However, respondents give social media high marks for offering organizations low-cost ways to develop relationships with members of various strategic publics (80% agreement in 2008 and 84% agreement in 2009), serving as a watchdog for traditional mainstream media (61% agreement in 2008 and 71% agreement in 2009) and impacting corporate and organizational transparency (76% agreement in 2008 and 82% agreement in 2009).

Table 4

Responses in 2009 to these questions: “Do you agree or disagree that social media (including blogs) . . .”

2009						
Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score
Are more accurate than traditional mainstream media?	18%	48%	28%	5%	1%	2.2
Are more credible than traditional mainstream media?	12%	49%	29%	8%	1%	2.4
Are a more trusted information source than traditional mainstream media?	10%	40%	31%	18%	1%	2.6
Tell the truth?	8%	27%	53%	12%	1%	2.6
Advocate a transparent and ethical culture?	7%	23%	32%	32%	6%	3.1
Offer organizations a low-cost way to develop relationships with members of various strategic publics?	1%	6%	9%	58%	26%	4.0
Serve as a watch-dog for traditional mainstream media?	2%	9%	18%	56%	15%	3.7
Are impacting corporate and organizational transparency.	1%	3%	14%	57%	25%	4.0

Responses in 2008 to these questions: “Do you agree or disagree that social media (including blogs) . . .”

2008						
Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score
Are more accurate than traditional mainstream media?	25%	42%	26%	6%	1%	2.3
Are more credible than traditional mainstream media?	19%	45%	26%	9%	2%	2.3
Are a more trusted information source than traditional mainstream media?	16%	35%	29%	18%	2%	2.4
Tell the truth?	14%	24%	49%	13%		2.6
Advocate a transparent and ethical culture?	11%	21%	31%	30%	7%	3.0
Offer organizations a low-cost way to develop relationships with members of various strategic publics?	2%	7%	11%	62%	18%	3.8
Serve as a watch-dog for traditional mainstream media?	4%	10%	24%	46%	15%	3.6
Are impacting corporate and organizational transparency.	1%	3%	20%	58%	18%	3.8

We also investigated whether people have different expectations in terms of honesty, truth telling, ethics, etc., between social media and the more traditional media. Results are shown in Tables 5 and 6.

Table 5

Responses to these questions: “Do you agree or disagree that people who receive information from mainstream media expect these news outlets to be honest, tell the truth and advocate a transparent and ethical culture?”

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score
2008	2%	12%	11%	50%	25%	3.9
2009	1%	8%	11%	60%	20%	3.6

Table 5 shows most (75% in 2008 and 80% in 2009) expect traditional mainstream media to be honest, tell the truth and be ethical. However, results displayed in Table 6 suggest expectations in these areas are considerably less (44% in 2008 and 41% in 2009) for blogs and other social media.

Table 6

Responses to these questions: “Do you agree or disagree that people who receive information from blogs and other social media expect these outlets to be honest, tell the truth and advocate a transparent and ethical culture?”

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score
2008	3%	27%	26%	36%	8%	3.3
2009	3%	22%	35%	36%	5%	3.2

Since research is such an integral part of the corporate public relations process, all four of our annual studies have contained questions specifically related to social media measurement. As reported in Table 7, even though public relations practitioners frequently say research and measurement is important, few of the subjects in our annual studies have claimed to actually be conducting this research. We have measured this question from the internal communication over all four years of this research. Although Table 7 shows only a very small number of organizations have commissioned or conducted such research or measurement the percentage of those conducting such measurement has been increasing each year including a ten percent jump from 15 percent to 25 percent between 2008 and 2009.

Table 7

Responses to the question: “To the best of your knowledge, has your organization ever commissioned or conducted a research or measurement study that focused on information employees communicated on www blogs?”

	2006	2007	2008	2009
Yes	3%	11%	15%	25%
No	77%	62%	55%	58%
Uncertain/ Don't Know	20%	27%	30%	18%

In an attempt to move the focus of this question from internal to external audiences, the 2009 survey asked about research measuring what external publics have communicated about organizations via blogs or social media. Results reported on in Table 8 suggest there is more activity measuring external than internal audiences as 39 percent claim their organizations are actively measuring this area (as compared to the 25% who are measuring internally).

Table 8

Responses to the question: “To the best of your knowledge, has your organization ever conducted research measuring what members of other strategic publics have communicated about your organization via blogs or other social media?”

	2009
Yes	39%
No	42%
Uncertain/ Don't Know	19%

While expanding the number of questions we asked about measurement, we also decided to find out what kind of measurement subjects thought should be taking place and then compare that with what was actually happening.

Table 9

Responses to the question: “Do you agree or disagree that public relations practitioners should measure:”

2009						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score
“The amount of communication that is being disseminated about their organizations (or client organizations) through blogs and other social media.”	1%	3%	7%	55%	35%	4.2
“And/or analyze content of what’s being communicated about their organizations (or their clients) in blogs and other social media.”			4%	55%	41%	4.4
“The impact information disseminated about their organizations (or their clients) through blogs and other social media has on influentials, opinion leaders and members of other strategic audiences.”		2%	5%	58%	36%	4.3
“The impact information disseminated about their organizations (or their clients) through blogs and other social media has on the formation, change and reinforcement of attitudes, opinions and behavior.”		1%	6%	59%	34%	4.3

Table 9 shows subjects in this study strongly believe that a wide variety of research should be conducted in connection with blogs and social media. As the table reports, more than 90 percent of the respondents to this survey agree this research should be taking place. This includes 90 percent supporting research that measures the amount of communication that is being disseminated about their organizations (or client organizations) through blogs and other social media; 96 percent encouraging studies that measure or analyze content of what’s being communicated about their organizations (or their clients) in these new media; 94 percent agreeing public relations measurement should focus on the impact information disseminated about their organizations (or their clients) through bogs and other social media has on influentials, opinion leaders and members of other strategic publics; and 93 percent in favor of research

measuring the impact information disseminated about their organizations (or their clients) through blogs and other social media has on the formation, change and reinforcement of attitudes, opinions and behavior.

Unfortunately, however, as Table 10 indicates, there is a considerable gap between the kinds of research and measurement this study's subjects agree should be taking place and what's actually going on. According to this table, 55 percent of the companies represented in this survey are involved in content analysis measurement, 44 percent claim to be conducting basic output measures and only about one-quarter actually are using measurement that focuses on outcome research measuring the impact on opinion leaders and/or the formation of attitude, opinion or behavior change.

Table 10

Responses to the question: “To the best of your knowledge, has your organization (or a client organization) ever measured . . .”

	No	Yes	Uncertain/ Don't Know
“The amount of communication that is being disseminated about it through blogs and other social media.”	39%	44%	17%
“Or analyzed the content of what's being communicated about it blogs and other social media.”	29%	55%	16%
“The impact information disseminated about it through blogs and other social media has on influentials, opinion leaders and members of other strategic audiences.”	51%	26%	22%
“The impact information disseminated about it through blogs and other social media has on the formation, change and reinforcement of attitudes, opinions and behavior.”	53%	25%	23%

This research also asked several other questions. Table 11 shows responses to the question inquiring about what percentage of their workdays respondents spend with blogs and other social media. Findings indicate most (93%) devote some of their work time to these new media with nearly half (48%) spending between one and ten percent in this area and about a third (30%) devoting somewhere between 11 and 25 percent.

Table 11

Responses to these questions: “On the average, approximately what percentage of your time working in public relations and communications is spent with blogs and other social media?”

None	1% to 10%	11% to 25%	26% to 50%	More than 50%
7%	48%	30%	11%	4%

We also asked if organizations represented in this research had created policies regarding employees blogging or communicating via other social media. Results found 41 percent had developed such policies, 41 percent had not and 15 percent of the respondents were uncertain.

A question inquired about situations in which an organization’s legal function impacted how blog or social media communication was managed. As Table 12 shows, more than one-third (38%) reported this happening.

Table 12

Responses to the question: “Are you aware of any situation in which an organization’s legal function impacted how the organization managed any aspects of blog or social media communication?”

Yes	38%
No	31%
Uncertain/ Don’t Know	30%

A follow-up, open-ended question revealed a number of unique sets of tensions exist between legal functions and the public relations or communications function in this area. One respondent took lawyers to task for “stifling free and honest expression.” Another wrote, “Blogs and social media demand real-time responses and this causes problems for companies that are required to vet all types of external communications through legal, which is not always easily done.” One respondent suggested, “Applying legal constraints to social media has a chilling impact on the effectiveness of modern communication.” Another pointed out, “Legal never will be comfortable with social media because social media can not be controlled in traditional ways.” However, some respondents praised the legal representatives in their organizations for being, as one subject put it, “a positive, proactive partner to us as we have developed guidelines for interaction with social media.”

