

## DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 481 238

CS 512 481

TITLE Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (86th, Kansas City, Missouri, July 30-August 2, 2003). Public Relations Division.

PUB DATE 2003-07-00

NOTE 632p.; For other sections of these proceedings, see CS 512 480-498.

PUB TYPE Collected Works - Proceedings (021) -- Reports - Research (143)

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF03/PC26 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Cooperative Learning; \*Ethics; Feminism; Higher Education; \*Journalism Education; Media Coverage; Models; National Surveys; Nonprofit Organizations; Organizational Communication; Private Financial Support; \*Public Relations; Radio; Scientific and Technical Information; Teaching Methods; World Wide Web

IDENTIFIERS Risk Communication; September 11 Terrorist Attacks 2001; Travel Industry

## ABSTRACT

The Public Relations Division of the proceedings contains the following 20 papers: "Communicating for Technical Change: Business-to-Business Communication with Small Manufacturing Firms" (Danielle Pontiff); "Integrating Editorial Presentation and Public Relations Publications: New Frontiers for Convergence and Collaborative Learning" (Jennifer George-Palilonis, Robert S. Pritchard, and Betsy Hatch); "The Use of Persuasive Appeals and Public Relations in the Travel and Tourism Industry Post-9/11" (Ann R. Carden); "The Relationship between Corporate Philanthropic Activity and Corporate Financial Impact: Getting Beyond the Inconsistent Results of Previous Studies" (Jiyang Bae and Margarette Rooney Hall); "A (Re)conceived Feminist Paradigm for Public Relations and Its Application to the Theory of Organization-Public Relationships" (Linda Aldoory and Elizabeth Toth); "How to Measure Organization-Public Relationships: Measurement Validation in a Company-Retailer Relationship" (Samsup Jo); "Protracted Strategic Risk Communication: A Longitudinal Analysis of Community's Zones of Meaning" (Michael J. Palenchar and Robert L. Heath); "Nonprofit Organizations' Use of the World Wide Web: Are They Sufficiently Fulfilling Organizational Goals?" (Seok Kang and Hanna E. Norton); "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly of How the General Public Views PR Practitioners: The Results of a Hybrid Survey/Experiment Employing a Nationwide Sample" (Coy Callison); "Utilizing John Rawls' 'A Theory of Justice' to Examine the Social Utility of Contemporary Public Relations" (David L. Martinson); "Organization-Public Relationships, Organizational Representations, and the Overall Evaluation of Organizational Performance: A Causal Model" (Sung-Un Yang and James E. Grunig); "Developing the 'Dynamic' Public Relations Case Class: I Don't Know Anything about Science and You Want Me to Say WHAT?" (B. J. Altschul); "Legitimate Strategy versus Smoke Screen: Framing Philip Morris' Name Change to Altria" (Cristina Popescu); "Radio Business on the World Wide Web: An Examination of the Streaming Terrestrial and Internet-Based Radio Stations in the United States" (Wen Ren and Sylvia M. Chan-Olmsted); "The Role of Clients in the Public Relations Campaigns Course" (Vince Benigni, I-Huei Cheng, and Glen T. Cameron); "Exploring the Effects of Organization-Public Relationships (OPRs) on Attitude toward the Organization, Brand, and Purchase

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made  
from the original document.

Intention" (Jeesun Kim, Sooburn Lee, and ByengHee Chang); "Congressional Press Secretaries: A Survey of Their Relationships with Reporters and Views on Media Coverage" (Ethnie Groves and Jennifer Greer); "Is Media Relations All There Is to Public Relations?: Differences in Perceptions between Public Relations and Journalism Educators" (Thomasena Shaw and Candace White); "Examining the PRSA Code of Ethics: Toward Ethical Advocacy" (Hyo-Sook Kim). (RS)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made  
from the original document.

# Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication

86<sup>th</sup>, Kansas City, MO

July 30-August 2, 2003

Public Relations Division

ED 481 238

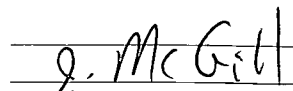
- Communicating for Technical Change: Business-to-Business Communication with Small Manufacturing Firms...Danielle Pontiff
- Integrating Editorial Presentation and Public Relations Publications: New Frontiers for Convergence and Collaborative Learning...Jennifer George-Palilonis, Robert S. Pritchard, Betsy Hatch
- The Use of Persuasive Appeals and Public Relations in the Travel and Tourism Industry Post-9/11, Ann R. Carden
- The Relationship Between Corporate Philanthropic Activity and Corporate Financial Impact: Getting Beyond the Inconsistent Results of Previous Studies... Jiyang Bae, Margarete Rooney Hall
- A (Re) conceived Feminist Paradigm for Public Relations and its Application to the Theory of Organization-Public Relationships...Linda Aldoory, Elizabeth Toth
- How to Measure Organization-Public Relationships: Measurement Validation in a Company-Retailer Relationship...Samsup Jo
- Protracted Strategic Risk Communication: A Longitudinal Analysis of Community's Zones of Meaning...Michael J. Palenchar, Robert L. Heath
- Nonprofit Organizations' Use of the World Wide Web: Are They Sufficiently Fulfilling Organizational Goals?...Seok Kang, Hanna E. Norton
- The Good, the Bad and the Ugly of How the General Public Views PR Practitioners: The Results of a Hybrid Survey/Experiment Employing a Nationwide Sample...Coy Callison
- Utilizing John Rawls' "A Theory of Justice": To Examine the Social Utility of Contemporary Public Relations...David L. Martinson
- Organization-Public Relationships, Organizational Representations, and the Overall Evaluation of Organizational Performance: A Causal Model...Sung-Un Yang, James E. Grunig
- Developing the "Dynamic" Public Relations Case Class: I Don't Know Anything About Science and You Want Me to Say *What?*...B. J. Altschul
- Legitimate Strategy versus Smoke Screen: Framing Philip Morris' Name Change to Altria...Cristina Popescu
- Radio Business on the World Wide Web: An Examination of the Streaming Terrestrial and Internet-Based Radio Stations in the United States...Wen Ren, Sylvia M. Chan-Olmsted
- The Role of Clients in the Public Relations Campaigns Course...Vince Benigni, I-Huei Cheng, Glen T. Cameron
- Exploring the Effects of Organization-Public Relationships (OPRs) on Attitude Toward the Organization, Brand, and Purchase Intention...Jeesun Kim, Soobum Lee, ByengHee Chang
- Congressional Press Secretaries: A Survey of Their Relationships with Reporters and Views on Media Coverage...Ethnie Groves, Jennifer Greer
- Is Media Relations All there is to Public Relations? Differences in Perceptions Between Public Relations and Journalism Educators...Thomasena Shaw, Candace White
- Examining the PRSA Code of Ethics: Toward Ethical Advocacy...Hyo-Sook Kim

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
Office of Educational Research and Improvement  
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION  
CENTER (ERIC)

- This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND  
DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS  
BEEN GRANTED BY



TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES  
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

PR

**Communicating for Technical Change:  
Business-to-Business Communication with Small Manufacturing Firms**

A Student Paper  
Presented to the AEJMC By  
Danielle Pontiff  
University of Louisiana at Lafayette  
March 2003

Danielle Pontiff ♦ Phone: (337) 482-6764 ♦ E-mail: [dcp1759@louisiana.edu](mailto:dcp1759@louisiana.edu)

## ABSTRACT

In business-to-business public relations, practitioners are often asked to encourage change in the adoption of new technologies. This study focuses on the challenge faced by business-to-business public relations practitioners who work to encourage the adoption of e-business applications among small manufacturing firms. While the adoption and use of e-business applications have been increasingly encouraged in the manufacturing industry, research indicates that smaller firms are less likely to adopt and use technology unless they perceive beneficial characteristics. This study presents results from a survey of 157 small manufacturing firms in Louisiana to determine how they perceive e-business applications based on characteristics defined in the diffusion of innovations theory. The findings indicate that the adoption and use of e-business applications among small Louisiana manufacturing firms are driven by perceptions of external pressure from customers, the relative advantages that the technology will bring to their company, and the ability of their company to overcome perceived barriers. Recommendations are presented based on the results of this study, showing practitioners how they can apply these findings to public relations efforts promoting the adoption and use of e-business applications for small manufacturing firms.

## **INTRODUCTION: THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY**

Business-to-business public relations practitioners face a changing and competitive environment, which requires the development of more sophisticated communication skills (Hartley & Patti, 1988). Electronic business applications are playing major roles in reshaping the way business-to-business relationships are managed and conducted worldwide by inventing new value propositions, transforming the rules of competition, and mobilizing people and resources to unprecedented levels of performance (Tapscott, Ticoll & Lowy, 2000). The Internet has become one of the most important media for sharing business information among firms and relating to their customers (Beatty, Shim, & Jones, 2001).

E-business generally refers to an interorganizational information system that is intended to facilitate business-to-business communication through electronic means, including information exchange and transaction support through a web of either public-access or private-value-added networks (Min & Galle, 2001). E-business can take a variety of forms, including electronic data interchange (EDI), direct link-ups with suppliers, internet, intranet, extranet, electronic catalog ordering, on-line collaboration through groupware, and e-mail (Min & Galle, 2001). E-business represents a shift in the methods of conducting business-to-business transactions, permitting firms to interact electronically with buyers and suppliers (Senn, 2000). It results in expanded choices for buyers, provides new opportunities for sellers, and reduces transaction costs for everyone involved (Kaplan & Sawhney, 2000).

Research studies around the world have focused on one industry that is adopting e-business - the manufacturing industry (Senn, 2000; National Association of

Manufacturers [NAM] & Ernst & Young, 2001). In order to find out how manufacturers in the United States are utilizing e-business applications, the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) and Ernst & Young jointly developed the E-Commerce Trends Index (2001), which looks at e-trends in manufacturing overall on a biannual basis. Of the 578 manufacturing companies that participated in the study, 72% said they used the Internet for marketing purposes. However, fewer than one in ten used the Internet to connect electronically with more than 50 percent of their suppliers.

The U.S. Census Bureau conducted its own study of e-business utilization by manufacturers through a supplement in its 1999 Annual Survey of Manufacturers (United States Census Bureau E-Stats, 2001). The results were based on data provided by more than 38,000 U.S. manufacturing plants, showing that online purchases accounted for 12 percent of the value of total shipments in manufacturing in 1999 with \$485 billion of the \$4 trillion in shipments recorded for that year. According to the Census Bureau's report, the percentage of plants reporting Internet access was generally higher among larger firms with more employees.

Why should small businesses, specifically manufacturing companies, adopt and implement e-business applications? Motorola, Boeing, General Motors, and other large manufacturing companies have insisted that their suppliers, often made up of smaller manufacturing companies, develop an ability to conduct business over the Internet as a condition of maintaining supplier status (Senn, 2000; Wirtz & Kam, 2001). In some cases, there have been explicit warnings that suppliers not changing to e-business within the next few years could be locked out as suppliers for the long term (Senn, 2000). This

message is extremely crucial for small manufacturing companies that serve as suppliers to larger organizations.

This study investigates the adoption and use of electronic business communication among small manufacturing firms, focusing on the perceptions of e-business applications. The research is theoretically based on the diffusion of innovations theory. The results are used to identify methods for public relation practitioners to educate manufacturing firms about e-business applications.

The diffusion of innovations theory serves as the foundation of this study to provide practitioners with valuable information regarding small manufacturers' perceptions of change and e-business applications that can help with public relations efforts. Public relations organizations or practitioners who are working to promote e-business in the manufacturing industry can gain insight into where this population of manufacturers stands today in its perceptions of e-business and learn how they can communicate the benefits of e-business in a way that will help overcome negative perceptions.

This study can also contribute to the public relations field in general, specifically to research on developing business-to-business relationships. Public relations plays a major role in the development and maintenance of business-to-business relationships (Bruning & Ralston, 2000). In business-to-business relationships, buyers and sellers tend to be in continuous, direct contact with one another at personal as well as organizational levels (Steinman, Deshpande, & Farley, 2000). These relationships must be monitored on an ongoing basis, since they have been reported to influence purchasing behavior and perceptions of satisfaction in a business-to-business context (Bruning & Lambe, 2001).



This study provides some insight into how manufacturing firms monitor and manage their business-to-business relationships.

## **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

The diffusion of innovations theory focuses on the communication of new ideas and their adoption by individuals and organizations (Rogers, 1995). There are four main elements in the diffusion of innovations: (1) the innovation, (2) communication channels, (3) time, and (4) the social system (Rogers, 1995). Two elements of the diffusion process are part of this study: the innovation and the social system. Innovation is defined by Rogers as “an idea, practice or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption” (Rogers, 1995, pg. 11). The social system, as it relates to innovation, is defined as “a set of interrelated units that are engaged in joint problem-solving to accomplish a common goal,” and may refer to individuals, informal groups, organizations and/or subsystems (Rogers, 1995, pg. 23). In this study, the “innovation” is electronic business applications and the “social system” refers to small Louisiana manufacturing companies.

Rogers (1995) grouped the types of individuals who adopted innovations into categories based on innovativeness, “the degree to which an individual or other unit of adoption is relatively earlier in adopting new ideas than other members of a social system” (pg. 261). He used two statistics, the mean and the standard deviation, to divide a normal-adopter distribution curve into categories. The normal frequency distribution was divided into five adopter categories, which Rogers defined as follows (Rogers 1995, pg. 262):

- (1) **Innovators** – The first 2.5 percent of the individuals in a system to adopt an innovation; are venturesome and can cope with a high degree of uncertainty.
- (2) **Early Adopters** – The next 13.5 percent of the individuals in a system to adopt an innovation; have the greatest degree of opinion leadership in most social systems.
- (3) **Early Majority** – The next 34 percent of the individuals in a system to adopt an innovation; adopt new ideas just before the average member of a system, interacting frequently with their peers before adopting.
- (4) **Late Majority** – The next 34 percent of individuals in a system to adopt an innovation; adopt new ideas just after the average member of a system, giving into pressure from peers to adopt.
- (5) **Laggards** – The final 16 percent of individuals in a system to adopt an innovation; possess almost no opinion leadership and suspicious of innovations.

Rogers (1995) defined five characteristics of innovations, each concerned with the perception of potential adopters. These characteristics, defined in table 1, include (1) Relative Advantage, (2) Compatibility, (3) Complexity, (4) Trialability, and (5) Observability (Rogers, 1995). While developing an instrument to measure the perceptions of adopting an information technology innovation, Moore and Benbasat (1991) concluded that most existing instruments designed to tap these five characteristics lacked reliability and validity. In order to improve the reliability and validity of their measuring instrument, they added three more characteristics to Rogers' original five. Those three characteristics are: (1) voluntariness, (2) image, and (3) result demonstrability, also defined in Table 1.

In a meta-analysis of existing diffusion of innovations research conducted by Tornatzky and Klein (1982), three perceived innovation characteristics were found to have the most consistent significant relationships to innovation adoption. Those characteristics were compatibility, relative advantage, and complexity. Compatibility and relative advantage were found to be positively related to adoption, while complexity was

negatively related (Tornatzky & Klein, 1982). Rogers (1995) and Moore and Benbasat (1995) had similar findings in their findings for these three characteristics, indicating consistency in the literature regarding these three perceived characteristics and their relationships to the adoption of an innovation.

Innovations tend to spread among firms of an industry in a diffusion process that is similar to the way that an innovation diffuses among individuals in a community or other types of systems (Rogers, 1995). Rogers (1995) found that one of the main motivations for organizations to adopt an innovation is the desire to gain status within their social system. Past research has shown that as relative advantage becomes increasingly visible among organizations adopting a change, other organizations are prompted to consider the same change, a pattern that forms a bandwagon effect, in which increasing numbers of firms adopt a strategy (O'Neill, Poudier & Buchholtz, 1998).

One reason the adoption of an innovation varies across a social system is uncertainty, an uncomfortable state within an organization or system that can lead to resistance in adopting the innovation (Rogers, 1995; O'Neill, Poudier & Buchholtz, 1998). Past research has shown that the more radical an innovation, the more uncertainty it creates and the more difficult its implementation (Rogers, 1995). Despite the adoption of an innovation by an organization's competitors and others in similar industries, uncertainties caused by knowledge barriers related to perceived complexity can hinder an organization in adopting an innovation (Iacovou, Benbasat & Dexter, 1995; O'Neill, Poudier & Buchholtz, 1998; Nambisan & Wang, 1999).

Table 1.  
Characteristics of Innovation Defined

Author(s)	Characteristics of Innovation	Definition
Rogers (1995)	Relative Advantage*	The degree to which an innovation is perceived as better than the idea it supersedes (pg. 15)
	Compatibility*	The degree to which an innovation is perceived as being consistent with existing values, past experiences, and needs of potential adopters (pg. 15)
	Complexity*	The degree to which an innovation is perceived as difficult to understand and use (pg. 16)
	Triability	The degree to which an innovation may be experimented with on a limited basis (pg. 16)
	Observability	The degree to which the results of an innovation are visible to others (pg. 16)
Moore & Benbasat (1991)	Voluntariness	The degree to which use of the innovation is perceived as being voluntary, or of free will (pg. 195)
	Image	The degree to which use of an innovation is perceived to enhance one's image or status in one's social system (pg. 195)
	Result Demonstrability	The degree to which the use of the innovation is perceived as producing beneficial results that can be communicated to others (pg. 203)

\* Consistent Predictors (Tornatzky & Klein, 1982; Moore & Benbasat, 1995; Rogers, 1995)

While e-business has become an area of increasing importance among researchers in several disciplines, little empirical work has been completed on the subject (Chau & Tam, 2000; Wirtz & Kam, 2001) and none was found in the public relations literature. Of the studies that have been conducted on perceptions and the influence of a social system concerning the adoption of e-business applications, some common themes have been found: (1) Large organizations are more willing to adopt and use e-business applications

than smaller organizations (Min & Galle, 2001; Wirtz & Kam, 2001); (2) Perceived lack of security is one of the main barriers to adopting e-business applications among companies of any size (Poon & Swatman, 1999; Min & Galle, 2001; Wirtz & Kam, 2001); (3) Other perceived barriers to the adoption of e-business applications include knowledge barriers, financial barriers and organizational barriers (Iacovou, Benbasat, & Dexter, 1995; Nambisan & Wang, 1999; Chircu and Kauffman, 2000); and (4) External pressures can influence small organizations to adopt e-business applications (Iacovou et al., 1995; Min & Galle, 1999).

Table 2 summarizes the major findings of the literature regarding the adoption of an innovation and the adoption of e-business applications. As a result of the literature review, this study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. How do small manufacturing firms perceive the characteristics of e-business?
2. What, if any, are the perceptual barriers that may hinder small manufacturing firms in the adoption of e-business?
3. Are there external pressures that have encouraged or discouraged the adoption of e-business among small manufacturing firms?
4. What other perceptions of e-business applications may have encouraged or discouraged the adoption of e-business among small manufacturing firms?

Table 2.

Summary of Adoption of Innovation Findings From Previous Studies

Author(s)	Findings Concerning Adoption of Innovation
Tornatzky & Klein (1982) Moore & Benbasat (1991) Rogers (1995) Iacovou, Benbasat & Dexter (1995)	Perceived relative advantage is positively related to the adoption of an innovation by an individual or organization
Tornatzky & Klein (1982) Moore & Benbasat (1991) Rogers (1995)	Perceived complexity of an innovation is negatively related to its adoption by an individual or organization
Tornatzky & Klein (1982) Moore & Benbasat (1991) Rogers (1995)	Perceived compatibility of an innovation is positively related to its adoption by an individual or organization
Rogers (1995) Wirtz & Kam (2001) Min & Galle (2001)	Large organizations are often more innovative and therefore more willing to adopt new technology than smaller organizations
Rogers (1995) Iacovou, Benbasat & Dexter (1995) O'Neill, Poudel & Buchholtz (1998) Min & Galle (1999)	External influences, such as gaining status within a social system and external pressures to adopt, are often motivation for individuals or organizations to adopt an innovation [relates to perceived relative advantage]
Iacovou, Benbasat & Dexter (1995) O'Neill, Poudel & Buchholtz (1998) Nambisan & Wang (1999) Chircu & Kauffman (2000)	Perceived knowledge barriers inhibit the adoption of an innovation by individuals or organizations [relates to perceived complexity]
Poon & Swatman (1999) Min & Galle (2001) Wirtz & Kam (2001)	Perceived lack of security is a barrier to adoption of e-business applications [relates to perceived complexity]

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Five hypotheses were generated from the research questions based on the literature review:

**Hypothesis 1:** The more small manufacturing firms perceive e-business as providing relative advantage to their current operations, the more likely they will be adopters of e-business applications.

**Hypothesis 2:** The more small manufacturing firms perceive e-business as compatible to their operations, the more likely they will be adopters of e-business applications.

**Hypothesis 3:** The more small manufacturing firms perceive e-business as easy to use, the more likely they will be adopters of e-business applications.

**Hypothesis 4:** The more small manufacturing firms believe they can overcome perceived barriers of e-business applications, the more likely they will be adopters of e-business applications.

**Hypothesis 5:** The more small manufacturing firms perceive external pressure to adopt e-business, the more likely they will be adopters of e-business applications.

## METHODOLOGY

A questionnaire was used to gather data for this study. The sample of manufacturing firms utilized for this study were Louisiana-based firms chosen from the 2001-2002 Manufacturers' News, Inc. database of Louisiana manufacturers. Three hundred small manufacturing firms were chosen randomly and systematically to compose the sample in this study. Louisiana was chosen as the site for this study based on the

results of recent technology studies, limiting the study to one state and controlling for regional and within-state variations. In the State New Economy Index (SNEI), an economic index established by the Progressive Policy Institute in Washington, D.C., Louisiana ranked 45<sup>th</sup> out of the 50 states in overall “new economy” rankings (Atkinson, 2002). A survey conducted in the year 2002 among small Louisiana manufacturing companies by the Manufacturing Extension Partnership of Louisiana (MEPoL) found that, among 355 Louisiana manufacturing companies, only 35 percent deemed e-business as an area of importance for their long-term success.

Employee size was used as a measurement of company size, since the information was readily available in the Manufacturers’ News, Inc. (2001) database and employee size has been used consistently to define large and small companies in previous studies (Poon & Swatman, 1999; Min & Galle, 2001; Wirtz & Kam, 2001). A focus on manufacturing firms employing 10 to 150 people allowed the current study to investigate firms least likely to have adopted e-business, based on data regarding organizational size (Rogers, 1995; Wirtz & Kam, 2001; Min & Galle, 2001). Approximately 2,100 Louisiana companies in the Manufacturers’ News, Inc. (2001) database employed between 10 and 150 people, making up the population for this study.

The survey was sent to the 300 manufacturing firms via a fax machine under the support of the Manufacturing Extension Partnership of Louisiana (MEPoL), a non-profit organization with a mission to provide business and technical assistance to Louisiana manufacturers. Each company was called before the survey was sent to obtain permission. A fax transmission cover letter on MEPoL letterhead was sent with the survey explaining its purpose and assuring the confidentiality of each respondent’s



individual responses. A number was assigned to each survey to allow the researcher to follow up with companies that had not responded by the given response date. This method of identification and its reasoning were mentioned in the cover letter, and no other methods were utilized to identify the respondents or their company. At least three follow-up efforts were administered to encourage responses.

The surveys were sent during a three-month period between March 20, 2002 and June 21, 2002. Of the 300 manufacturing firms randomly chosen to participate in this study, a total of 157 valid surveys were returned to the researcher, for a response rate of 52 percent.

**Statistics.** Each hypothesis in this study was tested as a bivariate correlation. Multiple regression analyses were also used to assess multiplier effects and identify stronger predictors of e-business adoption. For each tested hypothesis,  $p < .05$  was the standard. Tests for normality, equality of variance and linearity, histograms and normal probability plots were run on all of the data. Overall, the population was robust and multivariate, and the data appeared close to normal. Correlations indicated the relationships were modestly linear. Cases of extreme scores in the dependent variables and how they were handled, as well as one issue regarding multicollinearity that occurred in the multiple regression analyses, are addressed in the results section.

**Measuring Perceptions of E-Business Applications.** The hypotheses presented in this study focus on perceptions of e-business technology among small manufacturing firms. A combination of questions from three pre-developed questionnaires were used to measure perceptions of e-business applications: (1) An instrument developed by Moore and Benbasat (1991) to measure the perceptions of adopting an information technology

innovation; (2) The Manufacturing Extension Partnership's (2001) eBusiness Needs tool; and (3) The Manufacturing Extension Partnership's (2001) e-business assessment tool.

The perceived characteristics measured in this study included relative advantage, compatibility, ease of use, barriers (made up of knowledge barriers, technology barriers, security barriers and funding barriers), and external pressure to adopt e-business applications. Each of the perceived characteristics was measured using a seven-point Likert-type scale, with ratings as follows: 1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Somewhat disagree, 4. In between, 5. Somewhat agree, 6. Agree, and 7. Strongly agree. Two or more survey questions for each perceived characteristic were combined to form a single index for each perceived characteristic.

**Measuring the Adoption of E-business Applications.** Based on studies identified in the literature review, usage is the most valuable measurement when distinguishing between adopters and non-adopters of e-business applications. To distinguish between adopters and non-adopters, Moore and Benbasat (1995) incorporated the measurements of usage intensity and usage diversity into their study on the adoption of information technology. This study follows that example, measuring e-business adoption through the two dependent variables of usage intensity and usage diversity. The two variables were analyzed separately, with an adoption scale developed for each. These adoption scales are discussed in the results section for each of the dependent variables.

## RESULTS

### Demographic Results

A total of 16 types of manufacturing companies participated in this study, including companies in the metal fabrication, machinery and transportation industries. Owners and managers made up a total of 65 percent of the respondents who completed the survey for the participating companies. The number of years the participating companies had been in business varied from a minimum of one year to a maximum of 110 years.

The total number of full-time workers employed at the participating companies was a key demographic measure for this study since it determined company size. The results ranged from a minimum of four employees to a maximum of 130,000 employees. The intention of the study was to measure perceptions of e-business applications among manufacturing firms employing 10 to 150 people. Therefore, the statistical results were measured in two ways: (1) Analyses including only those participating companies that employed a total of 150 people or less, and (2) Analyses including all participating companies, even those that employed more than 150 people, since company size was considered a demographic measurement only, serving as a criterion to ensure a majority of the participating companies could be classified as “small.” Overall, 82 percent of the responding companies employed a total 150 people or less.

As part of the demographic data collected for this study, respondent companies were asked whether they had a website. Of the participating companies, nearly 71% reported that their company had a website. Respondents who did not have a website were asked to identify a reason. Of the 46 companies participating in this study that did not

have a website, 45 responded to this question, with 44 percent indicating that they were unsure or did not know why their company did not have a website. Limited human resources was the reason for 33 percent of the respondents, followed by limited technical resources (20 percent) and customer acceptance (22 percent). Concerns for cost and data security did not seem to be as important.

Additional demographic data were gathered to determine if the participants electronically communicated with their suppliers, customers and other businesses. Nearly half of the respondents (49 percent) indicated they electronically managed supplier and/or customer relationships, while 31 percent said they did not. Customer relationships were more likely to be managed electronically than were supplier relationships when respondent companies did not electronically manage both.

The data further indicated the importance of customer relationships among the respondents when they were asked what drove the adoption of e-business for their company. Customer pressure (49%), operational efficiency (49%) and improving existing customer relationships (44%) were shown to be the key drivers. In comparison to customers and competitors, suppliers did not seem to have as much influence on the adoption of e-business by participating companies, with 22 percent of respondents identifying improvement in existing supplier relationships and 18 percent identifying supplier pressure as drivers to adopt e-business applications. The data suggests that, in this particular system, output uses for e-business applications were more acceptable than input uses.

## **Dependent Variable Results**

**E-Business Usage Intensity.** In measuring e-business usage intensity, respondents were asked to indicate all methods their company used to communicate with other businesses in general. Traditional methods such as phone (98 percent), faxes (95 percent), U.S. mail (92 percent) and face-to-face meetings (88 percent) were the top four methods, with e-mail coming in fifth (84 percent). The Internet was used by 55 percent of the respondents for communicating with other businesses, relatively close to the percentage that used trade shows (52 percent) and advertisements (48 percent).

Respondents who marked any of the responses that involved electronic information exchange (e-mail, internet, electronic data interchange, computer-to-computer communication, video conferencing, value added networks and extensible mark-up language [XML]) were given one point each on a scale measuring the dependent variable of e-business usage intensity. Therefore, the highest score possible on the scale was seven points and the lowest was zero, with zero indicating non-adopters. Of the respondents, 23 scored a zero on the scale and two scored a seven. The mean score was 2 with a standard deviation of 1.4.

**E-Business Usage Diversity.** The dependent variable of e-business usage diversity was measured in a separate question that expanded the uses of items measured for the e-business usage intensity scale into diverse applications that manage several aspects of business communications, including order placements, inventory, and monetary transactions. Respondents were asked to indicate methods utilized by their companies to electronically communicate with trading partners such as customers and suppliers. The results showed that 39% allowed trading partners to contact them through

feedback forms and e-mail, 38% allowed trading partners to place orders electronically, and 34% allowed trading partners to obtain product or company information electronically through inquiries. Twenty-nine percent of the respondent companies did not use any of the 13 choices available to electronically communicate with trading partners. The least used electronic communication methods among respondents included providing capabilities for trading partners to process transactions over a secure connection (8%), select shipping options (7%), and check inventory (6%).

With the inclusion of a “none of the above” response, there were 14 possible responses to this question. Respondents were given one point per method that they marked as a response to this question, with the “none of the above” response counting as zero. The highest score possible on the scale was 13 points and the lowest was zero. The mean score was 2.2, with a standard deviation of 2.4. Of the respondents, 52 scored a zero on the scale and four had extreme scores of nine points or more. The highest score reported on the usage diversity scale among respondents in this study was 11 points, which two companies reported.

### **Independent Variable Results**

Table 3 shows each of the perceived characteristics measured in this study with relevant statistics. The standard deviation scores for some of the independent variables, including perceived relative advantage, perceived ease of use and perceived external pressures, indicated a lot of variation in the data. The scale alpha measurements showed that the scales measuring each of the perceived characteristics were reliable and consistent. Overall, the data showed that participants somewhat agreed that e-business

applications provided relative advantage to their operations and was somewhat compatible with their operations. They somewhat agreed that e-business applications were easy to use and that they could overcome barriers indicated in the literature, such as knowledge barriers, funding barriers, security barriers and technological barriers. They somewhat disagreed that there were external pressures to adopt e-business applications.

Table 3.  
Independent Variables with Relevant Statistical Data

Variable	Max. Score Possible	Mean	Std. Dev.	Scale Alpha	n=
Perceived Relative Advantage	35	21	7.2	.93	157
Perceived Compatibility	21	12	3.9	.78	157
Perceived Ease of Use	56	34	8.1	.87	148
Overcoming Perceived Barriers	28	17	5.5	.72	156
Perceived External Pressure	56	26	8.7	.80	147

### **Hypotheses Results**

The results of the bivariate correlation analyses showed that each of the perceived characteristics studied had a significant, positive relationship with e-business usage intensity and usage diversity, supporting the five hypotheses presented in this study. The variables with the strongest relationships to e-business usage intensity and usage diversity included perceived external pressures to adopt e-business, overcoming perceived barriers, and perceived relative advantage of using e-business applications (see Table 4).

When analyses were run on only those companies employing 150 people or fewer, some of the relationships became stronger, especially with perceived relative advantage and perceived compatibility. But overall, the data indicate that usage intensity had a stronger relationship with a majority of the independent variables when all companies were considered in the analysis, while usage diversity had a stronger

relationship with a majority of the independent variables when only those companies employing 150 people or fewer were considered in the analysis.

Table 4.  
Perceived Characteristics and Their Relationships to E-Business Usage Intensity and Usage Diversity (Bivariate Relationships)

Perceived Characteristic	Relationship to Usage Intensity (All Participants)	Relationship to Usage Intensity (Cos. with ≤ 150 employees)	Relationship to Usage Diversity (All Participants)	Relationship to Usage Diversity (Cos. with ≤ 150 employees)
External Pressure	.489* (R <sup>2</sup> = .24)	.479* (R <sup>2</sup> = .23)	.454* (R <sup>2</sup> = .21)	.481* (R <sup>2</sup> = .23)
Barriers	.461* (R <sup>2</sup> = .21)	.459* (R <sup>2</sup> = .21)	.364* (R <sup>2</sup> = .13)	.379* (R <sup>2</sup> = .14)
Relative Advantage	.406* (R <sup>2</sup> = .16)	.442* (R <sup>2</sup> = .20)	.397* (R <sup>2</sup> = .16)	.423* (R <sup>2</sup> = .18)
Compatibility	.342* (R <sup>2</sup> = .12)	.422* (R <sup>2</sup> = .18)	.381* (R <sup>2</sup> = .15)	.478* (R <sup>2</sup> = .23)
Ease of Use	.368* (R <sup>2</sup> = .13)	.346* (R <sup>2</sup> = .12)	.327* (R <sup>2</sup> = .11)	.377* (R <sup>2</sup> = .14)

\* p<.01

### **Multiple Regression Analyses Results**

In order to determine which of the independent variables in combination were stronger predictors of e-business usage intensity and usage diversity, multiple regression analyses were run for all of the variables. For each analysis, the two extreme cases for usage intensity and four extreme cases for usage diversity were folded into the third standard deviation to address any issues with normality. Table 5 shows the results of the multiple regression analyses, which were completed using a stepwise method. The variables chosen as good predictors of the two dependent variables had to meet the criteria of  $p \leq .05$ . In all analyses, a positive B indicated a positive slope and a positive relationship with the dependent variables. Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> statistics are reported for each analysis. The only R<sup>2</sup> analysis above 30 percent occurred when all five of the independent variables were considered for e-business usage intensity, although it was close for usage diversity when all variables were considered, at 28 percent.



As indicated by the beta weights shown in Table 5, the strongest predictors for e-business usage intensity and usage diversity were perceived external pressure to adopt e-business applications, overcoming perceived barriers and perceived relative advantage. Compatibility and ease of use were not strong predictors. This may be explained by a strong correlation between the two variables that occurred when tests for multicollinearity were conducted as part of the multiple regression analyses, indicating that compatibility and ease of use could have been measuring similar characteristics.

Table 5.  
Multiple Regression Analyses Results

E-Business Usage Intensity		n=	Mn.	Sd	B	Beta	Constant	R <sup>2</sup>
<u>Overcoming Perceived Barriers:</u>								
	Knowledge	156	4	2	.17	.24		
	Technology	156	5	2	.13	.18		
	Security	156	5	2	.13	.18		
Equation: Y' (usage intensity) = -0.009 + .17X <sub>(knowledge)</sub> + .13X <sub>(technology)</sub> + .13X <sub>(security)</sub>							-0.009	0.20
<u>Relative Advantage, Compatibility and Ease of Use:</u>								
	Relative Advantage	148	22	7	.06	.30		
	Ease of Use	148	34	8	.04	.24		
Equation: Y' (usage intensity) = -0.7 + .06X <sub>(relative advantage)</sub> + .04X <sub>(ease of use)</sub>							-0.7	0.20
<u>All Independent Variables:</u>								
	Relative Advantage	141	21	7	.03	.18		
	Overcoming Perceived Barriers	141	18	5	.07	.27		
	External Pressure	141	26	9	.04	.28		
Equation: Y' (usage intensity) = -1.2 + .04X <sub>(external pressure)</sub> + .07X <sub>(overcoming perceived barriers)</sub> + .03X <sub>(relative advantage)</sub>							-1.2	0.32
<b>E-Business Usage Diversity</b>								
<u>Overcoming Perceived Barriers:</u>								
	Knowledge	156	4	2	.34	.28		
	Funding	156	4	2	.22	.17		
Equation: Y' (usage diversity) = -0.01 + .34X <sub>(knowledge)</sub> + .22X <sub>(funding)</sub>							-0.01	0.13
<u>Relative Advantage, Compatibility and Ease of Use</u>								
	Relative Advantage	148	22	7	.11	.34		
	Ease of Use	148	34	8	.05	.19		
Equation: Y' (usage diversity) = -1.9 + .11X <sub>(relative advantage)</sub> + .05X <sub>(ease of use)</sub>							-1.9	0.19
<u>All Independent Variables</u>								
	Relative Advantage	141	21	7	.07	.21		
	Overcoming Perceived Barriers	141	18	5	.08	.19		
	External Pressure	141	26	9	.07	.27		
Equation: Y' (usage diversity) = -2.6 + .07X <sub>(external pressure)</sub> + .08X <sub>(overcoming perceived barriers)</sub> + .07X <sub>(relative advantage)</sub>							-2.6	0.28

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In order to suggest a message focus, this study presented results from a survey of 157 small manufacturing firms to determine how they perceive e-business applications based on characteristics defined in diffusion of innovations theory. The data indicated that there were relationships between perceptions of e-business applications and the use of e-business applications among small manufacturing firms. Perceived external pressure to adopt e-business applications, overcoming perceived barriers and perceived relative advantage had the strongest relationships with both e-business usage intensity and usage diversity. These perceptions in combination were also the strongest predictors for e-business usage intensity and usage diversity, as shown in the multiple regression analyses.

Perceived external pressure to adopt e-business applications was the highest predictor of e-business usage in this study. The data showed that small manufacturing firms that perceive external pressures from their social system to adopt e-business applications are more likely to be adopters of e-business applications. Yet the data in this study also showed that the participants somewhat disagreed that there is external pressure to adopt e-business applications, which could explain its limited adoption and use among small manufacturing firms. When participating companies identified e-business adoption drivers, customer pressure and improving existing customer relationships came before competitive pressure, supplier pressure, and improving supplier relationships. Overall, the data showed that the companies are much more concerned about the needs of their customers than the needs of their suppliers or the use of e-business applications by their competitors. If the manufacturers have not perceived a need for more electronic

communications by their customers, they have less incentive to adopt e-business applications beyond the usual e-mail and website.

This finding is not surprising, given that small manufacturers in this study use the phone and face-to-face meetings more than e-mail and the Internet to communicate. These traditional communication methods allow them to manage their relationships with customers and other businesses on a more personal level. Many of the participants in this study may not realize that the customer relationship management applications of e-business allow them to remain responsive to their customers and more efficient in addressing their needs. The applications may not be as personal as human interaction, but can increase efficiency. Based on this finding, perhaps practitioners promoting e-business should focus on and promote the customer relationship management applications of e-business. This can be done by offering training seminars on customer relationship management software and its applications, as well as distributing informative articles and news releases about small firms that are using customer relationship management software and the results these firms are achieving. Another option would be to host events that will allow small firms to meet with representatives from companies that develop customer relationship management programs, so that they can see demonstrations, obtain pricing information, and gain more knowledge concerning the various e-business applications that exist for customer relationship management.

Another strong predictor of e-business usage in this study was perceived relative advantage. The more small manufacturing firms perceived e-business as providing relative advantage to their current operations, the more likely they were adopters of e-business applications. The data showed that the advantages of e-business applications

should always be the main focus of any communication efforts that organizations undertake with small manufacturing companies. This may require more in-depth knowledge of specific manufacturing areas in order for organizations to appropriately communicate the advantages of using e-business applications among various industries. However, since external pressure from customers was identified as the strongest predictor of e-business adoption and usage, the relative advantages of using e-business applications for customer relationship management should take priority when communicating information on e-business applications to small manufacturing firms of any industry.

Overcoming perceived barriers was another strong predictor of e-business adoption in this study, with overcoming perceived knowledge barriers ranked as the strongest predictor of the four perceived barriers measured. The information on perceived knowledge barriers gives practitioners an indication that, in order to increase the use of e-business applications among small manufacturing organizations, more information and training needs to be available. The information and training should address perceived technology, security and funding barriers. Small manufacturing companies should be provided with information that shows which e-business applications are appropriate for them, the costs, and how the companies can have a return on their investment in e-business applications. The information on e-business applications and their relevance to small companies can be distributed through a variety of outlets, including articles and training seminars. Articles on e-business applications should be written to provide tips and examples, so that the audience can comprehend the uses and results of e-business applications. The training seminars should be hands-on courses, allowing participants to apply e-business applications to actual situations and evaluate the results.

## **Recommendations**

The results of this study cannot be generalized beyond the technology and geographic area presented, but the findings should be considered when business-to-business public relations practitioners are encouraged to promote a change in technology among their publics. The results showed that practitioners should focus on the relative advantages of the change and educate publics on how to overcome barriers that may hinder the change.

Based on the present research, there are several recommendations for future studies regarding the perceptions e-business applications among small manufacturing firms. First, future studies should include a larger sample that would better represent small manufacturers and their perceptions of e-business applications. They should also focus on gathering more in-depth information by conducting interviews and holding focus groups to gain more knowledge about why small manufacturers perceive e-business applications the way they are perceived and to look for additional independent variables that were not measured in this study. Another recommendation would be to have more than one person from each company involved, since one person may give his/her views only and not the company's views as a whole. It is important to be certain that those who participate in future studies are decision-makers who have a vast knowledge of their company and its capabilities. Finally, if organizations implement new public relations campaigns to inform small manufacturing firms about e-business applications based on the data provided in this study, those efforts should be tracked and evaluated regarding their effectiveness to determine if the data provided here were helpful in those efforts.

These organizations should continue to conduct similar studies on e-business usage and other topics to determine the direction for future public relations efforts.

## REFERENCES

- Atkinson, R. D. (2002, June). Louisiana SNEI results. In The 2002 State New Economics Index [On-line]. Retrieved August 24, 2002, from:  
<http://neweconomyindex.org/states/2002/louisiana.html>.
- Beatty, R. C., Shim, J. P., & Jones, M. C. (2001). Factors influencing corporate website adoption: A time-based assessment. *Information and Management*, 38, 337-354.
- Bruning, S. D., & Lambe, K. (2001, May). Relationships in public relations: Examining the linkage between relationship attitudes and consumer behavior. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association, Washington, DC.
- Bruning, S. D., & Ralston, M. (2000). The role of relationship in public relations: Examining the influence of relational attitudes on behavioral intent. *Communication Research Reports*, 17, 426-435.
- Chau, P. Y. K., & Tam, G. K. Y. (2000). Impact of information presentation modes on online shopping: An empirical evaluation of a broadband interactive shopping service. *Journal of Organizational Computing and Electronic Commerce*, 10, 1-22.
- Chircu, A. M., & Kauffman, R. J. (2000). Limits to value in electronic commerce-related IT investments. *Journal of Management Information Systems*, 17, 59-81.
- Hartley, S. W., & Patti, C. H. (1988, April/May). Evaluating business-to-business advertising: A comparison of objectives and results. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 28, 322-337.
- Iacovou, C. L., Benbasat, I., & Dexter, A. S. (1995). Electronic data interchange and small organizations: Adoption and impact of technology. *MIS Quarterly*, 19, 465-85.



Kaplan, S., & Sawhney, M. (2000). E-hubs: then new B2B marketplaces. *Harvard Business Review*, 78, 97-103.

Manufacturing Extension Partnership. (2001). E-business Assessment Tool. In *Net Knowledge Basics* [On-line]. Retrieved April 2, 2001, from: <http://www.mep.nist.gov/netknowledgebasics/>.

Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP), & KPMG Consulting Company (2001). U.S. Small Manufacturers: eBusiness Needs Part II [On-line secure site]. Retrieved August 30, 2001, from: [www.mepcenters.nist.gov](http://www.mepcenters.nist.gov).

Manufacturing Extension Partnership of Louisiana (MEPoL). Louisiana Manufacturers Competitiveness Survey Results and Analysis. September 2000.

Manufacturers' News, Inc. Database of Louisiana Manufacturers 2001-2002: EZ Select Full [CD-ROM]. Evanston, IL: Manufacturers' News, Inc. [Producer and Distributor].

Min, H., & Galle, W. P. (1999). Electronic commerce usage in business-to-business purchasing. *International Journal of Operations & Production Management*, 19, 909-922.

Min, H., & Galle, W. P. (2001). Electronic commerce-based purchasing: A survey on the perceptual differences between large and small organizations. *International Journal of Logistics*, 4, 79-95.

Moore, G. C., & Benbasat, I. (1991). Development of an instrument to measure the perceptions of adopting an information technology innovation. *Information Systems Research*, 2, 192-222.

Moore, G. C., & Benbasat, I. (1995, October). Integrating diffusion of innovations and theory of reasoned action models to predict utilization of information technology by end-users. In K. Kautz and J. Pries-Heje (Eds.), Diffusion of information technology: Proceedings of the first IFIP WG 8.6 working conference on the diffusion of adoption of information technology (pp. 132-146). Oslo, Norway.

Nambisan, S., & Wang, Y. (1999) Roadblocks to technology adoption? *Association for Computing Machinery*, 42, 98-101.

National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), & Ernst & Young. (2001, February). The NAM/Ernst & Young E-Commerce Trends Index. Retrieved March 10, 2001, from:  
<http://www.nam.org/tertiary.asp?TrackID=&CategoryID=439&DocumentID=22716>.

O'Neill, H. M., Pouder, R. W., & Buchholtz, A. K. (1998). Patterns in the diffusion of strategies across organizations: Insights from the innovation diffusion literature. *Academy of Management Review*, 23, 98-115.

Poon, S., & Swatman, P. M. C. (1999). An exploratory study of small business internet commerce issues. *Information and Management*, 35, 9-18.

Rogers, E. M. (1995). Diffusion of Innovations (4th Ed.). New York: The Free Press.

Senn, J. A. (2000). Business-to-business e-commerce. *Information Systems Management*, 17, 23-32.

Tapscott, D., Ticoll, D., & Lowy, A. (2000) Digital Capital: Harnessing the Power of Business Webs. Boston, Mass: Harvard Business School Press.

Tornatzky, L. G., & Klein, K. J. (1982). Innovation characteristics and innovation adoption implementation: A meta-analysis of findings. *IEEE Transactions on Engineering Management*, 29, 28-45.

United States Census Bureau E-Stats. (2001). 1999 E-business process use by manufacturers: Initial report on selected processes [On-line]. Retrieved Oct. 10, 2001, from: <http://www.census.gov/eos/www/ebusiness614.htm>.

Wirtz, J., & Kam, W. P. (2001). An empirical study on internet-based business-to-business e-commerce in Singapore. *Singapore Management Review*, 23, 87-113.