As was the case in previous years, the current study included several open-ended questions. Highlights of this year's open-ended responses suggest blogs and social media have enhanced the practice of public relations. Respondents told us:

- “They provide more opportunities to communicate.”
- “They provide a cost-free forum for the expression of ideas, information and opinion.”
- “New opportunities for direct interaction with target audiences. Risk can be negative information, but audiences are going to the web so PR must embrace social media whether we like it or not.”
- “They increase the immediacy of communication and offer platforms for public opinion on various issues.”
- “Blogs have enabled our clients to directly reach their target audiences in a cost-effective manner.”
- “They help us reach new, younger audiences that we might not get to through traditional news media.”
- “Blogs and social media are how one communicates in today's global world.”
- “The new media enable companies to quickly learn what publics and consumers are saying about their products and services.”
- “They give ordinary people media to communicate through without gatekeepers.”
- “It has helped those with a limited view of what public relations is realize it is more than just media relations. The unfiltered mechanisms within the social media system shift the focus from tools we use to the process of relationship building which is our purpose.”
- “There are places for professionals to go to now because of social media, i.e., LinkedIn and Facebook.”
- “Blogs and social media are more personal and they bypass traditional mass media to get to audiences and create dialogue.”
- “These new media have changed how we communicate with reporters. For bloggers especially, we now give our clients the freedom to communicate with them personally. We've found that most bloggers hate being “handled” by PR people.”
- “Public relations has not yet caught up to the value opportunities here.”

Summary

Our fourth annual, international, trend study examination of public relations practitioners (n=574) on the impact blogs and other social media are having on public relations practice once again finds these technologies are dramatically changing public relations and the way it is practiced. Results of this year's study show considerably more agreement in some areas than was the case in previous years.

Last year we reported that 61 percent of our respondents believed the emergence of blogs and social media had changed the way their organizations (or their client organizations) communicate. This year the score on that item is 73 percent. Findings continue to suggest these changes are more prominent in external than internal communications but numbers are up considerably there also. The majority (93%) of this year's respondents spent part of their average workdays with some aspects of blogs and the social media.

Many (85% in 2009 compared with 72% in 2008) believe social media complement traditional news media, and, an even higher number (92% in 2009 compared with 89% in 2008) think blogs and social media influence coverage in traditional news media. Most (88% in 2009 compared with 84% in 2008) believe blogs and social media have made communications more instantaneous because they encourage organizations to respond more quickly to criticism.

Results continue to show that traditional news media receive higher scores than blogs and social media in terms of accuracy, credibility, telling the truth and being ethical. Findings also show most (80% this year and 75% last year) expect traditional news media to be honest, tell the truth and be ethical. Fewer than half (41% in 2009 and 44% in 2008) hold these same expectations for blogs and other social media.

This year's study also asked a number of questions for the first time. Results of these annual measures find:

- Although more than 90% of the study's respondents encourage the use of research to measure various aspects of how blogs and social media are impacting their organizations, only about one-third (39%) say their companies are conducting this measurement.
- Although there is a very strong agreement (more than 90%) that measurement and evaluation about blogs and social media should focus not only on outputs but also on content analysis and outcomes, in reality most of what's being conducted is directed at outputs.
- Most (93%) of the respondents to this survey report they spend some time working with blogs and other social media during a typical business day. This includes 30 percent who spend between 11 and 25 percent of their time working in these areas and 48 percent who spend between one and ten percent.
- About one-third (31%) of the respondents are aware of situations in which an organization's legal function has impacted how the company manages blog and social media communication.

Highlights of responses to the study's open-ended questions include a recurring suggestion that blogs and social media have had a huge impact moving public relations into the direction of facilitating more two-way communication by opening up direct channels of communications between organizations and their publics. Other comments of note:

- "They provide a cost-free forum for the expression of ideas, information and opinion."
- "They increase the immediacy of communication and offer platforms for public opinion on various issues."

- “Blogs have enabled our clients to directly reach their target audiences in a cost-effective manner.”
- “They help us reach new, younger audiences that we might not get to through traditional news media.”
- “Blogs and social media are how one communicates in today’s global world.”
- “The new media enable companies to quickly learn what publics and consumers are saying about their products and services.”
- “They give ordinary people media to communicate through without gatekeepers.”
- “There are places for professionals to go to now because of social media, i.e., LinkedIn and Facebook.”
- Blogs and social media are more personal and they bypass traditional mass media to get to audiences and create dialogue.”
- “Public relations has not yet caught up to the value opportunities here.”

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Adding Value to Organizations: An Examination of the Role of Senior Public Relations Practitioners in Singapore

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Abstract

A key characteristic of public relations excellence in organizations is ensuring that the senior public relations practitioner - the head of the communication function - has the competencies to enact the strategic role of a manager. It is only when the top communicator possesses strategic management knowledge and engages in managerial work with support from colleagues who are technically skilled in traditional craft work can public relations work be considered to be value-generating.

This paper presents the findings of the examination of the role of senior public relations practitioners in organizations in Singapore. It also explores the importance of core communication activities to the role of top in-house communicators, examines the time they allocate to managerial and technical work, and assesses if the managerial role which the practitioners play adds value to organizations. Data collected from both in-depth interviews and self-reported log of daily activities showed that although top communicators in Singapore enjoy strategic reporting and unhindered access to senior management, it also revealed, paradoxically, senior management's mixed worldviews of public relations; and that Singapore's top in-house practitioners lack the strategic knowledge to enact the managerial role as they are too focused on technical work.

The paper concludes with recommendations on how the level of public relations professionalism can be raised in Singapore, starting with the practitioners themselves having to be fully equipped with the relevant academic knowledge of what makes communication excellent.

Introduction

Our world is becoming increasingly complex, interdependent and turbulent. In the last 25 years, major world events have escalated the process of globalization, giving rise to political and economic developments on a scale that was never witnessed before (Sriramesh & Vercic, 2003). While those who champion democracy and capitalism rejoice at a "freer" world with tremendous growth potential of different markets, globalization has also brought about the spread of activism and the rush for organizations to merge, downsize or acquire. This has led organizations to continuously devise different practices to respond to new economic, cultural and environmental changes in order to ensure growth and survival (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002).

Entrusted with this new and challenging responsibility to now manage relationships with people from different nationalities and cultures on behalf of their organizations, communication professionals have found themselves at the "interface where institutional concerns and public

responsibilities meet” (Sriramesh & Vercic, 2003, p.xxi). Dozier, Grunig and Grunig (1995), echoing the sentiments of the members of the team of what has popularly been called the “*Excellence Project*,” contended that in order to be able to contribute optimally to the effectiveness of the organization, the communication department has to possess “excellent” characteristics, one of which is for public relations to be able to engage in helping set organizational strategies. This would require the department to be headed by professionals with managerial role expertise and who are capable of exerting influence through suggestions, recommendations and proposals.

Building on the seminal work of Broom and Dozier on the roles of public relations practitioners, scholars such as Moss and DeSanto (2003) have stated that the public relations manager’s activities ought to be strategic as opposed to technical. Strategic work refers to the potential to create and add genuine value with desirable outcomes to the organization in the long run while technical work involves craft activities that have short-term impact and limited utility value to the organization. It is only with the top communicators’ managerial competences as well as support from subordinates who are technically skilled in traditional craft work can the department contribute substantially to strategic management and add value to the overall planning in the organization. This paper reports on a qualitative study of the activities of a sample of senior-level public relations managers in various types of organizations in Singapore that sought to assess whether these senior managers engaged in the kind of strategic functions that the literature seems to suggest.

Public Relations in Singapore

Despite its tiny geographical size, Singapore is among the world’s most globalized nations. It was ranked first in the world in 2005 and 2006 in the annual A.T. Kearney/FOREIGN POLICY Magazine Globalization Index (<http://www.atkearney.com/main.taf?p=5,4,1,116>); and has been placed among the top three positions every year since the Index was launched in 2001 (Tay, 2006). This highly developed cosmopolitan city-state boasts of a successful free market economy and enjoys a high per capita gross domestic product (GDP) with an average growth rate of 7% annually (<http://www.cia.gov/library/publication/the-world-factbook/index.html>). Its ability to attract foreign talents and major investments in pharmaceuticals and medical technology production has further earned it the title of being Southeast-Asia’s financial and technology hub. Culturally, Singapore’s multi-ethnic population together with the multi-nationality mix of expatriates has created a supportive environment for cross-cultural communication and socialization among its people and residents.

It is therefore logical to assume that public relations practice in this small city-state ought to be as vibrant and dynamic as the nation itself. According to a local newspaper report by Aggarwal (2006), industry players have openly professed that public relations practitioners in Singapore are now key players in company boardrooms and government agencies. They are called on to provide strategic advice and counsel on information management, risk and crisis communication, in addition to managing corporate reputation. Singapore practitioners are also asked to help influence buying decisions to win the hearts and minds of various stakeholders. The increasing focus on content as the industry matures testifies that although Singapore’s talent pool is small, it is credible and professional and that the city-state has the potential to become a regional public relations hub.

Lim, Goh and Sriramesh's (2005) study seemed to also reinforce the view that Singapore's public relations industry has developed significantly over the last 20 years. They found that there were 116 domestic and multinational public relations consultancies operating in Singapore in 2001. That year, the sector reported net operating profits of S\$63.9 million which was considered impressive. Reasons given for the unprecedented growth included Singapore's emphasis on technological development in its drive toward a knowledge-based economy. There was also increased awareness on corporate governance issues, which meant having to deal with matters relating to crisis management, reputation management and corporate transparency.