PR

**Integrating Editorial Presentation and Public Relations Publications:  
New Frontiers for Convergence and Collaborative Learning**

By

Jennifer George-Palilonis  
Instructor, Ball State University

Office: (765) 285-8216  
Fax: (765) 285-7997  
E-mail: [jageorge2@bsu.edu](mailto:jageorge2@bsu.edu)

and

Robert S. Pritchard, APR  
Captain, U.S. Navy (Ret.)  
Assistant Professor, Ball State University

Office: (765) 285-9104  
Fax: (765) 285-7997  
E-mail: [rpritchard@bsu.edu](mailto:rpritchard@bsu.edu)

and

Betsy Hatch  
Graduate Student  
Ball State University

Office: (765) 285-1742  
Fax: (765) 285-7997  
E-mail: [bhatch2@bsu.edu](mailto:bhatch2@bsu.edu)

## ABSTRACT

Graphic journalists and public relations specialists are often compelled to work with a broad array of specialists and experts in writing, reporting, advertising, graphic design, public relations, photography. However, in the controlled environment of the classroom, it's often difficult to emulate the cross-disciplinary collaboration necessary to effectively teach these communication skills. This paper provides a case study and analysis of one such project that served as an experiment in collaborative teaching and learning.

## **Integrating Editorial Presentation and Public Relations Publications: New Frontiers for Convergence and Collaborative Learning**

### **Introduction**

Professional journalists and public relations practitioners often joke that while the very foundation of our existence centers on the notion that we are communicators at heart, we frequently have trouble communicating well with our colleagues. In a single media organization, editors, writers, photographers, designers, advertising executives and public relations specialists may work toward a common goal in the creation of an information source, yet all have discreet responsibilities and interests as well. This multiplicity often creates an environment in which efficient collaboration among these groups is difficult, to say the least.

As educators, we often find great success in teaching “bigger picture” communications skills in which students learn to focus storytelling in a specific area, such as writing or design, for a specific audience. However, in the controlled environment of a single classroom, it’s often difficult to teach collaboration skills that force students of one discipline to work with students of another. Because only design or public relations students, particularly at the upper level, generally take the required courses in both the design and public relations sequences it’s extremely difficult to create the truly collaborative environments similar to those in which our students will exist in the business world. As practitioners, they are compelled to work with a broad array of specialists and experts in writing, reporting, advertising, graphic design, public relations, photography and a myriad of others.

Of course, this challenge has always existed for journalism and public relations educators. However, as convergence becomes more prevalent in the professional arena, increased instruction using collaborative methods becomes a great deal more important. Now, editors, publishers and producers find themselves in cooperative partnerships that require journalists of every discipline to work together on daily stories and long-term projects to create packages of information from a multi-media perspective. Public relations practitioners, long engaged in producing materials in a variety of media formats, must understand what convergence of media truly means and develop materials that are tightly focused to satisfy the media's need for this multi-media perspective. Likewise, designers and graphic artists must be trained to collaborate with a variety of specialists in order to execute content-driven presentation.

While instructors can assign group work among students within each of our sequences, this in-specialty experience does not expose them to the much-needed experience of collaborating with individuals outside their areas of focus. Institutions of higher learning must follow industry's lead in the classroom, and consequently, traditional teaching methods, such as the one teacher, one discipline, one classroom model, may not work as well as they once did.

Some have suggested that we may run the risk of misleading our students to think we are making an effort to create multi-headed monsters – students who claim to be experts in a variety of disciplines. However collaborative projects among students of different disciplines should work to create an environment in which students begin to practice and learn the professional languages of one another so that collaboration and communication may be enhanced. In this sense, students are not expected to become

experts at more than one form of communication, but they have the opportunity to develop a common language that allows them to be supportive of one another and find suitable compromise in the development of a final product.

## **Literature review**

### *Introduction*

Collaborative learning is shared inquiry (MacGregor 1990). Imel (1991) points out that in collaborative learning, we assume that knowledge is socially produced by communities or groups and that anyone can participate in the process of shaping and testing ideas. People exchange ideas, feelings, experiences, information, and insights and through this exchange come to an understanding that is acceptable to all group members. The emphasis is, in large part, on the process - listening to and respecting others, negotiating points of view, and caring for both the individuals and the group as a whole (Cranton 1996).

The concept of collaborative learning, the grouping and pairing of students for the purpose of achieving an academic goal, has been widely researched and advocated throughout the professional literature (Gokhale 2003, 1). The term collaborative learning refers to an instruction method in which students at various performance levels work together in small groups toward a common goal. The students are responsible for one another's learning as well as their own. Thus, the success of one student helps other students be successful.

Considerable research demonstrates that cooperative learning produces higher achievement, more positive relationships among students, and healthier psychological adjustment than do competitive and individualistic experiences (Johnson, Johnson, and



Smith 1991). Tinto (1987) found that the greater the degree of students' involvement in their college learning experiences, the more likely they are to persist to graduation. The process of social involvement, integration, and bonding with classmates are strongly related to higher rates of retention.

Johnson and Johnson (1989) found that cooperative learning experiences, compared with competitive and individualistic ones, promote more positive attitudes toward the subject area, more positive attitudes toward the instructional experiences, and more continuing motivation to learn more about the subject area being studied. Studies have shown that students who had opportunities in class to interact with classmates and instructors were more satisfied with their learning experience than students who were taught exclusively by lecture (Bligh 1972). According to Vygotsky (1978), students are capable of performing at higher intellectual levels when asked to work in collaborative situations than when asked to work individually. Students who participate in discussion groups in class were more likely to develop positive attitudes toward the course's subject matter (Kulik and Kulik 1979).

College students report greater satisfaction with courses that allow them to engage in group discussion, and students are more likely to stay in college if they are satisfied with the learning experience (Noel 1985). Cooperative learning allows for significant amounts of meaningful discussion, enhancing students' satisfaction with the learning experience and promoting retention.

### *Teams*

The structural shift away from top-down management and toward team-based management is an enduring trend in the business environment (Ahles and Fiske 2002, 3).

Group-based activities such as autonomous work groups, task forces, management teams, and project teams are now commonplace in today's organizations, and it is expected that organizations will continue to rely on such group-based activities in the future (Van Der Gejt 2000).

Katzenbach and Smith (1993) define a team by what is called a collective work product, or a product or set of products that depend on the contributions and performance of individual members of the group working together. Their formal definition of a team is a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, set of performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable (Katzenbach and Smith 1993, 112).

Effective teams are driven by members who possess technical or functional expertise, interpersonal skills, and problem-solving and decision-making skills (Katzenbach and Smith 1993). Effective teams are additionally characterized by a shared, meaningful purpose or mission; a set of specific and measurable goals; a common and collaborative work approach; well defined roles and responsibilities; mutual accountability for the team's response; the skills required to do the job and a commitment to continuous learning and improvement; and passion, as determined by the confidence and enthusiasm to do their best (Payne 2001).

#### *Professor Role*

The role of the educator in collaborative group learning can be confusing and perhaps troublesome (Cranton 1996, 29). The educator establishes an atmosphere or climate in which collaboration is possible. There must be a democratic environment in which people respect and listen to each other. The educator is to be an equal participant

in the shared inquiry, yet also responsible for facilitating and maintaining the process.

Authority and power over the group need to be given up, yet the educator is relied on to help group members work collaboratively. The educator is described as being accountable for preparing materials, problems, activities, and clear outcomes, but at the same time is a co-learner.

According to Gokhale (2003), for collaborative learning to be effective, the instructor must view teaching as a process of developing and enhancing students' ability to learn. The instructor's role is not to transmit information, but to serve as a facilitator for learning. This involves creating and managing meaningful learning experiences and stimulating students' thinking through real world problems.

#### *Communication Skills Development*

When the learning goal is the acquisition of communicative knowledge, collaborative groups are most appropriate (Cranton 1996, 28). It is here that the diversity of individual's experiences, ideas, values, and insights can be brought together to come to an understanding of the nature of human interactions.

When public relations graduates enter the workplace, they are judged not just on their pure public relations skills, but on a variety of business skills typically not taught in undergraduate education (Ahles and Fiske 2003). These skills include such things as the ability of the individual to communicate effectively with their colleagues, work productively in teams, and solve problems.

According to Johnson, Johnson, and Smith (1991, ii) grades in school do not predict success in a career. Social skills do. Much of what students have traditionally learned in school is worthless in the real world. Schools teach that work means

performing tasks largely by oneself, that helping others is cheating, that technical competencies are the only things that matter, that attendance and punctuality are secondary to test scores, that motivation is up to the teacher, that success depends on performance in individual tests, and that promotions are granted no matter how little one works. In the real world of work, things are altogether different. Most employers do not expect people to sit in rows and compete with colleagues. The heart of most jobs is teamwork, which involves getting others to cooperate, leading others, coping with complex issues of power and influence, and helping solve people's problems by working with them. Teamwork, communication, effective coordination, and division of labor characterize most real-life settings.

In an extensive analysis of what recruiters are looking for in recent graduates entering the workforce, a Wall Street Journal/Harris Interactive survey found that 87% of recruiters specifically rated the "ability to work well within a team" essential (Recruiter's Scorecard 2002). In that same survey, 90% of recruiters rated the skills of communication and interpersonal relations essential, and 86% rated analytical and problem-solving abilities essential for recent graduates entering the business world.

The appropriate use of interpersonal and small-group skills is an essential element of cooperative learning (Johnson, Johnson, and Smith 1991, 20). To coordinate efforts to achieve mutual goals, students must get to know and trust each other, communicate accurately and unambiguously, accept and support each other, and resolve conflicts constructively. To be cooperative, a group must have clear positive interdependence, members must promote each other's learning and success face to face, hold each other personally and individually accountable to do his or her fair share of the work, use

appropriately the interpersonal and small-group skills needed for cooperative efforts to be successful, and process as a group how effectively members are working together (Johnson, Johnson, and Smith 1996, iv).

In cooperative situations, students are bound together by their mutual fate, shared identity, and mutual causation, and they therefore celebrate (and feel benefited by) each other's success (Johnson, Johnson, and Smith 1991, 32). Relevant ideas, information, conclusions, and resources tend to be made available, exchanged, and used in ways that promote collective and individual insights and increasing energy to complete the task. Such oral discussion has at least two dimensions- oral explanation and listening- and both benefit the giver and the receiver. The giver benefits from the cognitive organizing and processing, higher-level reasoning, insights, and personal commitment to achieving the group's goals derived from orally explaining, elaborating, and summarizing information and teaching one's knowledge to others. The receiver benefits from the opportunity to use others' resources in accomplishing his or her goals.

Exchanging information and stimulating cognitive processes might not occur in competitive or individualistic situations. In competitive situations, the exchange of communication and information tends to be nonexistent or misleading, and competition biases a person's perceptions and comprehension of others' viewpoints and positions. Individualistic situations are usually deliberately structured to ensure that individuals do not communicate or exchange information at all (Johnson, Johnson, and Smith 1991, 32).

Survey research indicates that fear of public speaking is quite common among the general population of adolescents and adults (Motley 1998). College students in particular are frequently apprehensive about speaking in the classroom (Bowers 1996).

Such anxiety, however, can be significantly reduced if students are given the opportunity to first express themselves in the more comfortable social context of a small group of peers (Neer 1987).

Johnson, Johnson, and Smith (1991, 49) note that students who participate in collaborative learning learn to view situations and problems from perspectives other than their own, which is one of the most critical competencies for cognitive and social development. All psychological development can be described as a progressive loss of egocentrism and an increase in ability to take wider and more complex perspectives. It is primarily in interaction with peers that egocentrism is lost and the ability to take a wider perspective is gained.

### *Studies*

In the 1970s Brooklyn College and Beaver College started programs to show that peer-group influence has great educative potential in the teaching of writing (Bruffee 1983). The phrase “writing crisis” came about in the early 70’s to describe the difficulty that a large number of undergraduates had in expressing themselves cogently or even grammatically in writing. To combat this problem, a small program at Brooklyn College was introduced which organizes undergraduates to tutor each other in writing. The program developed a strong reputation, and other programs were modeled after it.

The success of the program can be attributed in part to the fact that it benefits both peer tutors and tutees. Tutees get help when they need it - on a drop-in basis and under conditions that are conducive to good writing. Peer tutors benefit from the opportunity to serve both their classmates and the college at large in an important way. Further, the

program contributes to the liberal education of peer tutors by providing a context both for their personal and intellectual development and for their development as writers.

Teachers at Beaver College play a similar role in students' learning to write.

However, at Beaver, not all the teachers in question are professional teachers of writing. They are teachers in many fields. The writing-across-the-curriculum program was started during the early 70's. At Beaver, the emphasis is on the process that precedes the moment when writers go public with their writing. Teachers in all fields are counseled to create contexts in which students read each other's work in progress. These contexts often involve formal group work in classes; even more often, they involve informal work in groups outside of class.

Larson and LaFasto (1989) conducted a study on the eight crucial factors of effective teams. This study was unique because it did not just study one type of team or one industry; instead, it attempted to validate common characteristics by studying many types of teams across many industries, working toward many different kinds of goals. The crucial factors associated with top performing teams are: 1) a clear, elevating goal; 2) a results-driven structure; 3) competent team members; 4) unified commitment; 5) a collaborative climate; 6) standards of excellence; 7) external support and recognition; 8) principled leadership. By finding the common characteristics of vastly different types of groups, the researchers were able to identify these eight core competencies of successful groups (Ahles and Fiske 2003).

## Methodology

An obvious and oft-used understatement about higher education is that “there’s only so much you can teach in the classroom.” Yet the body of literature clearly shows that collaborative learning generates excellent educational outcomes. In addition, as Ahles and Fiske point out in their research (Ahles and Fiske 2002, 2003), teamwork-related skills, specifically human relations skills and work habits, are the most highly valued skill sets sought by public relations practitioners. Several of the public relations trade journals document the power of teamwork, and public relations executives consistently ranked working with a solid team as the most important motivational factor overall (PRWeek 2002). Add our anecdotal and experiential knowledge, and it seemed clear to us that a collaborative teaching opportunity could be very beneficial to both our students and our respective disciplines.

With this clear understanding of the intrinsic value of teaching in a collaborative learning environment, both researchers had been discussing the possibilities of merging classes on a specific project for more than a year. One of the researchers regularly teaches Journalism 245, the first professional class in the journalism graphics sequence, and wanted the class to have a Web design experience. The other researcher regularly teaches Journalism 368, one of several professional courses in public relations skills focusing specifically on collateral materials, and was interested in providing the opportunity for public relations students to actually work with graphic designers and gain practical experience in the art and science of translating concepts and ideas

In the fall of 2002, the opportunity to seize the initiative finally presented itself. At the request of both researchers, our department scheduled one section of the Public



Relations Publications (Journalism 368) class concurrently with the Editorial Presentation (Journalism 245) class and we set about planning the class for the collaborative learning environment.

This combined group of 18 public relations students and nine journalism graphics/design students represented well the kind of converged environment in which our students will soon find themselves. As professionals, public relations students will often be teamed with designers in the creation of a product, and designers are often expected to collaborate with any number of content editors and creators. Yet, as previously noted, these two sets of students are rarely asked to interact in either student media or the classroom. We felt the fact that these students would have had little opportunity to work together before was essential to testing our concept.

Both classes were required to attend an out-of-class workshop on Adobe's GoLive Web design software before starting this module. The training was conducted by one of our department's training specialists. We felt this preparation would allow our students to "hit the deck running" and allow us to focus more on the project and less on the software. Our training specialist also made herself available during class lab periods to help with software questions.

Students were divided into nine groups, each comprised of one design student and two or three public relations students. They were required to develop the content and design for an information-based Web site focusing on a single topic in the areas of technology, science, history, children, outdoors, travel, health, entertainment (music, movies, etc.) and food. Students were encouraged to focus each topic as narrowly as possible to avoid coverage that exceeded the amount of information one could efficiently and thoroughly provide on a three-page Web site.

While each group was responsible for all of the research, reporting, editing and design of the site, the Journalism 245 students were expected to concentrate more on design and the Journalism 368 students would naturally focus more on content. Students were encouraged to push the bounds of their expertise with their ideas, and many chose to experiment with video, audio and animation.

Students were evaluated based on the originality of their projects, the coverage of material, the basic design and visual illustration of information, and the quality of a presentation of the final product. However, we were most interested in how well each group managed to communicate with one another, balance responsibilities and compromise on a final product that was acceptable for everyone involved.

Students were graded with a 150-point rubric broken into the elements of design and content that included topics such as clarity, consistency and relevance for design and mission, public and utility for content. In addition, part of the grade (50 points) was based on an in-class presentation that required each group to articulate their design decisions, not only in terms of good design principles and practice, but how each decision related to their key messages and target publics. (See Appendix 1 for rubrics).

Upon completion of the project, students were asked to complete a questionnaire in which they evaluated the experience and rated the success of the project based on the objectives set by the instructors. Participation was voluntary and students were offered alternative methods of providing us feedback. None-the-less, all 27 students agreed to participate in the survey. We felt this combination of case study and survey would allow us at least a basic level of triangulation.

## Objectives

Mechanically, our objectives were fairly straightforward. The assignment required students to create a content-driven, topical web site. Further, we advised our students that the site should have a “newsy” focus and should be information-based.

As alluded to above, each site was to contain a splash page and two additional pages organized either sequentially or hierarchically. Once the group had selected a category, they were required to:

- 1.) Focus the topic for the web site even further. For example, a group focusing on “health” might choose to develop a web site on something as specific as the effects of Alzheimer’s disease.
- 2.) Plan the content, design and navigation for the site. Groups were responsible for turning in site plans, design sketches and content drafts along the way.
- 3.) Create a web site that combined content in the form of visuals (video or still photography), text and graphics that offered thorough coverage of their chosen topic
- 4.) Create a presentation to accompany the final web site to be shared with the class.

It was important to both researchers that the Web project not just be an experiment in collaborative teaching, but also advance our accomplishment of course objectives. The specific course objectives outlined in our syllabi that directly applied to this project were:

### *Journalism 245 – Editorial Presentation*

- To develop the critical and analytical knowledge needed to be effective visual editors
- To understand the fundamentals of typography and legibility
- To understand the fundamentals of visual perception
- To introduce the principles of design and element of structure

- The explore the concept of journalistic “visual reporting”
- The learn coordination of visual and verbal combination
- To understand the explanatory function of journalistic visual and verbal combinations
- To introduce writing and researching skills for alternative story forms
- To introduce students to visual design and graphics editing
- To develop computer competency using layout and editing software
- To introduce integrated, visual/verbal storytelling techniques

#### *Journalism 368 – Public Relations Publications Design and Production*

- Understand how public relations publications differ from other publications in purpose, publics, funding and design.
- Understand and use basic graphic design terminology.
- Understand and structure effective visual communication.
- Identify target audiences and understand their various information needs.
- Select appropriate communication channels.
- Practice and refine desktop publishing skills.
- Understand and be able to use a variety of publication production techniques and options.
- Understand how to work with graphic designers and artists, publication specialists, service bureaus and commercial printers.

In addition, we agreed upon several project-specific objectives to guide our efforts and we articulated these objectives to our students when we introduced the project. They were:

- Understand and use basic web and graphic design terminology.
- Practice and refine web design and publishing skills
- Identify target audiences and define their informational needs
- Apply knowledge of target publics to build a web site that communicates effectively with them
- Understand how to work in a collaborative work environment
- Understand the role of design in web site development
- Understand the role of public relations in web site development

#### **Professor’s Role**

The literature spends a lot of time discussing the importance of educators helping students understand exactly what teamwork, shared, meaningful purpose or mission, a common and collaborative work approach, mutual accountability for the team’s response, and the confidence and enthusiasm to do their best mean behaviorally. Our commitment

to this project was to ensure, to the best of our ability, that students had an opportunity to understand this complex interaction, both intellectually and in practice.

Early in the process, we agreed that success would be determined, in part, by how much each group pushed the limits of their experience and expertise. As a result, we spent a considerable amount of time encouraging experimentation and downplaying “perfection” as a level of measurement and evaluation. In other words, we encouraged our students to try things they felt were well beyond their expertise by ensuring they understood that we considered the *effort* more important than the actual level of achievement. Indeed, on several assignments the attempted features did not work, but the group was rewarded for “stretching” and trying something new.

Establishing an atmosphere where collaboration was possible was extremely important to us, and we thought, to the success of the project. We were both adamant that we would use a democratic approach in which student and professor alike respected and listened to each other. On only one occasion in only one group did this approach become problematic, but a calm, rationale discussion by one of the instructors on the meaning and purpose behind our methods quickly set things right.

We felt our most important role was in facilitating and maintaining the collaborative learning process. We were in agreement that to be successful with this approach, we needed to cede some of our authority and power to the groups. We obviously prepared the materials and attempted to provide clear outcomes, but we also became co-learners as we helped each group focus their topics and expand their capabilities with some of the more advanced aspects of the software and technology.

We also understood the importance of modeling teamwork and a collaborative atmosphere, so we tried hard to set the right example for the class in all that we did. We used only a very few minutes of actual lecture, opting for a more discussion-based approach to provide the students with the necessary background to successfully complete this project. We also checked their work together as a group at periodic intervals, both to ensure they were making sufficient progress toward completion and to encourage more collaboration with each other and with us.

### **Results and Discussion**

One of our measures of success was based on the quality of the actual projects themselves. The majority of the final projects students presented met or exceeded our expectations. Only one did not reach the bar set by us at the beginning of the assignment.

The completed projects generally fell into three categories based on overall quality and success in conveying information clearly and effectively. The first category, represented by Group One, far exceeded our expectations by taking on the challenge of learning new software, such as Macromedia Flash, and unfamiliar storytelling methods, such as video and audio.

The second category, represented by Group Two met our standards with clear communication of ideas both in the production phase and the presentation phase. Content was concise, well edited, and design was clean and effective.

The last category, represented by Group Three, did not meet the goals set by us, in fact failing to adequately complete the project.

Through our close observation of each group over the course of the three weeks we spent on this project, we saw a clear correlation between effective teamwork, open

and honest communication, reliability, the care and effort put into the work and the category into which each group fell. Group One, our superstars, operated throughout this assignment in a democratic fashion, with each member listening to and respecting the other group members comments and suggestions. A model of collaboration, they easily divided tasks and resources and flawlessly integrated the results. They were always in attendance, both in class and in their after-class sessions, which were numerous. They demonstrated excellent time and work-flow management, always completing each stage of the project prior to the deadline for their small-group session with us. The confidence and trust each had in the other was demonstrable. Their work habits were excellent, they paid close and careful attention to detail and were painstaking in their research. Problem-solving skills were evident in abundance and always focused on the right issues.

Group Two, representative of the bulk of the teams, generally created and operated in a democratic fashion, though there were occasions when it was obvious that there was one clear “leader” driving group decisions and assuming a disproportionate level of responsibility. Most of the time, each member listened to and respected the other group members’ comments and suggestions. We did however, see occasional evidence of group-think, in which the one or two group members not in agreement with the consensus opinion tended to give up their position, even though valid, and go with the groups’ decision. In addition, we periodically saw one person dominating the group’s discussion. Collaboration was generally good and tasks and resources were equally divided as a rule. The groups’ ability to integrate the results generally varied, sometimes with acceptable results, sometimes with very good results. Most of the group members were always in attendance in class, though 100 percent attendance at out-of-class

meetings was seldom achieved and a major bone of contention in some groups. Time and work-flow management was generally acceptable with this skill more in evidence in the groups at the upper end of the grading spectrum. Most groups had completed their work at each stage of the project prior to the deadline for their small-group sessions with us, though there were several occasions when they did not have their assignments completed or were not ready to discuss the materials. The confidence and trust each had in the other was generally in evidence, though their confidence tended to wane as the deadline approached. Once they were completed, their confidence returned as evidenced by their individual evaluations of group members at the completion of the project. Their work habits were acceptable, though there was a proclivity to procrastinate early in the project. They paid reasonable attention to details and their research was generally solid. Problem-solving skills were average.

Group Three, our dysfunctional group and fortunately limited to only one group, operated throughout in a state of anarchy, with each member doing more talking and grouching than listening. While they were respectful to one another while together, they tended to cut the other group members' comments and suggestions when apart. This caused us endless hours of work, as we continually had to encourage teamwork and put a damper on the "bad-mouthing." They were the antithesis of collaboration, haphazardly dividing tasks and resources and stumbling with the integration of results. Seldom were all group members in attendance, either in class or in their after-class sessions; we think they only made two attempts to meet outside class. Time and work-flow management were almost non-existent and we were always cajoling them to complete their work at each stage of the project in time for their small-group discussion with us. They were



seldom successful in this regard. Confidence and trust in each other was at an extremely low level. Their work habits were poor, their attention to detail was nearly non-existent and their research was of poor quality. Problem-solving skills were severely lacking and generally directed at the wrong issues or problems of their own making.

The empirical evidence we collected from the survey we conducted with all 27 members of the class following completion of the project, supports some of these observations, though it also presents us with some paradoxes. We are also, sadly, unable to correlate responses to any of the specific groups. We opted to ensure anonymity to encourage more truthful responses rather than try to do such a correlation. The survey consisted of 25 questions, using a 7-point Likert-type scale (see Appendix 2) and was administered in the class session immediately following the students' final presentations.

Not surprisingly, the J245 students felt more confident in their software abilities than did the J368 students, with more than 50 percent of the J245 students strongly disagreeing with the question "I felt the requirement to complete a workshop prior to beginning this project was worthwhile" and all nine agreeing or strongly agreeing that they could have completed this project without the workshops required before the project began. However, one of the paradoxes gleaned from the data is that both groups felt strongly that a longer or more intensive workshop would have better prepared them for this project (J245  $M = 5.56$ , J368  $M = 6.61$ ).

For the most part, students from both classes liked the way the instructors divided up the project into stages (J245  $M = 5.11$ , J368  $M = 4.67$ ), but they particularly liked the fact that we checked their work at various stages in the project (J245  $M = 6.0$ , J368  $M = 6.11$ ). This was confirmed when we asked the question "I did not feel comfortable with

the instructors checking my work in stages” as 16 of 18 J368 students and 7 of 9 J245 students disagreed or strongly disagreed with that question. The remaining students from both classes remained neutral on the question.

Essential to both of us was modeling collaborative behavior. In response to the question “I felt the instructors worked well together,” 16 of 18 J368 students and 7 of 9 J245 students responded that they either somewhat agreed (5), agreed (12) or strongly agreed (6).

The public relations students clearly gained a greater understanding through this process of the role of design in web site development as a result of this project (J368 M = 5.22), but the J245 students also gained a greater understanding of their own role (J245 M = 4.67). In what we might view as a second paradox presented by the data, the public relations students gained a far greater understanding of the role of public relations in web site development than did the editorial graphic design students (J368 M = 5.78, J245 = 3.44). Upon closer examination, though, more than half of the design students (5 of 9) “somewhat agreed” with the question, though two “disagreed” and two “strongly disagreed” with the proposition. Interestingly, five of the public relations students remained neutral on the question.

When asked how comfortable they would feel in engaging in another collaborative class, the public relations students generally felt more positive about the experience though the difference between the two groups was marginal (J368 M = 5.78, J245 M = 4.33). Likewise, the public relations students indicated they would be more likely to seek out a collaborative class if offered in the future (J368 M = 5.22, J245 M = 4.44).

The third and perhaps least understandable of the paradoxes we found directly contradicts both the literature and our own observations regarding the quality of effort achievable from a collaborative environment. According to the literature, and our own observation of this class' efforts, the collaborative learning environment tends to improve the quality of work done over that completed individually or in a competitive environment.

Yet, when we asked whether these students felt they were able to achieve more because of the collaborative nature of the class than if they had designed the Web site on their own, the graphic design students responded with a resounding "no," with 7 of 9 of the students "somewhat disagreeing" (1), "disagreeing" (3), or "strongly disagreeing" (3) with the question. On the other hand, the public relations students responded with a "yes" to the same question, with 11 of 18 answering that they "somewhat agreed" (3), "agreed" (3) or "strongly agreed" (5). One possible explanation for this dichotomy is that the J245 students generally felt more comfortable with their software skills than did the public relations students. Also, the J245 students indicated they assimilated less about the various roles of the two groups than did the public relations students, which would tend to promote a more egocentric response to this question.

In the final analysis, though, both groups of students felt the project was a valuable learning experience for them with the graphic design students responding slightly more favorably than the graphic design students (J368  $M = 5.33$ , J245  $M = 5.44$ ).

### **Conclusion**

The value of collaborative learning in higher education is clearly delineated in the literature, so it should be no surprise that we chose this teaching model to execute our

teaching goals and objectives on this project. The more students are exposed to the conditions they are most likely to face in the marketplace, the better equipped they will be for success as professionals.

For graphic design and public relations students, collaboration and teamwork skills have always been important because both professions require individuals with discreet areas of expertise to work together in the creation of content-driven media. In addition, the proliferation of media convergence adds to the timeliness of such teaching methods.

Both anecdotally and through the survey results, although limited in scope, we have reinforced the value of both the collaborative learning environment and the collaborative teaching model. By creating a collaborative environment in which students were encouraged to take risks and develop new skills and ways of looking at problems, they achieved far more, in most cases, than even we dared to imagine.

Idea exchanges among peers with whom interpersonal or professional relationships had not previously existed became the norm. The collaborative environment, with its adherence to democratic ideals, open and honest communication and emphasis on work habits and human relations skills, yielded a whole that was larger than the sum of its parts.

Our study, while limited in sample size and duration, none-the-less represents a clear mandate for educators. Collaborative teaching is not only beneficial to our students, but a necessity in this world of convergence and interdependence. Further boundary-breaking opportunities across disciplines for our students should remain one of the top priorities for higher education.

### **Limitations and Next Steps**

While the results of this study tend to confirm the literature with regard to the advantages of collaborative teaching and a collaborative learning environment, we must caution that our results should not be considered generalizable. The next step would be to construct an entire course based on a collaborative teaching model for graphic design and public relations students. We also feel that a more rigorous survey directly related to the literature on collaborative teaching and learning could, and should, be conducted in conjunction with this course. With this in mind, we suggest the following topics be considered for additional study.

1. The development of a course that attempts to gather students from across disciplines to form an environment that emulates the professional world, where results are measured not in “A’s” and “B’s” but in terms of the students’ work habits, communications skills and responsibilities to one another.
2. The effect that teaching leadership and management in our courses of instruction and fewer “skill set” courses might have on the learning outcomes of our students.
3. Exploration into the establishment of a consistent language for collaboration in the many disciplines of mass communications.

Taken together, these three areas could help us make substantial progress in better preparing our students for the work places they will be most likely to encounter.

## Works Cited

- Ahles, C. and Bosworth, C. 2002. *Working in Teams: A Study of Students' Perceptions and Workplace Realities*. Paper presented at the meeting of the Educators Academy of the Public Relations Society of America, San Francisco, CA.
- Ahles, C. and Fiske, R. 2003. *The Problems and Practices of Highly Effective Public Relation Practitioners: An analysis of Employers' Perspectives*. Paper Presented at the 6<sup>th</sup> International, Interdisciplinary Public Relations Conference, South Miami, FL.
- Bligh, Donald A. 1972. *What's the Use of Lectures?* Harmondsworth, Eng: Penguin.
- Bowers, J.W. 1986. Classroom Communication Apprehension: A Survey. *Communication Education* 35, no. 4: 372-78.
- Bruffee, Kenneth. 1983. Teaching Writing Through Collaboration. In *New Directions for Teaching and Learning in Groups*, edited by Clark Bouton and Russell Garth.. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Cranton, P. 1996. *Professional Development as Transformative Learning: New Perspectives for Teachers of Adults*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Gokhale, Anuradha. 2003. Collaborative Learning Enhances Critical Thinking. *Digital Library Archives*. Accessed from [www.scholar.lib.vt.edu](http://www.scholar.lib.vt.edu) on January 7, 2003.
- Imel, S. 1991. *Collaborative Learning in Adult Education*. ERIC Digest no. 113. Columbus: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, Center on Education and Training Employment, Ohio State University.
- Johnson, David and Roger Johnson. 1989. *Cooperation and Competition: Theory and Research*. Edina, MN: Interaction Book Co.
- Johnson, David W., Roger Johnson, and Karl Smith. 1991. *Cooperative Learning: Increasing Collged Faculty Instructional Productivity*. The George Washington Univeristy: Washington, DC.
- Katzenbach, J.R. and D.K. Smith. 1993. The Discipline of Teams. *Harvard Business Review*, spring: 111-120.
- Kulik, J.A. and C.L.L Kulik. 1979. College Teaching. In *Research on Teaching: Concepts, Findings, and Implications*, edited by P.L. Peterson and H.J. Walberg. Berkley, CA: McCutcheon.
- Larson, C.E. and FMJ LaFasto. 1989. *Teamwork: What must go right/ what can go wrong*. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

- MacGregor, J. 1990. Collaborative Learning: Shared Inquiry as a Process of Reform. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, no. 42.
- Motley, M.T. 1988. Taking the Terror out of Talk. *Psychology Today* 22, no. 1: 46-49.
- Neer, M.R. 1987. The Development of an Instrument to Measure Classroom Apprehension. *Communication Education* 36: 154-66.
- Noel, L. 1985. Increasing Student Retention: New Challenges and Potential. In *Increasing Student Retention: Effective Programs and Practices for Reducing the Dropout Rate*, edited by L. Noel.
- Payne, V. 2001. *The Team-building Workshop: A Trainer's Guide*. New York, NY: AMACOM div. America Management Association.
- "Recruiters' Scorecard: Highlights from The Wall Street Journal/Harris Interactive survey of corporate recruiters on business schools." *The Wall Street Journal*, Sept. 9, 2002, sec. R, p. 5. In Ahles, Catherine B. and Rosanna M. Fiske. 2003. *The Problems and Practices of Highly Effective Public Relation Practitioners: An analysis of Employers' Perspectives*. Paper Presented at the 6<sup>th</sup> International, Interdisciplinary Public Relations Conference, South Miami, FL.
- Tinto, V. 1975. Dropout from Higher Education: A theoretical Synthesis of Recent Research. *Review of Educational Research* 45, no. 1: 89-125.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1987. *Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Attrition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Van Der Vegt, G. 2000. Team members' affective responses to patterns of intergroup interdependence and job complexity. Found in Ahles, Catherine B. and Rosanna M. Fiske. 2003. *The Problems and Practices of Highly Effective Public Relation Practitioners: An analysis of Employers' Perspectives*. Paper Presented at the 6<sup>th</sup> International, Interdisciplinary Public Relations Conference, South Miami, FL.
- Vygotsky, L. 1978. *Mind in Society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

### Appendix 1

#### Journalism 245

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

#### Web Site Project Evaluation Form

<b>Design</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>Your Score</b>
Clarity: site conveys its intent simply and coherently.	20	
Consistency: Web pages are freestanding, each containing an informative title, the creator's identity, a creation or revision date, and at least one link to a local home page or menu. The home page URL appears on the major menu pages.	10	
Accessibility: site is organized in an effective and consistent manner. Navigation aids are clear; there are no dead-end pages; hierarchy of information minimizes steps through menu pages (3 click rule); interface is simple, familiar and logical; and information is "chunked" appropriately.	20	
Relevance: graphics and the page design are tightly focused and integrated; visual design planned around mission statement and is clearly intended to attract target public.	20	
Speed: Web pages and graphics designed to download quickly.	10	
Usability: site is aesthetically pleasing with a unified look and feel.	20	
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	

BEST COPY AVAILABLE



<b>Content</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>Your Score</b>
Mission Statement: focused and clearly stated. Intentions and reasoning are clearly articulated; goals appropriately defined.	<b>10</b>	
Publics: narrowly focused and clearly stated. Knowledge, background, interests and needs of audience clearly defined and articulated.	<b>10</b>	
Message: communicated quickly and effectively. What you want your target publics to think or do after visiting your site is clear.	<b>10</b>	
Personality: language is engaging, not obnoxious, informative not boring.	<b>5</b>	
Utility: content is seen quickly as useful and worthwhile information.	<b>5</b>	
Links: amount and quality of links provides visitor with exceptional and useful content.	<b>5</b>	
Editorial: content represents highest editorial standards. Grammar and syntax are proper; no spelling or punctuation errors.	<b>5</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

## Journalism 368

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Web Site Project Evaluation Form

<b>Design</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>Your Score</b>
Clarity: site conveys its intent simply and coherently.	<b>10</b>	
Consistency: Web pages are freestanding, each containing an informative title, the creator's identity, a creation or revision date, and at least one link to a local home page or menu. The home page URL appears on the major menu pages.	<b>5</b>	
Accessibility: site is organized in an effective and consistent manner. Navigation aids are clear; there are no dead-end pages; hierarchy of information minimizes steps through menu pages (3 click rule); interface is simple, familiar and logical; and information is "chunked" appropriately.	<b>10</b>	
Relevance: graphics and the page design are tightly focused and integrated; visual design planned around mission statement and is clearly intended to attract target public.	<b>10</b>	
Speed: Web pages and graphics designed to download quickly.	<b>5</b>	
Usability: site is aesthetically pleasing with a unified look and feel.	<b>10</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

<b>Content</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>Your Score</b>
Mission Statement: focused and clearly stated. Intentions and reasoning are clearly articulated; goals appropriately defined.	20	
Publics: narrowly focused and clearly stated. Knowledge, background, interests and needs of audience clearly defined and articulated.	20	
Message: communicated quickly and effectively. What you want your target publics to think or do after visiting your site is clear.	20	
Personality: language is engaging, not obnoxious, informative not boring.	10	
Utility: content is seen quickly as useful and worthwhile information.	10	
Links: amount and quality of links provides visitor with exceptional and useful content.	10	
Editorial: content represents highest editorial standards. Grammar and syntax are proper; no spelling or punctuation errors.	10	
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	

**Journalism 245/368**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Web Site Presentation Evaluation Form**

Criteria	Value	Your Score
Opening: How well did the presenter attempt to create interest, buy in or a sense of expectation?	10	
Closing: How well did the presenter tell the audience what they wanted the audience to do with the information provided?	10	
Conversational: Was presentation natural and conversational? Did it flow in a logical manner? Did speakers relate to their audience?	10	
Completeness: Was the audience left with any questions? Was the presentation thorough? Was anything left out?	10	
Eye contact: Did the presenter make eye contact with the audience or "talk to the screen?" How well did the presenter use eye contact to keep the audience involved?	10	
Speaker confidence: How well did the presenter use stance, posture, hand positions, voice, facial expressions and movement to create an aura of confidence?	10	
Preparation: Was it apparent that the presenter had practiced the presentation? Did the presenter know where key slides were located?	10	
Other presentation skills: Were gestures strong, fluid and natural? Did the presenter pause for emphasis between points? Did the presenter smile where appropriate? Did the presenter dress appropriately? Was their grooming neat?	10	

Integrating Editorial Presentation and Public Relations Publications:  
New Frontiers for Convergence and Collaborative Learning

Knowledge of subject: How well did the presenter respond to questions? Was knowledge of the subject apparent in answers?	<b>10</b>	
Listening skills: Did the presenter demonstrate “active listening” during the presentation? Was presenter more concerned with responding to questions instead of listening intently before responding?	<b>10</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	

## Appendix 2

### Web Project Survey

1. I had mentally or physically generated a set of expectations for this project.

strongly agree	agree	somewhat agree	neutral
somewhat disagree	disagree	strongly disagree	

2. I entered this project with a positive outlook.

strongly agree	agree	somewhat agree	neutral
somewhat disagree	disagree	strongly disagree	

3. I entered this project with concerns.

strongly agree	agree	somewhat agree	neutral
somewhat disagree	disagree	strongly disagree	

4. I felt the requirement to complete a workshop prior to beginning this project was worthwhile.

strongly agree	agree	somewhat agree	neutral
somewhat disagree	disagree	strongly disagree	

5. I felt the materials in the workshop adequately prepared me to begin this project.

strongly agree	agree	somewhat agree	neutral
somewhat disagree	disagree	strongly disagree	

6. A longer or more intense workshop would have better prepared me for this project.

strongly agree	agree	somewhat agree	neutral
somewhat disagree	disagree	strongly disagree	

7. I could have completed this project without the workshops.

strongly agree	agree	somewhat agree	neutral
somewhat disagree	disagree	strongly disagree	

8. My instructors adequately explained the project to me at the beginning.

strongly agree	agree	somewhat agree	neutral
somewhat disagree	disagree	strongly disagree	

9. I felt comfortable with the set of instructions I received from my instructors.

strongly agree	agree	somewhat agree	neutral
somewhat disagree	disagree	strongly disagree	

10. I liked the way the instructors divided up the project into stages.

strongly agree	agree	somewhat agree	neutral
somewhat disagree	disagree	strongly disagree	

11. I liked the fact that the instructors checked our work at various stages in the project.

strongly agree	agree	somewhat agree	neutral
somewhat disagree	disagree	strongly disagree	

12. I did not feel comfortable with the instructors checking my work in stages.

strongly agree	agree	somewhat agree	neutral
somewhat disagree	disagree	strongly disagree	

13. I felt the instructors were well organized in their presentations.

strongly agree	agree	somewhat agree	neutral
somewhat disagree	disagree	strongly disagree	

14. I felt the instructors covered the material they presented well.

strongly agree	agree	somewhat agree	neutral
somewhat disagree	disagree	strongly disagree	

15. I felt the instructors worked well together.

strongly agree	agree	somewhat agree	neutral
somewhat disagree	disagree	strongly disagree	



16. I felt this project fell below my expectations.

strongly agree	agree	somewhat agree	neutral
somewhat disagree	disagree	strongly disagree	

17. I felt this project met my expectations.

strongly agree	agree	somewhat agree	neutral
somewhat disagree	disagree	strongly disagree	

18. I felt this project exceeded my expectations

strongly agree	agree	somewhat agree	neutral
somewhat disagree	disagree	strongly disagree	

19. I feel more confident in my abilities as a result of this project.

strongly agree	agree	somewhat agree	neutral
somewhat disagree	disagree	strongly disagree	

20. I have a greater understanding of the role of design in web site development as a  
result of this project.

strongly agree	agree	somewhat agree	neutral
somewhat disagree	disagree	strongly disagree	

21. I have a greater understanding of the role of public relations in web site  
development as a result of this project.

strongly agree	agree	somewhat agree	neutral
somewhat disagree	disagree	strongly disagree	

22. I would feel comfortable engaging in another collaborative class.

strongly agree	agree	somewhat agree	neutral
somewhat disagree	disagree	strongly disagree	

23. I would seek out a collaborative class if offered in the future.

strongly agree	agree	somewhat agree	neutral
somewhat disagree	disagree	strongly disagree	

24. I feel I was able to achieve more because of the collaborative nature of the class  
than if I had designed this site on my own.

strongly agree	agree	somewhat agree	neutral
somewhat disagree	disagree	strongly disagree	

25. I feel this was a valuable learning experience for me.

strongly agree	agree	somewhat agree	neutral
somewhat disagree	disagree	strongly disagree	

Running head: PERSUASIVE APPEALS AND PR IN TRAVEL/TOURISM POST-9/11

**The Use of Persuasive Appeals and Public Relations in  
the Travel and Tourism Industry Post-9/11**

Ann R. Carden

State University of New York College at Fredonia

P: 716.673.3544 F: 716.673.3414

[ann.carden@fredonia.edu](mailto:ann.carden@fredonia.edu)

*Author's Note:* The author thanks her faculty colleagues, Dr. Linda Brigance and Dr. Joseph Chilberg, for their review of and input to this paper.

### Abstract

This paper examines the effect of 9/11 on the types of persuasive appeals travel destinations are using to adjust to changing travel patterns and on the amount of public relations used in promotion. An exploratory study of 46 public relations practitioners in the travel and tourism industry found that entertainment and humor, rather than factual appeals, were being used by more destinations, and that public relations efforts had increased, while marketing and advertising efforts decreased.

## The Use of Persuasive Appeals and Public Relations in the Travel and Tourism Industry Post 9/11

Whether it is fear of terrorism, worry over the economy, or security-minded airline policies, people are not flying as much as they did before September 11, 2001. Consumers have changed their travel patterns, resulting in significant financial losses for the travel and tourism industry. According to a Travel Industry Association of America (TIA) report on changing travel patterns, three-fourths of its members are seeing an increase in closer-to-home travel and last-minute travel among their customers. As a result, 87% of its member organizations have changed their marketing and/or promotion programs, with 77% focusing their efforts on closer, drive-in markets during the last 12 months (Keefe, 2002b).

With the changing tourism climate and the shift in market, three questions were raised:

- 1) Were travel destinations adjusting their persuasive appeals to reach out to consumers with changing travel preferences?
- 2) Was public relations being used more in promotional efforts to attract visitors to travel destinations?
- 3) How much impact, if any, did 9/11 have on 1) and 2)?

Tilson & Stacks (1997) noted that little has been written regarding public relations theory and research in the travel and tourism industry; a similar observation was made in 2003 by Fall:

Related to suggestions for future studies, the travel industry is full of opportunity for social science researchers in the communication field. Within the public relations arena in particular, much research still needs to be conducted to test for the success of various

components of the public relations process, including research, evaluation and two-way feedback techniques. (p. 14)

The travel and tourism industry has traditionally relied on mass media advertising and special events to target consumers. Tilson & Stacks (1997) suggest that this type of promotion, which traditionally serves the sole purpose of attracting attention, may not be “particularly effective if relied upon exclusively during moments of growing tension or crisis within the travel/tourism destination” (p. 97).

Public relations, on the other hand, deals with image and perceptions on an ongoing basis by employing various persuasive techniques. Grunig’s & Hunt’s (1984) two-way asymmetrical model of public relations uses research to understand and persuade publics, and focuses on specific message appeals to modify or change opinions. At the heart of the public relations process are the decisions practitioners make about their organization’s target publics, the groups of people upon which the success of the organization depends. Practitioners must not only correctly identify their target publics, but also analyze their wants, interests and needs in order to construct effective messages for them.

This strategic function corresponds with Klenosky’s (2002) examination of the means-end theory as a framework to identify push-pull factors underlying tourist behavior:

Push factors refer to the specific forces in our lives that lead to the decision to take a vacation . . . while pull factors refer to those that lead an individual to select one destination over another once the decision to travel has been made. Push factors are viewed as relating to the needs and wants of the traveler . . . Pull factors, on the other

hand, have been characterized in terms of the features, attractions, or attributes of the destination itself . . . (p. 385)

In the emotional landscape of post-9/11 travel, the push factors relating to the needs and wants of the traveler are worthy of special consideration. Sherif's and Hovland's social judgment theory states that "individuals accept or reject messages to the extent that they perceive the messages as corresponding to their internal anchors and as being ego involved" (as cited in Smith, 2002, p. 115). Therefore, the content of the message should play an important role in addressing the push factors of traveler needs and wants. Of particular interest is how the persuasive appeals of ethos, pathos and logos might be used in these messages to address shifting travel patterns and the psychological aftermath of 9/11 -- the fear, anger and anxiety that have prompted most Americans to reach out to friends and family.