However, despite a burgeoning public relations industry that was growing in tandem with Singapore's highly competitive economy, Lim, Goh and Sriramesh (2005) also discovered among other things that public relations practitioners lacked the relevant knowledge and experience to engage in strategic and proactive management and were not empowered by senior executives who did not value them enough to include them as key decision-makers of the organizations. Earlier findings by Chay-Nemeth (2003) also supported the proposition that public relations in Singapore is in a transitional stage that is evolving from a "preprofessional to a professional status" (p. 88). She highlighted that public relations here provided mainly "arms-and-legs" (p. 89) support to communication activities and that Singapore practitioners played purely a technician role. Other studies further reiterated the need for Singapore's practitioners to be more trained in strategic thinking as many are too focused on the technical aspects of public relations such as media relation (e.g., Low & Kaw, 2005; Wee, Tan, & Chew, 1996).

All the studies that have assessed the state of public relations in Singapore, however, have so far sampled practitioners of all levels of seniority and from both in-house and consultancy firms. We could not find any studies that studied the specific roles of senior in-house public relations practitioners in Singapore. Given that they head communication departments, enjoy close proximity to the dominant coalition that comes with greater access to intimate and sensitive information, understanding the specific activities they conduct in the name of public relations is important. Not only would such knowledge offer valuable insights to the practice from "inside-out", it would also enable a better assessment on their departments' ability to contribute to the overall strategic management of the organization. Such knowledge is helpful in assessing the role of the public relations department itself in different regions of the world.

Therefore, building on previous studies, this study seeks to understand the role of the in-house senior public relations practitioners in Singapore by studying the organizational context within which they operate and the role of the communication department. In doing so it examines the importance of various core communication activities to the practitioners' role and tries to assess the amount of time practitioners allocate to managerial work versus technical work. It also seeks to evaluate if the work performed is capable of generating value to the organizations.

The Value of Public Relations

Although they perform vital communication functions for their organizations, there continues to be doubt that the work and contributions public relations professionals make is influential enough to have a direct impact in realizing organizational goals. Many practitioners have expressed disappointment that senior executives have yet to fully appreciate the contributions that public relations makes to organizations (White & Vercic, 2001).

However, in an increasingly shrinking world there is added pressure on organizations to turn to public relations practitioners for advice on how to make sense of the increasingly

complex environment. With the practitioners' ability to look at their organizations in a larger social context and their competency to propose solutions to "social environment" problems, the public relations function is progressively appreciated by senior management in today's highly competitive and erratic business environment. Nevertheless, there is a constant and nagging perception common around the world that public relations brings few "quantifiable" benefits. As the "results" at the end of the production line from communication works are deemed to be "intangible," public relations practitioners continue to be daunted by the arduous task of having to demonstrate their worth in ways that can be measured and justified (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002; White & Vercic, 2001).

However, as public relations primarily helps to build, shape, maintain and manage relationships with the relevant publics of an organization, how should intangible variables such as trust, commitment, satisfaction and mutual benefits be measured? This question has induced many public relations scholars' attempts to demonstrate the value of public relations and its financial contributions to the effectiveness of the organization for several decades (e.g., Hauss, 1993; Hon, 1998; Lindenmann, 1993).

While some like Hauss (1993) have offered solutions that attempt to make public relations outcomes measurable by advocating that practitioners leverage on technology advances and tools that can provide quantifiable measurements to their work, others like Hon (1997) argued that public relations' contribution to the bottom-line is obvious. The latter contended that the financial returns from the meaningful outcomes public relations activities produce for organizations are clearly evident. The efforts in building and enhancing corporate reputation, for example, help organizations to make money and in some cases also save them from collapsing.

Grunig, Grunig and Dozier (2002) rendered their support to Hon (1997) and rejected critics' call for public relations to prove its value in quantifiable (especially fiduciary) terms. They argued that public relations' contribution cannot be measured solely in terms of dollars and cents and cautioned that by merely translating the function's contributions into numerical figures will take the focus away from the real essence and relevance of public relations to organizations. They recommended the endorsement of the "totality of the concept of value" (p. 97), asserting that because the value of public relations is in helping to foster healthy relationships, the bottom-line should be looked at from "a combination of traditional financial return and the risks associated with the organization's long-term relationships" (p. 103). In other words, monetary returns are achieved when public relations, by cultivating win-win relationships with the organization's strategic stakeholders, succeeds in averting costs incurred from consequences brought about by troubled relationships with key publics (giving rise to activist publics).

Grunig (1992) and his team's investigation into how public relations should be practiced and the function organized for it to contribute best to organizational effectiveness uncovered that only excellent communication makes organizations more effective. For them, the key lies in having a communication team that participates in strategic management. It is only when the function contributes strategically can public relations be deemed to have created value. For this to occur, the head of the communication function must be made a part of the organization's top management. The managerial role that the top communicator performs, through the process of shared decision making with the CEO and other members of the top management, would invariably create conditions that enhance excellent public relations (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2002). As the organization's "boundary spanners" and "environmental scanners", the top communicator's knowledge expertise and understanding of the publics allow them to articulate

the views of the publics as they simultaneously provide advice and counsel to the dominant coalition. When decisions are made, these practitioners return to their departments to design programs, craft messages and ensure that the implementation of programs communicate effectively with the targeted publics (Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 1995). These scholars acknowledged that many public relations practitioners are creative and highly skilled when it comes to executing tactical tasks such as writing, editing, producing technical aspects of production and organizing events. However, they emphasized that if the communication department only has practitioners with these technical abilities, the programs rolled out by the function are not able to achieve excellence. To distinguish communication departments that deliver excellent versus less-than-excellent communication programs, the function's senior practitioners need to possess the expertise and knowledge to play the managerial role.

Managers, therefore, are expected to have the ability to strategically manage organizational responses to issues; know-how to set goals and objectives for the department; competency to use research to segment publics; capability to conduct program evaluation; and skills to perform budgeting. Their subordinates, on the other hand, would be skilled in technical work such as writing, editing news releases and promotional materials; producing publications and videos; liaising with the media; and organizing events. These two role activities, though different, are neither exclusive nor in opposition to each other. They are inseparable sub-functions belonging to one entity working together to achieve the same goals and objectives of the communication department (Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 1995). The value of communication is thus measured by how well the whole department contributes to helping the organization establish mutually beneficial relationships with stakeholders (Dozier & Broom, 1995).

Roles Research in Public Relations

Roles research has been a dominant theme within the public relations literature for almost four decades. Broom and Smith (1979) were the first to theoretically conceptually identify four roles played out by public relations - Expert Prescriber, Communication Facilitator, Problem-Solving Process Facilitator and Communication Technician. They concluded that the role a public relations practitioner plays depends on the daily patterns of behavior adopted to deal with assigned tasks. Practitioners are likely to play some or all of these roles in varying degrees and over time, a dominant pattern of behavior emerges which then becomes the dominant role (Broom, Center, & Cutlip, 2000). But Dozier (1984) found empirical evidence that practitioners who play the dominant role of expert prescriber, communication facilitator, or problem-solving process facilitator also tend to play the other two roles and therefore collapsed the four roles into two and classified them as manager and technician roles.

Other researchers, however, criticized the new manager-technician dichotomy, contending that the two-role typology was too narrow and may not take into consideration the range of tasks performed by practitioners (e.g., Culbertson, 1991; Toth & Grunig, 1993). But Dozier (1992) was convinced that the two-role typology of manager and technician allows a way to operationalize the concept of roles. He argued that the three roles are simultaneously enacted when communicators engage in value-adding activities such as environmental scanning, issues management, program monitoring and impact evaluation; while the technician role specifically performs technical tasks such as creating and disseminating communication materials (Dozier & Broom, 1995). Despite the on-going debate on the wisdom of the parsimonious manager-

technician dichotomy, Moss and Green (2001) contended that this proposition has been accepted as the dominant framework for roles research.

Shortcomings of Roles Research in Public Relations

However, researchers (e.g., DeSanto & Moss, 2004; Leichty & Springston, 1996; Moss & Green, 2001) have called for a re-evaluation of role enactment in public relations in particular the managerial dimension of practitioners' work. Moss and Green (2001) highlighted that the majority of studies gave mostly the practitioners' perspective role enactment which provided only a one-sided view, when the role making process is a product of the interaction between role senders and role receivers. Others called for a more dynamic and process perspective in looking at roles, commenting that the manager-technician dichotomy is essentially only abstractions of reality (e.g., Culbertson, 1991; Moss, Warnaby & Newman, 2000).

Moss and Green (2001) claimed that if public relations is to be recognized alongside other management functions such as human resource, finance or marketing, public relations managers need to demonstrate their ability to also counsel and advise, plan and manage budgets and conduct other generic managerial activities spelt out in the literature by management scholars (e.g., Hales, 1986; Mintzberg, 1973; Watson, 1986). There is a need for roles research to reconcile the managerial activities of public relations with the wider spectrum of managerial activities purported by these scholars.

Comparison between Management and Public Relations Roles Research

Both management and public relations scholars have attempted to delineate what constitutes "managerial" work. But although both sets of descriptions appear similar, they cannot be compared directly as the researchers from both disciplines examined the subject of managerial work from contrasting perspectives. Each sought different questions and answers and used dissimilar methodologies to evaluate their findings (Moss & Green, 2001; DeSanto & Moss, 2004). Public relations scholars looked at managerial work from the role of the practitioners in managing communication activities and processes. They used Broom and Dozier's role types and classified practitioners into either managerial or technician role based on the activities they perform (Moss & Green, 2001). DeSanto and Moss (2004) charged that this approach of understanding is problematic because the typologies were not based on empirical analysis of behavior but on consulting literature and secondary sources, and are at best concepts. Management scholars, on the other hand, identified generic elements of management work using quantitative and qualitative research methods such as observation studies, in-depth interviews, diaries and other survey methods to evaluate managerial work patterns from diverse perspectives and organizational settings (Moss & Green, 2001).

Moss and Green (2001) and DeSanto and Moss (2004) therefore asserted that public relations researchers cannot be said to have investigated into the processes by which public relations managers accomplish their tasks. They have not been able to explain the pattern of managerial behavior in the context of public relations. Like management scholars, they need to ask, "What do public relations managers do?" These researchers thus called for a re-examination of the managerial role in public relations to uncover managerial activities performed by practitioners by adopting methods which are more inductive and grounded. We have taken our cue from Moss and Green and Moss and DeSanto in designing this study. By focusing on a

sequence of individual and collective events, actions and activities over time in context, this form of data collection offers original insights into how things happen. Understanding the formation of concepts can then be shaped from the data rather than from preconceived theoretical frameworks (Daymon & Holloway, 2002).

Methodology

Design of Tools and Data Collection Process

This study answers the call by scholars Moss and DeSanto and adopts an inductive approach - qualitative in-depth interviews - as the dominant primary method for the first half of the study. The questions we posed closely resembled those used by Moss and DeSanto. For the second half of data collection, we assessed how practitioners allocate their time across a range of activities. We had to rely on a self-reported log of daily activities by our sample of practitioners instead of direct observation or conducting our own analysis of logbooks of practitioners given that not all Singapore's practitioners keep log books and requesting for access to personal information in diaries is considered disrespectful.

The list of communication activities we provided our sample comprised four managerial and five technical works, extracted from several roles research literature (e.g., DeSanto & Moss, 2004; Dozier, 1992; Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 1995; Grunig, 1992; Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002) plus an "others" option. These 10 activities were scrambled so that participants, who responded to our survey after the interviews, were not aware of the classification. This study also examined what practitioners do over a month as opposed to two-weeks (as Moss and DeSanto had done) as the former allows the performance of a variety of communication tasks to be captured more comprehensively. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews with 38 senior public relations practitioners over a period of five months from June to October 2006. Each interview lasted between one and a half to two hours. All the interviews were taped and subsequently transcribed for analysis.

Sampling

In all, 38 senior public relations practitioners from 11 industries in Singapore were interviewed. Sixteen were males and 22 were females. The age of respondents ranged from 32 to 58 years. Other than one practitioner who was a deputy head, the rest were department heads. They were chosen based on how renowned their companies are in Singapore, Asia or the world. Care was also taken to ensure that there were representations of both local and multinational companies as well as those from the private and public sectors.

Thirty-seven interviewees held at least a bachelors degree and one had a secondary school certificate. Only five out of the 37 were schooled in communication related courses such as Mass Communication, Media Studies or Public Relations, which is interesting given that there is ample evidence in the public relations literature lamenting the "influx" into public relations, practitioners from other disciplines. The other 32 were trained in different fields: Architecture, Biochemistry, Botany, Business Administration, Economics, English, Finance, Geography, Law, Microbiology, Pharmacy, Philosophy, Political Science, Psychology, Science, Sociology and Zoology. Of the 37, two had postgraduate diplomas, 14 had masters and one with a doctorate. Singapore's senior public relations practitioners are highly educated although 84% were trained in disciplines other than public relations. They are, therefore, practicing the trade with scant

exposure to the scholarly literature of public relations. This finding confirms the observation that there is a tendency to believe that one does not need to be trained in communication in order to practice public relations as it is perceived as a general trade. As other parts of the world, many of the “older” practitioners did not have the opportunity to study communication as a specialty at the tertiary level because communication (let alone public relations) was offered as a specialty for study at tertiary institutions in Singapore only 15 years ago. Although it does not necessarily mean that practitioners who are trained in other disciplines lack the competency to manage communication, it does mean that they may not possess the needed theoretical knowledge and framework to practice excellent public relations.

Table 1: Breakdown in representation of participants according to industry

1	Banking & Financial Services	7
2	Education	6
3	Engineering Services, Construction & Technologies	4
4	Government, Public & Policy Making	1
5	Healthcare	1
6	Information Communications	1
7	Information Technology	3
8	Petroleum & Petrochemicals	3
9	Property	4
10	Tourism, Leisure & Hospitality	4
11	Transportation	4
	Total	38

Findings

Organizational Background and Role of Public Relations Function

The 38 practitioners held varied corporate titles. Among them were Assistant Director; Assistant Vice President; Communications or Public Relations Manager; Deputy Director; Director; General Manager; Group Corporate Communications Officer; Head; Senior Manager; Senior Vice President; and Vice President.

Only three worked in a department named “public relations.” The other 35 adopted one of 14 different names which included Communications, Corporate Affairs, Corporate Communications, Corporate Relations, Marketing Communications, Public Affairs, Public Relations & Marketing, and Policy, Government & Public Affairs. The deliberate attempt to disassociate the function with “public relations” could be due to several reasons. Of course, the names may have been chosen to reflect the departments’ overall function and responsibilities clearer. But the more likely reason is because the term “public relations” has negative connotations implying that practitioners are spin doctors. This reaffirms Sriramesh’s (2004)

report that in Asia public relations suffers from the image of being perceived as a self serving practice that is no more than “spin doctoring” (p. 328). Many people, until recently, also equated public relations executives with pretty ladies working at the front line of the service, travel and tourism, and hospitality industry.

Only three members in the sample of this study did not lead a team of junior practitioners as they relied on external public relations consultancies to provide most of the technical support. The other 35 took charge of the communication function with the number of subordinates ranging from one to as many as 50. All the practitioners reported that their primary responsibilities included media relations and publicity; corporate branding and reputation; production of corporate literature; issues management; and event management. Ten were also responsible for internal communication while the other 28 worked closely with their human resource colleagues only when it concerned crafting of messages or brainstorming of employee issues. Ten reported that, in addition to their communication portfolio, they were also in charge of marketing communication while another three looked after investor relations as well (see Table on Communication Activities Performed by Practitioners). Five used external public relations firms on a retainer basis. Seventeen engaged external help only on needs basis, such as during crises or when faced with legal issues; while 16 sought no help from public relations consultancies

In terms of direct reporting, 21 reported directly to the CEO and they also occupied a seat at the top management table. Twelve reported to a member of the dominant coalition but not the CEO; and five did not report to any member of the dominant coalition. However, all 38 practitioners had access to the CEO or members of the dominant coalition as they had to liaise with key decision-makers regarding matters pertaining to media interviews, crisis management and communication with key stakeholders.

Table 2: Practitioners’ reporting relationships

1	Reported directly to the CEO, a member of the dominant coalition	21
2	Reported directly to a member of the dominant coalition who is not the CEO.	12
3	Reported directly to a supervisor who is not a member of the dominant coalition but given access to the CEO or a member of the dominant coalition	5
	Total	38

The findings here seem to suggest that public relations in the sample organizations in Singapore fulfills a key characteristic of public relations excellence in organizations. It is equally interesting to know that seven of the 17 practitioners report to a member of the dominant coalition who is not the CEO, or to a supervisor who is not a member of the dominant coalition. Further, in these instances, the communication function was kept under the marketing function. This shows that there is a pocket of organizations here which subscribe to the Integrated Marketing Communication concept where marketing campaigns and advertising take center stage for all the promotional activities with public relations playing a supporting role to marketing initiatives (Hallahan, 2007).

We also found it paradoxical that while most of the interviewees stated that they reported to a member of the dominant coalition, not everyone was of the opinion that his or her senior management truly valued the role of communication. Four respondents reported that their superiors displayed conflicting sentiments about the value of public relations and five reported that their supervisor had difficulty understanding the role of the communication function. This paradox was not unanticipated because all the practitioners handle media relations and journalists are a formidable group of stakeholders to every organization in Singapore. Giving public relations access to the CEO is therefore created out of the perceived need to keep a close watch on media reporting and is not indicative that the public relations function is valued or its role well understood beyond this narrow media relations role.