#### Background: The Effects of 9/11 on the Travel and Tourism Industry

The \$584 billion travel and tourism business is the nation's third largest retail sales industry, the largest services export industry and one of the country's largest employers ("Economic Research," 2002). 9/11 dealt a huge blow to the travel and tourism economy, which was already experiencing financial difficulties.

The negative effects on tourism as a result of acts of terrorism is not new. The 1980s saw several terrorist acts that decreased the demand for tourism: the 1985 Palestinian attacks in airports in Rome and Vienna, the 1986 hijacking of TWA Flight 847 in Athens, and the capture of the cruise ship Achille Lauro (Pizam & Fleischer, 2002).

Still it was the 9/11 terrorist attacks on American soil that have caused “significant losses in sales and revenues” in the travel and tourism industry, especially for airlines and hotels, resulting in a huge shift in consumer patterns (Keefe, 2002a, ¶ 4). TIA has reported that domestic and international travel expenditures for 2001 dropped \$33.3 billion, or 5.8%, and business travel declined 3% (Keefe, 2002d). The industry has suffered a 29.7% loss in jobs (Keefe, 2003). Bob Stewart, commissioner of the Kentucky Department of Travel, observed, “Usually, we’re an industry that’s taken for granted. It’s terrible that it took a catastrophe like that to show tourism’s importance” (as cited in Hammond, 2002, ¶ 4).

#### *The Immediate Effects of 9/11*

In the week following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, it’s estimated that U.S. airlines lost between \$1 million and \$2 billion. In the first month, the airlines were in such poor financial shape that many were making plans to cut back personnel. In addition, the stricken airline industry caused a ripple effect, prompting layoffs in related businesses, such as airline food services, cleaning crews and mechanics (Goodrich, 2002).

Within three months, popular destinations experienced significant drops in tourism; for example, tourism in the state of Florida decreased 19% (“Tourism Officials,” 2002). Restaurant sales declined \$6 billion and 55,000 jobs were lost at eateries nationwide (“Sept. 11,” 2002). During the same time frame, hotel occupancy throughout the country dropped 52.3%, resulting in a loss of at least \$2 billion (Goodrich, 2002).

#### *9/11: One Year Later*

The travel and tourism industry continued to struggle in the year following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Airline passenger traffic declined 30%, resulting in a \$5 billion loss for the



airline industry. By August 2002, two major airlines, United (the nation's second largest) and US Airways (the fifth largest) had declared bankruptcy ("FAA Challenged," 2002). The dismal outlook for the airline industry was confirmed when TIA issued a report forecasting travel and tourism figures for the end of 2002. The report stated that domestic and international travel expenditures were expected to drop \$1.9 billion, and business travel was expected to experience its fourth year of decline, dropping 4.3% (Keefe, 2002d).

A study sponsored by the U.S. Conference of Mayors, Travel Business Roundtable, and International Association of Convention and Visitors Bureaus found that the top 100 metropolitan areas had lost 536,000 jobs and \$22.6 billion since the end of 2000, with more than half of that loss attributed to 9/11. According to the survey conducted in 2002 by DRI-WEFA, an economic research firm, travel to New York City was down 17% from 2000 figures while travel to the nation's capital was down 11.3%. Phoenix, San Diego, Houston and Orlando experienced especially high job losses ("\$22 Billion," 2002).

The decrease in travel to Orlando was observed by Harris Rosen, owner of six hotels on Orlando's busiest tourist corridor:

There is a pretty fair degree of anxiety among the population, which tends to depress one's enthusiasm for travel. It [low hotel occupancy] has kind of continued from 9/11 and really hasn't changed, although there have been momentary signs of life followed by longer periods of gloom and doom. (as cited in Schnieder, 2002, ¶ 3)

The lack of enthusiasm for traveling also was evident in the Traveler Sentiment Index, issued by TIA for the fourth quarter of 2002, which dropped 4.5% to all-time low of 93.7. All five components measured in the index declined, with consumers' ability to take pleasure trips

because of demands on their time experiencing the biggest drop (8.7%). The sluggish economy also appeared to be a factor; the component measuring travel based on personal finances declined 4.2%. Also included in the Traveler Sentiment Index was a question regarding consumer perceptions of travel safety that had been added to the index one year earlier. At the end of 2002, 41% of adult travelers said they felt travel was safer than a year ago; however, this reflected a 9% drop from the previous quarter's index. Twenty-five percent of the respondents said they felt travel safety was worse than a year ago, compared to 17% in the third quarter (Keefe, 2002c).

### *A Changing Market*

According to a survey conducted in 2002 by the American Automobile Association (AAA,) 47% of Americans said they planned to take their longest vacation trip in 2003 by car. AAA executive vice president Mark Brown: "Americans are taking shorter trips, traveling closer to home and looking for ways to economize whenever they can. And, they are likely to continue these behaviors for some time due to our economic and political uncertainties" (as cited in Cheske, 2002b, ¶ 4).

The increased preference for travel destinations closer to home was supported in a TIA report that showed in-region trips had increased 8% during the first half of 2002 (Keefe, 2002d). Dr. Suzanne Cook, TIA's senior vice president for research, explained, "The current economic situation, combined with a sluggish travel recovery and a decrease in traveler spending has forced the industry to employ a number of strategies, such as focusing on in-state or in-region markets" (as cited in Keefe, 2002b, ¶ 3). According to TIA research conducted in 2002, 38% of U.S. travel consisted of one or two night trips, with three to six night trips making up 31% ("Domestic Research: Trip," 2002). TIA also reported that day and weekend trips were up 38% from five

years ago with cities and small towns the favored destinations (“Domestic Research: Travel,” 2002).

With a shift in consumer travel patterns, a forum featuring key industry figures was held in New York City in January 2002 to look at marketing strategies that had been successfully implemented by the travel and tourism industry following 9/11; one of the focuses was “how regional tourism is evolving and offering opportunities, and how destinations are taking advantage of it” (“Forum to Showcase,” 2002, ¶ 11).

Brown observed: “Those of us in the travel industry need to organize our products and our marketing to appeal to consumers who have changed their behaviors because of the events of September 11 as well as an economy that continues to struggle” (as cited in Cheske, 2002a, ¶ 3).

According to a TIA report on changing travel patterns, 87% of its member organizations have made changes to their marketing and/or promotion programs, with 77% focusing their efforts on closer, drive-in markets during the last 12 months (Keefe, 2002b).

With the changing tourism climate and the shift in market, three questions were posed for research:

- RQ1. Are travel destinations adjusting their persuasive appeals to reach out to consumers with changing travel preferences?
- RQ2. Is public relations being used more in promotional efforts to attract visitors to travel destinations?
- RQ3. How much impact, if any, did 9/11 have on RQ1 and RQ2?

#### An Exploratory Study

#### *Participants*

The population targeted for this exploratory study consisted of public relations practitioners who worked in the following industries: accommodations, convention and tourism bureaus (CVB), tourist attractions and transportation. The source of the sample, which represented all regions of the United States and small travel destinations as well as metropolitan areas, was taken from the 2002 membership directory of the Public Relations Society of America. A census of all practitioners fitting the population characteristics ( $N = 387$ ) was attempted.

### *Instrument*

A two-page survey comprised of close- and open-ended questions was developed; the instrument was divided into four sections correlating with the presented research questions:

*RQ1.* In order to discover whether travel destinations were adjusting their persuasive appeals to reach out to consumers with changing travel preferences, participants were asked to identify the persuasive approaches they used in 2001 and 2002 and were planning to use in 2003 to reach their target publics. A checklist offered the following choices of persuasive tactics based on ethos, logos and pathos: audience self-interest, bandwagon, emotional, factual, fear, guilt, humor, plain folks, sex appeal, source credibility, stereotypes, testimonials, and transference.

Participants also were asked whether their target publics had changed between 2001 and 2002, and 2002 and 2003 (“yes” or “no” response with request for explanation).

*RQ2.* In order to measure whether public relations was being used more in promotional efforts to attract visitors to travel destinations, participants were asked to estimate the percentage of advertising, marketing and public relations (totaling 100%) used in promoting their organization in 2001, 2002 and 2003. Because the terms “advertising,” “marketing,” and “public

relations” are often used interchangeably and their definitions vary among practitioners in these fields, the following definitions were used for consistency: “advertising” was defined as developing and placing any paid sales message regardless of medium, with a notation that image/issue advertising was considered public relations; “marketing” was defined as researching and developing products/services to satisfy consumers and creating promotions to cause a transaction; and, “public relations” was defined as publicity; writing copy for newsletters, brochures, Web sites, etc.; writing speeches or speaking; desktop publishing; issues management; special events/observances; and relationship building with employees, media and consumers.

*RQ3.* In order to measure the impact, if any, that 9/11 had on RQ1 and RQ2, participants were asked to indicate on a five-point semantic differential scale (1 = “not affected” to 5 = “greatly affected”) the effect that the terrorist attacks had on their selection of persuasive approaches; the portions of advertising, marketing and public relations used in promoting the travel destination; and identification of target publics. Participants were asked to provide explanations for their ratings in this section.

#### *Administration*

During October and November 2002, the survey was attached as a separate Word document to an e-mail message describing the intent of the study. Participants were asked to respond via e-mail or fax. When the deadline for the survey return neared, reminder e-mails, with the survey attached, were sent. As a follow up to the survey, interviews were conducted with five respondents who reported significant changes in their use of persuasive appeals and/or public relations.

#### Results

The study found that 9/11 did have an impact on target publics; persuasive appeals; and the mix of advertising, marketing and public relations used in promotional efforts to attract visitors to travel destinations.

### *Response Rate*

Out of the original sample ( $N = 387$ ), 67 surveys were returned as “undeliverable” and 9 surveys were returned by participants as being “not applicable” to their particular organization, resulting in a usable sample of 311. Forty-six replies were received, 12 as a result of the e-mail reminder, for a response rate of 14.8%. While the suggested target for survey responses is 50% to 70% (Babbie as cited in Smith, 2002), return rates for e-mail surveys can be as low as 6% (Sheehan & McMillan as cited in Fall, 2003). Twenty-five surveys were returned via fax; 21 were returned via e-mail. Participants represented all regions of the United States and small travel destinations as well as metropolitan areas.

### *RQ1*

Regarding the question of whether travel destinations were adjusting their persuasive appeals to reach out to consumers with changing travel preferences, the responses confirmed that persuasive approaches have been altered. Factual appeals, the most popular approach in 2001 (used by 59% of the participants), were replaced with entertainment appeals in 2002 (used by 69% of the participants). The number of travel destinations using humor appeals increased 32% between 2001 and 2002 (from 25% in 2001 to 33% in 2002). Other appeals increasing in usage included source credibility and audience self-interest. Complete results are shown in Table 1.

Nearly 31% of the respondents said their target publics changed (mostly from “fly in” to “drive in”) between 2001 and 2002 and, therefore, their appeals had to change. The following written comments are representative of responses to RQ1:

- “Appeals had to be carefully thought out in order not to offend or traumatize any one. [The] tone had to be upbeat, but not overly so.” (reported by an airport in the Northeast)
- “[Our] focus shifted more to regional and drive markets due to [the] 9/11 attacks and fear of flying.” (reported by a hotel in the South)
- “All programs were affected to reflect shifts in market (drive vs. fly) and the messages used to speak to those markets.” (reported by a CVB on the Pacific Coast)
- “Immediately after 9/11, travel came to a total standstill. Leisure family travelers, our target public, along with business travelers, stopped traveling in the weeks following the [9/11] tragedy and the rebound has been slow, but steady. Consequently, our persuasive approach had to change.” (reported by a CVB in the South)
- “The rubber tire travelers . . . continue to be our strongest market since 9/11.” (reported a CVB in the Pacific Northwest).

Only 19.6% said they expect further changes in their target publics in 2003, although some practitioners say “unforeseen circumstances,” such as war with Iraq, could alter further travel patterns.

## *RQ2*

Regarding the question of whether public relations was being used more in promotional efforts to attract visitors to travel destinations, participants responded that they had increased the public relations portion of their promotional mix (with portions of advertising, marketing and

public relations totaling 100%), on average, by 8% between 2001 and 2002. The increase is based on the average of responses in the public relations category:

- In 2001, responses ranged from 0% to 100% ( $M = 38.2\%$ ).
- In 2002, responses ranged from 10% to 90% ( $M = 41.2\%$ ).
- In 2003, responses ranged from 7% to 90% ( $M = 41.2\%$ ).

The portions of advertising and marketing in the promotional mix declined, on average, 6% and 3% respectively during the same time period. Complete results are shown in Table 2.

### *RQ3*

Regarding the question of how 9/11 impacted RQ1 (target publics and persuasive appeals) and RQ2 (the use of advertising, marketing and public relations in promotional efforts), an effect was reported in all areas, with the greatest effects reported in the use of persuasive appeals and public relations. The following responses were based on a scale of 1 to 5 (“not affected” to “greatly affected”):

- selection of persuasive approaches ( $M = 3.2$ ).
- the portion of advertising in the promotional mix ( $M = 3$ ).
- the portion of marketing in the promotional mix ( $M = 2.8$ ).
- the portion of public relations in the promotional mix ( $M = 3.2$ ).
- identification of target publics ( $M = 2.8$ ).

In looking specifically at the 9/11 effect on public relations, 25% reported “not affected” while 20% reported “greatly affected.” However, even several organizations that reported no affect increased their use of public relations in promotional efforts. The following written comments are representative of the responses to RQ3:



- “We implemented an emergency fourth quarter [2001] marketing campaign with additional advertising and regional public relations efforts.” (reported by a CVB in the West)
- “Advertising budgets were decreased extensively and reinstated to some extent at the end of the tourism season. PR became more of a local and regional focus.” (reported by a CVB in the Northeast)
- “Budget decreases and needs shifted as did strategies and tactics.” (reported by a CVB in the South)
- “Advertising and promotion budgets were cut as a result of lower bed tax receipts following 9/11. More focus on drive markets for tourism.” (reported by a CVB in the Mideast)

### Discussion

The results of this exploratory study show that 9/11 did have an effect on the use of persuasive appeals and public relations used by travel destinations to attract visitors.

#### *Change in Persuasive Appeals*

*Market shift.* While persuasive appeals were altered as a result of 9/11, it appears that the primary reason the appeals changed was because target publics changed from “fly-in” to “drive-in.” A CVB in the Southwest reported: “Our research confirmed that our primary market was our own backyard so resources were shifted from out-of-state initiatives to county programs.”

Another CVB reported that the events of 9/11 prompted it to increase the size of its drive market: “People were staying closer to home and we tried to capture some of that market.” These

findings of the shift from “drive in” to “fly in” target publics are consistent with current trends in the industry, as cited earlier in this paper.

*Psychological aspects.* A second reason for altering persuasive appeals may relate to post-9/11 psychological changes in the existing target publics, although this question was not specifically asked. In a follow-up interview to the survey, Lacy Beasley, tourism director of the Dickson County Chamber of Commerce in Tennessee, said, “People want to get back to what is real. I plan to not focus on entertainment as much as the way people feel while they are in Dickson County.” Human interest and “feel good” stories also are being used by a major tourist attraction in the Southeast, and an attraction in the West reported that it is “using more visual imagery – our animals, bright colors, happy people – to better relay [a] sense of fun and wonder” (both attractions asked to remain anonymous).

A CVB in the East, which also requested anonymity in a follow-up interview, is switching to audience self-interest and humor appeals to differentiate its city: “We feel that this approach says something about [our city], its attitude and orientation, that doesn’t necessarily come through ‘just the facts.’” Others are focusing on source credibility. Ann Carlon, the executive director of Eagan Convention & Visitors Bureau in Minnesota, said she decided to add testimonials to the bureau’s message strategy this year “to distinguish our area as a safe, helpful and clean part of the country.”

### *Increase in Public Relations*

*Budget cuts.* The increased reliance on public relations may be attributed to the need to reduce budgets for advertising and marketing, which traditionally use tactics and strategies that are more expensive than public relations, rather than the expertise public relations could offer

regarding persuasive appeals and message structure. One major reason for the budget shift appears to be less bed taxes as a result of low hotel occupancy. A CVB in the Southwest reported that “the biggest effect of 9/11, but more importantly of the overall economy, has been the loss of hotel room nights, which in turn caused about a 20% budget reduction for our bureau. That naturally has resulted in a slash to the advertising budget.” Another CVB, also in the Southwest, reported that it “closed all international offices and reorganized the entire organization.” The reorganization included a 45% increase in public relations.

“We are definitely trying to increase our efforts in the area of public relations. Why? Mostly it is because of budget issues,” said Jill Strunk, public relations manager for the Denver Metro Convention & Visitors Bureau, which estimated it would increase public relations from 30% in 2001 to 50% in 2003. In a follow-up interview to the survey, Strunk explained: “We don’t have the marketing dollars that we need, so we are going to try to publicize Denver more in the areas where we do spend our advertising dollars.”

According to TIA, one-quarter of its members cut their marketing and advertising budgets in 2002 with 9% planning to do so in 2003. One-third of the membership increased their marketing and advertising budgets in 2002; a similar percentage say that they planned to increase them again in 2003 (Keefe, 2002b). It is unclear in the TIA study whether public relations budgets were included or combined with either marketing or advertising, so it is difficult to compare the TIA findings with the results of the exploratory study.

*Different tactics.* A second reason for increased public relations may be the use of a broader set of promotional techniques used to attract visitors to travel destinations, for example, writing consumer articles. Strunk says travel articles have been a major source of information for

Denver visitors: “According to Longwoods International, 27% of marketable visitors (those not coming to visit friends or family) were influenced to request more information after seeing a Denver article, versus only 5% who saw advertising.”

This shift toward public relations tactics is consistent with the findings of Fall’s examination of communication techniques employed by convention and visitor bureaus after 9/11, which showed public relations-oriented tactics increasing and advertising tactics decreasing:

. . . public relations techniques – media relations tactics in particular – are, in fact, used more frequently now than before Sept. 11. Internet Web sites, direct mail correspondence, newspaper media releases/newspaper ads, and magazine media releases represent the top-ranked techniques. . . . paid advertisements are being the least used now than compared to before Sept. 11. (2003, p. 8).

*Focus on education.* A third possible reason for the increase in public relations efforts is a focus on educational and awareness campaigns, one of public relations’ strengths. A major tourist area in the South reported that travel came to a total standstill immediately after 9/11: “We shifted our budget greatly to funnel more funds into advertising and public relations that would convince a ‘scared’ public that travel is safe and appropriate.” An airport in the Southwest reported that it is now focusing almost all of its attention on public information campaigns: “[We’re] sending the message that it is safe to travel by air . . . and [that] it is still the safest, most efficient and convenient mode of transportation.” Another example of this is Tampa International Airport’s extensive “Keep Flying America” campaign that was implemented to educate the public about changes in airline travel since 9/11 and to help relieve the fear of flying.

*Response bias.* While the use of public relations by travel destinations to attract visitors appears to be increasing, according to the study it was already being used more than advertising and marketing, albeit to a lesser degree (the difference between advertising and public relations was 4.4% in 2001, but widened to 9.4% in 2002). It is probable that these results are inherently biased because participants in the study were public relations practitioners. In smaller organizations, the roles of marketing, advertising and public relations may be combined; however, in larger organizations, these functions may be separate. Staff members in marketing and advertising would most likely have a different view regarding the promotional mix. The public relations/marketing/advertising structure of the organizations surveyed was not discerned in the study. Non-response bias should also be considered.

#### *Travel Forecast*

According to a TIA forecast issued in October 2002, domestic and international travel expenditures are expected to increase 5% in 2003 and 2004. Business travel is expected to stabilize with a less than 1% gain in 2003 and 1.5% gain in 2004:

We can expect a long, slow road to recovery for the travel and tourism industry, and even when it does come, this does not mean we will necessarily return to the way things were before September 11. Travel demands, patterns and expectations may have been changed for the long-term. And despite continued slow growth in the leisure travel market, this recovery is fragile and could be choked off by any number of new developments. (Cook as cited in Keefe, 2002d, ¶ 2)

A survey conducted by AAA found that although 77% of Americans say they plan to travel as much or more in 2003 than in 2002, factors that will influence those travel plans are

potential terrorist attacks, 37%; war, 33%; airfare, 33%; and, gasoline prices, 31% (Cheske, 2002b).

Given the current world climate, it is not surprising that the potential for terrorist attacks ranks as the No. 1 influential factor in making travel plans. However, in a study of tourism in Israel, Pizam and Fleischer (2002) found that the frequency of terrorist attacks, not their level of severity, was the determining factor in whether people chose to travel, implying that “tourist destinations can recover from even severe acts of terrorism, as long as the terrorist acts are not repeated” (¶ 339). This is supported by a survey conducted by Travelocity that found that while 14.4% of respondents had “concerns for personal safety” immediately after 9/11, only 2.6% still feel that way (Bray, 2002). Many practitioners say they plan to continue to focus on the expanded “drive” market.

### Conclusion

There are many ways that this study could be expanded, such as increasing the sample size, widening the sample population to include input from advertising and marketing professionals, and adding survey questions to obtain more specific data. A follow-up survey comparing the estimated use of persuasive appeals and public relations in 2003 to actual use would also yield useful information.

There is no question that the travel and tourism industry is currently in a state of fluctuation. Since this exploratory study was conducted, data on the status of the industry and projections for its future have been released on a continual basis. Even as this conclusion is being written, TIA has issued an updated forecast on domestic leisure travel:

While domestic leisure travel increased 1.7% in 2002, growth was much subdued in the waning months of the year, and weakened even further this year in the weeks leading up to the start of the war. In the short-term, leisure travel is likely to be depressed even more . . . (“Domestic Leisure,” 2003, ¶ 2)

The challenges presented by this oscillating environment offer unique opportunities for the practice of public relations in the travel and tourism industry. Public relations practitioners specialize in monitoring the environment in which an organization operates and adjusting its behavior and messages accordingly in an effort to foster mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and its publics. Issues management and crisis management are other critical responsibilities of public relations practitioners. Because of these important strategic roles, it would seem that there is much to explore within the public relations function of the travel and tourism industry at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Table 1

*Persuasive Appeals Used in Promotional Efforts by Travel Destinations*

Persuasive Appeals	2001		2002		2003	
	<i>N</i> = 44		<i>N</i> = 45		<i>N</i> = 44	
	%	#	%	#	%	#
Audience Self-Interest	45	20	50	23	50	22
Bandwagon	14	6	11	5	14	6
Emotional	41	18	36	16	36	16
Entertainment	57	25	69	31	66	29
Factual	59	26	56	25	50	22
Fear	2	1	4	2	2	1
Guilt	2	1	2	1	2	1
Humor	25	11	33	15	20	9
Plain Folks	16	7	16	7	16	7
Sex Appeal	2	1	4	2	2	1
Source Credibility	30	13	33	15	36	16
Stereotypes	7	3	4	2	5	2
Testimonials	27	12	27	12	27	12
Transference	7	3	9	4	7	3

Note: Sample sizes vary due to non-responses in RQ1



Table 2

*Promotional Mix Used by Travel Destinations \**

Mix Component	2001	2002	2003
	<i>N</i> = 42	<i>N</i> = 44	<i>N</i> = 39
Advertising	33.8	31.8	32
Marketing	27.9	27	26
Public Relations	38.2	41.2	41.2

\* Numbers based on the average of responses in each category

Note: Sample sizes vary due to non-responses in RQ2

## References

- \$22 billion in lost tourist dollars.* (2002). Retrieved March 12, 2003, from <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2002/10/21/national/main526257.shtml>.
- Bray, R. (2002). *The legacy of 9/11*. Retrieved December 30, 2002, from <http://travel.guardian.co.uk/airterror/story/0,1335,787514,00.html>.
- Cheske, J. (2002a). *AAA says travel recovery sustainable; cites recent positive tourism trends*. Retrieved February 19, 2003, from <http://www.aaanewsroom.net/Articles.asp?ArticleID=137&SectionID=4&CategoryID=8&SubCategory=&>.
- Cheske, J. (2002b). *Confident Americans set sights on 2003 travel, AAA survey says*. Retrieved February 19, 2003, from <http://www.aaanewsroom.net/Articles.asp?ArticleID=172&SectionID=4&CategoryID=8&SubCategory=&>.
- Domestic leisure travel.* (2003). Retrieved March 29, 2003, from <http://www.tia.org/Travel/TravelOutlook/032603.asp>.
- Domestic research: Travel market segments.* (n.d.). Retrieved December 30, 2002, from <http://www.tia.org/Travel/TravelTrends.asp>.
- Domestic research: Trip characteristics.* (n.d.). Retrieved December 30, 2002, from <http://www.tia.org/Travel/tripChar.asp>.
- Economic research: Economic impact of travel and tourism.* (2002). Retrieved December 30, 2002, from <http://www.tia.org/Travel/EconImpact.asp>.
- FAA challenged by airline woes.* (2002). Retrieved December 30, 2002, from <http://www.msnbc.com/news/851986.asp?0cv=RB10>.

Fall, L. (2003, April). *Reaction in action: A national investigation of how the domestic travel industry uses public relations communication strategies and tactics in the wake of Sept. 11*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the International Academy of Business Disciplines, Orlando, FL.

*Forum to showcase post-9/11 industry marketing strategies*. (2002). Retrieved September 11, 2002, from [http://www.meetingnews.com/meetingnews/headlines/article\\_display.jsp?vnu\\_content\\_id=1231234](http://www.meetingnews.com/meetingnews/headlines/article_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=1231234).

Goodrich, J.N. (2002). September 11, 2001 attack on America: A record of the immediate impacts and reactions in the USA travel and tourism industry. *Tourism Management*, 23, 573-580.

Grunig, J.E. & Hunt, T. (1984). *Managing Public Relations*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Hammond, C. (2002). *Friendly persuasion*. Retrieved March 12, 2003, from <http://www.kybiz.com/lanereport/issues/april02/coverstory402.html>.

Keefe, C. (2002a). *2002 forecast projects domestic business travel turnaround, leisure travel continues to grow*. Retrieved December 30, 2002, from <http://www.tia.org/Press/pressrec.asp?Item=195>.

Keefe, C. (2002b). *Changing travel patterns force travel suppliers to rethink marketing plans*. Retrieved February 19, 2003, from <http://www.tia.org/Press/pressrec.asp?Item=240>.

Keefe, C. (2002c). *Consumers' financial ability to travel at lowest point in 3 years*. Retrieved February 19, 2003, from <http://www.tia.org/Press/pressrec.asp?Item=238>.

Keefe, C. (2002d). *TIA forecast shows slow road to recovery for travel and tourism industry*.

- Retrieved February 19, 2003, from <http://www.tia.org/Press/pressrec.asp?Item=227>.
- Keefe, C. (2003). *Travel industry applauds Stevens' amendment*. Retrieved February 19, 2003, from <http://www.tia.org/Press/pressrec.asp?Item=256>.
- Klenosky, D.B. (2002). The "pull" of tourism destinations: A means-end investigation. *Journal of travel research*, 40, 385-395.
- Pizam, A. & Fleischer, A. (2002). Severity versus frequency of acts of terrorism: Which has a larger impact on tourism demand? *Journal of travel research*, 40, 337-339.
- Schneider, M. (2002). *Travel industry still fragile*. Retrieved March 12, 2003; from <http://www.cbs.news.com/stories/2002/11/29/national/main531226.shtml>.
- Sept. 11: For the record* (2002). Retrieved September 11, 2002 from [http://www.usatoday.com/news/sept11220-02-10-for-the-record\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/sept11220-02-10-for-the-record_x.htm).
- Smith, R.D. (2002). *Strategic planning for public relations*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Thrasher, P.C. (2002). *Where do we go from here?* Retrieved December 30, 2002, from <http://www.accessatalanta.com/ajc/travel/goguide2002/safety.html>.
- Tilson, D.J. & Stacks, D.W. (1997). To know us is to love us: The public relations campaign to sell a "business-tourist-friendly" Miami. *Public relations review*, 23(2), 95-115.
- Tourism officials face a new world*. (2002). Retrieved December 30, 2002, from <http://www.msnbc.com/news/827623.asp>.

The Relationship between Corporate Philanthropic Activity and Corporate Financial Impact:  
Getting Beyond the Inconsistent Results of Previous Studies

Submitted by

Jiyang Bae, Master's Student

College of Journalism and Communications

University of Florida

Address: 2712 SW 34<sup>th</sup> ST. #127, Gainesville, FL 32608

Phone: (352) 336 - 7302

Email: jybae@ufl.edu

&

Margarete Rooney Hall, Ph.D., Associate Professor

College of Journalism and Communications

University of Florida

Address: College of Journalism and Communications,

University of Florida, P.O. Box 118400, Gainesville, FL 32611-8400

Phone: (352) 392 - 3951

Email: mhall@jou.ufl.edu

Paper submitted to the 86<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the Association for Education in Journalism  
and Mass Communication (AEJMC), August 2003, Kansas City.

Abstract

The main purpose of this paper is to re-examine the relationship between corporate philanthropic activity and its impact on corporate financial performance. Several scholars have tried to measure the relationship. But they have not produced consistent results because of methodological inconsistencies. After modifying two methodological factors as potentially creating the inconsistent results, this study suggests that corporate philanthropic activity does partially affect the corporate bottom line.

## Introduction

As part of a larger discussion concerning the legitimacy of corporate philanthropy, scholars and executives have wanted to know whether corporate philanthropy affects corporate financial performance. Two conceptualizations of corporate philanthropy have persisted over time: a corporate citizenship model and a corporate benefit model. Both conceptualizations assume that corporate philanthropy helps a company achieve its business goals by positively influencing decision makers among the company's publics.

The idea that business ought to support society as well as earn profits has long been widely accepted by some. Corporate Social Responsibility scholar Archie Carroll (1999) says "it is possible to trace evidences of the business community's concern for society for centuries" (p.268). The view expressed at the beginning of the twentieth century of Andrew Carnegie (1900), founder of U.S. Steel, is well known. In his *Gospel of Wealth* he claimed that the wealthy hold their riches as a "trust" for the less wealthy and have an obligation to use those riches, at least in part, for their benefit. This view is an example of what Duane Windsor (2001) calls a post-game philanthropy, occurring only after retirement from the wealth-accumulating, or in-game, phase of corporate life.

There were early twentieth century examples of corporate philanthropy that occurred "in-game," as part of business practice, not as a post-script to it. The railroads are often credited with the earliest instances of corporate philanthropy for their support of YMCA hostels along railroad routes (Koten, 1997). These small YMCA hotels provided safe haven for railroad travelers and employees, and spurred growth of the railroads themselves as well as the YMCA organization. By enabling safe travel, corporate gifts to the YMCA also benefited railroad investors. These early "in-game" corporate gifts set the expectation that the gifts could, and

perhaps should, directly benefit the corporation as well as helping the beneficiary. They established the corporate benefit model.

Unlike the railroad gifts, some in-game corporate philanthropic support seemed to be almost totally disconnected from any benefits to the business itself. Particularly in the first part of the twentieth century, corporate philanthropy often tended to be less related to direct corporate interests and more related to the personal philanthropic interests of the top managers of corporations (Koten, 1997). In accordance Carnegie's treatise, this might be appropriate if the source of the funds were the earnings of the corporate executives, but it often was corporate, not personal, earnings that were contributed. Corporate philanthropy that was only remotely (or not at all) related to corporate interests continued even after Congress passed the Tax Reform Act of 1935, for the first time giving a corporate tax deduction for philanthropic gifts and attaching the requirement that gifts eligible for the tax break had to directly benefit the corporation (Koten, 1997).

To attempt to force corporate leaders to attend to the investors' interests while making corporate gifts as Congress had specified, in the early 1950s a stockholder brought suit against the A. P. Smith Company. The investor asked the courts to prohibit the company from making an unrestricted contribution that did not directly benefit the corporation and its stockholders. The New Jersey courts ruled ("A.P. Smith Manufacturing Co. v. Barlow," 1953, 1954) that the unrestricted gift in question could be allowed as an act of corporate citizenship. This ruling is heralded by the philanthropic sector because it authorized corporate philanthropy for a broad range of programs. It failed to provide the investor with any direct relief from corporate leaders who indulged their personal philanthropic interests using corporate resources. Thus, many



continued to argue, from the perspective of the corporate benefit model, that corporate philanthropy was an inappropriate use of corporate funds.

In the 1950s several major companies began philanthropic activities that were less aligned with the personal interests of corporate leaders and were more aligned with social and community needs. These corporate gifts did not produce direct corporate benefits. For example, Ford Motor Company made a large gift to the Ford Foundation, which concurrently announced hundreds of grants to private colleges to increase faculty salaries. General Electric initiated the first matching gift program. The company believed that by matching the philanthropic gifts of their employees, it would improve employee morale. AT&T announced its intention to begin philanthropic support in the communities where it had facilities. Gifts of this kind, although an improvement on the type of contributions that indulged the personal philanthropic interests of corporate elite, led to a perception among some scholars that corporate philanthropy was a do-good activity more appropriate to private individuals than to stockholder-owned corporations.

These examples of corporate philanthropy and many others that followed in the 1960s and 1970s fits better with the corporate citizenship model than the corporate benefit model. Corporations supported their communities in order to improve the social, educational, and economic environment for their businesses (Holmes, 1976). They led to Milton Friedman's 1970 call for an end to corporate social responsibility activities, including philanthropy, as a violation of the manager's responsibility to act primarily as the agent of the stockholder (Friedman, 1970). Friedman argued outright that CSR and corporate philanthropy were not legitimate business activities.

During the second half of the twentieth century, attention to all CSR activities, including corporate philanthropy, increased among business scholars as well as business leaders. Howard

Bowen's (1953) landmark book in which he asked: "What responsibilities to society may businessmen reasonably be expected to assume?" (p. xi) delineated the scholarly interest. His question initiated a decades-long attempt to define, operationalize, measure, and evaluate the outcomes of CSR. The CSR concept became better defined and moved beyond Carnegie's call for distribution of wealth obtained through corporate activity and beyond the early general references to corporate concerns for societal well-being. However, as Carroll's (1999) and Windsor's (2001) extensive and detailed discussions of the literature show, the tension continued between those who thought it a legitimate activity and those who did not. Some scholars conceptualized CSR as including economic and social components working together to build long-term profits for the corporation. That group includes such authors as Carroll (1979, 1991), Walton (1967), Morrell Heald (1970), Keith Davis (1960, 1967), the Committee for Economic Development (CED, 1971), and S. Prakash Sethi (1975). Another group of scholars conceptualized CSR to include only the social components and saw them as costs to be borne by the economic component that generates the profits. It included such authors as Henry Manne and Henry Wallich (1973), Peter Drucker (1954), Milton Friedman (1970), and Herbert Stein (1996).

According to Stendardi (1992), three specific events in the 1980s – the election of Ronald Reagan, the election of George Bush, and the Tax Reform Act of 1986 -- led to calls for an increased level of corporate philanthropy for the purpose of strengthening communities and social institutions. *Giving USA* (AAFRC, 1990) showed a steady growth in corporate philanthropy during the 1980s decade, with an increase from \$2.4 billion in 1980 to \$5.0 billion in 1989. However, debate about the legitimacy of corporate philanthropic activity also increased in the 1980s (Stendardi, 1992). For example, Morrise and Biedman (1985) reported

that from 1979 to 1985 shareholder lawsuits designed to reduce corporate giving appeared on 195 proxy statements.

Despite these suits, growth in giving continued through the decade of the 1990s and the beginning of the first decade of the twenty-first century. In 2001, corporate giving totaled \$9.05 billion (AAFRC, 2002). Research showed that many corporate executives recognized corporate social responsibility activities as important (Arlow & Gannon, 1982; Quinn, Mintzberg, & James, 1987). Carroll (1999) points out that alternative themes such as stakeholder theory, business ethics theory, corporate social performance, corporate citizenship, and interest in measurement initiatives extended attention in this area but that the CSR concept, including corporate philanthropy, remains important today. Windsor (2001) is more cautious, fearing that a new leitmotif of “wealth creation” may overshadow corporate social responsibility concepts.

If corporate philanthropy could be shown to reliably achieve both social and the economic objectives, this debate could move to a new level. Over several decades, many academic researchers have tried to verify the wealth creation effectiveness of corporate philanthropic activity. A number of authors, including Lim (2001), Garone (1999), and Levy (1999) have shown that corporate philanthropic activity can bring intangible benefits to corporations by affecting corporate image, employees’ job satisfaction, and media coverage.

However, the research that has tried to measure the direct bottom line impact of corporate philanthropic activity has not produced consistent results (McWilliams & Siegel, 2000), perhaps because of methodological inconsistencies (Griffin & Mahon, 1997). Even though corporate managers need to recognize the difference between short-term and long-term outcomes, these conflicting results have made them more hesitant to engage in philanthropic activities because of confusion and misunderstanding about its effectiveness. Moreover, these results have reduced

conviction as to the intangible contributions of philanthropic activity such as reputation enhancement. Thus, it would be valuable to shed additional light on the relationship between corporate profits and corporate philanthropy and that is the purpose of this study.

### Literature Review

Corporate social responsibility and corporate philanthropy have interested communication scholars because they are often functions of the corporate public relations program (Bernays, 1975; Clark, 2000; Deatherage & Hazleton, 1998; Esrock & Leichty, 1998; Gildea, 1994; Kim, 2001; Leichty & Springston, 1993; Manheim & Pratt, 1986; Tilson & Vance, 1985; Tokarski, 1999). Additionally, verifying the direct relationship between corporate socially responsible activity and corporate financial performance has been one of the main topics in management scholarship since 1970. The results of the studies have been decidedly inconsistent, making stockholders hesitant to have their companies invest in corporate philanthropy. Although investor relations is also a public relations function, verifying the relationship between corporate philanthropy and corporate financial performance has received less scholarly attention in the public relations field than in management. However, the inconsistent results from management studies have affected the public relations practice negatively influencing the perceptions of both investors and managers concerning corporate philanthropic giving.

### Corporate Social Responsibility, Corporate Philanthropy, and Financial Performance

Many studies over the past several decades have shown a positive relationship between corporate socially responsible activity and corporate financial performance (Bowman & Haire, 1975; Bragdon & Marlin, 1972; Cochran, 1997; Cochran & Wood, 1984; Frooman, 1997; Fry,

Keim, & Meiners, 1982; Griffin & Mahon, 1997; Guerard, 1997; Lewin & Sabater, 1996; McGuire, Sundren, & Schneeweiss, 1988; Moskowitz, 1972; Parket & Eilbert, 1975; Pava & Krausz, 1996; Riahi-Belkaoui, 1992; Spencer & Taylor, 1987; Sturdivant & Ginter, 1977; Waddock & Graves, August 1994; Waddock & Smith, 2000; Wokutch & Spencer, 1987). As an early example, Parket and Eilbirt (1975) studied the 80 firms, from among 96 firms that self-identified as engaging in CSR activities in an earlier study (Eilbirt & Parket, 1973), based on the *Fortune* 500 list of 1972. They compared them with the other 420 companies on the list based on four measures: net income, net income as a percent of sales, net income as a percent of stockholders' equity, and earnings per share. This comparison showed that the median values of the socially responsible firms on all four measures were higher than those of the other firms on the *Fortune* list.

In a later example, Griffin and Mahon (1997) tested the relationship between CSR and corporate financial performance by analyzing the data reported in the *Fortune* 500 and the Kinder, Lydenberg, Domini (KLD) index of 1992. KLD is a social choice investment advisory firm that made its data on socially responsible companies available to researchers in the mid 1990s. Mark Sharfman (1996) studied the construct validity of KLD data and determined them to be at least as valid as the other commonly used source, *Fortune* magazine. Griffin and Mahon classified the firms as low, medium and high involvement in terms of social responsibility, and compared them on five financial measures (return on equity, return on assets, total assets, asset age, and 5-year return on sales) of 1992. They concluded that the socially responsible firms got more financial profits.

However, other research showed an indefinite relationship (Abbott & Monsen, 1979; Alexander & Bucholtz, 1978; Arlow & Gannon, 1982; Aupperle, Carroll, & Hatfield, 1985;

Coffey & Fryxell, 1991; Forger & Nutt, 1975; Freeman & Jaggi, 1986; Hillman & Keim, 2001; Ingram & Frazier, 1980; Maignan & Ferrell, 2001). For example, Abbott and Monsen (1979) tested the relationship by analyzing the data reported in the *Fortune* 500 between 1971-1974. Firms were classified as low involvement and high involvement in terms of social responsibility, and were compared in respect to total returns to investors between 1964-1974. They concluded that the more socially responsible firms were indistinguishable from the less socially responsible ones in terms of total rate of return to investors.

What is worse, other research studies showed a negative relationship (Bromiley & Marcus, 1989; Davison, Chandy, & Cross, 1987; Davison & Worrell, 1990; Eckbo, 1983; Hoffer, Pruit, & Reilly, 1988; Lemer & Fryxell, 1988; Marcus & Goodman, 1986; Vance, 1975). For example, Vance (1975) tested the data provided by *Business and Society Review* in which business executives and graduate students ranked leading firms on their socially responsible activities. He found a negative relationship between rankings of social responsibility in 1972 and stock market prices of January 1, 1974 and January 1, 1975.

To explain these inconsistent results, several researchers (Arlow & Gannon, 1982; Aupperle et al., 1985; Cochran & Wood, 1984; Griffin & Mahon, 1997; Ullmann, 1985) pointed out conceptual, operational and methodological differences among the previous studies. They suggested that if future researchers agreed on operation and methodology, they would produce reliable and consistent results. Thus, this study will retest the relationship between corporate philanthropy and corporate financial performance after modifying for the methodological limitations that are mentioned in these studies.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Common Problems of Past Research

The literature reveals two problems that particularly contributed to the discordant results. First, there are several controversies about which financial index should be used as a financial performance measurement (Griffin & Mahon, 1997). Studies often adopted different types of financial measurement. For example, Vance used earnings per share, Abbott and Mosen used returns to investors, and Friedman used net income. Two studies, Bowman and Haire, and Cochran and Wood, used 5-year return on equity.

Second, much of the literature focused on large, cross-sectional studies that incorporated many industries without any consideration as to industrial differences. Although the studies pointed out that future research should consider industrial differences carefully (Wokutch & Spencer, 1987), subsequent studies have not addressed this limitation. According to Griffin and Mahon (1997), "Forty articles, more than 78% of all articles analyzed, selected populations with multiple industries. Only three research groups since 1981 have focused on only one industry." To solve this problem, Griffin and Mahon (1997) selected their sample within the same industry. They chose the chemical industry because chemical companies confront similar regulatory constraints, enforcement procedures, stakeholder activism, issues, and problems. However, they tested only seven chemical firms, and the results cannot be generalized to mean 'the relationship between the two variables is conclusive.'

Unless these recurring problems are addressed, studies of the relationship between corporate philanthropic activity and financial performance cannot produce consistent results. Although many researchers perceived and admitted the limitations of their research, few have taken steps to address those limitations. This study will address these problems with an

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

expectation that doing so will help to explain and eliminate some of the inconsistency that have been observed among earlier results.

### Hypotheses

This study tested the following hypotheses.

H 1: Corporate philanthropic activity will be positively correlated with corporate financial performance.

A positive correlation between corporate philanthropic activity and corporate financial performance does not necessarily mean that corporate philanthropy increases financial performance. It might, for example, mean that corporate financial performance increases corporate philanthropy activities. Therefore, this study also will test the following hypothesis.

H 2: Corporate philanthropic activity will have a positive impact on corporate financial performance.

### Method

#### The Research Sample

This study attempted to identify the largest possible sample of companies with active corporate philanthropy programs about which giving amounts are available and subsequent corporate revenues are available. The research sample included all of the companies on the *Fortune* 1000 list for 2002 that are also in “*The Directory of Corporate and Foundation Givers: A National Listing of the 8,000 Major Funding Sources for Nonprofits* (1998 edition).” This directory contains in-depth, self-reported data about American companies’ philanthropic giving amounts. Many corporations do not disclose their giving amounts and are therefore not included. Among the corporations in the *Fortune* 1000 list for 2002, 225 were also in the *Directory of Corporate and Foundation Givers*. All of them are included in the sample. Past studies have



used more limited samples. For example, Vance used the list of companies reported in a study in a *Business and Society Review* article. Abbott and Monsen used the companies listed over a four-year period on the *Fortune* 500. Bowman and Haire chose their sample from a one-year listing in Moody's industrial manual. And, Cochran and Wood used the companies on a reputation index generated by Milton Moskowitz.

#### Factors Most Often Cited As Problematic In Past Studies

The study addressed the two factors most often mentioned in the literature as potentially creating the inconsistent results that have occurred in the past in which corporate social responsibility and corporate philanthropy have sometimes been seen to have a positive effect on financial performance, sometimes to have no effect, and sometimes to have a negative effect.

#### The Measure of Financial Performance.

Past studies have chosen different indicators to measure financial performance. Often the rationale for selecting one measure over another was unclear.

Following either a corporate citizenship model or a corporate benefit model, corporate philanthropy is expected to contribute to the achievement of the company's business goals by positively influencing decision makers. It is, therefore, a public relations function. Some researchers (Campbell, 1977; Stone & Duffy, 1993; Szymansky, Bharadwaj, & Varadraj, 1993) insisted that among several measures of organizational effectiveness such as productivity, efficiency, profit, quality, control of the environment, and stability, profitability and revenue are the best indicators the organization's achievement of its economic goals.

Among the two best indicators of the economic goals, this study chose revenue as its measure of financial performance based on the model provided by Yungwook Kim (Kim, 2001) to measure economic value of public relations activities. Kim selected revenue as the preferred

indicator of financial performance in his 2001 study because past research by Yungwook Kim (1997) revealed that a positive relationship between corporate reputation, as a intangible outcome of public relations activity, and corporate returns in a pilot study of 92 companies in 11 industry categories. In the study, he found that reputation could explain the variance in corporate revenue. It means that public relations activity affects increase and decrease of corporate revenue significantly. Therefore, this study chose corporate revenue as the best indicator of corporate philanthropic activity as a public relations activity.

#### The Comparison Across Industrial Sectors.

As mentioned above, large, cross-sectional studies that incorporated many industries without any consideration as to industrial differences potentially led to inconsistency in the outcomes. Thus, this study tested the relationship between corporate philanthropy and corporate financial performance in each industrial sector. This study followed the Standard and Poors' industrial sector categorization for distributing the U.S. government's 58 standard industry categories into 10 sectors.

#### Other Factors

Four additional factors were addressed.