Peers exhibited even less understanding of the role of public relations with five reporting that other functions had difficulty understanding the role of public relations. Twenty commented that only certain functions appreciated them; and only 13 interviewees were confident of peers' positive worldviews of communication. Asked if practitioners participated and provided input to strategic decision making processes, 26 reported that they were consulted on important matters and before decisions were made most of the time; and 12 reported that they participated only occasionally. Here it is unclear whether the practitioners were able to contribute strategically to key organizational issues or simply asked to be involved in the meetings so that they had more time to prepare and execute communication plans. And for those whose views are sought, no elaboration was given as to what they were consulted on and if those inputs pertain to activities such as media relations or strategic issues critical to the organization's long-term survival.

All except one practitioner felt that evolving environmental factors such as globalization, the increase in the number of crises, and the advancement of technology had increased the importance of communication in their organizations over the years. Twenty-five perceived their role as enhancing and guarding the brand and corporate reputation; eight perceived themselves as counselors and advisers to senior management; while five considered themselves as communication strategists employed to plan and manage communication plans.

A high number of practitioners perceived themselves as guardians of the brand but in the same breath emphasized that one of the most important outcomes of public relations was managing the media and generating positive publicity. These practitioners viewed the role of the communication function as supporting, arguing that it exists to help "lubricate" the business units so that the latter can bring in the numbers for the organization. Such a perception is rather disturbing and induces us to question whether Singapore's top in-house communicators truly possess the needed knowledge to be strategic, particularly when an overwhelming majority (36) also commented that there is still a long way more to go for the practice to be truly professional. The reasons were due to senior management's ignorance in recognizing and leveraging on communication as a strategic tool; negative image of public relations; and practitioners' incompetence and lack of strategic expertise.

Importance of Core Communications Activities to Practitioners' Role

All the practitioners reported that managing the media was one of the most important communication activities. Not everyone, however, spent a lot of time on this activity. Eleven had the assistance of a media manager due largely to a bigger communication team (with more than 10 members). Twenty-five practitioners, who were responsible for Singapore and the region, handled both local and foreign media while the other 13 managed mainly local media. Three

reasons were given for media relations being so fundamental to the communication function: media have the power to make or break the company's corporate reputation; senior management defines the value of communication by the amount of positive publicity generated; and media relations is one of the few areas of communication work that is quantifiable as the amount of publicity generated is measurable particularly when compared with the amount of money that the company would have otherwise spent on advertising.

All the practitioners reported that managing human resources was important to their work. The majority (35) spent more time managing internal as opposed to external stakeholders. This runs in the face of many an organizational communication scholar who argues that public relations should only deal with external stakeholders. Twenty practitioners in the sample spent only a fair amount of time on human resource management while 18 devoted a lot of time to it, identifying it as an essential component of managerial work.

All 38 practitioners also replied affirmatively that planning and strategy-making activity was important to their work. Fifteen spent a good amount of time thinking, strategizing and visioning; while 23 acknowledged that they did not spend enough time on this activity and that they would like to do more of it. Planning and strategizing work often occurred in the beginning or end of the year, during crises or when initiating new projects. Eighteen also commented that opportunities to participate in high level strategizing exercises were limited as these were performed by their direct supervisors. There is, however, a clear association between practitioners reporting directly to the CEO and those doing more of strategizing work. Only six saw the importance of communication research with 32 spending little or hardly any time on it. For those who did, the research tended to revolve around conducting polls or market surveys or customer feedback about the company's products and programs.

It is disturbing to discover that, despite being managers, about half of the interviewees spent a fair bit of time on administrative work. There was also evidence to suggest that this activity has to do with the size of the communication departments as those who led bigger teams could afford to delegate this work to subordinates. Thirty-six acknowledged that they were expected to have strong networking skills with 19 of them placing greater emphasis on networking with internal stakeholders while 17 focused more on external stakeholders such as the journalists, industry players or corporate sponsors. This finding confirms the relevance of the personal influence model to the public relations function. Twenty recognized the importance of troubleshooting and they scanned the environment regularly for issues or events that could lead to a crisis. They also monitored the media closely to keep abreast of unfavorable business trends or adverse global or political developments that could impact the organization. The other 18 either acknowledged that they did not spend enough time on this activity, or commented that this area was not a major focus among their list of work priorities.

All 38 practitioners reported that counseling and giving advice to top management was an essential work component. However, only 21 of them spent a lot of time on this activity while 17 worked on it only when their counsel was sought. It was also found that many were unclear in making the distinction between counseling and giving feedback to top management, stating briefing management on media interviews and reporting regularly on progress of work as giving advice. Thirty-one also commented that negotiating was part of their managerial role with seven considering it as a nonessential work component. Thirty spent a fair amount of time and eight hardly spent much time on this activity.

Time Allocated to Managerial and Technical Work in a Typical Month

Only seven practitioners spent more than 50% on managerial work while three spent an equal 50% on managerial work and another 50% on technical work. The majority (28 out of 38 practitioners) spent less than 50% of their time on managerial work. Of the 10 who spent more than 50% on managerial work, nine reported directly to the CEO and were considered a member of the dominant coalition while one reported to a member of the dominant coalition but given direct access to the CEO. Among the 10, five were males and five were females. Three practiced in the banking and financial services sector; one in engineering services, construction and technologies; one in information communications; two in petroleum and petrochemical sector; two from property; and one in the transportation sector.

Table 3: Number of practitioners and their corresponding percentage of time allocated to managerial and technical work

Percentage of time allocated to managerial work	Percentage of time allocated to technical work/non-typical communication activities	Number of practitioners
10% and less	90% or more	1
11% - 20%	89% - 80%	4
21% - 30%	79% - 70%	8
31% - 40%	69% - 60%	11
41% - 50%	59% - 50%	7
51% - 60%	49% - 40%	5
61% - 70%	39% - 30%	2
Total		38

As to the average percentage of time that the interviewees allocated to managerial and technical work, the following table shows the breakdown, in descending order:

Table 4: Average percentage of time allocated to managerial and technical work

Ranking	Communication Activity	Type of Work	Average Percentage of Time Spent
1	Media Relations / Investor Relations	Technical	19%
2	Attending Meetings with Peers / Subordinates	Technical	15%
3	Planning	Managerial	13%
4	Counseling / Advising Senior Management	Managerial	12%
4	Organizing Company's Events / Promotions	Technical	12%
5	Writing / Editing Corporate Literature	Technical	9%
6	Scanning / Trouble Shooting	Managerial	8%
7	Producing Publicity Materials	Technical	5%
7	Communication Research	Managerial	5%
8	Others	—	2%
Total			100%

Discussion

With an average of 32% of their time spent on what the public relations literature terms “managerial” work and 62% on “technical” work, Singapore’s top in-house public relations executives cannot be said to be playing a strategic role. This is in spite of an overwhelming majority (85%) of the interviewees reporting directly to the CEO or to a member of the dominant coalition with all given direct or indirect access to the CEO. Our data confirm De Beer’s (2001) assertion that reporting to CEOs or members of a dominant coalition is not necessarily a good indicator that public relations contributes meaningfully to decision making if such reporting is not accompanied with active engaging in strategic work and a high degree of participation in the boardroom on issues beyond media publicity. Although more than 60% of interviewees reported that they were “consulted” on “important” matters, we believe in most instances, top management have already decided on key issues and the top communicators’ participation in the boardroom was needed only to help facilitate the process of conveying the information to the target audience at worst or public relations’ advice was sought only as it related to areas related to communication at best. As such, our data suggest that Singapore’s top communicators are taking instructions more frequently than helping craft decisions at the highest level. That 66% perceived themselves as guardians of the corporate reputation as opposed to seeing themselves as counselors, advisers or strategists, further lends credence to the conclusion that public relations rarely seems to provide genuine value to organizational activities. This conclusion is further reinforced with the data suggesting that only an average of 8% of respondents scan the environment or engage in trouble shooting and only 12% engage in counseling and advising senior management.

We also found that members of top management predominantly harbors mixed worldviews about the role of public relations and rarely understand its true value to organizational effectiveness. The fact that some were made to report to marketing heads highlights the challenge for Singapore's public relations practitioners in continuing to prove that public relations can, and often does, make valuable contributions to the bottom line tangibly or intangibly. Equally disturbing was that "peer" disciplines such as marketing saw public relations as a peripheral support media relations function to their more "important and core" communication function. More efforts are therefore needed to educate senior management and peers about the true contributions that public relations can make to organizations.

It comes as no surprise that media relations tops the list with interviewees spending an average of 19 percent of their time on media relations. This confirms findings of other studies which found that public relations practitioners in Singapore are too focused on media relations (see e.g. Lim, Goh, and Sriramesh, 2005). In addition to the already mentioned reasons for this, another key reason is the nature of the mass media environment in Singapore. With media ownership restricted to only two dominant players, there is precious little competition if one desires media access to place stories. Such limited options for generating publicity and cultivating strong relationships with content makers mean that practitioners cannot afford not to spend sufficient time on this activity if they want their companies to be seen and heard. They are also spending more time than needed on other technical work such as attending meetings, organizing events and writing corporate literature. Then again, as events and corporate literature are "highly visible" communication activities, the tendency is always there for practitioners to want to spend time and be involved in the details.