#### The Time Factor.

In addition to these two factors that were seen in the literature as contributing especially strongly to the inconsistency of past results, several researchers (Arlow & Gannon, 1982; Cochran & Wood, 1984; Wokutch & Spencer, 1987) suggested that the relationship between corporate philanthropic activity and corporate financial performance would be apparent only in the long-term. Therefore, this study compared corporate revenues in 2001, the measure of corporate financial performance *outcome*, with corporate giving and two other *inputs* from 1997,

giving a 4-year period for results of the inputs to become apparent. The revenue values for 2001 were compiled from the *Fortune* 1000 listing in 2002.

The Measure of Corporate Philanthropic Activity.

Giving data were an input measure. They were gathered for the 225 companies from 1995, 1996, or 1997, whichever were the most recent available in “*The Directory of Corporate and Foundation Givers: A National Listing of the 8,000 Major Funding Sources for Nonprofits* (1998 edition).”

The Size and Past Revenue Factors.

The literature (Lim, 2001; Stanwick & Stanwick, 1998) also indicates that past revenues will be a significant factor affecting future financial performance. A company that is already performing well is likely to continue to perform well. Therefore, corporate financial performance from 1997 was used as an input to indicate corporate financial performance at the start of the study period. There is an inherent logic to the idea that a company’s revenue in 1997 will strongly influence how much revenue it has in 2001 regardless of other activities, such as corporate giving. Lim (Lim, 2001) and Stanwick and Stanwick (Stanwick & Stanwick, 1998) also said that a company’s size will affect its ability to earn revenue. Therefore, the number of employees in 1997 was included as an indicator of company size.

Data Analysis

After categorizing the 225 companies into their industrial sectors, ten (10) regression tests were employed to examine the two hypotheses. Correlations were made between the revenue in 1997 and the revenue in 2001, between the number of employees in 1997 and the revenue in 2001, and between the amount of giving in 1995, 1996, or 1997 and the revenue in 2001. Corporate revenue in 1997, number of employees in 1997, and corporate giving in 1995,

1996, or 1997 were used as three independent variables affecting the one dependent variable, which was “corporate revenue in 2001.” When three factors were entered into regression model as independent variables, there was no collinearity problem among three variables. This means that three variables are independently important factors affecting future financial performance.

Results – Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 states that corporate philanthropic activity will be positively correlated with corporate financial performance. Table 1 shows the correlations between corporate revenue in 1997, number of employees in 1997, and giving amounts in 1997, and corporate revenue in 2001 for each industrial sector.

Table 1 – Correlations

	Sample No.	Correlations		
		2001 Revenue – 1997 Revenue	2001 Revenue - 1997 Employee no.	2001 Revenue - 1997 Giving
1. Materials	37	.946 ***	.860 ***	.343 **
2. Industrials	33	.850 ***	.670 ***	.889 ***
3. Telecommunications	6	.785 **	.810 **	.923 ***
4. Consumer discretionary	38	.986 ***	.864 ***	.748 ***
5. Consumer staples	26	.928 ***	.452 ***	.642 ***
6. Energy	18	.921 ***	.811 ***	.914 ***
7. Financials	28	.863 ***	.298	.828 ***
8. Health care	17	.777 ***	.303	.490 **
9. Information technology	12	.808 ***	.288	.933 ***
10. Utilities	10	.921 ***	.939 ***	.924 ***
Total	225	.912 ***	.553 ***	.647 ***

( \*\*\*: p<.01; \*\*: p<.05 )

In the relationship between corporate revenue in 2001 and corporate philanthropic giving in 1997, positive correlations in telecommunications, energy, information technology and utilities sectors were very strong ( $r > .90$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This means that more corporate giving in the past is very strongly correlated with better financial performance in telecommunications, energy, information technology and utilities sectors. Positive correlations in industrials, consumer discretionary and financial sectors were strong ( $r > .70$ ,  $p < .01$ ), indicating that more corporate giving in the past is strongly correlated with better financial performance in industrials, consumer discretionary and financial sectors. And correlations were positive although they were not as strong in other sectors ( $p < .05$ ). Thus, Hypothesis 1 is supported.

Although the correlations between corporate giving in 1997 and corporate revenue in 2001 were relatively weaker than between corporate revenue in 1997 and corporate revenue in 2001, it is very interesting that the correlations between corporate giving in 1997 and corporate revenue in 2001 are relatively stronger than the correlations between corporate employee number in 1997 and corporate revenue in 2001. In particular, it is very notable that the correlations between corporate giving in 1997 and corporate revenue in 2001 were as strong as the correlations between 1997 revenue and 2001 revenue except in the materials and health care sectors. Segmenting the companies by industrial sector allowed for a new insight concerning the correlation between corporate philanthropy and financial performance.

### Results – Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 states that corporate philanthropic activity will have a positive impact on corporate financial performance. Table 2 shows the results of regression model analysis. In this model, corporate revenue in 1997, number of employees in 1997 and corporate giving in 1997

were used as independent variables and corporate revenue in 2001 was used as a dependent variable.

Table 2 – Regression Model Results

Model	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	F-value	1997 revenue		1997 employees		1997 giving	
			β	t-value	β	t-value	β	t-value
1. Materials	.903	112.675 ***	.715	5.173 ***	.350	2.069 **	-.193	-2.324 **
2. Industrials	.917	118.553 ***	.484	5.039 ***	-.008	-.099	.584	8.798 ***
3. Telecomm.	.835	9.445 *	-.846	-890	1.123	1.212	.746	2.895
4. Con. discretionary	.971	406.832 ***	.993	14.099 ***	-.023	-.378	.018	.419
5. Con. staples	.863	53.340 ***	1.014	8.153 ***	-.165	-1.702	.020	.199
6. Energy	.826	27.927 ***	.531	.871	.156	.861	.265	.453
7. Financials	.766	30.493 ***	.507	2.832 ***	-.111	-.929	.468	2.285 **
8. Health care	.648	7.978 ***	.701	3.875 ***	-.125	-.554	.289	1.237
9. Info. tech.	.921	43.671 ***	.229	1.337	.113	.880	.777	5.661 ***
10. Utilities	.862	19.807 ***	-.750	-850	1.239	1.505	.471	1.223
Total	.845	407.295 ***	.880	22.653 ***	-.086	-2.469 **	.141	4.152 ***

( \*\*\*: p<.01; \*\*: p<.05; \*: p<.10; \_: p>.10 )

Table 2 shows that corporate revenue in 2001 can be explained over 90 percent with corporate revenue in 1997, number of employees in 1997 and corporate giving in 1997 in the industrial and information technology sectors (r square=.917, p<.01; r square=.921, p<.01). It is very notable that in the industrial and information technology sectors, corporate giving in 1997 (beta=.584, p<.01; beta=.777, p<.01) contributed more to corporate revenue in 2001 than corporate revenue in 1997 contributed to corporate revenue in 2001 (beta=.484, p<.01; beta=.229, p>.10). This indicates that corporate philanthropic activity, in the industrial and information technology sectors, contributes more positively to future corporate financial

performance than does past financial performance. It implies that if corporate managers care about philanthropic giving activities as much as about financial operations, corporate giving can be a strategic function to increase corporate financial returns in the industrial and information technology sectors. Thus, Hypothesis 2 is supported in the industrial and information technology sectors.

Also, Table 2 shows that corporate revenue in 2001 can be explained over 70 percent with corporate revenue in 1997, number of employees in 1997 and corporate giving in 1997 in the financial sector ( $r^2 = .766$ ,  $p < .01$ ). It is also notable that corporate giving of 1997 ( $\beta = .468$ ,  $p < .05$ ) contributed to corporate revenue in 2001 as much as corporate revenue in 1997 did ( $\beta = .507$ ,  $p > .01$ ) in the financial sector. That is, corporate managers in the financial sector can utilize corporate philanthropic giving as a strategic function to enhance financial performance. Thus, Hypothesis 2 is supported in the financial sector.

The more notable result exists in the materials sector. Over 90 percent of corporate revenue in the materials sector in 2001 can be explained by corporate revenue in 1997, number of employees in 1997 and corporate giving in 1997 ( $r^2 = .903$ ,  $p < .01$ ). But when the result of the regression model analysis for this sector were first read, it seemed fatal to the corporate philanthropic enterprise because the beta value indicates that corporate philanthropic activity will affect future financial performance negatively ( $\beta = -.193$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This means that Hypothesis 2 is rejected in the materials sector.

However, considering the industrial characteristics of the materials sector, to the degree that the corporate philanthropic activities are geared toward consumer relations, the result seems not to be fatally damaging to the idea that corporate philanthropy positively affects corporate financial performance.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The major trade partners in the materials sector are not the same as in other industrial sectors because materials corporations sell majority of their products to an intermediary, not to the end-user. For example, Potlatch timberlands, a diversified forest products company, supply approximately half of the fiber required by the company's manufacturing operations. After selling its products to manufacturing corporations, Potlatch sells remained products to private and public sources (Potlatch, 2003). Phelps Dodge Corporation is a global leader in the mining and manufacturing industries. Its primary products, including copper, molybdenum, wire and cable, and specialty chemicals and it sells its product for meeting the infrastructure needs of businesses (PhelpsDodge, 2003).

If we consider that intermediaries are the main customers of these materials companies and the benefits of corporate philanthropic giving do not go to intermediaries, it is possible to hypothesize why corporate philanthropic activity might affect future financial performance negatively. That is, the more materials companies donate their money to non-profit organizations, the more the cost of product manufacturing increases to intermediaries, with few philanthropy-related benefits to them. Also, customer-related indirect benefits from corporate philanthropic activity, such as reputation enhancement, might occur differently in a business-to-business environment like the materials sector. This result may mean that corporations in the materials sector should need a different kind of strategy for their corporate philanthropic activity that takes careful account of the sector's industrial characteristics. For example, they might consider supporting industrial infrastructure development or they might want to consider the customers of their customers when planning their philanthropic activities.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE



### Implications

These results have important implications. The efforts to select an appropriate indicator of financial performance and to attend to the differences among business sectors will hopefully add weight to these results as they are considered along with the stream of previous studies of corporate philanthropy and financial performance.

In the results of correlations, the strength of correlations was great when compared to the results of past research studies. Strong correlations between corporate philanthropic activity and future financial performance imply that corporate philanthropic activities have high potential to increase corporate financial returns in the near future. From the results of the regression model in this study, it is clear that the potential has been realized in the industrial, financial and information technology sectors.

Another implication is that corporate philanthropic giving amounts can be more credible predictors of future financial performance than the size of the company, as indicated by the number of employees. Most of the correlations of 2001 revenue with corporate giving in 1997 were stronger than correlations of corporate revenue in 2001 with employee numbers in 1997. Also, the giving factor was more often selected than the employee number factor as a significant factor affecting future financial performance in the regression model. This means that strategic philanthropic activity can contribute as much as to financial performance as can corporate overall size.

Also, the variations of the results from industry to industry imply that each industry should develop characteristic philanthropic strategies. This means that conventional plans that follow other industries' patterns of giving without any consideration to industrial differences will

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

lead to different financial returns, as in the results of the materials sector. Business-to-business industries, like the materials industries, must be especially diligent in designing corporate philanthropy programs if they want to achieve both social and financial benefits.

### Suggestions for Future Research

It would be interesting to have an even larger sample size so that there would be more companies represented in each of the industrial sectors. The small number in some sectors was a limitation for this study. Also, it would be interesting if future researchers could track the impact of corporate philanthropic activity with time-series analysis, instead of this simple time-lapse study. A time series analysis might reveal trends concerning how corporate philanthropy affects corporate financial performance as time goes by, which would enable corporate philanthropy managers to be even more strategic. Third, future researchers might expand this study by verifying the relationship between corporate philanthropic giving and other financial measures such as profits or stock market price. Possibly another financial performance factor would help explain why the corporate philanthropic activity factor shouldn't be employed as an independent factor affecting future financial performance in certain industrial sectors.

### Conclusion

The most important contribution of this study to the understanding of corporate philanthropy as a public relations function is that it increases the degree of confidence in the previous studies that have shown the corporate philanthropy positively affects corporate financial performance. Although The New Jersey courts ruled ("A. P. Smith Manufacturing Co. v. Barlow," 1953, 1954) that unrestricted gifts, from a legal perspective, could be allowed as an act of corporate citizenship, corporate philanthropy continued to be controversial from a strategic perspective. Even though many studies showed positive intangible outcomes of corporate

philanthropic activities, conflicting results of the research testing tangible outcomes reduced confidence in both the tangible and intangible outcomes. Studies had been unable to consistently show corporate philanthropy could achieve both the social benefits expected in the corporate citizenship model and the financial benefits expected in the corporate benefit model. By specifically addressing the most problematic methodological factors in the previous studies, this study has increased the credibility of the studies finding that corporate philanthropy does positively affect corporate financial performance. That is, this study revealed that fundamental causes producing previous negative results were likely methodological factors, not the philanthropic activities themselves.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

References

- AAFRC, Trust for Philanthropy. (1990). *Giving USA*. Chicago, IL: Lipman-Hearne.
- AAFRC, Trust for Philanthropy. (2002). *Giving USA 2002*. Indianapolis, IN: author.
- Abbott, W. E., & Monsen, R. J. (1979). On the measurement of corporate social responsibility: Self-reported disclosures and a method of measuring corporate social involvement. *Academy of Management Journal*, 22(3), 501-515.
- Alexander, J. J., & Bucholtz, R. A. (1978). Corporate social responsibility and stock market performance. *Academy of Management Journal*, 21(3), 479-486.
- Arlow, P., & Gannon, M. (1982). Social responsiveness, corporate structure, and economic performance. *Academy of Management Review*, 7(2), 235-241.
- Aupperle, K. E., Carroll, A. B., & Hatfield, J. D. (1985). An empirical examination of the relationship between corporate social responsibility and profitability. *Academy of Management Review*, 28(2), 446-463.
- Bernays, E. L. (1975). Social responsibility of business. *Public Relations Review*, 1(3), 5-16.
- Bowen, H. R. (1953). *Social responsibilities of the businessman*. New York: Harper Row.
- Bowman, E. H., & Haire, M. (1975). An strategic posture toward corporate social responsibility. *California Management Review*, 18(2), 49-58.
- Bragdon, J. H., & Marlin, J. A. T. (1972). Is pollution profitable? *Risk Management*, 19(4), 9-18.
- Bromiley, P., & Marcus, A. (1989). The deterrent to dubious corporate behavior: Profitability, probability, and safety recalls. *Strategic Management Journal*, 10, 233-250.
- Campbell, J. P. (1977). On the nature of organizational effectiveness. In P. S. Goodman & J. M. Pennings (Eds.), *New perspectives on organizational effectiveness* (pp. 235-248). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- Carnegie, A. (1900). *Gospel of wealth, and other timely essays*. New York: Century.
- Carroll, A. (1979). A three-dimensional conceptual model of corporate social performance. *Academic Management Review*, 4, 947-505.
- Carroll, A. (1991). The pyramid of corporate social responsibility: Toward the moral management of organizational stakeholders. *Business Horizons*, 39-48.
- Carroll, A. (1999). Corporate social responsibility. *Business & Society*, 38(3), 268-295.
- CED. (1971). *Social responsibilities of business corporations*. New York: Committee for Economic Development.
- Clark, C. E. (2000). The differences between public relations and corporate social responsibility: An analysis. *Public Relations Review*, 26(3), 363-380.
- Cochran, P. L. (1997). *Future directions in international business and society research*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press.
- Cochran, P. L., & Wood, R. A. (1984). Corporate social responsibility and financial performance. *Academy of Management Journal*, 27(1), 42-56.
- Coffey, B. S., & Fryxell, G. (1991). Institutional ownership of stock and dimensions of corporate social performance: An empirical examination. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 10, 437-444.
- Davis, K. (1960). Can business afford to ignore social responsibilities? *California Management Review*, 2, 70-76.
- Davis, K. (1967). Understanding the social responsibility puzzle: What does the businessman owe to society? *Business Horizons*, 10, 45-50.
- Davison, W. N., Chandy, P. R., & Cross, M. (1987). Large losses, risk management and stock returns in the airline industry. *Journal of Risk and Insurance*, 55, 162-172.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

- Davison, W. N., & Worrell, D. L. (1990). A comparison and test of the use of accounting and stock market data in relating corporate social responsibility and financial performance. *Akron Business and Economic Review*, 21(3), 7-19.
- Deatherage, C. P., & Hazleton, V. (1998). Effects of organizational worldviews on the practice of public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 10, 57-71.
- Drucker, P. (1954). *The practice of management*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Eckbo, B. E. (1983). Horizontal mergers, collusion, and stockholder wealth. *Journal of Financial Economics*, 11, 241-273.
- Eilbirt, H., & Parket, I. R. (1973). The current status of corporate social responsibility. *Business Horizons*, 16(4), 5-15.
- Esrock, S. L., & Leichty, G. B. (1998). Social responsibility and corporate web pages: Self-presentation or agenda setting. *Public Relations Review*, 24, 305-319.
- Forger, H. R., & Nutt, F. A. (1975). A note on social responsibility and stock valuation. *Academy of Management Journal*, 18(1), 155-160.
- Freeman, M., & Jaggi, B. (1986). An analysis of the impact of corporate pollution disclosures included in annual financial statements on investors' decisions. *Advances in Public Interest Accounting*, 1, 193-212.
- Friedman, M. (1970). *The social responsibility of business is to increase its profits*. Retrieved February 26, 2002, from [www.rohan.sdsu.edu/faculty/dunnweb/rprnts.friedman.html](http://www.rohan.sdsu.edu/faculty/dunnweb/rprnts.friedman.html)
- Frooman, J. (1997). Socially irresponsible and illegal behavior and shareholder wealth: A meta-analysis of event studies. *Business and Society*, 3, 221-249.
- Fry, E. L., Keim, G. D., & Meiners, R. E. (1982). Corporate contributions: Altruistic or for profit? *Academy of Management Journal*, 25(1), 94-106.

Fryxell, G., & Wang, J. (1994). The fortune corporate reputation index: Reputation for what?

*Journal of Management*, 20(1), 1-14.

Garone, S. J. (1996). *Strategic opportunities in corporate community activity*. New York:

Conference Board.

Garone, S. J. (1999). *The link between corporate citizenship and financial performance* (No.

1234-99-RR): Conference Board.

Gildea, R. L. (1994). Consumer survey confirms corporate social action affects buying decisions.

*Public Relations Quarterly*, 39, 20-22.

Griffin, J. J., & Mahon, J. F. (1997). The corporate social performance and corporate financial

performance debate: Twenty-five years of incompatible research. *Business and Society*,

36(1), 5-31.

Grunig, L., Grunig, J., & Ehling, W. P. (1992). What is an effective organization? In J. Grunig

(Ed.), *Excellence in public relations and communications management* (pp. 65-90).

Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Guerard, J. B. (1997). Additional evidence on the cost of being socially responsible in investing.

*Journal of Investing*, 6(Winter), 31-36.

Heald, M. (1970). *The social responsibilities of business: Company and community, 1900-1960*.

Cleveland, OH: Case Western Reserve University Press.

Hillman, A., & Keim, G. D. (2001). Shareholder value, stakeholder management, and social

issues: What's the bottom line? *Strategic Management Journal*, 22(2), 125-139.

Hoffer, G. E., Pruitt, S. W., & Reilly, R. J. (1988). The impact of product recalls on the wealth of

sellers: A reexamination. *Journal of Political Economy*, 96(3), 663-670.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

- Holmes, S. L. (1976). Executive perceptions of corporate social responsibility. *Business Horizons, 19*(3), 34-40.
- Ingram, R. W., & Frazier, K. B. (1980). Environmental performance and corporate disclosure. *Journal of Accounting Research, 18*(2), 614-621.
- Kim, Y. (1997). *Measuring efficiency: The economic impact model of reputation*. Paper presented at the Annual conference of the Public Relations Society of America, Nashville, TN.
- Kim, Y. (2001). Measuring the economic value of public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 13*(1), 3-26.
- Koten, J. A. (1997). The strategic uses of corporate philanthropy. In C. Caywood (Ed.), *The handbook of strategic public relations and integrated communications* (pp. 149-172). New York: McGraw Hill.
- Leichty, G. B., & Springston, J. (1993). Reconsidering public relations models. *Public Relations Review, 19*, 327-339.
- Lemer, L. D., & Fryxell, G. E. (1988). An empirical study of the predictors of corporate social performance: A multi-dimensional analysis. *Journal of Business Ethics, 7*, 951-959.
- Levy, R. (1999). *Give and take: A candid account of corporate philanthropy*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Lewin, D., & Sabater, J. M. (1996). *Corporate philanthropy and business performance*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Lim, J. (2001). *Intangible outcomes of corporate strategic philanthropy: A public relations perspective*. Paper presented at the Association for Education of Journalism and Mass Communication.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE



- Maignan, I., & Ferrell, O. C. (2001). Antecedents and benefits of corporate citizenship: An investigation of French business. *Journal of Business Research*, 51(1), 37-51.
- Manheim, J. B., & Pratt, C. B. (1986). Communicating corporate social responsibility. *Public Relations Review*, 12(2), 9-19.
- Manne, H. G., & Wallich, H. C. (1973). *The modern corporation and social responsibility*. Washington, D. C.: The American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research.
- Marcus, A. A., & Goodman, R. S. (1986). Compliance and performance: Toward a contingency theory. In L. E. Preston & J. E. Post (Eds.), *Research in corporate social performance and policy* (Vol. 8). Greenwich, CT: JAI.
- McGuire, J., Sundren, A., & Schneeweiss, T. (1988). Corporate social responsibility and firm financial performance. *Academy of Management Journal*, 31(4), 854-872.
- McWilliams, A., & Siegel, D. (2000). Corporate social responsibility and financial performance: Correlation or misspecification? *Strategic Management Journal*, 21, 603-609.
- Morrise, R. I., & Biedman, D. A. (1985). How to give away money intelligently. *Harvard Business Review*, 156.
- Moskowitz, M. R. (1972). Choosing socially responsible stocks. *Business and Society Review*, 1(71-75).
- A. P. Smith Manufacturing Co. v. Barlow, XXVI (Supreme Court of New Jersey 1953, 1954).
- Parke, R., & Eilbert, H. (1975). Social responsibility: The underlying factors. *Business Horizons*, 18(4), 5-11.
- Pava, M. L., & Krausz, J. (1996). The association between corporate social-responsibility and financial performance: The paradox of social cost. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 15(3), 321-357.

PhelpsDodge. (2003). *Products*. Retrieved February 20, 2003, from

<http://www.phelpsdodge.com/index-products.html>

Potlatch. (2003). *Corporate overview*. Retrieved February 20, 2003, from

<http://www.potlatchcorp.com/company/corporate.html>

Quinn, J., Mintzberg, H., & James, R. (1987). *The strategy process*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.

Riahi-Belkaoui, A. (1992). Executive compensation, organizational effectiveness, social performance and firm performance: An empirical investigation. *Journal of Business Finance and Accounting*, 19(1), 25-38.

Sethi, S. P. (1975). Dimension of corporate social performance: An analytical framework. *California Management Review*, 17, 58-64.

Sharfman, M. (1996). The construct validity of the Kinder, Lydenberg & Domini. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 15(3), 287-297.

Spencer, B. A., & Taylor, G. S. (1987). A within and between analysis of the relationship between corporate social responsibility and financial performance. *Akron Business and Economic Review*, 18(3), 7-18.

Stanwick, P. A., & Stanwick, S. D. (1998). The relationship between corporate social performance and organizational size, financial performance, and environmental performance: An empirical examination. *Journal of Ethics*, 17(2), 195-204.

Stein, H. (1996, July 15). Corporate America, mind your own business. *Wall Street Journal*, p. 12.

Stendardi, E. J. (1992). Corporate philanthropy: The redefinition of enlightened self-interest. *Social Science Journal*, 29(1), 21-30.

- Stone, R., & Duffy, M. (1993). Measuring the impact of advertising. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 33(6), RC8-RC12.
- Sturdivant, F. D., & Ginter, J. L. (1977). Corporate social responsiveness: Management attitudes and economic performance. *California Management Review*, 19(3), 30-39.
- Szymansky, D. M., Bharadwaj, S. G., & Varadraj, P. R. (1993). An analysis of the market share-profitability relationship. *Journal of Marketing*, 57(1), 1-18.
- Tilson, D. J., & Vance, D. (1985). Corporate philanthropy comes of age. *Public Relations Review*, 11, 26-33.
- Tokarski, K. (1999). Give and thou shall receive. *Public Relations Quarterly*, 44(2), 34-40.
- Ullmann, A. (1985). Data in search of a theory: A critical examination of the relationship among social performance, social disclosure, and economic performance. *Academy of Management Review*, 10, 450-477.
- Vance, S. C. (1975). Are socially responsible corporations good investment risks? *Academy of Management Review*, 64(8), 18-24.
- Waddock, S. A., & Graves, S. B. (August 1994). *The corporate social performance-financial performance link*. Paper presented at the National meeting of the Academy of Management, Dallas, TX.
- Waddock, S. A., & Smith, N. (2000). Corporate responsibility audits: Doing well by doing good. *Sloan Management Review*(Winter), 75-83.
- Walton, C. C. (1967). *Corporate Social Responsibilities*. Belmont, Ca: Wadsworth.
- Windsor, D. (2001). The future of corporate social responsibility. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*, 9(3), 225-257.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Wokutch, R. E., & Spencer, B. A. (1987). Corporate saints and sinners: The effects of philanthropic and illegal activity on organizational performance. *California Management Review*, 29(2), 62-77.

Wood, D. A., & Jones, R. E. (1996). *Research in corporate social performance*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

RUNNING HEAD: A (RE)CONCEIVED FEMINIST PARADIGM

A (Re)conceived Feminist Paradigm for Public Relations and its Application  
to the Theory of Organization-Public Relationships

Linda Aldoory, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor

Department of Communication

2130 Skinner Building

University of Maryland

College Park, MD 20742

(301) 405-6528

[la74@umail.umd.edu](mailto:la74@umail.umd.edu)

Elizabeth Toth, Ph.D.

Associate Dean and Professor

S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications

Syracuse University

Syracuse, NY 13244

For submission to Public Relations Division of the  
Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication

April, 2003

### Abstract

This review essay sought to advance the use of a feminist paradigm in the research and understanding of the practice of public relations. Work by feminist scholars is substantial, but must move beyond androcentric principles and alienation from public relations scholars who do not conduct feminist research or do not consider themselves feminist. This essay posits that five concepts from the feminist paradigm should enrich and advance knowledge about public relations: analysis of gender, power, diversity, ethics/values, and reflexivity. These concepts are applied to developing relationship theory.

A (Re)conceived Feminist Paradigm for Public Relations and its Application  
to the Theory of Organization-Public Relationships

Feminists have been critiquing and reforming public relations scholarship and practice for almost 20 years. The first comprehensive gender study in public relations was published in 1986—*The Velvet Ghetto* (Cline, Toth, Turk, Walters, Johnson, & Smith, 1986)—and since then, numerous scholars have described the status of women in the profession, applied feminist perspectives to prevailing public relations theories, and explored new feminized concepts and theories (Toth, 2001). In fact, a few scholars have asserted that a feminist paradigm for scholarship and practice has emerged (Aldoory, in press; O’Neil, 2002; Toth, 2001). However, this feminist paradigm that has developed seems to have two major flaws: 1) it continues some long-held androcentric principles, such as maintaining some status quo power relations; and 2) it is conceived as a “competing” or “alternative” worldview, which marginalizes the paradigm itself and alienates public relations scholars who do not conduct feminist research or who do not consider themselves feminist.

A feminist paradigm, if re-visioned to be practical, heuristic, and inclusive, should contribute to general theory and practice in public relations and not just to research on women. Therefore, this article has three purposes: 1) to (re)conceptualize the characteristics of a feminist paradigm for public relations; 2) to highlight the contributions of a revised paradigm to the general body of knowledge in public relations; and 3) to use the paradigm to assess the theory of organization-public relationships, one of the most popular theories in public relations today.<sup>1</sup>

This article begins by defining the construct “paradigm” and how it has been developed in public

---

<sup>1</sup> In order to select a current trend in theory and research for this paper, all the articles over the last five years in the *Journal of Public Relations Research* and *Public Relations Review* (1999-2003) were examined. The top 3 ranking topics in terms of number of articles were: relationships/relationship building/relationship management; gender/women/feminist scholarship; and global/international public relations. Global public relations was not selected because the feminist paradigm developed in the discipline thus far has been strictly one of white Western thought and cannot yet be sensitively applied to multicultural cases.

relations. Then, briefly, the studies are described that have helped to build a feminist paradigm in public relations. General themes are extracted and (re)conceived to support the body of knowledge in public relations. Finally, the paradigm is applied to the theory of organization-public relationships to illustrate its ability to enhance general public relations theory.

### Paradigm in Public Relations

For over a decade public relations scholars have discussed “paradigm” and what it means to the discipline. Kuhn (1970) coined the term “paradigm,” referring to the fundamental points of view characterizing a science; it “stands for the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given community” (p. 35). Similarly, Laudan (1977) defined paradigm as a research “tradition”: “a set of general assumptions about the entities and processes in a domain of study, and about the appropriate methods to be used for investigating the problems and constructing the theories in that domain” (p. 81). These sets of assumptions provide ways of guiding action and scholarship (Babbie, 1995; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). According to Denzin and Lincoln (1998), paradigms can never be established in terms of their ultimate truthfulness (p. 185), because, as a set of *beliefs*, they are not grounded in fact, and they can change over time.

Influenced by Kuhn’s work, Ferguson (1984) argued in support of building a paradigm in public relations, because it would enhance the probability of productive theory development and would be essential for public relations research to be called a science. A special issue of *Public Relations Review* focused on paradigm struggles (Botan, 1993), and other articles were published about the paradigms that guided the field and the opportunity for new paradigms (Aldoory, 2001b; J. E. Grunig, 1992; Heath, 2001a). For example, Botan (1993) illustrated that one traditional paradigm for public relations was housed in modern business assumptions, and therefore, embodied “micro-ethical and economic questions” (p. 108). More currently,



complementary paradigms for the field have included, but have not been limited to, the rhetorical/critical worldview (Heath, 1993, 2001b; Toth & Heath, 1992), which envisions the field as dialogic, and the management worldview (J. E. Grunig, 1992, 2001; L. A. Grunig, J. E. Grunig, & Dozier, 2002), which envisions public relations as a management level role. Both of these paradigms also ascribe ethics and two-way communication to the practice of effective public relations. Paradigms that have emerged but that are seen as “alternative” include the feminist paradigm (Toth, 2001), which will be discussed later in more depth, and the postmodern paradigm (Holtzhausen, 2000; Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002), which holds several similar principles as feminism. Holtzhausen and Voto (2002) argued that a postmodern paradigm focuses on the link between knowledge and power, dissensus rather than consensus, and micropolitical processes (p. 59).

According to Coombs (1993), “Paradigms are important to understand because they serve to delimit a field and to control what phenomena are studied and how those phenomena are studied” (p. 111). However, as Sallot, Lyon, Acosta-Alzuru, and Jones (2003) said, there is no one shared worldview from which public relations theory derives, “although similar language pertaining to theory might be shared” (p. 32). Toth (1992) proposed a middle ground, arguing for pluralistic studies that would complement our understanding of public relations: “It is because there are differing approaches with differing assumptions and directions that our understanding of public relations is enriched” (p. 12).

#### Feminism and Gender in Public Relations: Paradigmatic Studies

There have been several studies in public relations focusing on gender and/or feminist theory, and a few of these studies have surfaced as notable for their contribution to a feminist paradigm. Taken as a whole, some of this research has been primarily descriptive in detailing the status of women in the public relations profession; some of it has been explanatory in trying to

build theory about women's place in the field; and a few studies have been transformative, with goals of critiquing and changing the status quo.

### *Descriptive Research about Women*

Most of the research addressing gender issues in public relations has used surveys and focus groups to describe the status, roles, and perceptions of women compared to men in the profession. This important area of study has highlighted the impact that the feminization of the field has had on women themselves and on the profession as a whole. Researchers have focused on practitioner roles (Choi & Hon, 2001; Creedon, 1991; Kucera, 1994; Tam, Dozier, Lauzen, & Real, 1995; Toth & L. A. Grunig, 1993; Wrigley, 2002), salaries (Cline & Toth, 1993; Jacobson & Tortorello, 1992; Leyland, 2000; Toth & Cline, 1991), job satisfaction (Serini, Toth, Wright & Emig, 1996), sexual harassment (Bovet, 1993; Serini, Toth, Wright, & Emig, 1998), race (Kern-Foxworth, 1989a, 1989c; Kern-Foxworth, Gandy, Hines, & Miller, 1994), and education (Creedon, 1989a; DeRosa & Wilcox, 1989; Farmer & Waugh, 1999; L. A. Grunig, 1989a, 1989b; Kern-Foxworth, 1989b). This body of research has reflected a liberal feminist standpoint by bringing to the surface disparities in work practices, salary, etc., and by suggesting how equality might be achieved.

Many of the authors cited above were motivated by the landmark research conducted by teams of researchers who were funded by the Public Relations Society of America (Aldoory & Toth, 2002; L. A. Grunig, Toth, & Hon, 2001; Toth, Serini, Wright, & Emig, 1998; Wright, L. A. Grunig, Springston, & Toth, 1991), and by the International Association of Business Communicators (Cline, et al., 1986; Toth & Cline, 1989). These research programs not only produced several publications about different aspects of gender in public relations, but they also sparked other researchers to engage in the study of gender. Findings from the studies illustrated discrimination by gender and race and an awareness by research participants of this

discrimination.

### *Explanatory Gender Scholarship*

Some scholars have moved beyond description and have elaborated well-known theories and developed new theories explaining gender discrimination. This body of research has elevated gender scholarship to a level of theoretical, institutional and ideological understandings of women's disempowerment in public relations. Although the work illustrates some liberal feminism, much of it resonates with a radical feminist perspective in its focus on systemic problems. The mainstream public relations theories that have been elaborated have included two-way communication (L.A. Grunig, 1991; Wetherell, 1989), public relations roles and leadership (Aldoory, 1998), and the situational theory of publics (Slater, Chipman, Auld, Keefe, & Kendall, 1992; Aldoory, 2001a).

Other scholars have uncovered explanations for gender differences that were found in earlier descriptive studies (Aldoory & Toth, 2002; L. A. Grunig, et al., 2001; Hon, 1995; Wright & Haynes, 1999; Wrigley, 2002). Some of the more common explanatory factors for disempowerment have included women's communication style, socialization, family commitments, and their perceptions of a "good ol' boy" network. Hon's (1995) pivotal work was one of the first studies that focused on factors explaining discrimination against women in public relations. Several themes emerged from her data that helped explain obstacles women faced, including: the marginalization of the public relations function; faulty college curriculum; a male-dominated work environment that led to women's exclusion from men's networks; women's lack of self-esteem; too few female role models; outmoded attitudes of senior men; conflicting messages for women; women's balancing act between career and family; gender stereotypes; sexual harassment; and ageism. In her conclusion, Hon mapped out characteristics of a feminist theory defined by holism, inclusiveness, and complexity.

### *Critical/Transformative Feminist Scholarship*

Though few in number, there have also been critical essays from feminists that are well-publicized due to the controversy of their arguments, their threat to the status quo, and their ability to empower younger scholars to follow in their scholarly pursuits. This research has used radical feminist theory as a lens through which to view roles theory (Creedon, 1991, 2001; Toth, 2001), two-way communication (Creedon, 1993; Toth, 1989), education (Creedon, 1989b; L. A. Grunig, 1989b, 1993, Rakow, 1993a, 1993b), and feminists' own research efforts (L. A. Grunig, 1988, 2000). Overarching goals for this body of work have included uncovering masculinist ideologies guiding theory and practice, and transforming the institutional systems that drive discriminatory practices.

One particularly provocative essay was Toth's (1988) treatise on the sexism and devaluation of women that led to subsequent devaluation of public relations as an organizational function (p. 38). She shared seven common rationalizations that were often used to defend gender discrimination or to ignore it, such as "the salary gap is narrowing" (p. 39) and "women perceive themselves as technicians" (p. 42). She proceeded to dissect each one to show how they were based on poor research methodology, masculinist ideology, and a socialization process affecting both men and women in U.S. society.

### Feminist Paradigm in Public Relations

Some scholars have viewed the feminization of the profession, the amount of research focusing on gender issues, and the number of scholars calling for change as illustrations of a new paradigm for scholarship and practice (Aldoory, in press; O'Neil, 2002; Toth, 2001). This feminist paradigm, however, is not often viewed as "complementary" or constitutive of the general body of knowledge in public relations, but rather as "alternative." One reason for this is that the feminist paradigm is caught in a double-bind. On one hand, it continues androcentric

ideas about public relations because several scholars assimilate their research to be accepted into the mainstream public relations discourse; this weakens a transformative posture and retains some masculinist ideals so that it can make some strides. On the other hand, when scholars do attempt to stake a more radical claim for change, the research is defined as “alternative” and alienating to many scholars who do not define themselves or their research as “feminist.”

There should be a way to reconstitute a feminist paradigm so that it still adheres to a certain ideology while also contributing to a general understanding of public relations. The public relations research that has focused on gender and feminism reveal some themes that have helped build a feminist paradigm for scholarship. These include an emphasis on gender, on power, on diversity, and on ethics/values. These themes play out in public relations scholarship in ways that reveal certain underlying assumptions—it is these assumptions that will be reconstituted. In addition, the theme of reflexivity is added below because of its potential for enhancing effective public relations.

### *Gender*

The crux of the current feminist paradigm has been the examination and critique of “gender” as it *exists* in public relations practice and research. In focusing on gender as it exists, most of the research has theoretically and operationally defined gender as female and has studied women in their jobs. Gender in public relations scholarship has normally been conceived as sex differences in work between males and females. This definition of gender as female was an essential early strategy, because it highlighted the discrimination against women that was occurring in public relations. However, the focus on gender needs to be revisioned so that the paradigm examines and critiques gender as it is *constructed*, rather than as it exists.

Gender should be defined as Rakow (1989, 1992) defined it: an organizing principle used to classify and differentiate humans and to offer guidelines for how to interact with others. The

guidelines are not necessarily valuable or desirable, but the study of them offers a different way of looking at public relations. A feminist paradigm would study public relations as a gendered profession, and both male and female professionals would be understood in terms of expectations and frames ascribed to them due to gender socialization.

This type of reconceptualization would benefit the whole of public relations in two main ways. First, it emphasizes the fact that both men and women are gendered. All people who work and study in public relations are influenced by the gendered nature of the profession, and therefore, all of us are bound/refrained by expectations and stereotypes. If a paradigm embraces the notion of gender as a lens through which to examine all of public relations, then the profession and the scholarship on the whole would become less stereotyped and more valued. Second, reconceptualizing gender as constructed prohibits the essentializing of females as naturally skilled public relations practitioners. With U.S. society still devaluing work ascribed to women, this essentializing of women in public relations ultimately hurts the profession in general by ascribing it to women only.

### *Power*

Power, along with gender, has been a basic, defining concept for feminist theory in public relations. Some of the more radical feminist scholars in the field have explicitly connected power with privilege in their calls for transformation (Aldoory, 2001b; Creedon, 1993). However, the impact of unequal power is usually implied rather than explicit in the research, and this alone is problematic for a feminist paradigm. As Hon, L. A. Grunig, and Dozier (1992) pointed out, “issues of power lie at the heart of women’s repression in organizations” (p. 427). Indeed, power lies at the heart of public relations and organization-public relationships. As O’Neil (2002) summarized, “public relations scholars have been interested for some time in what makes the public relations practitioner powerful and influential in the organization” (p. 5). Therefore, a

revised feminist paradigm would make power, and the unequal distribution of it, *explicit* in its writings and research. This act would increase dialogue about power, which would help reveal gaps in research and practice.

The gender/feminist research in public relations has encouraged “empowerment” of practitioners and publics that would reduce power imbalances in organizations (Hon, et al., 1992). Empowerment has been conceived of as a redistribution of power, so that more of it will lie in the hands of those who have traditionally been “powerless.” Additionally, it is argued, that in the act of empowering others, managers and leaders would ultimately increase their own power via increased productivity (L. A. Grunig, 1992, p. 492). L. A. Grunig, J. E. Grunig, and Dozier (2002) discuss power and its distribution within organizations so as to provide a culture of excellent practices of public relations. Although their conceptualization starts with power-control theory, they posited that excellent practices of public relations would be found when organizational leaders empowered their colleagues and those in strategic management, “of collaborating to increase the power of everyone in the organization to the benefit of everyone in the organization” (p. 142). They reasoned further that organizations that sought to benefit from different perspectives would support and encourage women and minorities, a critical extension because the field of public relations is almost 70 percent female today (Taft, 2003). According to Hon et al. (1992), “empowerment involves building up one’s own strength by building up others” (p. 428).

These attempts at transforming power into empowerment are necessary. However, the discourse and the guidance on how to do so has been limited and constraining. Within the current rhetoric, power is seen as an entity or product that, when held, defines a privileged position. As Yeatman (1994) explained, the empowerment of women *by* “state authority” reinforces women’s dependence on paternalistic protectionism (cited in Eaton, 2001, p. 22).

For a revisioned feminist paradigm, power would first be acknowledged, then dismantled and transformed into empowerment. Suggestions on how to do this derive from feminist scholars in other disciplines. For example, power has been revisioned as “capacity,” where oppressed individuals become active agents in their own decision-making (Baker Miller, 1992; Eaton, 2001; Yeatman, 1994). Several feminist scholars have turned to Foucault’s work in reconstituting power. According to Foucault (1980), power is not only imposed by others, but self-imposed as well. Power is exercised rather than possessed, and it can be productive rather than merely repressive. These dimensions transform current notions of power and put onus on oppressed peoples as well as oppressors. hooks (1984) has also changed the meaning of power, and the rhetoric used when discussing power. She and others (Collins, 2000) have suggested the concepts of ability, strength, action, and energy to be used in describing empowerment.

An explicit analysis of power relations and a transforming of the notions of power can significantly contribute to the general body of public relations. It is not just female practitioners who have to deal with inequitable power and lack of access or control. Public relations scholars have for years discussed the devaluing of the profession as a whole—this devaluing equals a lack of power and coincides with an increase of women in the field. Therefore, attempts at acknowledging power and transforming it is critical to increasing the strength and “capacity” of public relations as a profession/discipline. If the majority of individuals in public relations are female and ascribed lower value for their work, then empowering these individuals ultimately empowers the profession.

### *Diversity*

Hon and Brunner (2000) defined diversity as a “catchall phrase for a complex set of issues having to do with gender, racial, and other forms of discrimination; multiculturalism; and the social and legal responsibility the business community has to manage diversity proactively” (p.



311). Feminist scholars in public relations have written about the necessity for making diversity a priority in research and in practice (Aldoory, 2001b; L. A. Grunig, 1989b; Hon & Brunner, 2000; Rakow, 1989). However, systematic research about diversity issues in public relations is lacking (Hon & Brunner, 2000). Pompper (2002) claimed, “While feminists have infused our literature with deep examinations of status issues among a female plurality, ethnicity and class factors have been under-explored” (p. 31). It seems hypocritical for the feminist agenda to be encouraging diversity in essays on one hand but neglecting the practice of diversity in research on the other. A (re)conceived feminist paradigm would find ways to make diversity, difference, and inclusiveness second-nature to researchers and practitioners.

The importance in practicing diversity cannot be overstated. According to Haraway (1988), every individual is located within a particular position depending on identity, life experiences, and social, physical, and economic constraints. This situated position makes objectivity impossible because everyone is viewing a reality from *his or her* own perspective, called situated knowledge (Haraway, 1988; Mies, 1983; Hanen, 1988). The only way to achieve a greater understanding of reality is to combine a greater number of different backgrounds—this is true for research samples as well as for targeted audiences of public relations efforts.

Implementing difference and inclusiveness in a revised feminist paradigm will contribute to the overall public relations body of knowledge because it will increase validity of research findings and comprehensiveness of understanding certain realities. Ultimately, as Hon and Brunner (2000) asserted, “Inclusiveness is a strategic decision, based on its positive impact on the organization’s bottom line.” According to Pompper (2002), failure to promote diversity in the public relations workplace handicaps our ability to apply the two-way symmetrical model for public relations excellence.

*Ethics/Values*

For many feminist scholars in public relations, feminist values will create a more ethical public relations practice, and a more ethical public relations is a more effective profession. Sha (1996), for example, explained that women are more likely to possess a symmetrical worldview, which is an overall mindset that allows for consideration of interests of both an organization and its publics. This worldview, which most often manifests itself through organizational use of two-way communication, has been shown to be the most ethical means of practicing public relations because it allows for dialogue between organizations and publics (J. E. Grunig, 1992). Therefore, the influx of women into public relations can lead to a more ethical profession. A more current treatise by L. A. Grunig, Toth and Hon (2000) connected feminine values of respect, caring, reciprocity, self-determination, honesty and sensitivity to an ethical practice of today's public relations. The authors concluded that learning feminine values began in the classroom, where future professionals could be acculturated to adhere to certain values and ethics.

Ethics is indeed necessary for effective public relations, and feminists are not the only scholars who address the different ethical tensions in public relations. But in feminist scholarship, ethics seems to often be connected to essentialized or gendered characteristics ascribed to females through socialization. A revisioned feminist paradigm would make ethics a greater focus, and would broaden the conceptualization so as not to exclude males from their responsibilities in adhering to an ethical worldview and practicing ethical public relations. This revisioning, then, would contribute to the general body of knowledge in public relations, because every individual would become ultimately responsible for justifying their process/actions as well as their results in their practice and in scholarship.

### *Reflexivity*

Although not often discussed in public relations, reflexivity is inherent and essential to feminists in other fields (Fonow & Cook, 1991; Reinhartz, 1992; Sherwin, 1988; Stanley & Wise,

1993). Reflexivity is the act of acknowledging and interpreting one's own opinions and identity in terms of how these impact our work, our research, and our decisions. For example, in order for researchers to better understand what their situated perspective is and how it impacts a study's findings, they should engage in self-reflexivity (Armstead, 1995; Jayaratne & Stewart, 1991; Shields & Dervin, 1993; van Zoonen, 1994). A self-reflexive element reduces bias by acknowledging positionality, and by admitting to opinions, emotions, experiences, identity politics, and professional and personal constraints that may influence interpretations and decisions (Fonow & Cook, 1991; Mies, 1983; Reinharz, 1992; Stanley & Wise, 1993). There are several accounts of researchers including personal accounts in their writings as prefaces or postscripts (Reinharz, 1992). Although this tactic will not eliminate bias, it offers a way to reduce it to an extent that creates more valid data.

Public relations research and practice has neglected to focus on the practice of reflexivity. This may be due to researchers and practitioners not being socialized or trained to place themselves into the communication process. Nor do they reflect on how their positionality influences the settings that they work in and the outcomes that they proclaim. However, doing so would increase the validity in research findings and in professional reports.