Needless to say, more time should be allocated to the four managerial activities we had listed earlier: planning, counseling senior management, scanning the environment, and embarking on communication research. To be able to counsel top management, practitioners must have the knowledge base to offer strategic input and insights into corporate issues which requires that time be spent scanning the environment and conducting communication research. It is only when these managerial activities occupy the bulk of practitioners' time can influence be exerted on strategic planning and decision making at the highest level in the organization.

Conclusion

Despite Singapore organizations recognizing the increasing importance of communication with practitioners playing an increasingly more prominent role in recent decades, this study finds that top in-house communicators in Singapore lack the expertise, and the opportunity (when knowledge is present) to play the managerial role. Their work thus lacks the potential to create and add value with desirable outcomes to organizations in the long run. And if top public relations practitioners like to see the level of professionalism raised in Singapore, they are in the best position to effect changes that can spur desired changes.

This would require them to be equipped with knowledge on communication excellence as well as strategic and operational management so that they can play the manager role effectively. For a start, it helps to be academically trained in public relations. But this training alone is insufficient. As this study has shown, the 10 practitioners who spent more time on managerial work are not trained in communication! But the reverse is also true because this number represents less than a third who were not trained in communication. Theoretical knowledge of what makes communication excellent has to be supplemented with knowledge in finance,

operations and management. This is because, while non-communication graduates may not have gone through the rigors of fully appreciating communication academically, they bring with them expertise in other fields which sometimes help to enlarge their understanding of the organization's business. Practitioners who are trained in communication, on the other hand, find themselves equipped with traditional communication skills but sorely lacking the knowledge in other disciplines which is essential in carrying out the manager role.

Being knowledgeable across disciplines also allows the top communicators to enjoy a special rapport with key decision-makers that pure generalists are not capable of having. They are able to comprehend business opportunities and challenges faced by the organization, provide strategic advice, recommend and see to the execution of the communication programs that best meet company's objectives. Invariably, there will be respect for the profession with top management and peers from other functions developing a positive worldview of the role of public relations and communication management.

Professional accreditation and recognition is another avenue to help raise the level of public relations professionalism in Singapore. The Institute of Public Relations in Singapore (IPRS) offers accreditation but it is not being availed by a majority of practitioners in the city-state. The IPRS, for its part, would need to reevaluate its accreditation standards to keep them on par with the rapid growth in body of knowledge of public relations and communication management. Importantly, unless organizations (and clients of consultancies) insist on some kind of standards and qualifications for the public relations counsel they seek, accreditation and other such measures will not become popular.

Top management may also wish to take the initiative to increase and widen their knowledge on the role of communication in the organization so that they can use communication effectively to achieve corporate goals and business objectives. This is because most curriculum content offered by many management institutions devotes little to understanding the broad social environment within which communicators operate, and as such, an education in management is unlikely to be able to equip chief executives to make full use of the potential contribution of public relations (White & Vercic, 2001).

These efforts, easy access to top management which senior public relations practitioners here are already enjoying, together with a thirst to be multi-disciplined would pave the way for these practitioners to play a strategic role and head a communication department capable of creating value-generating outcomes for the organizations in Singapore.

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TABLE**Communication Activities Performed by Practitioners**

Activity Set	Communication Activities	No of Practitioners
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Media relations; publicity; issues management; events management; corporate reputation; corporate literature - Worked closely with Human Resource on internal communication 	19
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Media relations; publicity; issues management; events management; corporate reputation; corporate literature - Worked closely with Human Resource on internal communication - Marketing & Product Communication 	7
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Media relations; publicity; issues management; events management; corporate reputation; corporate literature - Employee Communications 	6
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Media relations; publicity; issues management; events management; corporate reputation; corporate literature - Employee Communications - Marketing & Product Communication 	3
E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Media relations; publicity; issues management; events management; corporate reputation; corporate literature - Investor relations - Worked closely with Human Resource on internal communication 	2
F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Media relations; publicity; issues management; events management; corporate reputation; corporate literature - Investor relations - Employee Communications 	1
Total		38

Public Relations in Japan: Expert Opinion on its Future

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Introduction

The history of modern public relations in Japan starts with the occupation by the United States in the post World War II era (Inoue, 2003). With in-house corporate PR activities occupying the central role, and its small size despite the country's presence in the world economy, Japan's PR practice remains relatively marginal and unique for the time being (Cooper-Chen & Tanaka, 2008). Japan experienced so-called "lost decade" in the 1990s after the collapse of the economic bubble. Although the economy stagnated for almost ten years, Japan's economic structure went through structural change in this period (Yamazaki, 2000, Yoshikawa, 2002). PR firms in Japan find that the clients' needs have changed drastically in the past ten years (Nagae, & Morito, 2008). The purpose of this study is to find out how PR practices in Japan is going to change in the future.

Existing Researches on PR Practices in Japan

Sriramesh, Kim, and Takasaki (2000), synthesized studies of public relations in three Asian cultures (India, Korea, and Japan). In each of the three countries, they conducted a survey and an interview/observation of public relations practitioners. The survey questions tried to compare the three countries in terms of four models of public relations - press agency/publicity, public information, two-way asymmetrical, and two-way symmetrical models. They found that in these three countries, in addition to practicing the press agency and publicity model, practitioners used the personal influence model to conduct their PR activities.

Watson and Sallot (2001) conducted a survey of highest ranking public relations professionals of corporations to see how management styles affect PR practices. They found that the management style in Japan has undergone changes over time and more than two-thirds of the practitioners perceive their own company's management style as a mix of both top-down "American style" and collaborative "Japanese style." They also found that practitioners who perceive their company's management style as collaborative see that the company has higher regard-for/excellence-in public relations than those who perceive their company's management style as top down.

Once every three years, the Japan Institute for Social and Economic Affairs (JISEA) conducts a survey of public relations departments of the members of JISEA and Keidanren (Japan Federation of Economic Organizations). The survey asks about the structure of PR department, collaboration with management and other departments and the type of PR activities conducted, etc. As to the PR activities the survey lists 11 items and asks if public relations department in the corporate headquarter conduct those activities. The items listed are: media relations; internal PR; investor relations (IR); advertising and publicity; crisis management; kocho (public hearing); cultural and social contribution; community relations; brand strategy; government relations, and; consumer relations including customer services (JISEA, 2006). The

survey asks if a respondent conducts a particular PR activity in their own department and reports the percentage of respondents that conduct the activity. The survey also asks what PR department outsources, but the items are limited to the actual works implemented such as writing press releases, setting up press conferences and production of reports. No inquiry is made as to the involvement of outside PR firms in consulting, advising, or delegation of all/part of PR function. JISEA survey answers the question, "what are the PR activities practiced in Japan?" However, it doesn't give us a clue to the question, "what are the PR activities practiced in Japan tomorrow?"

Research Question

RQ: What are the types of PR activities that will be important in Japan in five years from today?

The JISEA survey asks what activities are handled by the PR department in the corporate headquarters. That a particular activity is handled by PR department does not mean that it is deemed important. In addition, looking at the current activities may not necessarily reflect changes in the environment that are actually taking place. Therefore, the decisions were made to ask importance of PR activities in the near future.

Delphi Method

Delphi method is a method of eliciting and refining group judgments that have three features: anonymous response; iteration and controlled feedback, and; statistical group response (Dalkey, 1969). "The main criterion for Delphi's employment is the indispensability of judgmental information, which may arise in cases (such as forecasting) where no historical data exist, or when such data are inappropriate..." (Rowe, wright, & Bolger, 1991, p. 236). Delphi method has been applied to a wide variety of researches and researchers have developed variations of Delphi method. One such variation "in widespread use is the "ranking-type" Delphi, used to develop group consensus about the relative importance of issues" (Okoli, & Pawlowski, 2003, p. 16).

Delphi method is used by various public relations researchers. In 1980, McElreath conducted a Delphi study to identify priority research questions in public relations among 30 PR scholars and researchers in the U.S. (McElreath as cited in Synnott, & McKie, 1997). McElreath conducted a follow up study involving 50 panelists (1997). Synnott & McKie (1997) followed up McElreath, this time with 37 participants in 13 countries to establish international research agenda in public relations. Watson (2008) conducted a study that followed up Synnott a& McKie. In this study, the author's personal blog was used to pilot initial propositions. In the following rounds, 44 PR scholars and practitioners in six international regions were contacted. Boynton (2006) used Delphi method to identify key values that guide ethical practice of public relations. In this study, 83 PR practitioners contacted and 26 individuals responded.

Method

For this study, Delphi method was used to elicit opinions of public relations scholars and practitioners in Japan on PR activities and seek group judgment among respondents as to the importance of these activities. Rather than soliciting opinions in the first round on activity items to be ranked, they were provided by the researchers. This was to avoid listing of detailed activity

items that focus on technical aspect of PR, such as writing press releases, setting up press conferences, producing internal newsletter, and so on.

Activity item

Public relations activity items listed in the Q 2 of the JISEA PR department survey was referenced. The items were: media relations; internal PR; investor relations (IR); advertising and publicity; crisis management; ko-cho (public hearing); cultural and social contribution; community relations; brand strategy; government relations, and; consumer relations including customer services (JISEA 2006). Question items in the USC GAP study, III/G-1 (Swerling et al., 2007) was also referenced. USC GAP, question III/G-1 asks communications-related functions for which their departments have primary budgetary responsibility.