#### Paradigm Case: Theory of Organization-Public Relationships

Almost 20 years ago, public relations was defined as the management of communication between an organization and its publics (Ferguson, 1984; J. E. Grunig & Hunt, 1984). In 1984, Ferguson predicted that the area of relationship management would offer the best opportunity for theory development in public relations. She argued that this would create a shared domain for the field's research efforts and integrate several specific areas of study. She also asserted, "a research paradigm focus that comes to understand the study of public relations as the study of relationships ...will do much to 'legitimize' the field of public relations" (p. 11).

Ten years ago, J. E. Grunig (1993) integrated Ferguson's attributes of relationships with new concepts and listed the factors important for studying relationships. These included the dynamic nature of the relationship; the level of openness; the degree of satisfaction for both parties; the power distribution; the extent of mutuality of understanding, agreement and consensus; trust and credibility; and the concept of reciprocity.

However, it was Broom, Casey and Ritchey (1997) that published an important conceptualization of relationships that began a burgeoning of research interest. Broom et al. defined relationships as the unique and measurable properties of transactions, flows, linkages, exchange of resources, and/or communication between organizations or organizations and their publics to service their interdependent needs. They identified antecedent conditions of organization-public relationships, concepts of relationships, and outcomes of relationships. Antecedents included social and cultural norms, collective perceptions and expectations, needs for resources, perceptions of an uncertain environment, and legal/voluntary necessity. Relationship concepts were properties of exchanges, transactions, communications and other interconnected activities. Consequences included goal achievement, dependency/loss of autonomy, and routine and institutionalized behavior. Broom et al. (1997) stated that relationships are phenomena distinct from the perceptions held by parties in the relationships (p. 95). That is, they argued for a conceptualization of relationships that was separate from the participants that had unique properties. However, they did not suggest that instruments measuring a relationship apart from the perceptions of the organization and its publics could actually be achieved.

Several researchers have expanded on Broom et al's (1997) conceptualizations and have clarified relationship theories for public relations (Bruning, 2002; Bruning & Ledingham, 1999, 2000; J. E. Grunig & Huang, 2000; Hon & J. E. Grunig, 1999; Huang, 2001; Ledingham, 2001;

Ledingham & Bruning, 1998, 2000). Most of these scholars used quantitative measurements to assist public relations practitioners in showing what they did contributed to their organizations' "bottom-line." For example, the work by J. E. Grunig and colleagues (J. E. Grunig & Huang, 2000; Hon & J. E. Grunig, 1999; Huang, 2001) refined a measuring instrument that could assess organizational and public perceptions of relationships outcomes. They posited two types of relationships: exchange and communal. The concepts defining relationship outcomes were: control mutuality (power sharing), trust, commitment, and satisfaction (L.A. Grunig, J. E. Grunig & Dozier, 2002, p. 553). In order to achieve certain outcomes, L. A. Grunig, et al. (2002) argued, certain relationship maintenance strategies should be used. These involved access, openness, networking, assurances of legitimacy, sharing of tasks, and symmetrical strategies for conflict resolution. Authors argued that these strategies and resulting outcomes derive from a dialectical/dialogical approach to relationships, which acknowledges the essential tension in all relationships—of wanting to be together and at the same time desiring autonomy (p. 550).

#### Theory of Organization-Public Relationships Through a Feminist Paradigm Lens

The theory of organization-public relationships is more aligned with a feminist paradigm than past theoretical perspectives in public relations because of its focus on relationships. Also, several scholars have already engaged in discourse about power and ethics/values in relationships (L. A. Grunig, et al., 2002; L. A. Grunig, et al., 2000). However, the feminist paradigm as conceived here could better inform and expand relationship theory through its examination of gender, its reconstruction of power, its application of reflexivity and diversity principles, and its focus on ethics/values.

#### *Gender*

An examination of the gendered nature and construction of relationships is missing from the current conceptualizations used in organization-public relationship theory. This is not a claim

that research on women in relationships is missing—it is not the sex of each party that is important here. Instead, the theoretical construction of relationships is gendered. It has been constructed within notions of how modern organizations work and what modern organizations' goals are—modern organizations and business practices are constructed within a masculinist ideology that still values competition, monetary definitions of success, and exchange relationships. In addition, expectations and frames are ascribed to the parties involved in a relationship, and often these expectations and frames are also gendered—one side seems to take on masculine traits and the other side, usually the publics, take on feminine traits.

Understanding, acknowledging, and explicating how gender plays into the construction of relationship parties and processes will make the theory more heuristic and more applicable to different types of relationships in public relations.

### *Power*

Several authors have noted that power is a dimension of relationships. Ferguson listed “power distribution,” and J. E. Grunig and Huang (2000) discussed “control mutuality.” Grunig and Huang (2000) stated that power asymmetry is inevitable in interpersonal, inter-organization, and organization-public relationships, but good relationships can be reached when the parties can agree on how to share power. However, most business relationships are exchange relationships rather than communal, and, therefore, will not view certain publics as equals in a relationship. In addition, it is usually the organization that defines when and how to construct or destroy a relationship with stakeholders. Power, then, needs to be brought to the forefront of theoretical discussions, and concepts of capacity, ability, and energy need to be included in research and practice. Future research should focus on case studies to clarify differences in real relationships, which might be constructed within traditional power constraints, and ideal ones that might be achieved only through empowerment strategies.

### *Diversity*

The feminist paradigm can deepen our understanding of organization-public relationships by assessing how outcomes such as trust, satisfaction, and commitment vary according to culture, gender, and race. Currently, relationship research has not mentioned gender, race, ethnicity, or sexuality, as if perceptions of relationship outcomes were devoid of individual standpoints, socialization, and cultural influence. Although relationships are separate entities from the parties involved, relationships do evolve out of the parties, so their differences are integral for study. Additionally, an examination of how inclusive each party is separately would be an indicator of how sensitive the relationship would be to diversity in the future.

### *Ethics/Values*

In the feminist paradigm, every individual and organization in a relationship would be responsible for their actions. In relationship theory, being ethical in responding to parties in a relationship would lead to good outcomes such as trust and commitment. However, this implication needs to be brought out more explicitly in research and case studies. This is difficult to do, because there is a social desirability attached to studying ethics; it would be challenging to find people who will admit to underhanded relationship strategies. This is why most research in ethics is normative and prescribes ethical actions. Long-term observational case studies with confidential in-depth interviewing might alleviate some social expectations in research ethics in relationships. It will also enhance relationship theory by offering vivid illustrations of relationships in practice and how every party is accountable for the outcomes of the relationship.

### *Reflexivity*

The feminist paradigm reinforces the need for reflexivity about how relationship theory is constructed, who constructed it, and why it was constructed. This would ultimately reduce bias in the theory. Past theoretical approaches in public relations have been accused of bias and one

reason is the lack of positionality acknowledged by creators of theory. Ferguson, one of the original motivators behind relationship theory, might have had a different personal perspective on how to construct relationships than the men and women that followed her. Differences in the streams of research on relationships could be reflective of personal worldviews, and these differences need to be acknowledged so that relationship theory can become more valid in accurately explaining the relationships built through effective public relations.

### *Case Exemplars*

Quoyeser and Toth (2002) offered one example of applying transformative notions to current relationship theory. According to these authors, the theoretical models thus far have been linear, with one-way causality between relationships and their consequences or outcomes. Quoyeser and Toth instead considered that the elements of relationships could interact in a process of mutual causality. Their revision proposed “that relationship outcomes interact with causes/antecedents and maintenance strategies in a process of mutual causality” (p. 9). They sought to illustrate their proposition with a case study of a developing relationship between the World Bank Vietnam and Save the Children United Kingdom. Through qualitative interviews with several staff members of each organization, Quoyeser and Toth illustrated how both organization and public were changed and changed each other in the resulting relationship to develop a plan for funding poverty programs in Vietnam.

Creedon’s (1993) feminist analysis of systems theory and symmetrical communication offers another, though dated, example of how a feminist paradigm might revision relationship theory. Creedon argued that an “infrasystem” of institutional values or norms determines an organization's response to changes in its environment and guides approaches taken by organizations to achieve symmetry (p. 16). Creedon (1993) said that by examining the infrasystem, assumptions about gender, race, class and sexuality can be deconstructed. She



asserted, “The infrasystem must be explicitly acknowledged, analyzed and voiced to be known” (p. 160). Similarly, relationship theory research offers a chance to examine the infrasystem of each party involved in a relationship under study.

### Conclusion

A (re)conceived feminist paradigm can have impact on the general body of knowledge in public relations by offering perspectives on gender, power, diversity, ethics, and reflexivity that often go ignored in public relations research. The new paradigm envisions the following: 1) gender as a constructing concept of theory and not just as a sex difference; 2) power as empowerment through diffusion of energy and capacity; 3) diversity as situated knowledges that increase understanding and capacity for public relations as a field; 4) ethics as human accountability and not a trait unique to women; and 5) reflexivity as an essential practice to reducing bias in research and public relations practice. Limiting the discussion of a feminist paradigm to five themes may raise concerns by those who disdain categorization for purposes of simplicity. Hopefully, this essay will open dialogue about the paradigm and will encourage other authors to add to the themes discussed here as ways to empower and improve the general body of knowledge in public relations.

In applying a feminist paradigm to the theory of organization-public relationships, the theory becomes more valid, practical, and comprehensive. This was accomplished because the paradigm broadens the bases for the concepts that are integral to the theory. It acknowledges the roles that gender, power, and personal biases had in the construction of the theory. It was also shown that expanding diversity and ethical understandings create a more realistic and applicable theory. Most of the assertions made, however, will only come to fruition through future research.

Future research using the feminist paradigm will generally embody qualitative methodology. In particular, case studies and in-depth interviewing are valuable tools to get at

gender and power constructions. Qualitative methodology may also reduce social desirability found in studies of ethics and diversity, and increase opportunities for reflexivity by researchers. Studies using qualitative methods or a combined methodological approach will help build theory on relationships as well as test current operationalizations of concepts.

In conclusion, a feminist paradigm for public relations cannot be viewed as an “alternative” perspective. Rather, it is constitutive of knowledge and research in the field. It complements research paradigms such as the one growing on relationships. It increases the validity of research, it broadens our understanding of relationships, and it allows for a more ethical, effective and empowering profession.

## References

- Aldoory, L. (in press). The Empowerment of Feminist Scholarship and the Building of a Feminist Paradigm in Public Relations. *Communication Yearbook*, 27.
- Aldoory, L. (1998). The language of leadership for female public relations professionals. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 10, 73-101.
- Aldoory, L. (2001a). Making health messages meaningful for women: Factors that influence involvement. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 13, 163-185.
- Aldoory, L. (2001b). The standard white woman in public relations. In E.L. Toth & L. Aldoory (Eds.), *The gender challenge to media: Diverse voices from the field*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, Inc.
- Aldoory, L., & Toth, E. L. (2002). Gender discrepancies in a gendered profession: A developing theory for public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 14, 103-126.
- Armstead, C. (1995). Writing contradictions: Feminist research and feminist writing. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 18, 627-636.
- Babbie, E. (1995). *The practice of social research* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.
- Baker Miller, J. (1992). Women and power. In T. E. Wartenburg (Ed.), *Rethinking power* (pp. 240-248). Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Botan, C. (1993). Introduction to the paradigm struggle in public relations. *Public Relations Review*, 19, 107-110.
- Bovet, S.F. (1993). Sexual harassment. What's happening and how to deal with it. *Public Relations Journal*, 49, 26-29.
- Broom, G. M., Casey, S., & Ritchey, J. (1997). Toward a concept and theory of organization-public relationships. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 9, 83-98.

- Bruning, S. D. (2002). Relationship building as a retention strategy: Linking relationship attitudes and satisfaction evaluations to behavioral outcomes. *Public Relations Review*, 28, 39-48.
- Bruning, S. D., & Ledingham, J. A. (1999). Relationships between organizations and publics: Development of a multi-dimensional organization-public relationship scale. *Public Relations Review*, 25, 157-170.
- Bruning, S. D., & Ledingham, J. A. (2000). Perceptions of relationships and evaluations of satisfaction: An exploration of interaction. *Public Relations Review*, 25, 85-95.
- Choi, Y., & Hon, L. C. (2002). The influence of gender composition in powerful positions on public relations practitioners' gender-related perceptions. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 14, 229-263.
- Cline, C. G., & Toth, E. L. (1993). Re-visioning women in public relations: Practitioner and feminist perspectives. In P.J. Creedon (Ed.), *Women in mass communication* (2nd ed., pp. 183-198). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Cline, C. G., Toth, E. L., Turk, J. V., Walters, L. M., Johnson, N., & Smith, H. (1986). *The velvet ghetto: The impact of the increasing percentage of women in public relations and business communication*. San Francisco: IABC Foundation.
- Collins, P. H. (2000). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. New York: Routledge.
- Coombs, W. T. (1993). Philosophical underpinnings: Ramifications of a pluralist paradigm. *Public Relations Review*, 19, 111-119.
- Creedon, P. J. (1989a). Public relations history misses "her story." *Journalism Educator*, 44, 26-30.
- Creedon, P. J. (1989b, June). Teaching "feminization" by reframing the perspective. *Teaching*

- Public Relations*, No. 13, Newsletter of the Public Relations Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.
- Creedon, P. J. (1991). Public relations and “women’s work”: Toward a feminist analysis of public relations roles. *Public Relations Research Annual*, 3, 67-84.
- Creedon, P. J. (1993). Acknowledging the infrasystem: A critical feminist analysis of systems theory. *Public Relations Review*, 19, 157-166.
- Creedon, P. J. (2001, August). *From Making PR Macho to Making PR Feminist: The Battle over Values in a Female-Dominated Field*. Paper presented to the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Washington, DC.
- DeRosa, D. & Wilcox, D. L. (1989). Gaps are narrowing between female and male students. *Public Relations Review*, 15, 80-89.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (1998). *The landscape of qualitative research: Theories and issues*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Eaton, B. C. (2001). “I’m a feminist but...”: A response to sexism, racism, and class elitism in mass communications. In E. L. Toth & L. Aldoory (Eds.), *The gender challenge to media: Diverse voices from the field* (pp. 13-55). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, Inc.
- Farmer, B., & Waugh, L. (1999). Gender differences in public relations students’ career attitudes: A benchmark study. *Public Relations Review*, 25, 235-237.
- Ferguson, M. A. (1984, August). *Building theory in public relations: Interorganizational relationships*. Paper presented at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Gainesville, FL.
- Fonow, M. M., & Cook, J. A. (1991). Back to the future: A look at the second wave of feminist epistemology and methodology. In M. M. Fonow & J. A. Cook (Eds.), *Beyond methodology: Feminist scholarship as lived research* (pp. 1-15). Bloomington, IN:

Indiana University Press.

Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings, 1972-1977*. (C.

Gordon, Trans. & Ed.). New York: Pantheon.

Grunig, J. E. (Ed.). (1992). *Excellence in public relations and communication management*.

Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Grunig, J. E. (1993). Image and substance: From symbolic to behavioral relationships. *Public*

*Relations Review*, 19, 121-139.

Grunig, J. E. (2001). Two-way symmetrical public relations: Past, present, and future. In R. L.

Heath (Ed.), *Handbook of public relations* (pp. 11-30). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Grunig, J. E., & Huang, Y. (2000). From organization effectiveness to relationship indicators:

Antecedents of relationships, public relations strategies, and relationship outcomes. In J. A.

Ledingham & S. D. Bruning (Eds.), *Public relations as relationship management: A*

*relational approach to the study and practice of public relations* (pp. 23-53). Hillsdale, NJ:

Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Grunig, J. E., & Hunt, T. (1984). *Managing public relations*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, &

Winston.

Grunig, L. A. (1988). A research agenda for women in public relations. *Public Relations*

*Review*, 14, 48-57.

Grunig, L. A. (1989a). Sex discrimination in promotion and tenure in journalism education.

*Journalism Quarterly*, 66, 93-100, 229.

Grunig, L.A. (1989b, August). *Toward a feminist transformation of public relations education*

*and practice*. Paper presented to the Public Relations Division, Association for Education

in Journalism and Mass Communication, Washington, DC.

Grunig, L.A. (1991). Court-ordered relief from sex discrimination in the foreign service:

- Implications for women working in development communication. *Public Relations Research Annual*, 3, 85-113.
- Grunig, L. A. (1992). Power in the public relations department. In J. E. Grunig (Ed.), *Excellence in public relations and communication management* (pp. 483-501). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Grunig, L.A. (1993). The "glass ceiling" effect on mass communications students. In P.J. Creedon (Ed.), *Women in mass communication* (2nd ed., pp. 276-300). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Grunig, L. A. (2000). A feminist phase analysis of research on women in postmodern public relations. In D. Moss, D. Vercic, & G. Warnaby (Eds.), *Perspectives on public relations research*. London: Routledge.
- Grunig, L. A., Grunig, J. E., & Dozier, D. M. (2002). *Excellent public relations and effective organizations: A study of communication management in three countries*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Grunig, L. A., Toth, E. L., & Hon, L. C. (2000). Feminist values in public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 12, 49-68.
- Grunig, L. A., Toth, E. L., & Hon, L. C. (2001). *Women in public relations*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Hanen, M. P. (1988). Feminism, objectivity, and legal truth. In L. Code, S. Mullett, & C. Overall (Eds.), *Feminist perspectives: Philosophical essays on method and morals* (pp. 13-28). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Haraway, D. (1988). Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist Studies*, 14, 575-599.
- Heath, R. L. (1993). A rhetorical approach to zones of meaning and organizational prerogatives.

- Public Relations Review*, 19, 141-155.
- Heath, R. L. (Ed.). (2001a). *Handbook of public relations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Heath, R. L. (2001b). A rhetorical enactment rationale for public relations: The good organization communicating well. In R. L. Heath (Ed.), *Handbook of public relations* (pp. 31-50). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Holtzhausen, D. R. (2000). Postmodern values in public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 12, 93-114
- Holtzhausen, D. R., & Voto, R. (2002). Resistance from the margins: The postmodern public relations practitioner as organizational activist. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 14, 57-84.
- Hon, L. C. (1995). Toward a feminist theory of public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 7, 27-88.
- Hon, L. C., & Brunner, B. (2000). Diversity issues and public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 12, 309-340.
- Hon, L. C. & Grunig, J. E. (1999). *Guidelines for measuring relationships in public relations*. Gainesville, FL: The Institute for Public Relations.
- Hon, L. C., Grunig, L. A., & Dozier, D. M. (1992). Women in public relations: Problems and opportunities. In J.E. Grunig (Ed.), *Excellence in public relations and communication management* (pp. 419-438). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- hooks, b. (1984). *Feminist theory from margin to center*. Boston, MA: South End Press.
- Huang, Y. (2001). Values of public relations: Effects on organization-public relationships mediating conflict resolution. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 13, 265-301.
- Jacobson, H. K., & Tortorello, N. J. (1992). PRJ's seventh annual salary survey. *Public Relations Journal*, 48, 9-21, 26-30.



- Jayaratne, T. E., & Stewart, A. J. (1991). Quantitative and qualitative methods in the social sciences: Current feminist issues and practical strategies. In M. M. Fonow & J. A. Cook (Eds.), *Beyond methodology: Feminist scholarship as lived research* (pp. 85-106). Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Kern-Foxworth, M. (1989a). An assessment of minority female roles and status in public relations: Trying to unlock the acrylic vault and assimilate into the velvet ghetto. In E.L. Toth & C.G. Cline (Eds.), *Beyond the velvet ghetto* (pp. 241-286). San Francisco, CA: IABC Research Foundation.
- Kern-Foxworth, M. (1989b). Public relations books fail to show women in context. *Journalism Educator*, 44, 31-36.
- Kern-Foxworth, M. (1989c). Status and roles of minority public relations practitioners. *Public Relations Review*, 5, 14-22.
- Kern-Foxworth, M., Gandy, O., Hines, B., & Miller, D. A. (1994). Assessing the managerial roles of black female public relations practitioners using individual and organizational discriminants. *Journal of Black Studies*, 24(4), 416-434.
- Kucera, M. (1994). *Doing it all: Why women public relations managers tend to fulfill both the managerial and technical roles*. Unpublished masters thesis. University of Maryland, College Park.
- Kuhn, T. (1970). *The structure of scientific revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Laudan, L. (1977). *Progress and its problems: Toward a theory of scientific growth*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Ledingham, J. A. (2001). Government-community relationships: Extending the relational theory of public relations. *Public Relations Review*, 27, 285-295.
- Ledingham, J. A., & Bruning, S. D. (1998). Relationship management in public relations:

- Dimensions of an organization-public relations. *Public Relations Review*, 24, 55-65.
- Ledingham, J. A., & Bruning, S. D. (Eds.). (2000). *Public relations as relationship management: A relational approach to the study and practice of public relations*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Leyland, A. (2000, March 27). Competition drives PR salaries up 8% in '99. *PR Week*, p. 1.
- Mies, M. (1983). Towards a methodology for feminist research. In G. Bowles & R. Dueli Klein (Eds.), *Theories of women's studies* (pp. 117-137). Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- O'Neil, J. (2002, August). *An analysis of the relationships among structure, influence, and gender: Helping to build a feminist theory of public relations*. Paper presented to the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Miami, FL.
- Pompper, D. (2002, August). *Reconciling multiple roles: Toward a model of the female African-American public relations practitioner*. Paper presented at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Miami, FL.
- Quoyeser, C. & Toth, E. L. (2002, July). *New partnership for the poor: A case study advancing relationship theory*. Paper presented to the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Miami, FL.
- Rakow, L. F. (1989). From the feminization of public relations to the promise of feminism. In E. L. Toth & C. G. Cline (Eds.), *Beyond the velvet ghetto* (pp. 287-298). San Francisco, CA: IABC Research Foundation.
- Rakow, L. F. (1992). The field reconsidered. In L.F. Rakow (Ed.) *Women making meaning: New feminist directions in communication* (pp. 3-17). New York: Routledge.
- Rakow, L. F. (1993a). A bridge to the future: How to get there from here through curriculum reform. In P.J. Creedon (Ed.), *Women in mass communication* (2nd ed., pp. 363-374). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

- Rakow, L. F. (1993b). The curriculum is the future. *Journal of Communication*, 43(4), 154-162.
- Reinharz, S. (1992). *Feminist methods in social research*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Sallot, L. M., Lyon, L. J., Acosta-Alzuru, C., & Jones, K. O. (2003). From aardvark to zebra: A new millennium analysis of theory development in public relations academic journals. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 15, 27-90.
- Serini, S. A., Toth, E., Wright, D. K., & Emig, A. (1996). Watch for falling glass...Women, men and job satisfaction in public relations: A preliminary analysis. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 9, 99-118.
- Serini, S. A., Toth, E., Wright, D. K., & Emig, A. (1998). Power, gender, and public relations: Sexual harassment as a threat to the practice. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 10, 193-218.
- Sha, B. L. (1996, May). *Does feminization of the field make public relations more ethical?* Paper presented to the International Communication Association, Chicago, IL.
- Sherwin, S. (1988). Philosophical methodology and feminist methodology: Are they compatible? In L. Code, S. Mullett, & C. Overall (Eds.), *Feminist perspectives: Philosophical essays on method and morals* (pp. 13-28). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Shields, V. R., & Dervin, B. (1993). Sense-making in feminist social science research. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 16(1), 65-81.
- Slater, M. D., Chipman, H., Auld, G., Keefe, T., & Kendall, P. (1992). Information processing and situational theory: A cognitive response analysis. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 4, 189-203.
- Stanley, L., & Wise, S. (1993). *Breaking out again: Feminist ontology and epistemology*. New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

- Taft, H. (2003). Times have changed? IABC research foundations' 'velvet ghetto' study revisited. *Communication World*, (Feb./March), 10-11.
- Tam, S. Y., Dozier, D. M., Lauzen, M. M., & Real, M. R. (1995). The impact of superior-subordinate gender on the career advancement of public relations practitioners. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 7, 259-272.
- Toth, E. L. (1988). Making peace with gender issues in public relations. *Public Relations Review*, 14, 36-47.
- Toth, E. L. (1989). Whose freedom and equity in public relations? The gender balance argument. *Mass Comm Review*, 16, 70-76.
- Toth, E. L. (1992). The case for pluralistic studies of public relations: Rhetorical, critical, and systems perspectives. In E. L. Toth & R. L. Heath (Eds), *Rhetorical and critical approaches to public relations* (pp. 3-15). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Toth, E. L. (2001). How feminist theory advanced the practice of public relations. In R.L. Heath & G. Vasquez (Eds.), *Handbook of Public Relations* (pp. 237-246). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Toth, E. L., & Cline, C. G. (Eds.). (1989). *Beyond the velvet ghetto*. San Francisco, CA: IABC Research Foundation.
- Toth, E. L., & Cline, C. G. (1991). Public relations practitioner attitudes toward gender issues: A benchmark study. *Public Relations Review*, 17, 161-174.
- Toth, E. L., & Grunig, L. A. (1993). The missing story of women in public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 5, 153-175.
- Toth, E. L., & Heath, R. L. (1992). *Rhetorical and critical approaches to public relations*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Toth, E. L., Serini, S. A., Wright, D. K., & Emig, A. G. (1998). Trends in public relations roles:

- 1990-1995. *Public Relations Review*, 24, 145-163.
- van Zoonen, L. (1994). *Feminist media studies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Wetherell, B. L. (1989). *The effect of gender, masculinity, and femininity on the practice and preference for the models of public relations*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Maryland, College Park.
- Wright, D. K., Grunig, L. A., Springston, J. K., & Toth, E. L. (1991). *Under the glass ceiling: An analysis of gender issues in American public relations*. New York: PRSA Foundation.
- Wright, D. K., & Haynes, J. R. (1999, August). *An innovative look at gender in public relations: Examining relationships between gender and source credibility in employee communication messages and media*. Paper presented to the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, New Orleans, LA.
- Wrigley, B. J. (2002). Glass ceiling? What glass ceiling? A qualitative study of how women view the glass ceiling in public relations and communications management. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 14, 27-55.
- Yeatman, A. (1994). Feminism and power. *Women's Studies Journal*, 10, 79-100.

Running head: How to measure organization-public relationships

**How to measure organization-public relationships: Measurement validation in a  
company-retailer relationship**

Samsup Jo, Ph.D.  
University of Florida  
College of Journalism and Communications  
University of Florida, Gainesville, FL P.O. Box 118400  
[samsupjo@ufl.edu](mailto:samsupjo@ufl.edu)  
(352) 846-1155

Paper presented to the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass  
Communication, Public Relations Division, July 2003.

## **Abstract**

In spite of attempts to develop operational measurements of organization-public relationships, the development of global public relations has been limited in other cultural contexts. The basic premise of this study supposes that global relational elements can be found when an organization engages in organization-public relationships. For this study, a setting for an organization-public relationship is Samsung Electronics located in South Korea and its retailers. Two hundred fourteen retailers and two hundred forty seven Samsung managers in Korea participated in this study. While managers perceive “trust” “satisfaction” “face & favor” and “personal network” as important relationship components, retailers assess “trust” “commitment” “face & favor” and “personal network” as important relationship dimensions. These findings provide a conceptually and operationally meaningful depiction of organization-public relationship that should be useful for understanding and measuring public relationships by surveying the two sides that are involved in the relationships.

## Introduction

The notion of public relations as relationship management has been gaining more momentum among scholars and public relations practitioners. New paradigm of relationship management embraces the value of favorable organization-public relationships. Ledingham and Bruning (1998) define organization-public relationship as “the state which exists between an organization and its key publics in which the actions of either entity impact the economic, social, political and/or cultural well-being of the other entity” (p. 62).

The perspective of organization-public relationship extends the traditional value of public relations such as disseminating information into the more meaningful contribution of fostering quality relationships between an organization and its publics. The relational perspective primarily concurs with the conceptual definition of public relations “the management function that establishes and maintain mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends” (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 1994, p. 2).

Many scholars have contributed scholarly reviews of organization-public relationships from other disciplines such as interpersonal communication, social psychology, and marketing management (Hon & J. Grunig; 1999; Huang, 2001; J. Grunig & Huang, 2000; Kim, 2001; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998, 2000; Ledingham, Bruning & Wilson, 1999).

In line with borrowing theoretical frameworks from other disciplines, the question “how do you measure the effects of public relations?” has become a fundamental issue in public relations in recent years. Counting the number of news clippings and broadcast reports does not necessarily measure the value of public relationships. For decades, it has



been said that public relations is diverse and difficult to measure in that most of its elements are intangible (Lesley, 1997). However, the paradigm shift from mediated communication perspective to relational perspective necessitates measurement of relationship building and its effect on the organizations. Thus, quantifying organization-public relationship requires measurement scale to measure the relational value. Public relations scholars have proposed relationship indicators as measures of organization-public relationships (Hon & J. Grunig, 1999; Huang, 2001; J. Grunig & Huang, 2000; Kim, 2001; Ledingham & Bruning, 1999, 2000).

### **Literature Review**

#### **Public Relations as Relationship Management**

More often than ever, public relations practitioners are being asked to demonstrate the effect of public relations. In spite of emphasis on relational perspective in public relations, how to measure the effect of public relations value is still a challenging task to public relations practitioners. Thus, the need of valid and reliable indices to measure the long-term effect of public relationship is much in great demand in public relations field. Also, scholars are asking further scale development of organization-public relationship (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999; Huang 2001; Kim 2001).

Since the value of organization-public relationships can be represented by relational outcomes, measuring the dimensions of public relationships is becoming more important. Deciding which specific measure to use when assessing public relationships can be critical for public relations professionals given the limited measures on organization-public relationship scales.

Reviews of the literature on relationship marketing, interpersonal relationship,

and of the social psychology literature pertaining relational dimensions have identified attitudinal and psychological dimensions of relationships. Scholars have been used these literature to construct the questionnaire for relationship measurement.

Ledingham and Bruning (2001) summarize research concerning relationship management falls into three categories. (a) models of the organization-public relationship (e.g., antecedents, maintaining strategies, and consequences) (b) relationship dimensions as indicators of relationship, and (c) applications of the relational perspective to various aspects of public relations practice.

The study is related to second category, which is research on relationship dimensions as indicators of organization-public relationship (OPR). Relationship dimensions can be viewed as an integrated mix that encompasses multi-facets of relationship qualities that impacts the behavior of key publics of an organization. While the relationship management emerges as an important framework to public relations role and value, the critical issue is how to measure the invisible public relationships between an organization and its stakeholders. Thus, there is an obvious need for an instrument to capture complete and valid characteristics of the organization-public relationships. Theory development is delayed without a valid and reliable instrument. The study involves the elaboration of a scale assessing the organization-public relationships.

Researchers have devoted considerable effort to clarifying the meaning of relationship dimensions in terms of theory building in public relations. An important next step is trying to find empirical support for a causal link between relational efforts and behavioral outcomes. Before doing so, however, scholars may need to provide not only theoretical framework in relationship building theory but also need to develop measuring

instrument to public relations professionals. Thus more valid and reliable relationship dimensions must be better established. As Ledingham and Bruning suggested, “There is a need to develop a relationship scale that includes several measures of each of the relationship dimensions to ensure greater reliability” (2000, p. 67). From a theoretical standpoint, existing scales need to be refined for two reasons.

First, most organization-public relationship measure has been derived from the perspective of only one party (Hon & J. Grunig, 1999). This approach does not reveal the public relationship from the perspective of two parties. We must reflect on whether one-way measure, in fact, does tell us something about how relationship is. Hon and Grunig stated, “At some point, public relations researchers should measure relationships as seen or predicted by both parties. This evaluation would document how organizational decision makers see the relationship as well as how publics see the organization” (1999, p. 25). Moreover, Hon and Grunig (1999) contended “Practitioners also should consider administering these items formally or informally to senior managers to get their perceptions of a relationship with a specific public” (1999, p. 28). Broom , Casey and Ritchey (1997) also stated “to truly measure the properties of relationships, researchers must develop measures of “relationships as phenomena distinct from the perceptions held by parties in the relationships.” (1997, p. 95)

An alternative approach is to measure two parties’ relationship quality and quantity averaged relational perceptions that are held evaluations in the minds of both sides. Furthermore, the scale should ensure reliability and construct validity to be used in a global setting. Therefore, one crucial assumption being made in this study is that

organization-public relationship corresponds to the two-way measures of both sides called between organization and its publics.

Second, the existing scales should ensure the validity and reliability for the robustness of the measurement scale. One initial question of importance asks whether the earlier constructs are reliable and valid. More testing stages and theoretical support can ensure the validity and reliability. In the relationship management literature, relational dimensions developed by Huang (2001), Ledingham and Bruning (1998, 2000) and Hon and J. Grunig (1999) provide a general measures for organization-public relationship, but these measures differ in dimensions. A comprehensive measurement model of organization-public relationship would enhance the existing relationship measurement scale. To develop the comprehensive measurement model, the study combine extensive existing measures with unique dimensions in organization-public setting and organizational behavior. Only two studies attempted to validate the relational dimensions using confirmatory factor analysis. Kim (2001) and Huang (2001) used confirmatory factor analysis to validate relational dimensions they proposed.

Third, the current measurements of organization-public relationships has been developed based on Western culture. As Huang (2000) pointed out the development of global public relations has become a critical issue in global age. Botan (1992) contended that public relations has been developed from Western culture and often cultural assumptions of public relations theory does not necessarily reflect other societal culture. Thus, cross-cultural theory of organization-public relationship becomes important in the building of public relations theory in a global setting.

Moreover, Ledingham and Bruning (2000) called for relational dimensions to be replicated among different industries and different publics to determine if and how diverse settings and people affect relationship indicators. Along these lines, Huang (2001) identified face and favor as distinctive relational feature in Eastern culture. Furthermore, Bruning and Ledingham (1999) called for further relationship study for relationship management as the dominant paradigm in public relations.

### The Purpose of the Study

Thus, the study of relational dimensions needs to consider not only examining measurable properties, but also determining whether and how relationship properties may vary across public in other culture.

In spite of attempt in developing operational measurement of organization-public relationship (Bruning & Ledingham, 1998; Huang, 1997, 2001; Hon & Grunig, 1999), the development of global public relations has been limited in other cultural context. Therefore, the present study starts with Huang's study, which was developed in East culture. Also, Huang's OPR scale is

The specific objectives of the study are (1) to design a comprehensive instrument to measure organization-public relationship (OPR) by Huang's study (2001) and proposing additional items that could capture specific features that may influence or characterize OPR in the selected country; (2) to test the comprehensive instrument proposed and assess its validity and reliability. This will be accomplished by assessing OPR between an organization (Samsung Electronics) and one of its key public (retailers).

Research examining the relational dimensions to measure organization-public relationship continues to suggest the importance of relevant features of relationship measurement. The results of this study may show how relational features are perceived

differently depending on organization and its public side. Understanding the varying degree of relational features will enable public relations practitioners to manage relationships more effectively by understanding to what extent public relationships are situationally based. The measurement scale for organization-public relationship can offer practitioners and scholars a way to measure relationships as they develop. Moreover, this study can be a starting point to determine the value of public relations and its link to an organization's bottom line in terms of causal relationships between relational efforts and its outcomes.

#### Development of Organization-Public Relationship (OPR) Scale

Public relations scholars have approached the relationship measurement issue from the perspective of relational outcome (dimensions). The organization-public relationship (OPR) attempts at developing measurement framework have incorporated general summaries of the interpersonal theories, social psychology and relationship marketing approaches. Within the literature on interpersonal relationship, a variety of frameworks and measuring dimensions have been developed. Ferguson (1984) suggested that public relations practitioners use the following tools to evaluate the quality of an organization's relationship with the public: dynamic vs. static, open vs. closed, mutual satisfaction, distribution of power and mutual understanding, agreement and consensus. Grunig and Ehling (1992) suggested reciprocity, trust, credibility, mutual legitimacy, openness, mutual satisfaction, and mutual understanding as the key elements of the organization-public relationship (p.136). Further, Ledingham, Bruning, Thomlison and Lesko (1997) found 17 dimensions from the extensive literature review from interpersonal, marketing with qualitative research. Ledingham et al. (1997) developed 17 relationship dimensions:

investment, commitment, trust, comfort with relational dialectics, cooperation, mutual goals, interdependence/power imbalance, performance satisfaction, comparison level of the alternatives, adaptation, non-retrievable investment, shared technology, summative constructs, structural bonds, social bonds, intimacy, and passion.

Subsequently, Ledingham and Bruning (1998) suggested five organization-public relationship indicators: open communication, the level of trust, the level of involvement, investment in the communities and long-term commitment. With discriminant analysis, Ledingham and Bruning (1998) demonstrated that five relational dimensions (trust, openness, involvement, commitment, and investment) in an organization-public relationship differentiated stayers, leavers, and undecided subscribers for local telephone service.

Although Ledingham and Bruning culled comprehensive relational dimensions from other disciplinary such as interpersonal communication, marketing and social psychology, they solely relied on only twelve focus groups to finalize the items (trust, openness, involvement, and commitment). The development of a summated rating scale requires a considerable investment of time and effort (Spector, 1992). Focus group may have checked face validity to measure organization-public relations, however the measure still needs to go through reliability test by asking more subjects to see whether the proposed measures are consistent in other settings. In addition, Ledingham and Bruning did not show the operational measures in their studies, preventing further validation studies. The importance of reliability needs to be stressed to build a solid instrument. Spector states, "A good summated rating scale is both reliable and valid. Reliability will be considered in two ways. First, test-retest reliability means that a scale

yields consistent measurement over time. Assuming that the construct of interest does not change, each subject should get about the same score upon repeated testing. Second, internal-consistency reliability means that multiple items, designed to measure the same construct, will intercorrelated with one another.” (p. 6, 1992).

In an effort to develop an organization-public relationship scale, Bruning and Ledingham (1999) culled 51 relational items from previous studies on relational dimensions. Out of screened 24 relational items, they extracted three key dimensions using factor analysis: *professional relationship*, *personal relationship* and *community relationship*<sup>1</sup>. *Professional relationship* refers to the extent to which an organization engages in the welfare of its customers, whereas *personal relationship* deals with the organization’s effort to build personal relationship. Bruning and Ledingham (1999) state that when an organization is managing a professional relationship, it should deliver its service with businesslike manner that meet the business needs of the customer. *Personal relationship* engages in actions that build a sense of trust between the organization and the members of key publics, that the organization’s representative be willing to invest time, energy, thought and feelings into their interactions with members of key publics. Finally, *community relationship* refers to the extent to which an organization interacts

---

<sup>1</sup> The questions that make up the *professional relationship* dimension are as follows: Organization name is no involved in activities that promote the welfare of its customers; Organization name does not act in a socially responsible manner; Organization name is not aware of what I want as a customer; Organization name does not see my interest and the bank’s interests as the same; I think the Organization name is not honest in its dealings with customers; and Organization name is not willing to devote resources to maintain its relationship with me. *Personal relationship* dimension: I feel I can trust Organization name to do what it says ii will do; Organization name seems to be the kind of organization that invests in its customers; I think that Organization name takes into account my convenience in all of our interactions; Organization name demonstrates as interest in me as a person; and Organization name understands me as a customer. *Community relationship* dimension: Organization name is open about its plans for the future; I feel that Organization name supports events that are of interests to its customers; I think that Organization name strives to improve the communities of its customers. Organization name shares its plans for the future with customers; and I think that Organization name actively plays a role in the lives of the communities it serves.



with the communities in which it is located. Bruning and Ledingham state “when an organization is managing a *community relationship* it is important that the organization be open with community members, that the organization engage in activities that can be used to improve social and economic aspects of the community, and that the organization take an active role in community development.” (p.165)

In this study, Bruning and Ledingham advanced their initial relational dimensions developed in 1998. The method they analyzed was exploratory factor analysis to refine organization-public relations. They analyzed 24 items culled from extensive literature review. Initially they dropped lower loadings in a principal-components analysis. measurement. They finalized 16-items organization-public relationship scale. As noted above, they labeled three factors – professional, personal, and community relationship. One of limitations in their study is that they didn’t test the relational items based on theoretical bases. Exploratory factor analysis involves reducing the items based on the correlations one another. Development of instrument of organization-public relationships needs to go through further step called confirmatory factor analysis. Confirmatory factor analysis can test whether the proposed scale items (sample data) fits with the theory. Sole rely on exploratory factor analysis does not support the solid validation of the proposed scale. Also, labels (professional, personal, community) representing organization-public relationships proposed by Bruning and Ledingham are not comparable other studies. In other words, for example, professional relationship is not comparable with trust or commitment, which is proposed by Hon and Grunig (1999). Incompatibility with other relational dimensions makes it difficult to replicate their study.

Hon and Grunig (1999) summarized maintenance features of interpersonal relationships and outcomes of relationships from the interpersonal and public relations literature. They included positivity, openness, assurance, networking, sharing of tasks, trust, control mutuality, commitment, satisfaction, communal relationship, and exchange relationship. Grunig and Huang (2000) suggested some indicators to evaluate the organization-public relationships. With regard to maintenance strategies, they suggest that disclosure, assurance of legitimacy, and participation in mutual networks can be used. They also suggest five relationship features such as trust, control mutuality, commitment, and satisfaction from the extensive outcome features.

Broom, Casey, and Ritchey (1997) suggested that relationship formation and maintenance involve a process of mutual adaptation and contingent responses between parties. They believe that relationships between an organization and its key publics are phenomena that can be studied as distinct from the perceptions of the relationship held either by an organization or its key publics.

However, Huang's research (1997, 2000, 2001) has focused on measuring perceptions as a first step in developing a theoretical model of relationship formation, maintenance, and outcomes. She has isolated four key relational features: trust, control mutuality, commitment, and satisfaction. Similarly, Ledingham et al. (1997) suggested that the concepts of openness, trust, involvement, investment, and commitment may represent the dimensions of an organization-public relationship (Ledingham, Bruning, Thomlison, & Lesko, 1997). Table 1 summarizes the studies of organization-public relations with proposed dimensions and research method.

Table 1. Frameworks for Organization-Public Relationship Measurement

Study	Relationship Dimensions	Sample & OPR setting
Ferguson, 1984	dynamic vs. static, open vs. closed, mutual satisfaction, distribution of power, mutual understanding, mutual agreement	
J. Grunig and Ehling, 1992	reciprocity, trust, credibility, mutual legitimacy, openness, mutual satisfaction, and mutual understanding	
Huang, 1997	trust, control mutuality, relational commitment, relational satisfaction	311 legislative members and their assistants, 16 items (1997)
Ledingham and Bruning, 1998	openness, trust, involvement, investment, commitment	384 residential telephone subscribers, 91 items (1998)
Bruning and Ledingham, 1999	professional relationship, personal relationship, community relationship	183 bank customers with 51 items (1999)
Hon and J. Grunig, 1999	trust, control mutuality, commitment, satisfaction, communal relationships, exchange relationships	200 online users with 52 items (1999)
J. Grunig and Huang, 2000	trust, control mutuality, commitment, satisfaction	311 legislative members and their assistants, 16 items (1997)
Huang, 2001	trust, control mutuality, commitment, satisfaction, face and favor	1 <sup>st</sup> stage: 311 legislative members and their assistants, 16 items (1997) 2 <sup>nd</sup> stage: 235 public relations practitioners from Executive Yuan in Taiwan, 21 items (1999)
Kim, 2001	trust, commitment, local and community involvement, reputation	1 <sup>st</sup> stage: 160 undergraduate students, 58 items 2 <sup>nd</sup> stage: 102 community residents, 16 items 3 <sup>rd</sup> stage: 157 customers of online company, 16 items

Drawing from all of relational research, J. Grunig and Hon (1999) suggested that six relational dimensions could measure the relationship perceptions between an organization and its publics: trust, control mutuality, commitment, satisfaction, communal relationship and exchange relationships. Based on comprehensive theoretical review, they developed solid organization- public relationship. Although most of relational measures showed acceptable Cronbach's alpha, they drew the sample in online using graduate students for the data collection. Also, they analyzed the data with only checking Cronbach alpha without pilot test and exploratory factor analysis to check face validity and consistency with theory. These limitations should be corrected in further studies.

Based on her dissertation, Huang (2001) developed multi-item scale for measuring organization-public relationships from the perspective of cross-cultural setting. She combined four relational features (control mutuality, trust, satisfaction, commitment) from Western literature with one relational feature from Eastern culture (face and favor). She emphasizes the concept of face and favor in Chinese society with "the strategy of face, face-work, is also important in Chinese society. In general, maintaining face or doing a face-work in front of others is important in social interactions, especially for expanding or enhancing human networks." (p. 69) With exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, Huang (2001) found all five dimensions are acceptable to measure organization-public relationship with a cross validation method.

Furthermore she suggested future research to test organization-public relationships across different types of organization such as non-profit organization with

different size of the organization. Thus, the study is corresponding her research suggestion and in line with her scale of organization-public relationships.

### Relational Dimensions

#### **Trust**

Trust has been recognized as a critical construct in relationship literature. Trust generally is a fundamental component for beneficial relationships between two parties. A trustworthy reputation is important in that it affects publics around the issues, products or services originated by an organization. In public relations literature, trust and credibility have been regarded critical components for an organization to exist (Vercic & J.Grunig, 1995).

Morgan and Hunt (1994, p. 23) define trust as the perception of “as existing when one party has confidence in the exchange partner’s reliability and integrity.” Relationship marketing can also give an idea of how to approach employees. Many different variables have been raised to explicate the long-term-based relationship marketing. Morgan and Hunt (1994) suggested that successful relationship marketing demands relationship commitment and trust. They theorized and tested the Key Mediating Variable (KMV) model of relationship marketing in which commitment and trust were used as mediating variables between five important antecedents (relationship termination costs, relationship benefits, shared values, communication, and opportunistic behavior) and five outcomes (acquiescence, propensity to leave, cooperation, functional conflict, and decision-making uncertainty).

## **Commitment**

Commitment refers to an implicit or explicit pledge or relational continuity between exchange partners (Dwyer & Oh, 1987). Similar to trust, commitment has been recognized as an essential component for favorable relationships (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Morgan and Hunt (1994) define commitment as “as exchange partner believing that an ongoing relationship with another is so important as to warrant maximum efforts at maintaining it; that is, the committed party believes the relationship is worth promoting and savoring to ensure that it endures indefinitely.” (p. 23)

Moorman and Zaltman (1992, p.316) define commitment as “an enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship.” Hon and Grunig (1999, p. 20) define commitment as “the extent to which one party believes and feels that the relationship is worth spending energy to maintain and promote.” Also, Hon and Grunig (1999) itemize commitment as continuance commitment (action) and affective commitment (emotion).

## **Satisfaction**

A central tenet of public relationship literature is the creation and retention of satisfied publics who affect the bottom line of the organization. Ferguson (1984) suggests that different expectation toward each other (organization, public) may bring different level of satisfaction. Ferguson states “Other variables related to the relationship might be how much control both parties to the relationship believe they have, how power is distributed in the relationship, whether the parties to the relationship believe they share goals, and whether there is mutuality of understanding, agreement, and consensus” (p. 20).

## **Control Mutuality**

Hon and J. Grunig (1999) defined control mutuality as the degree to which parties agree on who has rightful power to influence one another. The discussion of power imbalance between an organization and its publics has been discussed in recent years, specifically from the perspective of postmodernists. Postmodernism challenges ideological domination and power structure that maintain control over the people who have legitimate voices. Postmodernism distinguishes macropolitics from micropolitics. Micropolitics include people who have been discriminated against in the past such as female and minorities (Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002).

## **Personal influence model in an international setting**

Since the 1990s, a few international scholars have recognized the perspectives of international public relations. Huang, Lyra, and Sriramesh (1995) used J. Grunig's four models as a theoretical framework to examine the applicability in the international setting. In Taiwan, organizations not only practice the four models, but also take a personal influence approach in the early stage of conflict. The underlying framework in practicing public relations is primarily 'Confucianism.' In Greece, Lyra (1995) found that the press agency model was practiced most dominantly, followed by the public information and two-way symmetrical model. In India, Sriramesh found that building a positive image of the organization is the first purpose of public relations, and media relations was the predominant activity among most public relations professionals. Grunig, Huang, Lyra and Sriramesh (1995) applied an additional variable - the personal influence model - in their combined meta-analysis of the three countries. They argued that public

relations in those countries (Taiwan, Greece, and India) commonly tried to establish personal relationships with key individuals in the media, government, political and activist groups.

#### Cross-cultural variable in Korea

Since the data collection comes from Korea, which is distinctive cultural setting from the U.S., the study needs to take into account for the unique cultural characteristics specific in Korea.

The importance of culture lies in its dominating power, in that the culture is embedded in every aspect of a nation from interpersonal communication to its political system. As in most Eastern Asian countries, Confucianism has been the most consistent legacy. For one thousand years, Confucianism has prevailed as the basic social and political value system (Yum, 1988). The importance of Confucianism on Far-eastern culture can be found in every aspect of human relationships (Yum, 1988). The most distinctive characteristic in East Asia is the emphasis on hierarchical relationships (Yum, 1988).

Korean Confucianism, descended from the *Chosun Dynasty*, emphasizes hierarchical authority in Korean society. Confucianism is a teaching that offers a guide for proper human relationships. "Proper" in a Confucian context means to follow a patterned, uniform behavior. These relationships are perceived as the building blocks of a society, stressing harmonious cooperation and peaceful social order (Kang, 1977). Confucianism is thus an ideology and a political strategy, as it is concerned with realizing the prescriptions suggested for the establishment of the ideal society. Human ties are described in five categories of social relationships. In classical Confucian texts these



relationships are usually mentioned in the following order: Ruler-Subject; Father-Son; Husband-Wife; Elder-Younger (brother); and Friend-Friend.

Confucianism has more in common with a political ideology than a religion, although the social impact of this teaching may have been as strong as any religion. Having assumed the role of state ideology as well as the essence of all educational efforts in a centralized state for more than 500 years, Confucian ideas and values, morals and norms have been internalized as the right, apparent and cultured way of judgment and behavior in Korean society (Helgesen, 1998).

With regard to interpersonal relationship characteristics, Yum and Canary (2003) summarize the different frame of reference regarding Korean versus American relationships. Several cultural features and principles appear to affect Korean beliefs and attitudes toward relationship building and their styles of relational maintenance communication

#### Personal Network (*yon*)

While Grunig and Huang (2000) proposed networking as one of maintenance strategies<sup>2</sup>, this study conceptualizes networking as an important relationship dimension to be included in organization-public relationship measurement. The study defines “personal network” as established personal network through blood tie (*hyulyon*), school tie (*hakyon*), and regional hometown (*jiyon*). As noted earlier, the cultural characteristics such as *jung*, *eui-ri*, *noon-chi*, *chae-myun*, and *yon* can commonly represent the dimension of personal network, which is found in Korea.

---

<sup>2</sup> Based on Stafford and Canary (1991), Grunig and Huang (2000) suggested relationship maintenance strategies – positivity, openness, assurances, networking, shared tasks (2000, p36).

Thus, this study assumes personal network greatly influences all the relational interactions in Korea. In practicing public relations in Korea, without personal network, it is difficult for practitioners to practice professional public relations. Building relationships and maintaining with media, government, and local community is greatly enhanced with the aid of personal network such as his her academic background, regional hometown and families. In sum, personal network is included in organizational-public relationship, which is found distinctively in Korea.

This study proposes that publics' global evaluations frequently have close relationships to that of the U.S. because of common influences from component attitudes. Huang (2001) demonstrates that consumers use the same attribute evaluations to render global evaluations, but the weighting of attributes varies with the global evaluation requested. We found a similar phenomenon; global evaluations share some of the same component factors, yet there are varying influences of the component on the global constructs of overall satisfaction, trust, and commitment.

### Research questions

Although a number of scholars provide organization-public relationship studies, the measurement of organization-public relations is still in an infant stage. What dimensions should we use to measure organization-public relationship? How do we check validity and reliability? How do we measure the organization-public relationship reflecting two sides' perceptions? These issues make it difficult to develop measurement instrument of organization-public relationship. In particular, the first attempt to develop measurement instrument is increasingly important for the subsequent studies.

Since the measurement of organization-public relations is still in an exploratory stage in terms of theory building, the present study approaches to assess relationship quality with research questions. Based on the theoretical review on organization-public relationship, this study proposes three research questions.

RQ1: What are the valid and reliable dimensions that represent organization-public relationship reflecting two sides' evaluations of relationship?

RQ2: Is there any distinctive relational dimensions found in Korea when measuring organization – public relationship?

RQ3: Do organization's relational dimensions differ from public's relational dimensions in this study?

## **METHODS**

### Organization Public Relationship (OPR) Setting

Although the organization-public relationship dynamic in different cultures can add unique relational features (Huang, 2001), general relational features can be found commonly in both Western and Eastern culture. Thus, the basic premise of this study supposes the global relational elements can be found when an organization engages in organization-public relationship.

For this study, the setting of organization-public relationship needs to be proposed. The sample organization-public relationship is Samsung Electronics located in South Korea and its retailers. Retailers are private companies, which deal with Samsung Electronics' products. General managers working for Samsung Electronics in Korea will be asked to evaluate their relationships. The Samsung Electronics is a leading corporation in nation in its sales volume as well as its net profit. The main products of Samsung Electronics are computer, mobile phones and home appliances. The corporation accounts for an estimated 10% of Korea's total export. In Korea, Samsung Electronics is considered the national flagship corporation representing Samsung (business conglomerate). Samsung is one of the conglomerates called *Chaebols*, which account for more than half of the national economic activity (Yoo & Lee, 1998).

For the Samsung Electronics, given the fact that retailers are important distributing channel of the company, retailers are regarded as a primary public, which can influence organizational bottom line. The Samsung Electronics is a leading corporation nationally in home appliance, mobile phone and personal computer market.

To ask the perception of organization-public relationship, general managers at the Samsung Electronics are surveyed since they involve in managing marketing those products in domestic market. Therefore, above general managers are appropriate organizational representatives to evaluate organization public relationship. They are asked to evaluate the public relationships with their company and retailers. Likewise, retailers are asked to evaluate their relational perceptions toward Samsung Electronics with the same survey instrument. Thus, the survey is conducted in a two-way to ask both sides' perceptions.

### **Sample**

In this study, to investigate organization-public relationship, both sides' perceptions are required. Retailers of Samsung Electronics and general managers at Samsung Electronics are asked to investigate both sides' perceptions regarding Samsung-retailers relationship. The retailer sample is obtained from the website of Samsung Electronics posted in the [www.sec.co.kr](http://www.sec.co.kr). The retailers deal with personal computer, mobile phone, audio/video and other home appliances. The population of retailers located in Seoul is 1,030. The random sample of retailers is drawn from the retailer directory. A random sample of retailers will be contacted with face-to-face interview method.

The population of Samsung managers is 1,250 as of January 2003. The sample of representatives for Samsung Electronics is general managers or above working for Samsung Electronics. They are contacted with the cooperation of public relations department, marketing department at Samsung Electronics to increase response rate. The method of sampling for managing directors is convenience sample. The survey will be conducted through internal mail system at Samsung Electronics. For the purpose of data

collection, public relations employees at Samsung Electronics plan to distribute and collect most survey questionnaires.

### **Survey Instrument and Pretest**

Since the study aims to retest relational dimensions previously examined by Huang (2001), the survey instrument comes from her instrument. The Huang's instrument is consisted of five dimensions with 20 items. The instrument aims to measure trust, control mutuality, commitment, relational satisfaction, and face & favor. Each dimension consists of four variables to measure the construct. These measures already have been tested and applied in further organization-public relationship studies. In addition, for the purpose of study, the present study adds one more dimension, which is personal network (*yon*). Since this study is designed to conceptualize organization-public relationship in a global setting, cultural characteristic defining interpersonal relationship should be included to capture the accurate facet of organization-public relationship in a given country, which is South Korea. Thus, given the literature review on cultural characteristics in Korea and their comments, this study propose *personal network* as an additional dimension to measure organization-public relationship. Personal network consists of 4 items, thus, the number of pretest items is 24 items.

The initial version of 24 items should be pilot-tested with a small number of respondents. The purpose of the pilot study is to clarify the meaning of the questions in a real context, and to correct any ambiguity or confusion when administering the instrument to the subjects. They should indicate which items are ambiguous or confusing, and which items cannot be rated along the dimension chosen (Specter, 1992). The questionnaire needs to be corrected to ensure face validity when measuring the

relationships from the both sides. The pilot study administers a preliminary questionnaire to a sample of general managers and retailers. The initial pilot test can provide appropriate questions and ensure face validity. Unlike the questionnaires for retailers, questionnaire for general managers needs to be revised to ensure the relevant context toward the public (retailers). Since the whole questionnaire is designed to ask the perceptions toward the each other, each questionnaire needs to be adjusted to retailer or general manager at Samsung Electronics.

Personal responses are based on 7-point Likert-scale ranging with 1=strongly disagree, 2=moderately disagree, 3=slightly disagree, 4=neutral, 5=slightly agree, 6=moderately agree, and 7=strongly agree. All the above measures demonstrated acceptable level of Cronbach alphas, ranging .76 to .94, which showed acceptable reliability. The questionnaire is a structured format asking about various dimensions of an organization-public relationship. For the selection of actual survey instrument from the combined earlier questionnaires, a pretest is necessary. 24 items were translated into Korean and back translated into English by native speaker to ensure the quality of the original measure. Pretest items are provided in Table 2 and Table 3.

---

Insert Table 2 About Here

---

---

Insert Table 3 About Here

---

The purpose of pretest is to check content validity for the finalized instrument, which will be administered in a main survey. As noted in Table 2, twenty-four items of

six dimensions were used to test content validity. These twenty-four items were asked to twenty-six retailers and thirty-one general managers at Samsung Electronics between January and February 2003. The original survey instrument were translated into Korean and back translated into English by native speaker to ensure the accurate meaning of the original survey questionnaire.

When analyzing the responses of open-end questions, many retailers commented that the personal relationship does not help them to make profits in the business relationship between Samsung and the retailers. By the same token, most general managers pointed out that the relationship between Samsung Electronics and retailers is defined by business relationship, where marketing variables are more important than interpersonal variables such as personal network.

Some general managers at Samsung commented that personal network with government officials or media journalists are more critical than a relationship with retailers. The impact of personal network can affect managing corporate issues such as approval of new business right or managing negative publicity on Samsung Electronics.

However, both retailers and managers of Samsung commonly feel that the personal network does not affect in the relationship of retailers and Samsung. Retailers responded that overall they are satisfied with the Samsung Electronics. In contrast, they don't feel that the personal network with Samsung greatly helps their problems or objectives. More importantly, they pointed out that location, comparative advantage compared to competitor and more important than personal network.

Overall, managers at Samsung feel more positively than retailers in most measures. For example, Samsung managers feel that Samsung is treating fairly and justly



than retailers. While the Cronbach alpha of five dimension showed acceptable level in both sides, ranging .70 to .90 personal network does not show acceptable level with .58.

Although the deletion of q24 increases Cronbach alpha .67. for the personal network deletion, the combined Cronbach alpha, which averaged managers and retailers, showed that the combined one is .63. Therefore, the present study decided to retain personal network (*yon*) dimension for the finalized instrument. The resulting instrument included 20 items of Huang's (1999) instrument and 4 items of personal network to measure relationship between organization (Samsung Electronics) and its public (retailers).

Also, the pilot test identified that the dimension of face & favor needs to be translated clearly when asking subjects in Korea. Pilot test noted that face & favor should be translated with *chae-myun* in Korea. *Chae-myun* refers to face work found in all social relationships. Showing concern and interest to partner and giving favors to maintain harmonious relationship is commonly found cultural dimension in Korea. Thus, in this study, *chae-myun* is equivalent to face-work in Huang's instrument.

Therefore, the present study aims to test whether the Huang's five relational dimensions (trust, commitment, control mutuality, satisfaction and face & favor) and personal network can be found in a different organization (Samsung) and its public (retailers) by evaluating perceptions held both two sides.

## RESULTS

Since the study aims to reflect two parties' perceptions of organization-public relationship, the two sides (organization & public) participated the study. The context of organization-public relationship (OPR) is Samsung Electronics and its retailers in South Korea. Since retailers are one of strategic stakeholders to maintain organizational survival in a competitive business environment, the relationship between Samsung Electronics and its retailers may provide insights of the components of OPR.

### Retailer participants

Two hundred fourteen retailers owning their own shops in Seoul Korea participated in this study during February and March in 2003. The mean age of the sample was 36.9 years ( $SD=8.39$ ). One hundred sixty six are male owners and forty-eight retailers are female. 43 percent of the retailers are dealing with mobile phone followed by computer (27%), home appliances (20%) and audio/video (9.8%). Most of the retailers are college or university graduate level (79.4%) followed by high school graduate (17.8%). The average year of retailing for Samsung Electronics is 6.51 years.

### Samsung participants

Two hundred seventy three Samsung employees participated the study during February and March in 2003. Since the perceptions of Samsung Electronics need to be reflected more precisely, the survey participants excluded twenty-six responses who indicated lower level of manager. Therefore, the study only included two hundred forty seven participants who indicated the level of manager or above. The mean age of participants is 39.1 years ( $SD= 5.76$ ). The average working years at Samsung Electronics is 10.6 years ( $SD=5.62$ ). Two hundred seven participants are male, whereas forty

participants are female. One hundred eighty four are managers (74.5%, called *Gwajang*) followed by forty-six are senior manager (18.6%, called *Chajang*) and four managing directors (1.6%, called *Isa*). Thirteen participants did not specify their level of position. The participants work for marketing (28.3%), research & development (13%), general planning and management (10.9%), corporate communication (8.1%) and others (36.8%). More than 95 percent of Samsung participants are college or university graduate level or above.

### Procedure

Participants completed the organization-public relationship questionnaires adapted from Huang (2001). As noted earlier, the construct of “personal network” is added with the Huang’s measurement scale to test its applicability in Korean setting. The instrument is shown in the appendix. Literature on personal network in Korean society is important construct to understand all the relationships.

For the retailers, face-to-face survey was used to collect the data efficiently. For the managers at Samsung, the researcher distributed seven hundred instruments with the cooperation of Samsung Electronics to the managers who work for domestic sales related to retailers.

### **RESULT: Retailers**

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) enables researchers to test whether the measurement model fits the data and test the number of factors that can be detected and reliably estimated in the data. The measurement model is similar in form to factor analysis; the major difference lies in the degree of control provided the researcher

(Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1993). The measurement of each construct can be assessed by examining the estimated loadings and the statistical significance of each loading.

The first phase involved an exploratory factor analysis using principle factor analysis. Several iterations of the factor analysis were run to obtain a clearly distinguishable factor structure. Both oblique (Harris-Kaiser) and orthogonal (varimax) rotation were used to explore all factors. In order to extract the relevant items from twenty-four measurement items, a few decision rules were employed. First, item loadings (standardized regression coefficient) had to exceed .44 on at least one factor. Second, for those items with factor loadings exceeding .44 on more than one factor, a minimum difference of .1 between factor loadings was required (Nunnally, 1978). Several criteria were used to determine the number of factors to extract; (a) prior study (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Huang 2001). (b) percentage of variance, and (c) Scree plot.

The second phase data analysis was to confirm the extracted latent factors (relationship measurement) using the LISREL 8.5 program (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 2001). The third phase was to evaluate the confirmed model in the second phase, using split half-sample.

For the first phase analysis, rotated exploratory factor analysis extracted four factors, comprising 18 items, in the factor structure from the twenty-four items. All three criteria above were used to determine and finalize the number of factors.

Table 4 presents the means and standard deviation for the different sets of variables. It also includes the matrix of correlations among the various 18 extracted items.

---

Insert Table 4 About Here

---

The items in the first factor were involved in “control mutuality,” “satisfaction,” and “commitment.” In contrast to theoretical classification, the first factor combines “control mutuality,” “satisfaction” and “commitment” under the one factor.

The items in the second factor were related to trust. Relatively high loadings are with “Members of Samsung are truthful with us” (.90), “Samsung treats me fairly and justly compared to other manufacturers.” (.81) and “Generally speaking, I don’t trust the Samsung” (.66).

The third factor was comprised of three items, which were related to face and favor, which is initially found by Huang (2001). “Given a conflict situation, retailers will consider the *Quanxi* (relationship) between Samsung and retailers” (.81), “ When retailers have favors to ask, Samsung will give retailers face and render its help” (.84) and “In certain conditions, Samsung will do the face-work for retailers” (.75).

The items in the fourth factor explained the personal network, which was added to extend the earlier organization-public relationship in other cultural context. Three variables (items) showed relatively high loadings on the personal network respectively. The variables are “When necessary, I seek important people that I know at Samsung” (.79), “I can get better deal with Samsung through someone at Samsung” (.87), and “If I have any “*yon*” with Samsung, it greatly benefits me in doing business with Samsung” (.88).

---

Insert Table 5 About Here

---

Both oblique and orthogonal factor analysis revealed that satisfaction, commitment and control mutuality are closely related to each other. It is possible that one dimension could replace these three different constructs with a new label. Overall, Huang's measurement scale is congruent with the observed data with the additional dimension of personal network. This means that the discriminant validity is met by explaining the conceptual relationship with different dimensions. In addition, SEM allows us to analyze the measurement model simultaneously to test the discriminant validity and convergent validity. Convergent validity refers to the extent to which multiple items of factors should have common power to explain the underlying factor. While the number of factor is not consistent with Huang's scale, the exploratory factor analysis extracted four factors, which confirms unique dimension of personal network in one of eastern cultures, Korean society.

The second phase analysis employed confirmatory factor analysis to show whether the proposed model fits the observed data. Based on Huang's measurement model, this study added one more dimension of "personal network" to elaborate the OPR model. Figure 3 describes the measurement model, as a guideline for measuring organizational public relationships between an organization and its stakeholder.

---

Insert Figure 1-a, 1-b, 1-c About Here

---

As shown in Figure 1, overall the confirmatory factor analysis supported the six-factor model with fewer items than the original items in the proposed model. The loadings for each observed variable to the latent factor are satisfactory. Most factor loadings are over .65, which indicates much variances of indicators are explained by latent six-factors. The vast majority of factor loadings were over .7, which means that the variance of each observed variable was explained adequately by six different factors.

The fit of the six-factor model is generally good. Chi-square ( $\chi^2 = 332.96$ , d.f. = 107,  $p < .005$ ) can be acceptable given the adequate number of the sample size ( $n=214$ ). Low SRMR, acceptable NNFI, CFI, SRMR, GFI indicated the six-factor model fit the data reasonably (NNFI=. 87; CFI=. 91; SRMR=. 061; GFI=. 87). However, the acceptable model requires many correlates among  $\theta_{\delta}$ , indicating that adding too many error variances is not consistent with theoretical reasoning. In other words, theoretical reasoning does not appear to support the correlates among error variances.

Other competing model is five-factor model, which includes “trust,” “commitment,” “satisfaction,” “face & favor” and “personal network.” Since the dimensions of “commitment” “satisfaction” and “control mutuality” are more likely to share the variances, one or two dimension could be explained by other dimension. In this case, “commitment” and “satisfaction” have more explanatory power than “control mutuality.” The five-factor model indicates that it is acceptable with  $\chi^2 = 332.96$ , d.f. = 107,  $p < .005$ , NFI=. 91; NNFI=. 90; CFI=. 93; GFI=. 89.

Other competing multiple factor models can fit the data reasonably. The four-factor model is possible in that the “commitment” “satisfaction” and “control mutuality” factors can be grouped with one dimension. In other words, the retailers perceived the

three proposed factors very similarly. The factor structure reveals that the retailers are satisfied if they have control power. Likewise, the retailers can commit to the Samsung Electronics if they are satisfied with the relationships with Samsung. Thus, the four-factor model encompasses “trust” “commitment” “face & favor” and “personal network.” The four-factor model shows fairly satisfactory goodness of fit indices ( $\chi^2 = 114.02$ , d.f.=44, NFI=.92, NNFI=.92, CFI=.95, SRMR=.055, GFI=.92).

The following Table 6 shows the comparison fit of the six-factor, five-factor, and four-factor model.

**Table 6. Summary of Goodness-of-Fit Indices for Three Models**

Number of Factors	Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ )	d.f.	RMSEA	p value	RMR	NNFI	CFI
6	293.85	102	.088	p<.01	.059	.89	.93
5	200.48	69	.094	p<.01	.049	.90	.93
4	114.02	44	.086	p<.01	.055	.92	.95

The following model comparison test indicates the superiority of the four-factor model over the five and six-factor models. Chi-square comparison tests showed why the six-factor five-factor models were rejected in favor of the four-factor model. In a subsequent comparison test, the Chi-square difference is significant favoring the four-factor model against six-factor and five-factor model, since the difference is large enough to support the four-factor model.

One caveat needs to be cautioned when choosing the appropriate model. The model choice should be based on theoretical reasoning and rational support. By and large, the similar perceptions of the retailers between “commitment” “control mutuality” and “satisfaction” have resulted in the four-factor model. Although the four-factor model is



not consistent with the proposed six-factor model based on Huang's study, four-factor model fit the data best among the models.

**Table 7. Model Comparison Test**

Six-factor model vs. five-factor model	Six-factor model vs. four-factor model	Five-factor model vs. four-factor model
$\chi^2(33) = 298.85 - 200.48 = 98.37$ $p < 0.05$	$\chi^2(58) = 298.85 - 114.02 = 184.83$ $p < 0.05$	$\chi^2(25) = 200.48 - 114.02 = 86.46$ $p < 0.05$

Note.  $\chi^2_{0.05, 34} = 48.60$   $\chi^2_{0.05, 58} = 76.77$   $\chi^2_{0.05, 25} = 37.65$

Thus, the four-factor model appears to be appropriate in the context of organization-public relationships between Samsung Electronics and its retailers. There are several reasons to support the four-factor model. First, the indexes of overall goodness of fit indicated the model showed a satisfactory level. Second, indices of goodness of fit indicated satisfactory level without adding correlating residual errors between variables, meaning the latent factors explain each variable moderately well. Although "control mutuality" and "satisfaction" were not included in the four-factor model, the observed data explained much of the variances of the two dimensions. Thus, the four-factor model fit the data and can be applied to measure business organization-retailer relationships.

### **RESULT: Managers**

As shown in case of retailers, the instrument asked the perceptions of Samsung managers' perceptions on Samsung Electronics-Retailer relationships. Similarly exploratory factor analysis is used for the first step and confirmatory factor analysis attempts to prove the proposed model proposed by this study as a second stage.

As applied in the retailers' analysis, two criteria are used to determine the relevant number of observed variables for the subsequent analysis. First, item loadings

(standardized regression coefficient) had to exceed .44 on at least one factor. Second, for those items with factor loadings exceeding .44 on more than one factor, a minimum difference of .1 between factor loadings was required. The criteria resulted in 19 items out of 24 total items. Table 8 presents the means and standard deviation for the different sets of variables. It also includes the matrix of correlations among the various 19 extracted items from the sample of managers of Samsung Electronics.

---

Insert Table 8 About Here

---



---

Insert Table 9 About Here

---

Table 9 shows the underlying factor structure based on varimax rotational method. The items of the first factor represent “control mutuality” and “satisfaction.” Except one “good” item, the variables of “decision,” “same,” “agree,” “cooper,” “meet,” and “satis” are supposedly to measure the two construct of “control mutuality” and “satisfaction.”

The items in the second factor commonly represent “trust” and “commitment” dimension. The indication that “trust” and “commitment” can get together suggests these two constructs share much of the variance simultaneously. The managers at Samsung tend to perceive that if the retailers perceive Samsung trustful, they are more likely to develop commitment relationship with them.

The items in the third factor represent “personal network” dimension. Relatively high loadings are well explain the dimension with “deal” (.84), “network” (.79), and

“yon” (.91). (See the variables in the Appendix). The fourth factor represent “favor & face” dimension. Three items of “favor” “face” and “lose” explain the construct of Huang’s proposed dimension in Confucian culture. The last factor includes only one item of “good” with loading of .74. Although the variable of “Samsung’s relationship with retailers is supposedly to measure “satisfaction” dimension, the one item exceptionally large amount of variance with 9%.

Overall, while the dimensions of public relationships developed in the U.S. represent similar perceptual dimension in the context of Samsung Electronics-Retailers relationship, the distinctive dimensions in Eastern culture such as “face & favor” and “personal network” are found distinctive dimensions as predicted in the proposed model.

The second phase is to test whether the observed data can fit the proposed model, which is consisted of six-factors. As examined in the retailers sample, the confirmatory factor analysis supported three promising models.

---

Insert Figure 2 About Here

---

First, the six-factor model is supported by the observed data with moderate level of goodness of fit indices ( $\chi^2 = 332.96$ , d.f. =107,  $p < .005$ , NFI=.88, NNFI=.88, CFI=.93, RMR=.068, SRMR=.068, GFI=.90). Although the six-factor model moderately fit the observed data, the acceptable indices of goodness of fit have been achieved through many unrelated correlates of error variances among the variables, which means that modification of model was completely not based on theoretical reasoning. In addition, the indices of NFI, NNFI are less than .90, which is recommended level of goodness of fit.

Secondly, the fit of the five-factor model is generally good. Chi-square ( $\chi^2 = 162.08$ , d.f. =64,  $p < .005$ ) can be acceptable given the adequate number of the sample size ( $n=247$ ). Since the dimensions of “satisfaction” and “control mutuality” similarly share the variance of the perceptions of relationship, either dimension can represent the other dimension. Thus, “trust” “control mutuality” “commitment” “face & favor” and “personal network” can explain the structure of the Samsung Electronics and its retailers from the perspective of Samsung Electronics. Acceptable indices of goodness fit support the five-factor model Low SRMR, acceptable NNFI, CFI, SRMR, GFI indicated the six-factor model fit the data reasonably (NNFI=. 89; CFI=. 93; SRMR=. 082; GFI=. 92).

Thirdly, the most parsimonies competing model is four-factor model, which includes “trust,” “satisfaction,” “face & favor” and “personal network.” In this model, dimension of “satisfaction” encompasses the characteristics of initially proposed two other dimensions (control mutuality, commitment). The four-factor model indicates that it is reasonably acceptable with  $\chi^2 = 73.98$ , d.f. =36,  $p < .005$ , NFI=. 95; NNFI=. 95; CFI=. 97, GFI= .94.

The following table shows the comparison fit of the six-factor, five-factor, and four-factor model in the sample of Samsung managers on the perception of Samsung-retailers relationships.

Table 10. Summary of Goodness-of-Fit Indices for Three Models

Number of Factors	Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ )	d.f.	RMSEA	p value	RMR	NNFI	CFI
6	247.89	83	.084	$p < .01$	.068	.88	.92
5	162.08	64	.079	$p < .01$	.082	.89	.92
4	73.98	36	.062	$p < .01$	.048	.95	.97

The model comparison test suggests that the best model is the four-factor model over the five and six-factor models. Chi-square comparison tests showed the Chi-square difference between the models supporting the four-factor model.

While the four-factor model is not consistent with the proposed six-factor model based on Huang's study, the four-factor model fits the data best.

Table 11. Model Comparison Test

Six-factor model vs. five-factor model	Six-factor model vs. four-factor model	Five-factor model vs. four-factor model
$\chi^2(19) = 247.89 - 162.08 = 85.81$ $p < 0.05$	$\chi^2(47) = 247.89 - 73.98 = 173.91$ $p < 0.05$	$\chi^2(28) = 162.08 - 73.98 = 88.1$ $p < 0.05$

Note.  $\chi^2_{0.05, 19} = 30.14$   $\chi^2_{0.05, 48} = 65.17$   $\chi^2_{0.05, 28} = 41.33$

Likewise retailers, the four-factor model appears to represent the Samsung Electronics-retailer relationships most appropriately. From the perspective of organization (Samsung), the absence of "commitment" and "control mutuality" is reasonable when it comes to organization-public relationship. Since the organization tend to consider itself having more control power and less in need to commit the relationship in a long term basis.

The confirmatory factor analysis has resulted in the different four-factor dimension as summarized in Table 9. While they perceive the organization-public relationship, they put different weight on each dimension. While Samsung Electronics values more overall satisfaction of the relationship, retailers put more weight on the dimension of "commitment" when being asked the relationships with the organization.

Table 12. Finalized 4-factor model in public and organization

Party	Four dimensions	Characteristic of the organization-public relationship
Organization (Samsung Electronics)	Trust, Satisfaction, Favor & face, Personal network	-More control power than public -In general, consider whether the public is satisfied or not.
Public (retailers)	Trust, Commitment, Favor & face, Personal network	-Less control power than an organization -"Commitment" is critical for long term relationship

## DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

This research effort was designed to (1) empirically test organization-public relationship scale based on Huang's (2001) instrument, (2) test the additional dimension of "personal network" in a different culture and (3) validate the instrument using two sides' perceptions with an organization and its strategic public. Although each of the two data sets displayed slightly different four-factor structures, overall the two subjects similarly supported the proposed measures as valid and reliable indicators of an organization-public relationship.

In the retailers group, a four-dimension model was supported as best model to measure organization-public relationships from the perspective of public. Retailers perceive the "commitment" more distinctively compared to other relationship quality such as "control mutuality" and "satisfaction." This does not mean the retailers do not value of the "satisfaction" and "control mutuality" but they put more weight when considering the relationship quality with an organization.

Despite the difficulty of measuring a communal relationship in this setting, it is hard to conclude that the overall the sample data do not fit the proposed OPR measures.

Since in the sample of retailers, the retailers perceive similarly “commitment” “control mutuality” and “satisfaction.” In other words, much of the variances of the three dimensions are shared simultaneously.

In contrast, the managers representing Samsung Electronics perceive more distinctively “satisfaction” dimension compared to “commitment” and “control mutuality.” When considering the relationship quality from the perspective of organization, they are more likely to value the overall satisfaction of public.

The most important finding is that both subjects perceive “face & favor” and “personal network” as distinctive relationship quality in the context of organization-public relationship in the Eastern culture like South Korea. No matter what they are organization side or public side, they commonly perceive the “face & favor” and “personal network” in measuring relationship quality. In particular, the study attempts to test the validity and reliability of the “personal network” based on the prior study examined by Huang (2001). The solid existence of the “personal network” affirms the earlier finding of personal influence model should be incorporated into a global relationship measurement scale.

Lastly, the organization-public relationship should be tailored to the context of organization-public relationship and other variables such as culture, media and economic environment. While the standardized instrument is convenient and desirable, the variety of organization-public context requires more sophisticated instrument, which support the characteristic of the relationships.

Hon and J. Grunig (1999) called for research efforts to develop a way of relationship measurement. Lindenmann (1999) asserted that when perceptions of

relationships are measured from both sides, one can begin to measure gaps in the way of management and publics perceive the relationship. This study has attempted to echo these research needs.

These findings provided a conceptually and operationally meaningful depiction of OPR that should be useful for understanding and measuring public relationships by asking two sides that are involved in the relationships. Ultimately, these insights should help scholars and practitioners document compelling evidence of the value of public relations.

### **LIMITATIONS**

Several limitations of this study should be mentioned. First, the perceptions of business retailers' relationship with their manufacturer may not necessarily be generalizable to other publics and types of organizations. As Spector (1992) pointed out, the development of a summated rating scale requires testing the measures in several separate studies. Second, this research examined slightly modified Huang's measurement scale instead of building from the scratch based on a broader scope of scholarly literature about relationships. Third, this study attempts to validate the measurement scale in Eastern culture. The robustness of measurement scale can be achieved in more different cultures and different organization-public context. Doing so might render a theoretical model and operational measures that provide more explanatory power than what was investigated here. Additional refining of a conceptual understanding of public relationships and scales for measuring perceptions of relationship dimensions seems a promising avenue for future research.



Table 2. Pretest items for retailers

Dimension (construct)	Instrument Items	Retailers Mean	Managers Mean.	Combined
Trust (4)	Q1. Members of Samsung are truthful with us.	4.38	4.83	4.60
	Q2. Samsung treats me fairly and justly, compared to other manufacturers.	5.39	5.75	5.57
	Q3. Generally speaking, I don't trust Samsung. *	5.65	5.67	5.66
	Q4. Samsung keeps its promises.	5.19	5.41	5.30
	Cronbach's alpha	.90	.75	.80
Control Mutuality (4)	Q5. Generally speaking, Samsung and retailers are both satisfied with the decision-making process.	5.03	5.25	5.14
	Q6. In most cases, during decision-making both Samsung and retailers have equal influence.	3.03	4.16	3.59
	Q7. Both Samsung and retailers agree on what they can expect from each other.	3.88	4.38	4.13
	Q8. Both Samsung and retailers are cooperative with each other.	3.61	4.58	4.09
	Cronbach's alpha	.78	.77	.80
Satisfaction (4)	Q9. Generally speaking, Samsung members meet retailers' needs.	4.23	5.12	4.67
	Q10. Generally speaking, Samsung's relationship with retailers has problems. *	5.19	5.32	5.26
	Q11. In general, Samsung is satisfied with the relationship with retailers.	4.76	5.22	4.99
	Q12. Samsung's relationship with retailers is good.	4.73	5.35	5.04
	Cronbach's alpha	.87	.81	.84

Continued. Table 2.

Dimension (construct)	Instrument Items	Retailers Mean	Managers Mean.	Combined
Commitment (4)	Q13. Samsung does not wish to continue a relationship with retailers.*	5.42	5.64	5.53
	Q14. I believe that it is worthwhile for Samsung to try to maintain the relationship with retailers.	5.02	5.19	5.10
	Q15. Samsung wishes to keep a long-lasting relationship with retailers.	5.15	5.41	5.28
	Q16. Samsung wishes it had never entered into the relationship with retailers.*	5.73	6.19	5.86
	Cronbach's alpha	.82	.77	.79
Face & Favor (4)	Q17. Given a conflict situation, retailers will consider the <i>Quanxi</i> (relationship) between Samsung and retailers.	4.11	4.48	4.29
	Q18. When retailers have favors to ask, Samsung will render its help.	3.88	4.16	4.02
	Q19. In certain conditions, Samsung will do the face-work ( <i>chaemyun</i> ) for retailers.	3.89	4.74	4.32
	Q20. Given a situation of disagreement, Samsung won't let retailers lose face.	3.76	4.76	4.26
	Cronbach's Alpha	.73	.70	.74
Personal Network ( <i>Yon</i> ) (4)	Q21. When necessary, I seek important people who I know at Samsung.	2.69	3.38	3.03
	Q22. I can get a better deal through my contact at Samsung.	2.31	3.35	2.83
	Q23. Without a personal network with Samsung, it is hard to make a profit.	2.15	2.35	2.25
	Q24. If I have any " <i>yon</i> " with Samsung, it greatly benefits me in doing business with Samsung.	2.84	2.77	2.80
	Cronbach's alpha	.67	.58	.63

Table 3. Pretest items for managers.

Dimension (construct)	Instrument Items
Trust (4)	<p>Q1. Retailers think members of Samsung are truthful with them.</p> <p>Q2. Retailers think Samsung treats them fairly and justly, compared to other manufacturers.</p> <p>Q3. Generally speaking, retailers don't trust Samsung.*</p> <p>Q4. Retailers think Samsung keeps its promises.</p>
Control Mutuality (4)	<p>Q5. Generally speaking, Samsung and retailers are both satisfied with the decision-making process.</p> <p>Q6. In most cases, during decision-making both Samsung and retailers have equal influence.</p> <p>Q7. Both Samsung and retailers agree on what retailers can expect from one another.</p> <p>Q8. Both Samsung and retailers are cooperative with each other.</p>
Satisfaction (4)	<p>Q9. Generally speaking, retailers think Samsung members meet retailers' needs.</p> <p>Q10. Generally speaking, Samsung's relationship with retailers has problems.*</p> <p>Q11. In general, Samsung is satisfied with the relationship with retailers.</p> <p>Q12. Samsung's relationship with retailers is good.</p>
Commit- ment (4)	<p>Q13. Samsung wishes to continue a relationship with retailers.*</p> <p>Q14. Retailers believe that it is worthwhile for Samsung to try to maintain the relationship with them.</p> <p>Q15. Samsung wishes to keep a long-lasting relationship with retailers.</p> <p>Q16. Samsung wishes it had never entered into the relationship with Retailers.*</p>
Face & Favor (4)	<p>Q17. Given a conflict situation, retailers will consider the <i>quanxi</i> (relationship) between Samsung and retailers.</p> <p>Q18. When retailers have favors to ask, Samsung will give retailers face and render its help.</p> <p>Q19. In certain conditions, Samsung will do the face-work for retailers.</p> <p>Q20. Given a situation of disagreement, Samsung won't let retailers lose face.</p>
Personal Network ( <i>Yon</i> ) (4)	<p>Q21. When necessary, retailers seek important people who they know at Samsung.</p> <p>Q22. Retailers can get a better deal through someone's contact at Samsung.</p> <p>Q23. Without a personal network with Samsung, it is hard for a retailer to make a profit.</p> <p>Q24. If a retailer has any "<i>yon</i>" with Samsung, they can benefit in doing business with my company.</p>

Table 4. Retailers Group

Descriptive Statistics and Correlation for 18 Items in First Phase

Item	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
1. Truth	4.91	1.38	1.00																	
2. Fair	4.81	1.52	.77	1.00																
3. Keep	4.88	1.24	.62	.52	1.00															
4. Same	3.36	1.35	.45	.56	.44	1.00														
5. Agree	4.49	1.45	.37	.47	.37	.61	1.00													
6. Cooper	4.91	1.45	.42	.55	.50	.66	.69	1.00												
7. Meet	4.64	1.59	.49	.48	.40	.61	.71	.66	1.00											
8. Satisfy	4.83	1.21	.60	.47	.55	.49	.62	.71	.64	1.00										
9. Good	4.99	1.31	.52	.58	.49	.54	.72	.62	.71	.71	1.00									
10. Continue	5.34	1.14	.41	.39	.42	.51	.59	.72	.55	.36	.71	1.00								
11. Maintain	5.45	1.32	.28	.24	.39	.37	.47	.36	.34	.62	.35	.48	1.00							
12. Long	5.30	1.36	.33	.39	.45	.56	.57	.62	.58	.33	.58	.69	.58	1.00						
13. Quanxi	4.07	1.37	.26	.32	.17	.39	.47	.33	.30	.26	.30	.29	.16	.24	1.00					
14. Favor	3.83	1.42	.23	.30	.32	.36	.37	.26	.31	.31	.31	.25	.26	.27	.66	1.00				
15. Face	4.38	1.32	.15	.24	.32	.25	.34	.31	.32	.42	.32	.25	.14	.28	.51	.59	1.00			
16. Seek	4.01	1.69	.21	.20	.24	.25	.31	.41	.28	.32	.28	.32	.25	.28	.41	.33	.34	1.00		
17. Deal	4.13	1.62	-.01	.05	.06	.24	.11	.31	.18	.16	.18	.20	.27	.31	.27	.26	.39	.71	1.00	
18. Yon	3.94	1.80	.01	.00	-.07	.04	.03	.16	.03	.09	.03	.09	.25	.17	.25	.28	.33	.62	.70	1.00

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Table 5. Retailers: Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Item (variable name)	Factor1	Factor 2	Factor3	Factor4
1. Members of Samsung are truthful with us. (truth)	.23	.90	.003	.05
2. Samsung treats me fairly and justly, compared to other manufacturers. (fair)	.28	.81	-.004	.19
3. Samsung keeps its promises (keep)	.37	.66	-.08	.12
4. In most cases, during decision-making both Samsung and retailers have equal influence. (same)	.54	.44	.22	.18
5. Both Samsung and retailers agree on what retailers can expect from on another. (agree)	.78	.20	-.01	.28
6. Both Samsung and retailers are cooperative with each other. (cooper)	.72	.32	-.004	.35
7. Generally speaking, Samsung members meet retailers' needs. (meet)	.69	.32	.20	.25
8. In general, Samsung is satisfied with the relationship with retailers. (satisfy)	.65	.46	.21	.12
9. Samsung's relationship with retailers is good. (good)	.73	.40	-.4	.20
10. Samsung does not wish to continue a relationship with retailers. (continue)	.81	.20	.008	.008
11. I believe that it is worthwhile to try for Samsung to maintain the relationship with retailers. (maintain)	.64	.007	.24	-.2
12. Samsung wish to keep a long-lasting relationship with retailers. (long)	.81	.13	.16	-.006
13. Given a conflict situation, retailers will consider the <i>Quanxi</i> (relationship) between Samsung and retailers. (quanxi)	.19	.15	.16	.81
14. When retailers have favors to ask, Samsung will give retailers face and render its help. (favor)	.17	.14	.15	.84
15. In certain conditions, Samsung will do the face-work ( <i>chaemyun</i> ) for retailers. (face)	.13	.006	.25	.75
16. When necessary, I seek important people that I know at Samsung. (seek)	.22	.14	.79	.23
17. I can get better deal with Samsung through someone at Samsung. (deal)	.22	-.12	.86	.17
18. If I have any "yon" with Samsung, it greatly benefits me in doing business with Samsung. (yon)	-.001	.008	.88	.15
Variance (%)	27.8	15.9	13.9	13.5

Appendix 1. Retailers, 18 variables for relationship measurement (variable name)

Trust

1. Members of Samsung are truthful with us (truth)
2. Samsung treats me fairly and justly, compared to other manufacturers (fair)
3. Samsung keeps its promises (keep)

Control Mutuality

4. In most cases, during decision-making both Samsung and retailers have equal influence. (same)
5. Both Samsung and retailers agree on what retailers can expect from on another. (agree)
6. Both Samsung and retailers are cooperative with each other. (cooper)

Satisfaction

7. Generally speaking, Samsung members meet retailers' needs. (meet)
8. In general, Samsung is satisfied with the relationship with retailers. (satisfy)
9. Samsung's relationship with retailers is good. (good)

Commitment

10. Samsung does not wish to continue a relationship with retailers. (continue)
11. I believe that it is worthwhile to try for Samsung to maintain the relationship with retailers. (maintain)
12. Samsung wish to keep a long-lasting relationship with retailers. (keep)

Face and Favor

13. Given a conflict situation, retailers will consider the *Quanxi* (relationship) between Samsung and retailers. (quanxi)
14. When retailers have favors to ask, Samsung will give retailers face and render its help. (favor)
15. In certain conditions, Samsung will do the face-work (*chaemyun*) for retailers. (face)

Personal Network

16. When necessary, I seek important people that I know at Samsung. (seek)
17. I can get better deal with Samsung through someone at Samsung. (deal)
18. If I have any "yon" with Samsung, it greatly benefits me in doing business with Samsung. (yon)

Descriptive Statistics and Correlation for 19 Items in First Phase

Item	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19			
1.Fair	5.40	1.05	1.00																					
2.Credit	5.43	1.06	.61	1.00																				
3.Keep	5.30	1.03	.60	.68	1.00																			
4.Decision	4.54	1.05	.54	.47	.47	1.00																		
5.Same	3.52	1.29	.40	.35	.27	.57	1.00																	
6.Agree	4.29	1.21	.47	.47	.32	.49	.64	1.00																
7.Cooper	4.96	1.19	.55	.52	.46	.57	.51	.63	1.00															
8.Meet	4.74	1.13	.53	.51	.39	.55	.46	.57	.57	1.00														
9.Satisfy	4.67	.96	.49	.55	.43	.48	.38	.54	.59	.61	1.00													
10.Good	4.95	1.13	.43	.38	.27	.42	.25	.45	.54	.57	.66	1.00												
11.Continue	5.55	1.01	.52	.49	.46	.37	.19	.34	.55	.44	.51	.50	1.00											
12.Maintain	5.46	1.17	.48	.38	.51	.32	.15	.23	.43	.34	.32	.35	.66	1.00										
13.Long	5.31	1.30	.39	.51	.43	.42	.33	.36	.40	.34	.48	.37	.56	.58	1.00									
14.Favor	4.40	1.06	.13	.09	.11	.19	.26	.19	.20	.16	.07	.03	.18	.16	.19	1.00								
15.Face	4.36	.99	.13	.18	.06	.16	.25	.17	.20	.06	.20	.17	.22	.15	.27	.46	1.00							
16.Lose	4.24	1.10	.28	.25	.27	.22	.38	.29	.30	.33	.25	.16	.26	.24	.33	.46	.26	1.00						
17.Deal	4.15	1.50	-.21	-.13	-.15	-.23	-.17	-.05	-.13	-.17	-.08	.04	-.05	.03	.12	.08	-.06	-.00	1.00					
18.Network	3.11	1.38	-.38	-.26	-.19	-.25	-.17	-.08	-.21	-.30	-.29	-.25	-.22	-.33	-.16	.05	-.18	-.06	.49	1.00				
19.Yon	3.65	1.49	-.25	-.16	-.14	-.28	-.12	-.01	-.08	-.22	-.03	-.04	-.07	-.12	.04	-.04	.005	-.15	.68	.66	1.00			