Since this was a study about Japanese PR practice, the JISEA survey was adopted as the basis for item selection and the USC GAP study supplemented the list. Both authors of this study have more than 10 years of experience in PR practice, one in corporate, the other in firm, before moving to academic environment. The authors relied on their own judgment to add items that were missing in the list compiled from the JISEA survey and USC GAP study.

Of the eleven items in the JISEA survey, community relations was changed to two separate items: domestic community relations and overseas community relations. This was to clarify the scope of international PR activities. From the USC GAP study, three items were adopted: web PR; issues management, and; corporate social responsibility. Four items in the USC GAP study - external web site, monitoring and participation in the blogosphere, monitoring and participation in online social networking, and monitoring and participation in other online media - were combined into the item - web PR - because the use of the Internet other than web site, such as blog, social networking site, and twitter etc, is not yet popular among corporations in Japan. For social responsibility, the phrase "environmental PR" was added because in Japan, environmental issue is of grave concern and many corporations take on the environmental issues as their corporate social responsibility matter. By adding the phrase "environmental PR" it was made clear that environmental issues are included in this item.

The authors added three more items to the list. They were: corporate intra-group PR; overseas PR, and; advising management. Corporate intra-group PR was added because even though zaibatsu conglomerates have lost much of the control it had, the authors felt that many major corporations have their own subsidiaries and pay much attention to maintaining corporate group identities. Overseas PR was added because business activities of Japanese corporations now expand globally, and many products exported were no longer "unbranded" products. The USC GAP study includes an item "executive communications," however, it can be for any of the activity item. For example, PR practitioners may need to support executive in media relations, investor relations, or government relations. The authors have decided to add an item, "advising management," because it can be a measure of the "seat at the table."

The activity items and their sources are listed in the table 1.

Table 1: PR activity items

Activity item	Source		
	JISEA	USC GAP	Authors
Media relations	↔		
Internal PR	↔		
Investor relations	↔		
Corporate (& group) advertising	↔		
Product & service advertising			
Crisis management	↔		
Public hearing / information gathering	↔		
Cultural / social contribution activities	↔		
Community relations (domestic)	↔		
Community relations (overseas)			
Brand strategy (promotion & coordination of)	↔		
External affairs and government relations	↔		
Consumer relations (customer service etc)	↔		
Web PR		↔	
Issues management		↔	
Corporate social responsibility (environmental PR)		↔	
Corporate group PR			↔
Overseas PR			↔
Advising management			↔

Participants

The core participants were selected from the members of the Japan Society for Corporate Communication Studies (JSCCS). Members of JSCCS comprise of scholars and practitioners of public relations. Since the focus of the study was on corporate public relations activities, of the members of JSCCS, practitioners in government agencies, non-profit organizations, and academic institutions were excluded from the list. Those who were not in the list, but the authors knew and believed to be qualified, were added to the list. In total, 228 practitioners and scholars were identified as potential participants of the study.

Step one - letter of invitation/first round questionnaire

First, a letter of invitation and the first round questionnaire were sent to potential participants by email. Although it was assumed that members of JSCCS are experienced scholars and practitioners, it was stated in the letter that only those with five years or longer experience (practical and scholarly experience combined) were invited to participate in the study.

The first round questionnaire asked participants to rank order top 10 items from the 19 items list, in terms of its importance in five years. The participants also provided any additional item that they believed to be within the top 10 ranking. In addition, comment or rationale for selection for each item, if any, were to be included in their response. Their affiliation, gender, and the length of experience in PR practice/academic research were also asked. Of the 228

potential participants who received the email, 43 responded. Of those 43 respondents, 38 provided valid response. The invalid responses were one of the three types: refused to rank order the importance - for example, only grouped items in high/medium/low importance; rank ordered items with multiple items in certain ranks, or; did not rank up to ten items.

Step two - second round questionnaire

The result of the first round - the aggregate ranking of the items - along with their comments were sent to those who responded in the first round. The respondents were asked to rank order 15 items - 13 items ranked highest in the first round and two additional items proposed by respondents - and provide comments if any.

Step three - third round questionnaire

The result of the second round - the aggregate ranking of the items - along with their comments are to be sent to those who responded in the first round. This time, they are not asked to rank order but to comment on the result of the two rounds. As of the time of presentation of this study, the third round questionnaires are not yet sent out.

Rank order calculation

To calculating rank order in Delphi studies, mean rank is used. Since the study asked respondents to rank-order 10 most important PR activity items from the list, not all items were ranked by the same number of people. In evaluating and reporting the rank, there can be two approaches. One approach is to report the ranking purely on the means of the rank assigned by the respondents. If the number of respondents who assigns a rank is too small, the item can be treated as outlier. However, there is no objective criteria for determining how many response is needed not to treat the item as outlier. Another approach is to assign certain score for items not ranked by participants. For this study, the researchers took this approach. Unlike projection of future technology, respondents - experts in PR - should be familiar with all these activity items. Therefore, that an item is not ranked does not mean the respondent is unfamiliar with the item. Rather, it is an indication that the respondent regards the item as less important than the item ranked as 10th most important. For this reason, in calculating ranks for this study, a value of 11 was assigned to all non-ranked items.

First Round Result

In the first round, 228 questionnaires were sent by email, and 43 responses were obtained (18.9% response rate). Of those 43, 36 were valid response (15.8%), ranking 10 items from one to 10 in order of importance without any duplication.

Demographics

Respondents' affiliation was classified as the following: PR firm; advertising firm; corporate; independent PR consultant; education/research, and; other. Advertising firm was included because many advertising firms in Japan offer public relations as part of their service portfolio and there are certain number of JSCCS members who are affiliated with advertising

firms. Respondents were also asked of their gender and the number of years engaged in public relations practice/education/research (combined).

The demographic breakdown is shown in the table 1.

Table 1: Demographic (round 1)

		# of respondents (total 36)	Percentage
Affiliation	PR firm	5	13.9%
	Ad firm	5	13.9%
	Corporate	10	27.8%
	Independent PR consultant	6	16.7%
	Education /Research	6	16.7%
	Other	4	11.1%
Gender	Female	6	16.7%
	Male	30	83.3%
Experience	5- 9 years	10	27.8%
	10-19 years	13	36.1%
	20-29 years	11	30.6%
	30- years	2	5.6%

Ranking (round 1)

In the first round result, media relations topped the list, followed by crisis management. Top 13 items were ranked within 10th by more than half of the respondents, and the gap between the 13th rank item - consumer relations, and the 14th rank item - cultural / social contribution activities were fairly large both in terms of mean score and the frequency (1-10 rank). Two PR activity items were proposed by the respondents. The items were "word of mouth and social media strategy" and " corporate transformation." These two items and the top 13 ranked items were submitted for evaluation in the second round.

The ranking calculated from the first round response is shown in the table 2.

Table 2: Round 1 rank-order result

Rank	PR Activity Item	Mean	Frequency 1-10 rank (max 36)
1	Media relations	4.49	32
2	Crisis management	5.97	27
3	Promotion and integration of brand strategy	6.56	25
4	Web PR	6.58	27
5 (tie)	Internal PR	7.03	25
5 (tie)	Issues management	7.03	23
7	Public hearing / Information gathering	7.17	26
8	Advising management	7.69	22
9	PR on corporate social responsibility including environmental issues	7.81	25
10	Overseas PR	7.83	20
11	Investor relations	8.00	20
12	Corporate group PR	8.19	19
13	Consumer relations (customer service etc)	8.61	20
14	Cultural / social contribution activities	9.67	11
15	Product and service advertising	9.94	7
16	Community relations (overseas)	10.36	8
17 (tie)	Community relations (domestic)	10.39	9
17 (tie)	Corporate advertising (including corporate group ad)	10.39	7
17 (tie)	External affairs and government relations	10.39	6
Proposal	Word of mouth and social media strategy		
Proposal	Corporate transformation		

Second Round Result

In the second round, questionnaires were sent by email to 43 people who responded in the first round, whether the response was valid or not. Thirty eight responses were obtained (88.4% response rate). They were all valid response, ranking 10 items from one to 10 in order of importance without any duplication.

Demographics

The demographic breakdown is shown in the table 3.

Table 3: Demographic (round 2)

		# of respondents (total 36)	Percentage
Affiliation	PR firm	4	10.5%
	Ad firm	5	13.2%
	Corporate	13	34.2%
	Independent PR consultant	6	15.8%
	Education /Research	6	15.8%
	Other	4	10.5%
Gender	Female	4	10.5%
	Male	34	89.5%
Experience	5- 9 years	12	31.6%
	10-19 years	11	28.9%
	20-29 years	12	31.6%
	30- years	3	7.9%

Ranking (round 2)

Of top ten items in the first round, nine items stayed in the top ten list in the second round. Most moves were minimal, with Web PR moving from the fourth to the fifth, and Overseas PR moving from 10th to the 11th. The biggest loser in the second round was the issues management, dropping from the fifth to the ninth with only one more respondent ranking within top 10. Two items proposed by the respondents did not gain enough support to be in the top 10 ranking.