Item : variable name

Table 9. Managers: Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Item (variable name)	Factor1	Factor 2	Factor3	Factor4	Factor5
1. Retailers think Samsung treats them fairly and justly, compared to other manufacturers. (fair)	.49	.59	-.25	.002	.006
2. Generally speaking, retailers don't trust the Samsung. (credit)	.48	.64	-.11	-.07	-.004
3. Retailers think Samsung keeps its promises. (keep)	.36	.78	-.10	-.36	-.19
4. Generally speaking, Samsung and retailers are both satisfied with the decision-making process. (decision)	.67	.32	-.22	.009	-.004
5. In most cases, during decision-making both Samsung and retailers have equal influence. (same)	.78	-.002	-.009	.31	-.004
6. Both Samsung and retailers agree on what retailers can expect from on another. (agree)	.82	.13	.007	.12	.19
7. Both Samsung and retailers are cooperative with each other. (cooper)	.66	.37	-.004	.12	.30
8. Generally speaking, retailers think Samsung members meet retailers' needs. (meet)	.66	.28	-.18	.003	.32
9. In general, Samsung is satisfied with the relationship with retailers. (satisfy)	.56	.34	-.003	.008	.55
10. Samsung's relationship with retailers is good. (good)	.42	.25	.003	-.02	.74
11. Samsung wishes to continue a relationship with retailers. (continue)	.16	.70	-.03	.16	.41
12. Retailers believe that it is worthwhile to try for Samsung to maintain the relationship with them. (maintain)	.007	.80	-.007	.16	.25
13. Samsung wish to keep a long-lasting relationship with retailers. (long)	.21	.66	.14	.26	.25
14. When retailers have favors to ask, Samsung will give retailers face and render its help. (favor)	.13	.008	.006	.83	-.10
15. In certain conditions, Samsung will do the face-work for retailers. (face)	.001	.002	-.008	.74	.32
16. Given a situation of disagreement, Samsung won't let retailers lose face. (lose)	.30	.25	-.002	.62	-.14
17. Retailers can get better deal with my company through someone at Samsung. (deal)	-.17	.005	.84	.005	.10
18. Without personal network with Samsung, it is hard for a retailer to make a profit. (network)	-.002	-.21	.79	-.003	-.33
19. If a retailer has any "yon" with Samsung, they can benefit in doing business with my company. (yon)	-.006	-.007	.91	-.005	.007
Variance (%)	20.58	18.81	12.54	9.97	8.85





## Appendix 2. Managers, 19 variables for relationship measurement (variable name)

### Trust

1. Retailers think Samsung treats them fairly and justly, compared to other manufacturers. **(fair)**
2. Generally speaking, retailers don't trust the Samsung. **(credit)**
3. Retailers think Samsung keeps its promises. **(keep)**

### Control Mutuality

4. Generally speaking, Samsung and retailers are both satisfied with the decision-making process. **(decision)**
5. In most cases, during decision-making both Samsung and retailers have equal influence. **(same)**
6. Both Samsung and retailers agree on what retailers can expect from on another. **(agree)**
7. Both Samsung and retailers are cooperative with each other. **(cooper)**

### Satisfaction

8. Generally speaking, retailers think Samsung members meet retailers' needs. **(meet)**
9. In general, Samsung is satisfied with the relationship with retailers. **(satisfy)**
10. Samsung's relationship with retailers is good. **(good)**

### Commitment

11. Samsung wishes to continue a relationship with retailers. **(continue)**
12. Retailers believe that it is worthwhile to try for Samsung to maintain the relationship with them. **(maintain)**
13. Samsung wish to keep a long-lasting relationship with retailers. **(long)**

### Face & Favor

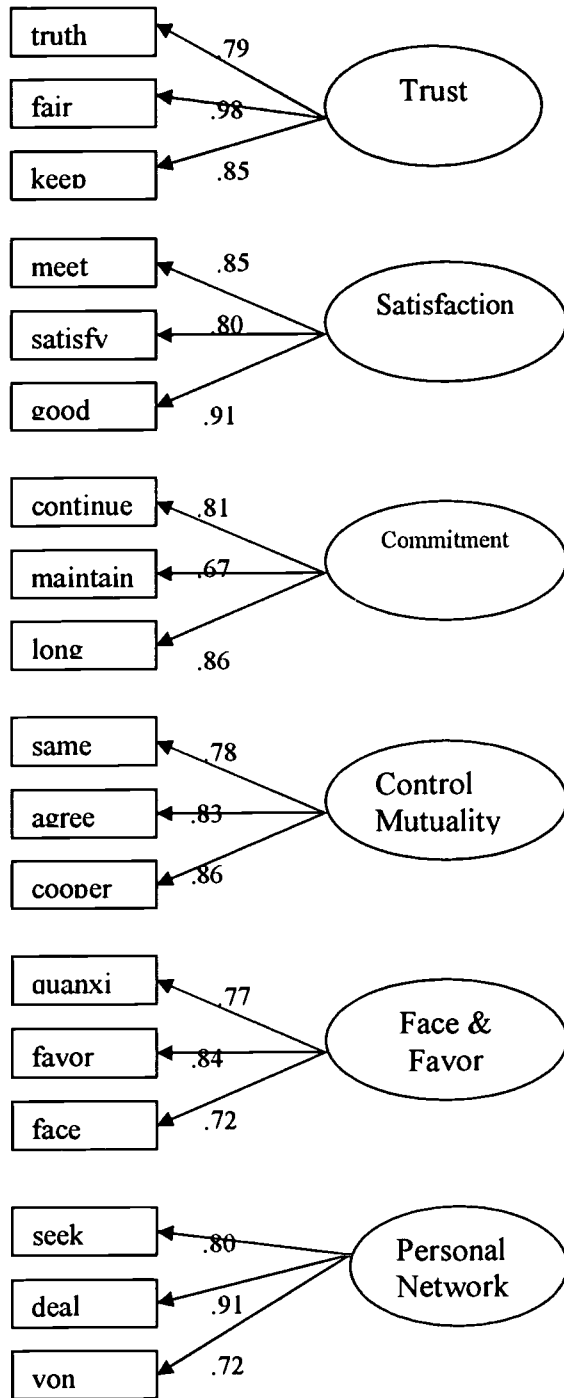
14. When retailers have favors to ask, Samsung will give retailers face and render its help. **(favor)**
15. In certain conditions, Samsung will do the face-work for retailers. **(face)**
16. Given a situation of disagreement, Samsung won't let retailers lose face. **(lose)**

### Personal Network

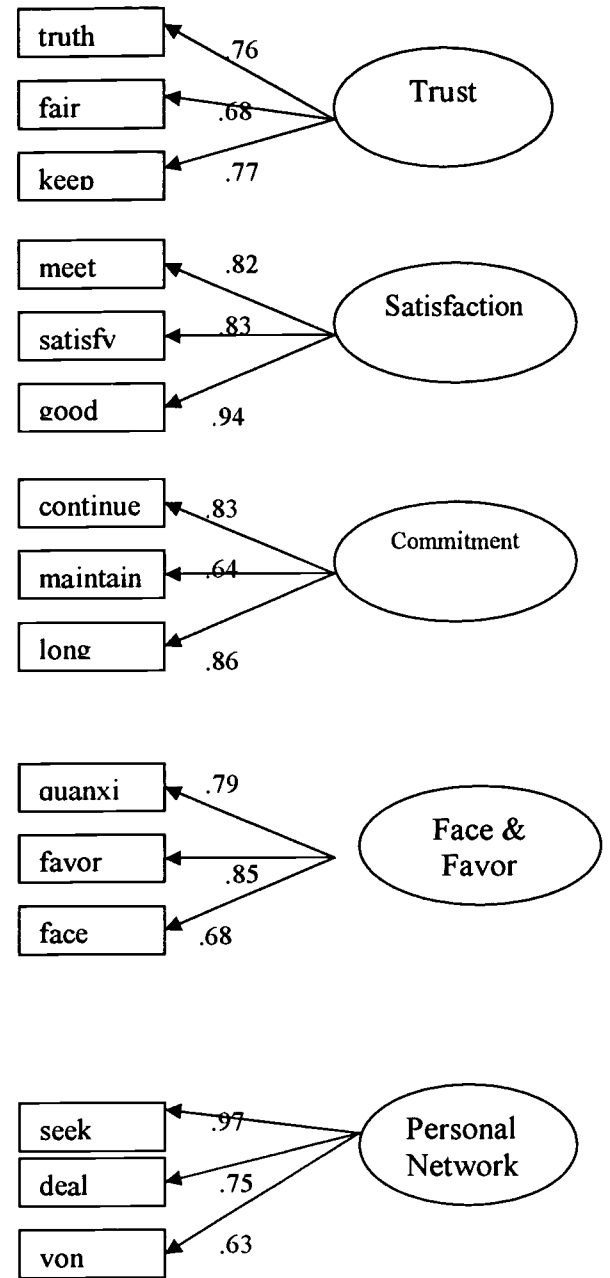
17. Retailers can get better deal with my company through someone at Samsung. **(deal)**
18. Without personal network with Samsung, it is hard for a retailer to make a profit. **(network)**
19. If a retailer has any "yon" with Samsung, they can benefit in doing business with my company. **(yon)**

Figures 1 & 2. Organization-Public Relationship Models by Retailers and Managers

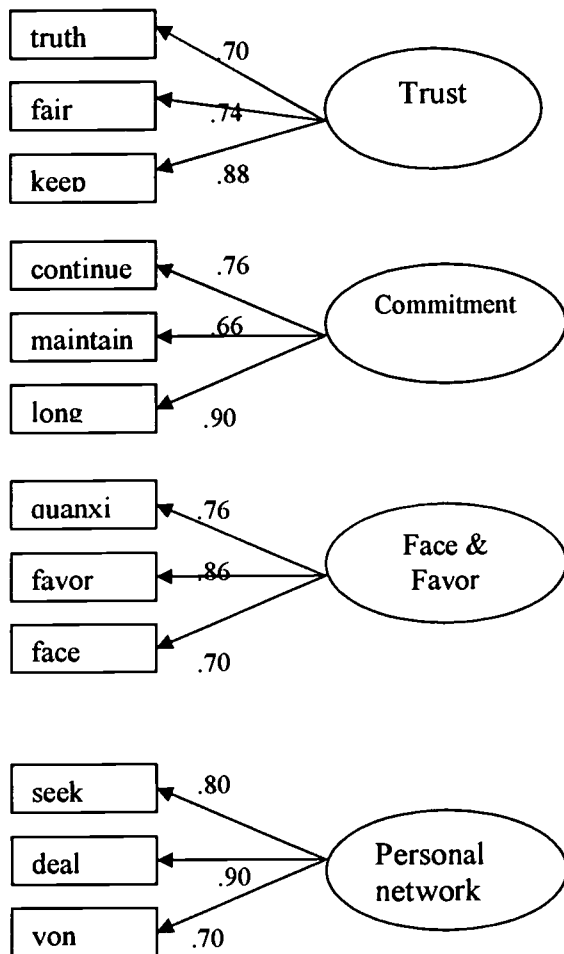
(Figure1-a) Retailers 6-factor model



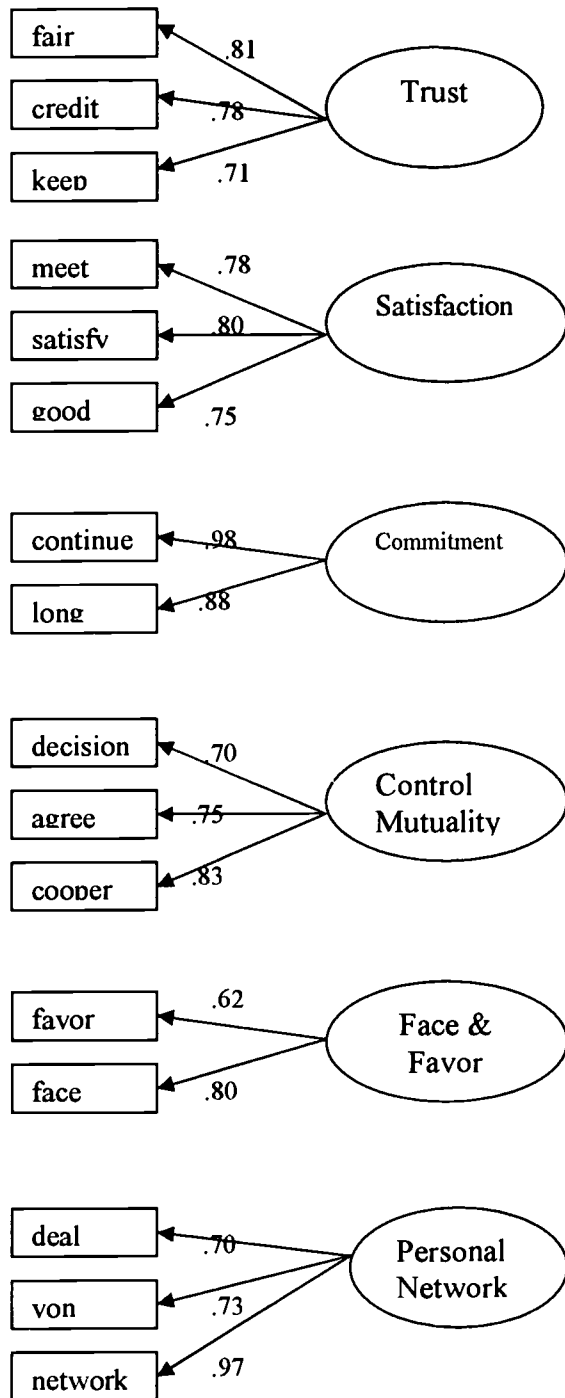
(Figure1-b) Retailers 5-factor model



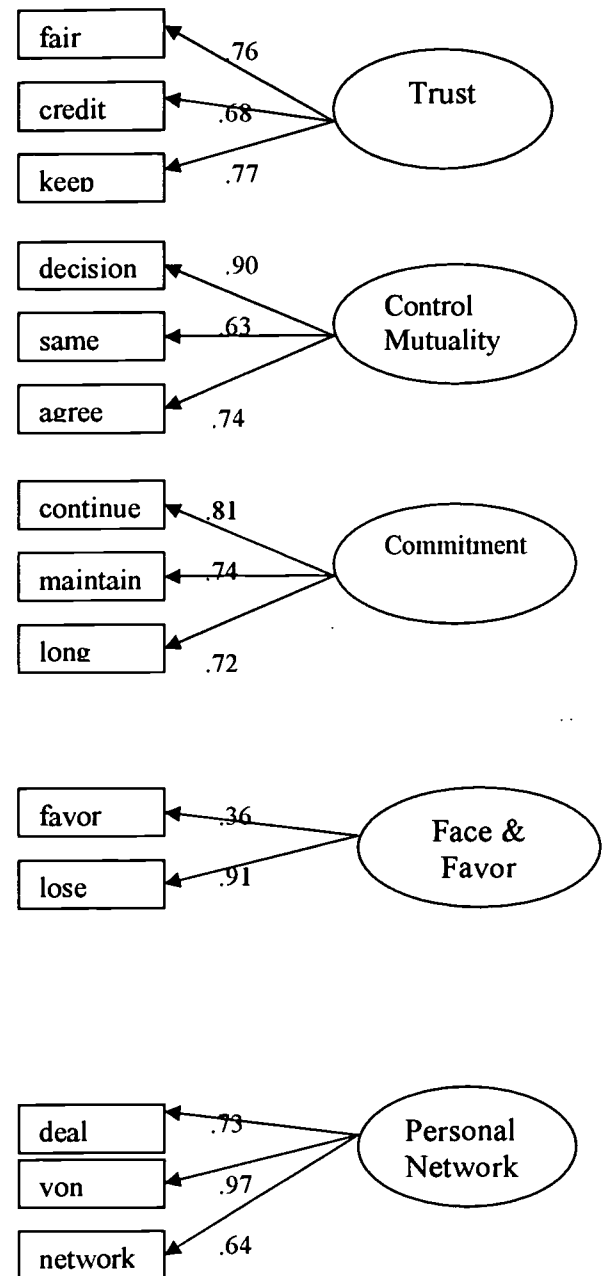
(Figure 1-c) Retailers 4-factor model



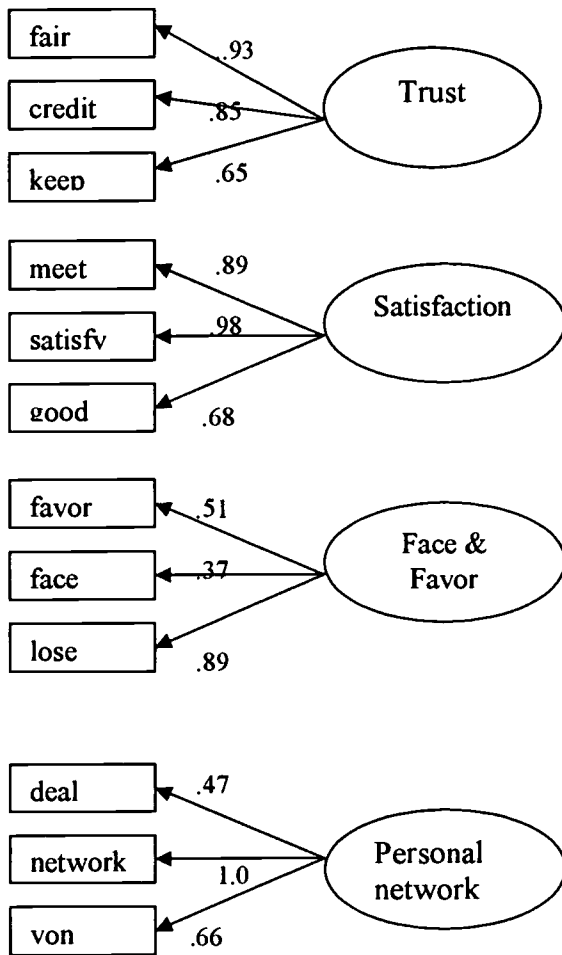
(Figure 2-a) Managers 6-factor model



(Figure2-b) Managers 5-factor model



(Figure 2-c) Managers 4-factor model



References

- Botan, C. (1992). International Public Relations : Critique and reformulation. *Public Relations Review* 18, 149-159.
- Broom, G. M., Casey, S., & Ritchey, J. (1997). Toward a concept and theory of organization-public relationships. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 9(2), 83-98.
- Bruning, S.D. (2002). Relationship building as a retention strategy : Linking relationship attitudes and satisfaction evaluations to behavioral outcomes. *Public Relations Review*, 28, 39-48.
- Bruning, S.D., & Ledingham, J.A. (1998). Organization-public relationships and consumer satisfaction: The role of relationships in the satisfaction mix. *Communication Research Reports*, 15, 199-209.
- Bruning, S.D., & Ledingham, J.A. (1999). Relationships between organizations and publics: development of a multi-dimensional organization-public relationship scale. *Public Relations Review*, 25(2), 157-170.
- Bruning, S.D., & Ledingham, J.A. (2000 a). Perceptions of relationships and evaluations of satisfaction : An exploration of interaction. *Public Relations Review*, 26, 85-95.
- Bruning, S.D., & Ledingham, J.A. (2000 b). Organization and key public relationships; Testing the influence of the relationship dimensions in a business-to-business context. In J.A. Ledingham & S.D. Bruning (Eds.), *Public relations as relationship management; A relational approach to the study and practice of public relations* (pp. 159-173). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Bruning, S.D., & Ralston, M. (2001). Using a relational approach to retaining students and building mutually beneficial student-university relationships. *Southern Communication Journal*, 66, 337-345.
- Cutlip, S.M., Center, A.H., & Broom, G.M. (1994). *Effective Public Relations*, Englewood, NJ; Prentice Hall, Inc
- Dwyer, F.R., & Oh, S. (1987). Output Sector Munificence Effects on the Internal Political Economy of Marketing Channels. *Journal of Marketing Research* 24, 347-358.
- Ferguson, M. A. (1984, August). *Building theory in public relations: Interorganizational relationships as a public relations paradigm*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Gainesville, FL.

- Grunig, L.A., Grunig, J.E., & Ehling, W. P. (1992). What is an effective organization? In James E. Grunig (Ed.), *Excellent public relations and communication management: Contributions to effective organizations* (pp.65-89). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Grunig, J.E. , Grunig, L.A., Sriramesh, K., Huang, Y.H., & Lyra, A. (1995). Models of public relations in an international setting. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 7, 163-186.
- Grunig, J. E., & Huang, Y. (2000). From organizational effectiveness to relationship indicators: Antecedents of relationships, public relations strategies, and relationship outcomes. J. A. Ledingham & S. D. Bruning (Eds.). *Public relations as relationship management: A relational approach to public relations* (pp. 23-54). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Grunig, L.A., Grunig, J.E., & Dozier, D.M (2002). Empowerment of the public relations function. In L.A. Grunig, J.E. Grunig, & D.M. Dozier (Eds.). *Excellent Public Relations and Effective Organizations*. (pp.140-195).
- Hair, J.F., Anderson, R.E., Tatham, R.L., Black, W.C. (1998). *Multivariate data analysis*. Upper Saddle River , NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Hecht, M.L. (1978). The Conceptualization and Measurement of Interpersonal Communication Satisfaction. *Human Communication Research*, 4(3), 253-264.
- Helgesen (1998). NEED IT!!
- Holtzhausen, D.R., & Voto, R. (2002). The Postmodern Public Relations Practitioner as Organizational Activist. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 14(1), 57-82.
- Hon, L., & Grunig, J. E. (1999). *Guidelines for measuring relationships in public relations*. Institute for Public Relations. University of Florida, PO Box 118400, Gainesville, FL 32611-8400.
- Hosmer, L.T. (1996). Research notes and communications: Responses to ‘Do good ethics always make for good business?’, *Strategic Management Journal*, 17(6), 501.
- Hosmer, L.T. (1994). Why be moral? different rationale for managers. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 4(2), 191-204.
- Huang, Lyra Sriramesh (1995) NEED IT

- Huang, Y.H. (1997). *Public relations strategies, relational outcomes, and conflict management strategies*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Maryland, College Park, MD.
- Huang, Y.H. (2000). The personal influence model and *gao guanxi* in Taiwan Chinese public relations. *Public Relations Review*, 26, 216-236.
- Huang, Y.H. (2000). Cultural aspect of organization-public relationships. Paper presented to the annual convention at the International Communalization Association, Acapulco, Mexico, June, 2000.
- Huang, Y.H. (2001). OPRA: A cross-cultural, multiple-item scale for measuring organization-public relationships. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 13, 61-91.
- Huang, Y. (2001). Values of public relations :Effects on organization-public relationships mediating conflict resolution. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 13(4), 265-301.
- Huang, Y. (2001). OPRA: A cross-cultural, multiple-item scale for measuring organization-public relationships. *Journal of Public Relations research*, 13, 61-91.
- Jöreskog, K.G., & Sörbom, D. (2001). *LISREL 8.5* [Computer Program]. Mooresville, IN: Scientific Software.
- Kang (1977). NEED IT
- Kim, B (1996). Korean families. In M. McGorlrick, J. Giordano, & J.K. Pearce (Eds.), *Ethnicity and family therapy* ((pp. 281-294). New York: The Guilford Press.
- Kim, Y. (2000). Measuring the bottom-line impact of corporate public relations. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 77, 273-291.
- Kim, Y. (2001). Searching for the organization-public relationship: A valid and reliable instrument. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 78(4), 799-815
- Kim, Y., & Hon, L. (1998). Craft and professional models of public relations and their relation to job satisfaction among Korean public relations practitioners. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 10(3), 155-175.
- Kline, R.B. (1998). *Principles and practice of structural equation modeling*. NY: The Guilford Press.
- Ledingham, J.A., Bruning, S.D., Thomlison, T.D., & Lesko, C. (1997). The application of interpersonal relationship dimensions to an organizational context; Toward a



- theory of relational loyalty; a qualitative approach. *The Academy of Managerial Journal*, 1(1), 23-43.
- Ledingham, J.A., & Bruning, S.D. (1998). Relationship management in public relations; Dimensions of an organization-public relationship. *Public Relations Review*, 24 55-65.
- Ledingham, J.A., Bruning, S.D., & Wilson, L.J. (1999). Time as an indicator of the perceptions and behavior of member of a key public :monitoring and predicting organization-public relationships. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 11(2), 167-183.
- Ledingham, J.A., & Bruning, S.D. (2000). *Public Relations as Relationship Management*. NJ : Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Lesley (1997) NEED
- Lindenmann, W.K. (1999). *Guidelines for measuring relationships in public relations*. Institute for Public Relations. University of Florida, PO Box 118400, Gainesville, FL 32611-8400.
- Lindenmann, W.K. (1988-1999). Measuring Relationship is Key to Successful Public Relations. *Public Relations Quarterly*, 43(4), 18-24.
- Lyra, A. (1991). Public relations in Greece: Models, roles, and gender. *Unpublished mater's thesis*, University of Maryland, College Park.
- McLeod, J..M., & Chaffee, S.H. (1973). Interpersonal approaches to communication research. In S.H. Chaffee & J.M. McLeod (Eds.), *Interpersonal perception and communication* (pp.483-488). Special edition of *American Behavioral Scientist*.
- Morgan, R., & Hunt, S.(1994). The commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing, *Journal of Marketing*, 58, 20-38.
- Morgan, B.S., & Schiemann, W.A. (1994, March). Why internal communication is failing. *Public Relations Journal*, 15-17.
- Moorman, C.R., & Zaltman G. (1993). Factors affecting trust in market relationships, *Journal of Marketing*, 57, 81-101.
- Peltier, J.W., Boyt, T., & Schibrowsky, J.A. (1998). Relationship building. *Marketing Health Services*, 18(3), 16-24.

- Rhee, Y. (2002). Confucian culture and excellent public relations: A study of generic principles and specific and applications in South Korean public relations practice. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 5(3), 190-201
- Ring, P.S., & Van de Ven, A.H. (1989). Formal and informal dimensions of transactions, in A.H. Van de Ven, H.L. Angle and M.S. Poole (eds.), *Research on the Management of Innovation* (pp.171-192). New York :Harper and Row.
- Spector, P.E. (1992). *Summated Rating Scale Construction*. Newbury :CA, Sage Publishing
- Sriramesh (1995) Need it
- Stafford, J., & Canary, D.J. (1991). Maintenance strategies and romantic relationship type, gender, and relational characteristics. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 8, 217-242.
- Strutton, D.A., Toma, & Pelton, L.E.(1993). A relationship between psychological climate and trust between salespersons and their managers in sales organizations. *Psychological Reports*, 72(3), 931-939.
- Thibaut, J.W., & Kelley, H.H. (1959). *The social psychology of groups*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Thomlison, T. D. (2000). An interpersonal primer with implications for public relations. In J. A. Ledingham & S. D. Bruning (Eds.). *Public relations as relationship management: A relational approach to public relations* (pp. 177-203). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Vercic, D., Grunig, L.A., & Grunig, J. E. (1996). Global and specific principles of public relations: Evidence from Slovenia. In H. Culbertson and N. Chen (Eds.), *International public relations: A comparative analysis*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. pp. 93-106.
- Ward, K.L. (1998). *Evaluating Public Relationships*. Institute for Public Relations. University of Florida, PO Box 118400, Gainesville, FL 32611-8400.
- Watson, D.R. & Sallot, L.M. (2001). Public Relations in Japan: an exploratory study, *Public Relations Review* 27. 389-403
- Whitener, E.M., Brodt, S.E., & Werner, J.M. (1998). Managers as initiators of trust : An exchange relationship framework for understanding managerial trustworthy behavior. *Academy of Management Review* 23(3), 513-530.
- Wilson, J.W (2000). Building Employee and Community Relationships Through Volunteerism : A Case Study. In J. A. Ledingham & S. D. Bruning (Eds.). *Public*

*relations as relationship management: A relational approach to public relations* (pp. 137-144). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Wiener, Yoash (1982). Commitment in Organizations: A Normative View. *Academy of Management Review*, 7(3), 418-428.

Yoo, K.S., & Lee, M.S. (1998). *Understanding Korean Corporate Culture*. Seoul, Korea: Oh-ROM.

Yum, J.O (1988). The impact of Confucianism on interpersonal relationships and communication patterns in East Asia. *Communication Monographs*, 55, 374-388.

Yum, Y., & Canary, D.J. (2003). Maintaining Relationships in Korean and the United States: Features of Korean Culture that Affect Relational Maintenance Beliefs and Behaviors. In D.J. Canary & M. Dainton (Eds.), *Maintaining Relationships Through Communication* (pp.277-296). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Zane, N., Takeuchi, D., & Young, N. (1994). *Confronting critical issues of Asian and Pacific Islander Americans*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

**Protracted Strategic Risk Communication:  
A Longitudinal Analysis of Community's Zones of Meaning**

Prepared by

Michael J. Palenchar  
Doctoral Student  
University of Florida  
College of Journalism and Communications  
Department of Public Relations  
G040 Weimer Hall  
Gainesville, FL 32611-8400  
352-281-2810  
mpalenchar@jou.ufl.edu

and

Robert L. Heath  
Professor of Communication  
Institute for the Study of Issues Management  
University of Houston  
Houston, Texas 77204-3786  
713-743-2882  
rheath@uh.edu

Top Faculty/Student Paper  
Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication: Public Relations Division  
Kansas City, Missouri  
July 30 – August 2, 2003

Protracted Strategic Risk Communication:  
A Longitudinal Analysis of Community's Zones of Meaning

This study replicates and extends elements of Heath and Abel's (1996) and Heath and Palenchar's (2000) analysis of the impact of sustained strategic risk communication. Through random telephone surveys (n=400), the authors confirmed and strengthened some of the conclusions of the two previous studies in relation to identifying and better understanding community zones of meaning. Identifiable community zones of meaning related to risk perception are becoming apparent. Sense of risk, cognitive involvement, trust of the chemical industry and government officials, the roles of schools during a chemical emergency, and certain risk communication public awareness tools (e.g., Wally and LEPC) are identified as key elements in understanding community zones of meaning.

**Sustained Strategic Risk Communication:  
Longitudinal Analysis of A Community's Zones of Meaning**

Previous research (e.g., Palenchar & Heath, 2002; Heath & Palenchar, 2000) established that risk communication strategies incorporated into community relations programs can enhance discourse with residents and augment their knowledge about chemical manufacturing issues. In the case of Local Emergency Planning Committee's (LEPC) emergency response practices, sustained strategic risk communication helps residents learn and understand emergency response measures related to having a large chemical manufacturing, refining and transportation presence in the community.

This specific approach to risk communication typically involves large private or public organizations, such as petroleum manufacturing complexes or specialty chemical storage facilities, whose business activities can or do pose a health and safety risk. These organizations, along with related governmental agencies, concerned community groups, and national health and safety coalitions, and community residents ideally engage in dialogue and exchange information pertaining to health, safety and environmental risks.

The assumption behind this branch of risk communication is that people in key communities participate in an open and ongoing process of recognizing, understanding and appreciating the levels of risks that they experience from living in proximity to manufacturing facilities that are inherently hazardous. Thus, residents and related organizations can take measures that would help them understand the prevailing risk, help them reduce their risk, and help them to collectively take actions.

One of the challenges in public relations studies is to gather longitudinal data about community residents, in an effort to better understand how the community perceives risks related

to chemical manufacturing, how community residents perceive their relationship to organizations that create or effect health and safety in the community, and to identify key knowledge and attitudinal segments within the community, either through demographics or psychographic variables.

To that effect, the purpose of this study is to expand on the conclusions drawn by Heath and Abel's (1996) and Heath and Palenchar's (2000) research on community risk perceptions. The purpose of this study is to provide a quasi-longitudinal analysis of the impact emergency preparation and risk communication have on the overall, long-term effectiveness of sustained, risk communication practices in identifying key interpretive patterns of perceiving reality – a community's zones of meaning.

This paper provides insights into sustained strategic risk communication, where efforts have been made to build relationships between industry and area residents whose lives can be affected, positively and negatively, by the presence of hazardous manufacturing operations. As part of the industry's Responsible Care program, leading communities have assessed the periodic status of communities' zones of meaning. The data captured in these assessments provide ongoing snap shots of identifiable community zones of meaning, and factors that relate to risk perceptions, over time.

## THE 1996 AND 2000 STUDY

A study by Heath and Abel (1996), and later reinforced by Heath and Palenchar (2000) suggested that the implementation of emergency response procedures and communication about those activities had positive impact on public concerns and sentiments. The 1996 study of three communities addressed whether more effort actually pays off in providing community residents

with the emergency response warning knowledge and the strategies they want to use in the event of a health or a life threatening emergency. Related to that question is whether providing more information – having key publics feel that they are better informed – lowers their sense of the risks of living in their community and increases their support for the industry.

The 1996 study compared three cities based on the amount and duration of their emergency preparation (e.g., integration of a CAER Line) and the communication measures (e.g., SIP) residents are directed to take during a chemical manufacturing emergency. The communities examined in that study were high profile (HP: substantial amounts of emergency response actions, preparations and communication), moderate profile (MP: less actions, preparations and communication), and low profile (LP: actions, preparation and communication that were starting). Heath and Abel (1996) used amount of effort (independent variable) to examine whether more communication efforts over time – a quasi-longitudinal model – would increase community support (dependent variable).

Heath and Palenchar (2000) later replicated the study for two (HP, MP) of the three communities from the 1996 study, based on the degree of emergency response planning and related communication efforts. They used a quasi-longitudinal approach that assumed that different amounts of emergency response implementation and communication over time would produce the predicted, desired effects.

The messages addressed in both studies are those typical of shelter in place (SIP), an emergency response procedure that operates as follows: if a release of hazardous material occurs in a manufacturing plant in a community where people live, then the residents would be notified via an emergency alert system, such as plant sirens and computerized emergency alert phone



messages. Once alerted, residents would engage in the appropriate emergency response to protect themselves until the hazardous materials no longer posed a safety threat.

Regarding community zones of meaning in their review of the data of three communities, Heath and Palenchar (2000) concluded that “[A]s has been discovered in previous studies, survey instruments can be used to determine the zones of meaning and communication infrastructure in a community. Such information is vital to community-relations, risk communication projects” (p. 159). Both studies assumed that by analyzing and identifying community zones of meaning, it would help in understanding each key publics’ idiosyncratic response to each risk based on its unique decision heuristic.

## RISK COMMUNICATION

Risk communication grew out of risk perception and risk management studies. From these origins it took on a source oriented, information based, linear approach to communication (Leiss, 1996). Stressing the need for correct information on which to base risk assessments in 1985, Fischhoff argued, “The legitimacy of the public’s concerns and of the actions that those concerns provoke largely depends on the accuracy of the risk perceptions on which they are based” (p. 84). This approach to risk communication – still in common practice today – prescribed that any organization whose activities may or do result in health, safety or environmental risk for community members can assuage their apprehensions by being credible and by providing accurate information about the known likelihood of each risk’s occurrence and the magnitude of its effect.

More recent approaches to risk communication have discovered the importance of a dialogic, relationship-building approach to dealing with the concerns and perceptions of

community residents and employees. In this approach, information does not completely account for the final estimation of risk. Culture, values, attributions of responsibility and self-interests employed in risk interpretations may be more important than technical data (Dake, 1992; Renn, Burns, J. Kasperson, R. Kasperson, & Slovic, 1992; Vaughan & Seifert, 1992). According to Covello (1992), other central factors in risk perception include: catastrophic potential, familiarity, understanding, uncertainty, controllability, voluntariness of exposure, effects on children, effects manifestation, effects on future generations, victim identity, dread, trust in institutions, media attention, accident history, equity, benefits, reversibility, personal stake and origin.

Strategic risk communication charges that each key public makes an idiosyncratic reaction to each risk based on its distinct yet continually transforming decision heuristic. Risk relevant publics exist because people have different interpretive heuristics as well as conflicting understanding of whether something creates risk, whether that risk should be tolerated, and whether avoidance strategies or control measures are warranted.

Typical of this line of reasoning, Covello (1992) defined risk communication "as the exchange of information among interested parties about the nature, magnitude, significance, or control of a risk" (p. 359). It involves "the act of conveying or transmitting information between interested parties about levels of health or environmental risks; the significance or meanings of such risks; or decisions, actions, or policies aimed at managing or controlling such risks" (Davies, Covello, & Allen, 1987, p. 112; see also Covello, Sandman, & Slovic, 1988).

This perspective has been characterized as an infrastructural approach to risk communication (Heath, 1996), one that acknowledges that political dimensions of risk communication couple with the more purely technical or scientific dimensions. In a community

where varied opinions and concerns exist, scientific assessment of facts and performance achievements is subjected to persuasive contests and sociopolitical interpretations that include consideration of balances of political power (Heath & Nathan, 1991).

## ZONES OF MEANING

As noted previously, more recent approaches to risk communication have discovered the importance of a more dialogic, relationship-building approach to addressing the concerns of community residents who worry that the activities of the organization are having an unnecessary impact on health, safety and environment. Risk assessors and communicators realize that each key public makes an idiosyncratic response to each risk based on its unique decision heuristic.

Risk relevant publics exist because people have different interpretive heuristics as well as a conflicting understanding of whether something creates risk, whether that risk should be tolerated, and whether avoidance strategies or control measures are warranted. Publics arise because information and opinion regarding each risk do not uniformly exist throughout society. Pockets of concern become fertile ground for employing government to intervene between the public and the source of the risk.

A rhetorical perspective for the study and practice of public relations entails the analysis of words, symbols and psychographics that create unique decision heuristics. "Meaning defines the identities and prerogatives of organizations, people associated with them, and their relationships. Changes that affect businesses and non-profits result from calls, voiced in interpretive vocabularies, to constrain their prerogatives by displacing old meanings with new ones" (Heath, 1993, p. 142). Heath derived that perspective from an examination of Burke's (1966) proposition that meaning is created and expressed through "terministic screens" with

which people filter and form interpretations of reality and prescribe corresponding behaviors. Once these terministic screens, or interpretive patterns of perceiving and talking about reality, become observable through actions and discussions, Heath (1993) reasoned, they have become zones of meaning.

Heath (1993) postulated that a dynamic relationship exists between the risk communication process and the formation of zones of meaning. "Each group in the risk communication infrastructure is likely to be part of a different zone of meaning, reflecting different standards of what constitute risk, the appropriate level of apprehension regarding risk, and appropriate plans to avert and respond to risks" (p. 148). Thus for example, environmental activists share a different, and perhaps competing, zone than the ones held by members of the chemical manufacturing industry, community or government.

Understanding zones of meaning held by key publics would therefore be an integral part of risk communication and public relations studies. If zones of meaning – facts, value premises, and conclusions – in communities differ, then risk responses must be tailored to each public and agreement must be achieved. Addressing that theme, Rayner (1992) applied cultural theory to conclude, "that risks are defined, perceived and managed according to the principles that inhere in particular forms of social organization" (p. 84). This approach differs from the dominant information exchange linear form of communication. "The preferred outcome is a shared sense of control through which relevant and concerned parties increase the harmony in the community and seek to maximize mutual interests" (Heath, 1997, p. 338).

The preferred risk communication model assumes that publics are active rather than passive information receivers and processors. Risk communication entails institutions trying to reach individuals in various states of collective behavior and engage in collaborative decision

making. Risk assessment and communication assumes that key players dispute of propositions of fact, value and policy. How people interpret risks may result from the facts they believe and the premises they use in their debate and decision making. Propositions of fact result from inquiries regarding what is known about a risk? What is the community's sense of risk? How does the community trust government agencies, the chemical industries or third-party experts? This last question stresses the rhetorical and political nature of risks. Different cultures – zones of meanings – reflect premises that stress different, even conflicting values. The argumentative outcome of risk assessment and communication is a product of facts interpreted through relevant premises and values.

What rationale exists for this approach to risk assessment and communication? For example, Nathan and Heath (1992) found that opposition correlated with the opinion that risks are intolerable. When considering whether they would tolerate the potential discharge of harmful substances – particularly lead – into coastal waters, non-supporters were more likely to believe potential risks from a chemical manufacturing facility would be greater than did supporters.

In a similar fashion, persons who oppose or do not support the presence of a chemical plant in their community tend to think that harm from the plant outweighs its benefits –such as jobs, business income, and taxes (Heath, Liao & Douglas, 1995). Persons who oppose such a plant experience higher levels of cognitive involvement than supporters do; opponents believe that they need to be attentive to plant operations and information about them because of the likelihood that those operations adversely affect their self-interests. The longer people live near a chemical plant or similar facility, the more accommodating they become to it. Likewise, they become more willing to support its presence in their community (Nathan & Heath, 1992).

## KEY VARIABLES

*Cognitive involvement* is another vital aspect of the risk communication process. The perception that risk exists and is unacceptable – or at least deserving of concern – correlates with cognitive involvement (Nathan, Heath & Douglas, 1992). Involved persons are more critical of information and arguments than are their less cognitively involved counterparts (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Cognitively involved persons acquire, pause to consider and evaluate information more thoroughly.

Persons who are frightened, angry and powerless resist information that implies that their risk is modest, whereas those who are optimistic and overconfident deny that their risk is substantial (Sandman, 1986). When people feel that the source of risk harms their financial well being they are likely to become more cognitively involved with the discussion of the risk and its abatement (Heath et al., 1995).

Cognitive involvement and support/opposition exhibit a curvilinear relationship (Gay & Heath, 1995; Heath et al., 1995). That means that persons who strongly oppose or support a product, service, company or industry are likely to exhibit higher cognitive involvement than will persons who neither strongly support nor oppose those items or organizations. Overall, people are more willing to communicate about and to think about an issue that relates to their self-interest or to some altruistic interest (Heath & Douglas, 1991; Kunreuther, Easterling, Desvousges, & Slovic, 1990).

*Trust* is also a central process variable within the infrastructural approach to risk communication. People tend to be less afraid of risks that come from places, people, corporations or other organizations that they trust, and are more afraid if the risk comes from a source they don't trust (Ropeik, D., & Gray, G, 2002). If expert risk estimates conflict with one another, the

decision to be made becomes more complex and requires greater amounts of trust. For effective risk communication, the source of information and advice needs to have a satisfactory level of trust in the judgment of each public (Renn & Levine, 1991).

*Support/opposition* is the outcome objective of managing the organization's response to the concern on the part of key publics. From an infrastructural approach to risk communication, it has been the primary risk communication process dependent variable used to assess individual or community perceptions of a risk generating organization.

Numerous views of risk communication, however, identify understanding as the final dependent variable. People may understand, for example, what a plant manager says about the employee safety record at a community refinery. But those people may not agree with the risk assessments because they are not satisfied that those assessment achieve or constitute the proper levels of risk (Palenchar & Heath, 2002). This line of reasoning makes explicit the fact that risk communication is not merely a scientific or knowledge-based activity.

One of the consistent findings of risk assessment studies is the recurring theme that risks are a tradeoff of costs and rewards. If risks are perceived to be acceptably low and the rewards or benefits of taking the risks are perceived to be high, then one can predict that the risks will be tolerated. For example, Baird (1986) found judged benefits of a hazard were ranked first among other variables in correlation with risk tolerance. Fischhoff, Slovic and Lichtenstein (1978) found a consistent relationship between perceived benefit and acceptable risk level. Otway, Maurer and Thomas (1978) found that economic and technical benefits contributed most to the pro-nuclear respondents' attitudes toward nuclear power. Overall, people tolerate higher risks from activities seen as beneficial, if benefits extend beyond economic to include qualitative variables such as basic needs, safety, security and pleasure.

## THIS STUDY

To extend and examine results related to community zones of meaning from Heath and Abel's (1996) and Heath and Palenchar's (2000) study, this research project replicated their study and compared data. Using data from the 1996 and 2000 studies, and conducting a comparable study of the HP community in 2002, this research project conducted a quasi-longitudinal analysis of the HP community over a seven-year period and as such can more accurately assess the long-term impact of sustained risk communication on understanding communities' zones of meaning.

Assessment is vital because if such risk management/risk communication programs are determined to be effective and at the same time can be combined with detailed information about community zones of meanings, it can encourage city officials, industries and communities to create strategic, sustained and measured risk communication campaigns. By identifying and further explicating the nature of a community's zones of meaning, more targeted and effective and dialogic risk communication campaigns can be implemented with measured results.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Though this study was similar to ones conducted by Heath and Abel (1996) and by Heath and Palenchar (2000), this research paper addressed the following research questions:

- RQ1: Do recognizable zones of meaning exist within a community? If yes, how have these patterns changed during the intervening years of the risk communication campaign.
- RQ2: If recognizable zones of meaning exist, how consistent are these zones of meaning over a seven-year period for the HP community?



## METHODOLOGY

This study was designed to replicate and extend both the 1996 and 2000 study. The 2002 replicated only the HP city (same city in all three studies) – the city with the longer record of community outreach and a larger communication budget. This city has large and numerous chemical manufacturing, transportation and storage facilities. The city has a Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPC) and city emergency planning organizations that develop and communicate emergency response plans for citizens to follow in the event of an emergency.

The HP Community LEPC has been actively implementing sustained risk communication campaigns for more than a decade. Each LEPC consists of members from chemical companies and refineries, city government (especially police and fire personnel), community health and safety organizations and concerned citizens. This comparative analysis of two communities' zones of meaning during a seven-year risk management/risk communication campaign was designed to explore certain previously identified knowledge and attitude variables regarding key communities' zones of meaning regarding idiosyncratic response to each risk based on unique decision heuristic. Thus, the data pertaining to the HP community's zones of meaning in the 1996, 2000 and this study, will be examined.

Using a professional survey company, 400 random telephone interviews were conducted with community residents. See Table 1 for the demographic profile of the persons who participated in the study. The telephone survey was conducted so that males and females were equally represented; respondents needed to be at least 18 years of age. The instrument used a four point Likert scale for most questions: Strongly agree = 4, agree = 3, disagree = 2 and strongly disagree = 1. Some questions asked about demographics. Others tested knowledge by

asking respondents what they would do during specific events.

-----  
Insert Table 1 Here  
-----

Statistical analysis included measuring the reliability coefficients by using multiple measures of key constructs. With three to four measures per construct, Cronbach's alpha coefficient provided a measure of how reliably the variables measure the construct. These constructs were developed from prior zones of meaning indexes developed by Heath and Abel (1996), Heath and Palenchar (2000), and Palenchar and Heath (2002). Pearson correlation coefficient was used to analyze the relationship among constructs and between constructs and other single-item variables, and to make inferences from samples to populations.

## RESULTS

### Zones of Meaning and Communication Infrastructures

RQ1 asked: Do recognizable zones of meaning exist within a community? If yes, how have these patterns changed during the intervening years of the risk communication campaign. When many people within a community share the same knowledge and interpretation of events, they constitute a zone of meaning (Heath, 1994; Heath & Abel, 1996, Palenchar & Heath, 2002). This study, as well as the 1996 and 2000 studies, discovered distinct and important patterns of shared meaning, which imply that categories of community members have diverse levels of knowledge and perception. Discovering zones of meaning allows public relations practitioners to use survey instruments that contain demographics, knowledge, awareness, cognitive involvement, trust, support/opposition and other risk communication process variables to

determine how a community communicates about and decides on risk assessment, management and emergency response. Overall, data reveal different zones in the community that are likely to reflect communication patterns that occur whether people talk about risks and emergency response efforts or whether they are reached in various patterns by risk communication messages.