The ranking calculated from the second round response is shown in the table 4.

Table 4: Round 2 rank-order result (round 1 result in the bracket)

Rank	PR Activity Item	Mean rank	Frequency 1-10 rank: max 38 (round 1 max:36)
1 (1)	Media relations	2.97 (4.49)	38 (32)
2 (2)	Crisis management	4.24 (5.97)	36 (27)
3 (3)	Promotion and integration of brand strategy	6.34 (6.56)	28 (25)
4 (5)	Internal PR	6.50 (7.03)	29 (25)
5 (4)	Web PR	6.68 (6.58)	31 (27)
6 (7)	Public hearing / Information gathering	6.74 (7.17)	32 (26)
7 (8)	Advising management	7.13 (7.69)	30 (22)
8 (9)	PR on corporate social responsibility including environmental issues	7.50 (7.81)	32 (25)
9 (5)	Issues management	7.53 (7.03)	24 (23)
10 (12)	Corporate group PR	8.32 (8.19)	21 (19)
11 (10)	Overseas PR	8.58 (7.83)	23
12 (11)	Investor relations	8.66 (8.00)	24
13 (---)	Word of mouth and social media strategy	9.63 (N/A)	11

14 (---)	Corporate transformation	9.71 (N/A)	10
15 (13)	Consumer relations (customer service etc)	9.82 (8.61)	10

Third Round

Opinions of the respondents have fairly converged, as indicated in the fact that everyone agreed that media relations as the most important activity, and 36 out of 38 respondents agreeing that crisis management is the second most important. The authors have decided to ask respondents in the third round only their opinions on the outcome of the second round. However, since this is a research still in progress, the result of the third round cannot be reported here.

Comments from Respondents

Along with rankings, respondents provided comments to PR activity items. In the first round, there were 236 comments. In the second round, there were 316 comments altogether. Some of the comments that the authors deemed important are listed here.

1. Media Relations

- It is the fundamental operation of public relations.
- Regardless of the diversification of media, media relations is the most important PR activity.
- Although media will change in five years, it still will continue to be as influential as it is today.
- The most effective message channel.
- In five years, the concept of media and the way journalism functions will change.
- There are increasing scrutiny of media content by citizens. Consequently, it will be more important that media relations activities are conducted in a fair and transparent manner.

2. Crisis management

- As more and more companies are setting up departments specializing in risk management, the recognition of media relations professionals in times of crisis will rise.
- Crisis management deals with survival of a company.
- One incident can destroy reputation of a company in a single moment and companies must always be prepared.
- The fundamentals of crisis management is the internal communication.
- The most important skill in public relations.

3. Promotion and integration of brand strategies

- Brand strategy will be more and more important as market continues to saturate.
- In addition to conventional branding, "sustainable brand strategy" will be more important.
- Every public relations activity leads to corporate brand strategy.
- Mass advertising will continue to lose its influence and strong branding will emerge as a key theme.

4. Internal PR

- The form of employment may change over time, but internal PR is important in maintaining the approach that "company = people."
 - For management in the future, internal "information sharing" will bear significance.
 - In the Internet age when controlling information is impossible, having employees understand and comply with corporate policies and codes of conduct will be ever more important.
 - Employees and their families are important stakeholders of a company and internal PR helps maintain motivation.
5. Web PR
- It has a strong influence over consumers but Web PR activities entail great risk and companies are not likely to expand beyond existing web sites.
 - As mass media is losing its reach, it will be important for several years from now.
 - Rather than information dissemination on the Web, information gathering, analysis, and responding to/of Web contents such as Web news and blogs will be more important.
 - Young people today don't read newspapers and the need for Web PR will increase.
6. Public hearing/information gathering
- Fundamental function of PR.
 - It will be more important as social and international environment becomes more and more complex.
 - No information, no judgment. Often research prior to decision making is missing in PR. Enhancement of research in public relations is likely, but maybe not in five years.
 - Two way communication is the fundamental of PR, but the challenge is to determine what information we collect and how we collect them from abundance of information.
7. Advising management
- In principle, public relations is a management matter and every PR activity is accompanied by a management decision.
 - The aim of PR activities is to 1) provide feedback from market and society for management strategy formation and corporate internal activities and 2) implement corporate communication based on management strategy. To do this, the close tie with management is essential.
 - The role top executives play in PR activities such as crisis management, corporate social responsibility, and brand strategy will expand. Top executive will play a leadership role in PR.
 - It is important for PR function to elevate its ability to bring to the management appropriate information timely. PR need to have presence in the minds of management.
8. Corporate social responsibility including environmental issues
- In environmental issues and social issues, relationship building is more important than information dissemination. Therefore, it is more likely to be handled by specialists.
 - For large corporations to exist, corporate social responsibility and environmental PR are the essentials.

- Corporate social responsibility will further become a common agenda and companies will be required to bear roles and responsibilities as global corporate citizens.
- It is necessary to clarify which part of the company's business activity is socially meaningful.

9. Issues management

- Issues management is essential in global business strategy.
- It can be a part of crisis management.
- Japanese companies will need to conduct American style lobbying on social issues such as employment, economy, welfare, and securities.
- It will be important for the sustainability of businesses, but because the term is not yet recognized, and because PR departments are busy with day to day operations, not many companies can cover this area even if they recognize its importance.

10. Corporate group PR

- With mergers & acquisitions and industry reorganizations, various corporate groups will emerge. Today, the international competition is fought as groups. The enhancement of group branding covering both domestic and overseas operation will be essential.
- In corporate groups that span over different cultures, or that comprise of companies with different corporate cultures, smooth communication among employees and unification of opinion among them are prerequisites for its management.
- It is the same as internal PR, and there's no need to differentiate between the two.

11. Overseas PR

- Overseas PR should be handled not from overseas, but locally.
- Overseas PR will increase its importance as domestic market continues to shrink and overseas PR needs to be rooted in the locality.
- The significance of dichotomization such as "overseas vs. domestic," and "external vs. internal" is fading, but for Japanese companies in five years from now, cross-cultural communication remains to be an important issue.
- With the overseas sales ratio of manufacturing industries above 50%, enhancement of competitiveness overseas is inevitable. The importance of overseas PR to establish excellent global brand will increase.

12. Investor relations

- After the financial crisis, it has become difficult for many companies to foresee its performance. In terms of accountability, the investor relations' role will change.
- The scope of investor relations work may become broader than it is today. I am saying this with anticipation that current style of investor relations - only with printed materials and analysts meetings - will change.
- To cope with falling birthrate and aging population, and escalation of global competition, companies need to structurally change their business models. To achieve this, and to obtain funding for this, the understanding and support from shareholders and investors will be essential.
- With the number of individual shareholders increasing, the key factor in investor relations is whether the company can provide information that can fulfill management's accountability.

13. Word-of-mouth and social media strategy (additional item)

- Good consumer relations is the best word-of-mouth strategy.
- It will be more and more important as the Internet use grow.
- Whether it's a good or a bad, the rate at which a reputation travels constantly increases. Every company needs to devise a method to generate reputation. A reputation is not made merely upon information, and sincere behavior will be a key.

14. Corporate transformation

- Corporate transformation to accommodate changes in society requires utilization of information.
- Promotion of corporate transformation is a part of management strategy and is mainly handled by management strategy planning section. Once a strategy is formulated, PR section often plays the central role.
- For PR department to be recognized as a management strategy division, this is an important function.

15. Consumer relations (customer service etc)

- It will become important, not only to respond to inquiries from consumers, but also to listen to the voices and forward them to related sections in the company to improve customer satisfaction.
- This will be a key function in dealing with word-of-mouth.
- As consumers are more "right-conscious," mishandling customers can create a crisis. Legitimate claims should be handled sincerely, and bogus claims should be handled with a firm stand.

Discussion

Media relations was unanimously supported by the respondents as the most important PR activity in Japan in the near future. Sriramesh and Takasaki (1999) reported that in a survey of 81 Japanese PR practitioners, media relations was highly valued by those practitioners. After 10 years, the importance of media relations in Japan remains the same and it is regarded as the most important and fundamental operation of PR.

Crisis management followed media relations. In the past decade, several well established companies have either collapsed or drastically down-sized its operation because of mishandling communication in crisis situations (for example, Wrigley, Ota, & Kikuchi, 2006). Its position in the ranking doesn't necessarily reflect the extent that it is practiced, but it can be said that the ranking reflects the understanding of the consequences of crisis and the importance of crisis management.

One activity item that deserve an attention is issues management. It is the only item that fell more than two spots in the second round from the first round result. It fell from the 5th in the first round to the 9th in the second round. It also had the smallest number of increase in the frequency- the number of people who ranked the item in the top 10. As one comment noted, the term is not yet well recognized in Japan. There may be a gap between those who understand the concept and those who do not. The concept needs to be translated into Japanese culture to gain understanding of this activity, and to expand the field of public relations.

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