### Key Variables.

The surveys asked respondents to rate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with statements regarding the likelihood of chemical releases from pipelines, tanker trucks, trains and chemical plants. Combined into a single variable, these four questionnaire items were used to create a variable (reliability for this study,  $\alpha = .68$ ; 2000,  $\alpha = .64$ ; 1996,  $\alpha = .67$ ) called *sense of risk*. This measure operationalized respondents' perception that risks exist in their community.

Combining items that measured respondents' predictions that living in the community could affect their (a) safety and (b) long-term health created a variable called *cognitive involvement*. When combined, these survey items produced a reliability coefficient (this study,  $\alpha = .48$ ; 2000,  $\alpha = .57$ ; 1996,  $\alpha = .50$ ). Previous research (Grunig, 1989; Heath & Douglas, 1990, 1991; Heath et al., 1995; Heath & Palenchar, 2000) has used this variable to predict the likelihood that people would seek or receive communication, such as read newspapers, attend meetings, watch television programs, and talk to friends and acquaintances on topics related to some issue. The variable assumes that if people believe that an issue affects their self-interest, they become more thoughtful, are more likely to engage in communication about the topic, and tend to take actions regarding the issue (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981, 1986; Petty, Cacioppo, & Schumann, 1983).

To operationalize *trust in government*, three items were combined; those related to opinions toward elected city officials and fire or police officials regarding the danger or safety associated with a release. The items asked how much trust respondents would have for the opinion of these officials. These survey items produced a variable with a reliability coefficient (this study,  $\alpha = .85$ ; 2000,  $\alpha = .84$ ; 1996,  $\alpha = .84$ ). Persons who score high on this variable would seem to believe those key officials in the community will exert control over emergency situations on their behalf.

A new variable in the 2000 and continued in this survey operationalized residents' *trust in third-party experts*. Two items were combined to form this variable, those related to opinions toward a medical doctor or university chemical expert regarding the danger or safety associated with a release. The items asked how much trust respondents would have for the opinion of these experts. These survey items produced a variable with a reliability coefficient (this study,  $\alpha = .66$ ; 2000  $\alpha = .60$ ). Persons who score high on this variable would seem to be ones who believe those key experts in the community will exert intellectual professional control over emergency situations on their behalf.

Another variable not analyzed in the 1996 survey operationalized residents' *trust in chemical industry officials*. Four items formed this variable: those related to opinions of plant managers, environmental managers, public relations officers, and plant representatives regarding the danger or safety associated with a release. The items asked how much trust respondents would have for the opinion of these experts (this study,  $\alpha = .83$ ; 2000,  $\alpha = .81$ ). Persons who score high on this variable would seem to believe those key industry officials in the community will exert control over emergency situations on their behalf.

To create a variable called *leave or evacuate*, three (1996) and two (2000 and this study) survey items were combined, those where people said they would evacuate, to form a variable that resulted in a reliability coefficient (this study,  $\alpha = .68$ ; 2000,  $\alpha = .58$ ; 1996,  $\alpha = .86$ ). Persons who score high on this variable would seem to opt for personal rather than community control.

Two variables were created to measure *SIP*, (a) persons who reported correct *SIP* procedures if they were at home during a chemical release and (b) persons who could correctly state the actions they associate with "SIP" as a concept. *SIP/procedure* resulted in a reliability coefficient of (this study,  $\alpha = .66$ ; 2000,  $\alpha = .67$ ; 1996,  $\alpha = .57$ ) and *SIP/concept* was a variable with a reliability coefficient (this study,  $\alpha = .81$ ; 2000  $\alpha = .62$ ; 1996,  $\alpha = .75$ ).

Another variable, *role of public schools* in the *SIP*, emergency preparedness process, was formed by combining responses to questions about what parents said they would do if a chemical release occurred while their children were at school and if they feared the school was in the path of the release. These two items formed a weak variable (this study,  $\alpha = .42$ ; 2000,  $\alpha = .40$ ; 1996,  $\alpha = .44$ ).

Also not included in the 1996 survey, organizations want to know whether persons perceive them to be a positive economic and community presence. These survey items produced a variable with a strong reliability coefficient (this study,  $\alpha = .69$ ; 2000,  $\alpha = .76$ ). Persons who score high on this variable would seem to be ones who *support the chemical industry* in their community.

A new variable in this study operationalized residents' awareness of the *Responsible Care program*. This variable was formed by combining responses to two questions about hearing and receiving information about this program. These two items formed a strong reliability  $\alpha = .81$ .

In addition to key variable constructs, five other single-item variables were analyzed for relationships. These included awareness of Wally, awareness of LEPC, awareness of CAER Line, present or previous employee, and family member in the industry.

Identification of Zones and Infrastructures (This Study, HP Community).

*Sense of risk* had a moderate negative relationship with trust in industry officials ( $r = -.36$ ). *Sense of risk* had a weak negative relationship with being a present or previous employee in the chemical industry ( $r = -.13$ ) and a small positive relationship with cognitive involvement ( $r = .29$ ). These findings suggest that persons who have greater concern about the risks of living in the community are more cognitively involved – concerned about their self-interests. On the other hand, these findings suggest that persons who have greater concerns about the risks of living in the community are less likely to trust in industry officials or to be or have been employed in the chemical industry. Most of these patterns are classic ones in risk studies.

*Cognitive involvement* had a weak relationship with sense of risk ( $r = .29$ ), awareness of a local emergency broadcast radio station ( $r = .13$ ), awareness of the Responsible Care program ( $r = .13$ ), and being a previous or current chemical industry employee ( $r = .12$ ). Persons who are cognitively involved have a higher sense of risk, but at the same time are more aware of emergency response tools such as emergency broadcast radio station and the Responsible Care program. The data continue to show that people who have a stronger sense that they are at risk and experience high cognitive involvement are likely targets of communication, and that those

targets of communication, or at least the means to communicate, are becoming increasingly aware.

*Trust in government officials* had a strong relationship with trust in industry officials ( $r = .62$ ), and had a moderate relationship with trust in third-party experts ( $r = .43$ ) and leave or evacuate in the event of an emergency ( $r = -.35$ ). Trust in government officials also had a weak relationship with knowledge of the LEPC ( $r = .20$ ), understanding SIP as a concept ( $r = .16$ ), knowledge of SIP as a procedure ( $r = .11$ ), and awareness of the CAER line ( $r = .10$ ). This would suggest that residents who trust government are less likely to leave or evacuate. On the other hand, residents who trust government or more likely to trust industry officials and third-party officials, understand SIP as a concept and follow it as a procedure, and are more aware of the LEPC and the CAER line. It appears that trust in the government continues to have a somewhat strong relationship with trusting other sources, including industry officials and third-party experts.

*Trust in chemical industry officials* and *trust in third-party experts* demonstrated relationships with some interesting variables. Trust in third-party experts had a strong relationship with trust in industry officials ( $r = .72$ ) and a moderate effect on trust in government ( $r = .43$ ). Also, trust in chemical industry officials had a strong relationship with trust in government ( $r = .62$ ), suggesting that people who trust one group might tend to trust other groups as well. Trust in chemical industry officials also had a moderate negative relationship with sense of risk ( $r = -.36$ ). Trust in third-party experts correlated with knowledge of SIP procedures ( $r = .15$ ). It is interesting to note that trust in industry officials did not demonstrate a relationship to either having family members presently or previously employed or being a present or previous employee of the industry.

One key aspect of emergency response planning is to lessen the likelihood that people would leave a safe place or attempt to evacuate in an emergency. Based on this study, the profile of the person who would attempt to *leave or evacuate* in the event of a chemical release is critical. Leave or evacuate had a moderate negative relationship on trust in government officials ( $r = -.35$ ) and with the role of a school during an emergency ( $r = -.31$ ). Residents who are more likely to leave or evacuate during an emergency have less trust of government officials and are more likely to take incorrect actions with their school-aged children while they are at school.

Persons who know the *SIP/procedures* to take while at home/business or as a *SIP/concept* were more knowledgeable of Wally (SIP/procedure,  $r = .21$ ; SIP/concept,  $r = .16$ ), more likely to trust government (SIP/procedure,  $r = .11$ ; SIP/concept,  $r = .16$ ), have a higher awareness of the Responsible Care program (SIP/procedure,  $r = .15$ ; SIP/concept,  $r = .14$ ), more likely to know what to do if children are at school (SIP/procedure,  $r = .21$ ; SIP/concept,  $r = .13$ ), more likely to know what the LEPC is (SIP/procedure,  $r = .10$ ; SIP/concept,  $r = .21$ ), more likely to know what the CAER Line is (SIP/procedure,  $r = .10$ ), are more likely to trust third-party experts (SIP/procedure,  $r = .15$ ), and are more likely to have been or presently employed by the chemical industry (SIP/procedure,  $r = .10$ ). These data demonstrate relationship between knowledge of SIP as both a concept and the actual procedure during an emergency with communication efforts of the LEPC in the community.

Persons who know what to do in the event their children are at school (*role of public schools*) tend to be residents who would not leave or evacuate in the event of a chemical release ( $r = -.31$ ), are more aware of SIP procedures while at home or business during an emergency ( $r = .21$ ), and are more aware of Wally ( $r = .19$ ) and of SIP as a concept ( $r = .13$ ). A strong



relationship is identified between Wally and SIP as both a concept and procedure, and with knowledge of proper procedures regarding children in school in the event of an emergency.

Persons who know about the *Responsible Care program* are more aware of the LEPC ( $r = .37$ ), more knowledgeable of the CAER Line ( $r = .36$ ), more likely to be a present or previous employee of the chemical industry ( $r = .28$ ), more likely to be aware of SIP procedures ( $r = .15$ ), more likely to be aware of SIP as a concept ( $r = .14$ ), more cognitively involved ( $r = .13$ ), and more likely to have a family member who is a present or previous employee of the chemical industry ( $r = .13$ ). This new program has gained a positive foothold in the community; a program that is similar to residents' recognition of the LEPC.

What sorts of people were most knowledgeable of *Wally*? The answer: those who know what to do in the event they were at home/business when a chemical release occurred (SIP/procedure,  $r = .21$ ), as well as those who know the concept of SIP ( $r = .16$ ). Knowledge of *Wally* also had a weak relationship with awareness of LEPC ( $r = .28$ ), awareness of the CAER Line ( $r = .24$ ), to the proper role of school during an emergency ( $r = .19$ ), and to having a family member in the industry ( $r = .11$ ). Knowledge of *Wally* not only correlates with appropriate actions during an emergency, but also with emergency mediums of communication as well as the sponsoring organization (LEPC).

Persons who know what an *LEPC* is tend to be: more aware of the Responsible Care program ( $r = .37$ ), more aware of a dedicated emergency radio station ( $r = .35$ ), more aware of the CAER Line ( $r = .30$ ), more aware of *Wally* ( $r = .28$ ), more likely to be aware of SIP as a concept ( $r = .21$ ), more likely to trust government ( $r = .20$ ), more likely to be a present or past chemical industry employee ( $r = .16$ ), more likely to have a family member who works or worked for the industry ( $r = .11$ ), more likely to have children ( $r = .11$ ), and more able to recall

SIP procedures ( $r = .10$ ). These findings suggest that the LEPC is increasingly being associated with the information people receive about emergency response practices.

*Present or previous employees* of the chemical industry have more knowledge of the Responsible Care program ( $r = .28$ ), more knowledgeable of the CAER Line ( $r = .16$ ) and the LEPC ( $r = .16$ ), have a lower sense of risk ( $r = -.13$ ), higher cognitive involvement ( $r = .12$ ), and are more knowledgeable about SIP procedures ( $r = .10$ ). This data suggests the chemical industry is communicating with present or previous employees of the industry regarding community emergency response information.

Persons who have a *family member in the industry* are more aware of the Responsible Care program ( $r = .13$ ), and are more knowledgeable about Wally ( $r = .11$ ) and the LEPC ( $r = .11$ ). It is important to understand that having a family member presently or previously employed in the chemical industry does not correlate with knowledge of emergency response practices, but does demonstrate a weak relationship with communication tools such as the LEPC, Wally and the Responsible Care program.

Awareness of the *CAER Line* had a moderate positive correlation with awareness of the Responsible Care program ( $r = .36$ ) and the LEPC ( $r = .30$ ). It also had a weak positive relationship with Wally ( $r = .24$ ), being a past or present employee ( $r = .16$ ), trust in government ( $r = .10$ ), and leave or evacuate ( $r = .10$ ).

Identification of Zones and Infrastructures (2000 Study, HP Community):

*Sense of risk* had a moderate relationship with cognitive involvement ( $r = .35$ ), and a weak negative relationship with trust in industry officials ( $r = -.13$ ) and trust in government officials ( $r = -.13$ ). This zone of meaning consists of persons who have greater concern about the

risks of living in the community, are more cognitively involved (concerned about their self-interests), and are less trusting of industry and government officials.

*Cognitive involvement* had a moderate positive relationship with sense of risk ( $r = .35$ ). It had a small negative relationship on trust in government ( $r = -.25$ ), trust in industry officials ( $r = -.21$ ), awareness of CAER Line ( $r = -.13$ ), and awareness of the LEPC ( $r = -.10$ ). Persons who are cognitively involved have a higher sense of risk, are less trusting of government and industry officials, and are less aware of the CAER Line and the LEPC.

One zone of meaning features *trust in government* officials as a vital part of the emergency response process. Trust in government had a strong positive relationship with trust in the chemical industry ( $r = .52$ ) and a moderate positive relationship with trust in third-party experts ( $r = .39$ ). It also had a weak relationship with cognitive involvement ( $r = -.25$ ), knowledge of what to do if children are at school ( $r = .17$ ), being a present or previous employee of the chemical industry ( $r = .14$ ), family member presently or previously employed in the chemical industry ( $r = .14$ ), sense of risk ( $r = -.13$ ), awareness of the LEPC ( $r = .10$ ), and leave or evacuate ( $r = -.10$ ). This zone would suggest that residents who trust government are less likely to be cognitively involved and less likely to evacuate in an emergency situation and have a higher sense of risk; however, they are more likely to know what to do when their children are at school, to have or had family member(s) in the industry, and are more aware of the LEPC.

*Trust in chemical industry officials* demonstrates a strong relationship with trust in government ( $r = .52$ ) and trust in third-party experts ( $r = .51$ ). This zone consists of a weak negative relationship with cognitive involvement ( $r = -.21$ ), a sense of risk ( $r = -.13$ ), and a weak positive relationship with family members presently or previously employed in the chemical industry ( $r = .16$ ). It is interesting to note that trust in industry did not correlate with length of

time in the community or family members presently or previously working in the industry. Trust in third-party experts had a strong relationship with trust in industry officials ( $r = .51$ ), a moderate relationship with trust in government ( $r = .39$ ), and a weak relationship with awareness of emergency response practices at home during an emergency ( $r = .15$ ). Trust in third-party experts had a weak negative relationship with awareness of the CAER Line ( $r = -.18$ ).

Emergency response planning is designed to lessen the likelihood that people would *leave or evacuate*. Based on this study, the profile of the person who would attempt to evacuate in the event of a chemical release is important. Persons in this zone of meaning are less aware of SIP procedures ( $r = -.50$ ), are less likely to take correct actions if their children were at school during an emergency ( $r = -.28$ ), are less aware of Wally ( $r = -.14$ ), and are less trustful of government officials ( $r = -.10$ ).

People who know the *SIP/procedures* to take while at home during an emergency seem to be less likely to leave or evacuate ( $r = -.50$ ). These people are aware of Wally (SIP/procedure,  $r = .21$ ; SIP/concept,  $r = .22$ ). People in this zone know what to do if children are at school (SIP/procedure,  $r = .36$ ; SIP/concept,  $r = .31$ ), what an LEPC is (SIP/procedure,  $r = .10$ ; SIP/concept,  $r = .21$ ), what the CAER Line is (SIP/concept,  $r = .22$ ), and trust third-party experts (SIP/procedure,  $r = .15$ ). Present or previous employees are more knowledgeable of SIP as a concept ( $r = .11$ ) and as a procedure ( $r = .10$ ). This zone is likely to be created through training programs conducted for workers in the manufacturing facilities.

Persons who know what to do in the event their children are at school (*role of public schools*) tend to be more aware of SIP procedures while at home during an emergency ( $r = .36$ ) and of SIP as a concept ( $r = .31$ ). They are more aware of the LEPC ( $r = .30$ ) and Wally ( $r = .17$ ). They are less likely to evacuate ( $r = -.28$ ) and more trustworthy of government ( $r = .17$ ).

What sorts of people were knowledgeable about *Wally*? The members of this zone of meaning know what to do if they were at home when a chemical release occurred ( $r = .21$ ), as well as those who know the concept of SIP ( $r = .22$ ). As one would predict, *Wally* appeals to children, who appear to be a means for introducing SIP information into the family. Knowledge of *Wally* correlated with awareness of CAER Line ( $r = .21$ ), awareness of LEPC ( $r = .19$ ), role of school ( $r = .17$ ), and leave or evacuate ( $r = -.14$ ).

Persons who know what an *LEPC* is are more aware of the CAER Line ( $r = .31$ ), more aware of what to do when their children are in school ( $r = .30$ ), more able to recall SIP as a concept ( $r = .21$ ), more aware of *Wally* ( $r = .19$ ), more likely to be aware of SIP procedures during an emergency at home ( $r = .10$ ), more likely to trust government ( $r = .10$ ), and are less cognitively involved ( $r = -.10$ ).

Persons who are *presently or previously employed* in the chemical industry had a weak positive correlation with trust in government ( $r = .14$ ), SIP/concept ( $r = .11$ ) and SIP/procedures ( $r = .10$ ). Persons who have a *family member in the industry* have a weak relationship with trust in industry ( $r = .16$ ) and trust in government ( $r = .14$ ). Having a family member in the chemical industry does not correlate with knowledge of emergency response practices.

Awareness of the *CAER Line* had a moderate positive relationship with LEPC ( $r = .31$ ), and it had a weak positive relationship with SIP/procedure ( $r = .22$ ), *Wally* ( $r = .21$ ), trust in the chemical industry ( $r = .18$ ), and cognitive involvement ( $r = .13$ ).

Identification of Zones and Infrastructures (1996 Study, HP Community):

*Sense of risk* had a moderate positive correlation with cognitive involvement ( $r = .26$ ), and had a weak negative correlation with trust in government officials ( $r = -.18$ ) and SIP/concept ( $r = -.13$ ). This zones of meaning consists of people who have a greater concern about the risks

of living in the community, are more cognitively involved, and are less trusting of government officials and less knowledgeable of the concept of SIP.

*Cognitive involvement* had a moderate positive correlation with sense of risk ( $r = .26$ ). It also had a weak negative correlation with trust in government ( $r = -.17$ ), SIP/concept ( $r = -.13$ ), and present or previous employment in the industry ( $r = -.13$ ). People who are cognitively involved have a higher sense of risk, are less trusting of government and industry officials, less likely to be aware of SIP/concept and less likely to have been or have been employed by industry.

*Trust in government* had a strong negative correlation with the role of school ( $r = -.24$ ) and a negative correlation with leave or evacuate ( $r = -.24$ ). It is interesting to note that people who feel less trust for government officials seem to have more trust for school officials.

*Leave or evacuate* had a weak positive negative correlation with the role of schools ( $r = -.24$ ). People who would leave or evacuate also had a weak negative correlation with SIP/procedures ( $r = -.22$ ) and awareness of the LEPC ( $r = -.15$ ).

People who know the *SIP/procedures or SIP/concepts* to take while at home during an emergency seem to have weak to moderate correlations with leave or evacuate (SIP/procedures,  $r = -.22$ ), knowledgeable of Wally (SIP/procedures,  $r = .16$ ; SIP/concept,  $r = .20$ ), more likely to know what to do if their children are at school (SIP/procedures,  $r = -.21$ ; SIP/concept,  $r = -.30$ ), more likely to know what the LEPC is (SIP/concept,  $r = .30$ ), and more likely to be a present or previous employee of the industry (SIP/concept,  $r = .20$ ).

*Role of public schools* tend to be more aware of SIP/procedure ( $r = .21$ ) and SIP/concept ( $r = .30$ ). They are more knowledgeable about Wally ( $r = .24$ ), less likely to evacuate ( $r = -.24$ ), less likely to trust government ( $r = -.24$ ), and more cognitively involved ( $r = .14$ ). *Wally* had a weak positive correlation with two constructs: SIP/concept ( $r = .20$ ) and SIP/procedures ( $r = .16$ ).

People who know what an *LEPC* is were had a moderate positive correlation with SIP/concept ( $r = .30$ ) and a weak negative correlation with leave or evacuate ( $r = -.15$ ). *Present or previous employees* had a weak positive correlation with SIP/concept ( $r = .20$ ).

#### Consistent and Possible Consistent Zones of Meaning

RQ2: The second research question one asked how consistent are these zones of meaning over a seven-year period for the HP community? As typical with exploratory analysis, there were multiple consistencies and inconsistencies during the seven-year period of study. However, many are typical of patterns that are classic ones in risk studies. (Note: A consistent measure describes a Pearson correlation coefficient in a similar direction for all three studies.)

*Sense of risk* had a consistent weak-to-moderate positive correlation with cognitive involvement (1996,  $r = .26$ ; 2000,  $r = .35$ , this study,  $r = .29$ ). This pattern, classic within the risk communication literature (e.g., Heath and Abel, 1996) suggests a zone of meaning where people who have a higher sense of risk are more cognitively involved.

*Leave or evacuate* demonstrated a consistent weak-to-moderate negative correlation with the role of school during a chemical emergency (1996,  $r = -.24$ ; 2000,  $r = -.28$ ; this study,  $r = -.31$ ). Residents who are more likely to leave or evacuate during a chemical emergency are less confident that schools are prepared for a chemical emergency.

Knowledge of the proper procedures during a chemical emergency at home or at business (*SIP/procedure*) demonstrated two consistent weak-to-moderate positive correlations. These include: the proper role of schools (1996,  $r = .27$ ; 2000,  $r = .36$ ; this study,  $r = .21$ ) and awareness of Wally (1996,  $r = .16$ ; 2000,  $r = .12$ ; this study,  $r = .21$ ). This demonstrates a possible relationship between awareness of SIP procedures and the public awareness character

Wally and the role of the schools during an emergency, which are consistent emergency response messages.

Knowledge of the concept of SIP (*SIP/concept*) demonstrated three consistent weak-to-moderate positive correlations. These include: the proper role of schools (1996,  $r = .30$ ; 2000,  $r = .31$ ; this study,  $r = .13$ ), awareness of Wally (1996,  $r = .20$ ; 2000,  $r = .22$ ; this study,  $r = .16$ ), and awareness of the LEPC (1996,  $r = .20$ ; 2000,  $r = .11$ ; this study,  $r = .21$ ). Similar to SIP procedures, this demonstrates a relationship between knowledge of the concept of SIP with the schools, Wally and LEPC, which again are consistent emergency response messages.

Awareness of *Wally* had a consistent weak positive correlation with the proper role of school (1996,  $r = .24$ ; 2000,  $r = .17$ ; this study,  $r = .19$ ). Similar to the above relationships, Wally has a positive relationship with the understanding the proper role of schools.

Overall, these consistent relationships demonstrate a consistent connection between elements of risk communication campaigns (*SIP/concept* and *SIP/procedures*) with risk communication campaign tools (*Wally*) utilized by organizations (*LEPC* and the role schools).

As an exploratory analysis of consistent zones of meaning demonstrated over a period of time, the researchers also identified which constructs and single-item variables showed a similar direction relationship during at least two of the three studies. Though lacking consistency throughout the entire seven-year study, it could point out possible relationships that warrant further analysis.

*Sense of risk* had a weak negative correlation with trust in government (1996,  $r = -.18$ ; 2000,  $r = -.13$ ), and a weak-to-moderate negative correlation with trust in the chemical industry (2000 study,  $r = -.13$ ; this study,  $r = -.36$ ). *Cognitive involvement* had a weak negative correlation with trust in government (1996,  $r = -.17$ ; 2000,  $r = -.25$ ).



*Trust in government* demonstrated five possibly consistent relationships. They include: a strong positive relationship with trust in the chemical industry (2000,  $r = .52$ ; this study,  $r = .62$ ), a moderate positive relationship with trust in third-party experts (2000,  $r = .39$ , this study,  $r = .43$ ), and a weak positive relationship with awareness of LEPC (2000,  $r = .10$ ; this study,  $r = .20$ ). Trust in government also had a weak-to-moderate negative correlation with leave or evacuate (2000,  $r = -.10$ ; this study,  $r = -.35$ ) and the proper role of school (1996,  $r = -.24$ ; 2000,  $r = -.28$ ). Also, *trust in third-party experts* had a strong positive correlation with trust in the chemical industry (2000,  $r = .51$ ; this study,  $r = .72$ ).

*SIP/procedures* had three possible consistent zones of meaning relationships. These include: trust in third-party experts (2000,  $r = .21$ ; this study,  $r = .15$ ), LEPC (2000,  $r = .10$ ; this study,  $r = .10$ ), and present or previously employed in the chemical industry (2000,  $r = .10$ ; this study,  $r = .10$ ). *SIP/concept* demonstrated one possible consistent relationship with previous or present employee in the chemical industry (1996,  $r = .20$ ; 2000,  $r = .11$ ).

*Leave or evacuate* had a possibly consistent weak-to-strong negative correlation with SIP/procedures (1996,  $r = -.22$ ; 2000,  $r = -.50$ ). Also, *Wally* had possibly consistent weak positive relationship with LEPC (2000 study,  $r = .19$ ; this study,  $r = .28$ ) and CAER Line (2000,  $r = .21$ ; this study,  $r = .24$ ).

## DISCUSSION

The risk management/risk communication public awareness campaign showed steady progress toward increasing the likelihood that members of the community know the appropriate actions and policies of industry and government regarding safety and health issues related to chemical manufacturing. These findings should reinforce the continuing effort of the LEPC; this

is especially important given the fact that the population is not static.

Community members continue to have high levels of concern that some event could harm their safety or that over time their health could be affected. This concern is counterbalanced by the strong perception that industry and local government are prepared and willing to respond properly in the event of an emergency and to reduce these risks.

For the most part, the community residents continue to demonstrate increased awareness and understanding of emergency response protocols.

Overall, results reported for this community in both surveys indicate that several key zones of meaning exist that can be identified either by risk communication variables or by demographic categories. Such analysis reinforces previous held contentions regarding zones of meaning within communities of risk that can help public relations professionals better understand the informational needs and communication patterns of persons in the community.

## CONCLUSION

This study replicated and reaffirmed that survey instruments can be used to determine the zones of meaning and communication infrastructures in a community. This study also demonstrated that consistent patterns to zones of meaning are starting to be identified. Palenchar and Heath (2002) argued that “not only must researchers understand the prevailing risk communication variables, but they also need to understand and respond proactively to the different zones of meaning that exist in these communities” (p. 150).

Zones of meaning continue to be demonstrated as a key element in sustained risk communication efforts. Such zones of meaning are links that connect them to emergency response organizations, emergency response personnel, individual companies, the chemical

industry and the community. The knowledge residents have might result from where they are located in the information networks of the community, and understanding and interpreting the different and unique variables that constitute zones of meaning is a key to strategic risk communication.

The results of this paper challenge risk communication and public relations researchers to gather longitudinal data that can track the zones of meaning that operate in key stakeholder groups and communities. This paper provides insights into long-term, sustained risk communication efforts in a community setting.

## References

- Baird, B. (1986). Tolerance for environmental health risks: The influence of knowledge, benefits, voluntariness and environmental attitudes. *Risk Analysis*, 6, 425-435.
- Burke, K. (1966). *Language as Symbolic Action*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Covello, V.T. (1992). Risk communication: An emerging area of health communication research. In S.A. Deetz (Ed.), *Communication yearbook 15*, (pp. 359-373). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Dake, K. (1992). Myths of nature: Culture and the social construction of risk. *Journal of Social Issues*, 48, 21-37.
- Davies, J.C., Covello, V.T. & Allen, F.W. (Eds.). (1987). *Risk communication*. Washington, DC: The Conservation Foundation.
- Fischhoff, B. (1985). Managing risk perceptions. *Issues in Science and Technology*, 2, 83-96.
- Fischhoff, B., Slovic, P., & Lichtenstein, S. (1978). How safe is safe enough? A psychometric study of attitudes toward technological risks and benefits. *Policy Sciences*, 9, 127-152.
- Grunig, J. E. (1989). Sierra Club study shows who becomes activists. *Public Relations Review*, 15(3), 3-24.
- Heath, R. L. (1993). A rhetorical approach to zones of meaning and organizational prerogatives. *Public Relations Review*, 19(2), 141-155.
- Heath, R. L. (1994). *Management of corporate communication: From interpersonal contacts to external affairs*, Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

- Heath, R. L. (1996). Corporate environmental risk communication: Cases and Practices along the Texas Gulf Coast. In B. R. Burleson (Ed.), *Communication yearbook 18* (pp. 255-277). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Heath, R. L. (1997). *Strategic issues management: Organizational and public policy challenges*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Heath, R. L., & Abel, D. D. (1996). Proactive response to citizen risk concerns: Increasing citizens' knowledge of emergency response practices. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 8*, 151-171.
- Heath, R. L., & Douglas, W. (1990). Involvement: A key variable in people's reaction to public policy issues. In J. E. Grunig & L. A. Grunig (Eds.), *Public relations research annual* (Vol. 2, pp. 193-204). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Heath, R. L., & Gay, C. D. (1997). Involvement, uncertainty and control's effect on information scanning and monitoring by expert stakeholders. *Management Communication Quarterly, 10*(3), 342-373.
- Heath, R. L., Liao, S., & Douglas, W. (1995). Effects of perceived economic harms and benefits on issues involvement, information use, and action: A study in risk communication. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 7*, 89-109.
- Heath, R. L., & Nathan, K. (1991). Public relations' role in risk communication: Information, rhetoric and power. *Public Relations Quarterly, 35*(4), 15-22.
- Heath, R. L., & Palenchar, M. (2000). Community relations and risk communication: A longitudinal study of the impact of emergency response messages. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 12*, 131-162.

- Kasperson, R. E. (1986). Six propositions on public participation and their relevance for risk. *Risk Analysis*, 6(3), 275-281.
- Kunreuther, H., Easterling, D., Desvousges, W., & Slovic, P. (1990). Public attitudes toward siting a high-level nuclear waste repository in Nevada. *Risk Analysis*, 10, 469-484.
- Leiss, W. (1996). Three phases in the evolution of risk communication practice. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 545, 85-94.
- Nathan, K., Heath, R.L., & Douglas, W. (1992). Tolerance for potential environmental health risks: The influence of knowledge, benefits, control, involvement and uncertainty. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 4, 235-258.
- Otway, H., Maurer, D., & Thomas, K. (1978). Nuclear power: The question of public acceptance. *Futures*, April, (10) 109-118.
- Palenchar, M. J., & Heath, R. L. (2002). Another part of the risk communication model: Analysis of communication processes and message content. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 14, 127-158.
- Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, J. T. (1981). *Attitudes and persuasion: Classic and contemporary approaches*. Dubuque, IA: Brown.
- Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, J. T. (1986). *Communication and persuasion: Central and peripheral routes to attitude change*. New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Petty, R. E., Cacioppo, J. T., & Schumann, D. (1983). Central and peripheral routes to advertising effectiveness: The moderating role of involvement. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 10, 135-146.
- Rayner, S. (1992). Cultural theory and risk analysis. In S. Krimsky & D. Golding (Eds.), *Social theories of risk* (pp. 83-115). Westport, CT: Praeger.

- Renn, O., Burns, W. J., Kasperson, J. X., Kasperson, R. E., & Slovic, P. (1992). The social amplification of risk: Theoretical foundations and empirical applications. *Journal of Social Issues, 48*, 137-160.
- Renn, O., & Levine, D. (1991). Credibility and trust in risk communication. In R. E. Kasperson & P.J. M. Stallen (Eds.), *Communicating Risks to the Public*, (pp. 175-218). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer.
- Ropeik, D., & Gray, G. (2002). Risk: A practical guide for deciding what's really safe and what's really dangerous in the world around you. New York: Houghton Mifflin.
- Thompson, S. C. (1981). Will it hurt less if I can control it? A complex answer to a simple question. *Psychological Bulletin, 90*(1), 89-101.
- Vaughan, E., & Seifert, M. (1992). Variability in the framing of risk issues. *Journal of Social Issues, 48*, 119-135.

Table 1  
Demographic Profile of Respondents

	2000	This Study
Years in community		
0-5	7.3	18.7
6-10	17.0	12.2
11+	75.8	69.1
Sex of Respondent		
Female	50.0	49.6
Male	50.0	50.4
Race/ethnicity		
African-American	0.3	1.2
Hispanic	3.8	7.4
White	94.5	90.8
Education of respondent		
Some high school	4.5	4.2
High school graduate	30.8	33.3
Some college	38.3	36.5
Bachelor's degree	16.0	21.1
Post Graduate degree	5.5	4.7
Respondent employed in industry		
No	67.8	59.8
Yes, previously	16.8	20.3
Yes, presently	15.5	19.9
Family member employed in industry		
No	50.0	46.2
Yes, previously	14.8	22.6
Yes, presently	35.3	31.3
Rent or own		
Own	91.5	86.1
Rent	7.8	13.9
House	5.3	5.2
Apartment	2.5	6.2
Proximity to plants		
Close to plants	44.3	51.1

Note. N=400 for both studies.



Nonprofit Organizations' Use of the World Wide Web:  
Are They Sufficiently Fulfilling Organizational Goals?

Seok Kang, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Speech, Theatre, and Journalism  
Arkansas Tech University  
Russellville, AR 72801  
(479) 498-6000  
seok.kang@mail.atu.edu

Hanna E. Norton, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Speech, Theatre, and Journalism  
Arkansas Tech University  
Russellville, AR 72801  
(479) 498-6025  
hanna.norton@mail.atu.edu

Paper Submitted to the Public Relations Division  
Association of Education in Journalism and Mass Communication  
Kansas City, MO  
July 30-August 2, 2003

## Abstract

This study explores nonprofit organizations' Web sites to determine the extent to which the organizations utilize benefits of the Web to accomplish their organizational goals. A sample of the 100 largest NPOs in the United States was used for the study. Results found that the selected NPOs were effectively using the Web to present traditional public relations materials and connect with publics. However, the organizations were largely unsuccessful in making interactive, relational communications with publics.

## **Nonprofit Organizations' Use of the World Wide Web: Are They Sufficiently Fulfilling Organizational Goals?**

For nonprofit organizations (NPOs), the public relations struggle is reaching potential publics with generally limited financial means. The World Wide Web (the Web) offers these organizations the unique opportunity to interactively reach multiple publics without enormous financial burdens. Organizations can post their charter, meetings, press releases, speeches, and fund raising efforts along with possibly increasing their support base by connecting with visitors, members, and governments. In addition, the Web offers organizations an interactive, technological image to interested publics and general Web "surfers." In this study, we investigate how a group of nonprofit organizations are presenting their organizations online and interactively connecting with publics.

As NPOs today are acting much like profit businesses, their use of diverse public relational practices has become salient in the competitive NPO circumstances (Rouner & Camden, 1988; Wilcox, Ault, Agee, & Cameron, 2001). Marketing is a significant factor for the fund raising of the public relations departments of NPOs (Kelly, 1993). The principles behind successful commercial Web sites, such as simplicity and public outreach, can be functionally utilized by NPO Web sites (Corby & Sowards, 2000). The organizational communication advocates agree the Web is a channel for educating, informing, and persuading organizations' various audiences (Marken, 1995). Likewise, Mitra (1997) suggests that the Web brings the organization members to a relational space together. The Web can be a pertinent channel for NPOs to communicate their messages and erect public support for confronting issues.

While the usefulness of the Web for public relations among NPOs has been emphasized, relatively little research has attempted to explore the content of NPO Web

sites in terms of their usability, information utility, and interaction with publics. Kensicki (2003) claimed that "the Internet was supposed to be the great democratizer, but no one had studied if it had transformed the messages of non-profit groups" (p. 29). This study explores NPO Web sites to determine the extent to which the organizations utilize benefits of the Web to accomplish their organizational goals. Given NPOs' changing climate with increasing competition, marketing interest, and usefulness of the Web, NPOs need to re-orient messages and the presentation of organizational goals when they communicate with members and visitors via the Web. Moreover, this study pays particular attention to the NPOs' organizational characteristics such as net income or expense. These characteristics have been outside researchers' attention, even though they may be used to compare organizational activities such as the use of the Web. To explore the utility of the NPO Web sites, we investigated the front pages and overall content of the sites in the United States and examine the relationship between the Web sites and NPOs' organizational traits.

### **Characteristics of NPO Web Sites**

One of the key elements of any public relations effort is to communicate with selected publics in a two-way communicative effort. As Grunig's original model of public relations communication illustrates, effective public relations reaches publics on a two-way symmetrical level where communication is balanced between senders and receivers. This model posits that understanding is the main public relations goal, and not persuasion (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). For public relations practitioners in NPOs, having publics understand their work and connecting with them is the key to persuading them to volunteer or donate.

Considering two-way communication in our mediated environment, however, requires an updated perspective reliant on relational communications that allow a true dialogue to develop. Adapting the concept of two-way communication to the Internet, Taylor, Kent, and White support this dialogic approach. They discuss:

“Given the field’s shift to a more relational approach to public relations, the concept of dialogue may now best capture the process and product of relationship building. Dialogue is more than a framework for understanding interpersonal relationships, it can also be used to understand mediated relationships such as those created by communication through the Internet” (Taylor, Kent, & White, 2001, p. 265).

With respect to discussing a dialogic loop, Kent and Taylor (1998) offered five principles for organizations to follow that facilitate reciprocal communication and organizational responses to publics: (1) dialogic loops, (2) usability of Web sites, (3) keeping visitors, (4) return visits strategies, and (5) relevant information. The emphasis on this revised two-way communication in which organizations have publics understand their work and interact with them by providing easy interface, relevant information, and relational communication forms the theoretical framework driving this research.

The NPO, as the “third sector” in addition to for-profit corporations and government agencies, is generally defined as an organized private entity for nonprofit distributing, self-governing, and voluntary participation (Wilcox, et al., 2001). More than one million organizations in the United States are documented by the Internal Revenue Service as being tax-exempt. NPOs also include private foundations with over 8.6 million people working for the organizations (Baskin, Aronoff, & Lattimore, 1997).

Without gatekeeping functions found in other mass media, the Web is considered the best public relations medium because it allows managed communication to flow directly between organizations and mass audiences (White & Raman, 1999). Indeed,

Edelman Public Relations Worldwide touts the Web as a plausible public relations medium (Gleason, 1997). The Web lets NPOs reach as many people as they target without national or cultural boundaries. At the price of a television or newspaper ad, NPOs can make contacts with a dramatically larger number of audiences for a full year on the Web (Lee, Chen, & Zhang, 2001). The Web has the potential to level a communication field between organizations and publics (Esrock & Leichty, 2000). Johnson (1997) addresses that public relational professionals utilize the Web to facilitate media relations, for employee connection, and government and investor relations as well as for members and consumer relations. The relationships among them are possibly transformed, enhanced, or deteriorated by their use of the Web. The major question at this point is then, how organizations should construct their Web sites to facilitate more equitable connections with their publics.

With respect to this question, the Web site content analysts contend three typical content clusters of profit or nonprofit organization Web sites: *ease of interface*, *usefulness of information*, and *relational communication*. The convenient usability when a user visits a NPO site can determine his or her impression and future return (Nielson, 2000). A NPO Web site should be the platform to provide visitors with timely and adequate information. By providing relevant links to local branches, press releases, or organizational missions, the degree to which visitors, members, governments, or other organizations rely on the site will be largely determined (Kent & Taylor, 1998). Third, it is manifest that the relational communication between organization and publics via the Web facilitates NPOs' effort to achieve their missions, goals, and objectives (Taylor, Kent, & White, 2001). The opportunities of donating, investing, volunteering activities,

or discussing current issues in online forums should have a great influence on NPOs' effective management. Therefore, this study focused on these three clusters of content of NPO Web sites and their relationships with NPOs' organizational characteristics.

### **NPOs and Ease of Interface**

For a visitor-friendly Web site, ease of use is an important factor to impact visitors' accessibility (Abels, White, & Hahn, 1997; Neilson, 2000). The factors of "use" (i.e., ease of navigation, presence of site maps, incorporating a search engine box and minimal graphic reliance) would be likely to result in more visits and positive impressions. Because the relationships between NPOs and visitors via the Web are based on visitors' levels of interest and attraction, visitors will evaluate the sites from their "surfing" experiences. Their experiences on the Web while on a NPO site will largely consist of "convenience of use," which can be the conceptual definition of ease of interface.

A body of research suggests that the majority of organizational Web sites fail usability tests because the users are not encouraged to return due to slow load, intricacy of site structures, and response time delays (Nielson, 2000). It results in the users' negative evaluation of the site, rendering the site a virtually useless communication tool (Esrock & Leichthy, 2000). According to Kent and Taylor (1998), ease of interface is one of the rules that nonprofit activist organizations should follow to enhance communication with publics on the Web. Navigating and finding information on a Web site with ease can generate return visits from previous visitors. For profit corporate companies, Perry and Bodkin (2001) studied the components of marketing communications that successful Web sites should contain, and they found that ease of interface was a salient indicator

differentiating net income among Fortune 500 manufacturers. Those with high income designed their sites with more easy usability functions than those with low income.

Nevertheless, relatively little research has been done in examining ease of access in NPO Web site analyses. Given that one experiences ease of interface when visiting the first page of a whole site, it is important to explore the usability of the site on its home page because it impacts visitors' impressions and whether or not they will continue to explore the site and even return to the site in the future. Thus, the first research question asks:

Q1: How do NPOs use ease of interface functions on their Web pages?

### **NPOs and Usefulness of Information**

The functions of the Web from an audience perspective address that an audience is goal directed to accomplish personal needs of information, communication, entertainment, transaction, and sociability (Chan-Olmstead & Park, 2000; Kaye, 1998; Papacharissi & Rubin 2000). As a Web surfer attempts to evaluate a site's value, based on his or her assessment of the needs to be met, the content availability of the front and overall pages of the Web site will have a great impact on that impression. Particularly to NPOs that generally value relationships with governments, other profit and non-profit organizations, and other publics, Web sites emerge as a primary source for communication with those entities by offering relevant content that the entities seek. Taylor et al. (2001) suggested that the dialogic principle of a Web site is based on usefulness of information. Therefore, the principle information on a NPO Web site serves as a predictor of users' positive impression and a catalyst of return visits.



Target visitors of a Web site evaluate the site based on overall content. With respect to this, Esrock and Leichty (2000) proposed 5 indices of the structures of Fortune 500 corporations including: investor index, customer index, press index, internal audience index, and image index. That is, for a desirable Web site, investors, customers, and press should be able to find pertinent information meeting their needs. And the study suggested that Web typologies be developed and practitioners think about the placement of navigational and interactive features to best meet users' needs. Accordingly, the effectiveness of a NPO Web site will be influenced by its ability to demonstrate these features to its target users.

Additionally, a NPO site needs to update content regarding important social issues. Donors, volunteers, and investors will visit NPO Web sites to find relevant information and links for contribution or involvement. To maintain a good public image, various types of information including supporting messages for public policy should be on the Web site. A NPO site should be a crucial motivational forum for members, volunteers, and trustees to dedicate themselves in the support of organizational goals. Information about the organization, for visitors, for regular members, for communities, or for governments is a potential mechanism for users' positive impression of a NPO site. The review of literature regarding content of organizations' Web sites indicates that affluent sources of information available will have a positive influence on users' evaluation. Hence, we ask a question of the attractiveness of NPO Web sites from an audience perspective.

Q2: How do NPOs use useful information functions on their Web sites?

### **NPOs and Relational Communication**

One of the benefits that the Web serves as a public relational platform is its relational communication potential. Relational communication is either a synchronous or asynchronous channel for interactive communication with Web users. The importance of relational communication on NPO Web sites has been emphasized by several past studies. For example, Taylor et al. (2001) term this function as “generation of return visit” and “dialogic loop” which is defined as incorporation of interactivity. It cannot be considered fully relational communication if it does not offer and follow through in two-way communication.

The two-way communication on the Web provides less social context cues and leads to feelings of anonymity, reduced self-regulation, and reduced self-awareness pertaining to relational communication (Wood & Smith, 2001). According to social context cue theory, the lack of social context cues (e.g., nonverbal face-to-face communication) can foster greater personal independence, getting one out from under the constraints of social control (Kiesler, Siegel, & McQuire, 1984). NPO sites then, can be used as forums for divergent voices, where visitors share and exchange opinions in interactive settings. The importance of relational communication holds true among NPOs to strengthen existing relationships (Hill & White, 2000). In the context of NPOs' building relationships with publics, Johnson (1997) examined the use of the Web among public relations practitioners and found that some felt that the Web “impersonalized” public relations. In other words, sharing ideas and information with lower divulgence on personal identity leads to active communication among participants. Accordingly, when visiting a NPO Web site, the users may attempt to exhibit self-absorbed behavior, to

display little differentiation among the people of different status, to act more uninhibited through two-way communication tools such as bulletin board systems (BBS) or e-mails. Then, NPO sites need to have interactivity functions to induce more participation from users. Hence, the Web site for an organization can be a place for previously unknown publics to gather to construct social meanings (Cozier & Witmer, 2001).

Because the interaction of users on a NPO site is influenced by the presence of two-way communication functions, what the users expect to derive from a NPO site would logically be based on the anticipated Web utilities (e.g., presence of an online discussion forum). Since it seems that a user impersonalizes oneself on a NPO site, Web users will be more likely to be candid in expressing opinions about social issues. Thus, this study proposes that the degree of relevancy between organizational goals and presence of relational communication functions on NPO Web sites will largely determine the site's usefulness for public relations. Through communication mechanisms, the NPO site visitors can utilize e-mail click, feedback forums, chat rooms, online polling, surveys, or a guest book. Thus, we ask another research question:

Q3: How do NPOs use relational communication functions on their Web sites?

### **NPOs and Organizational Characteristics**

With respect to the antecedent market factors that might influence different approaches in Web site content, the Web site content analysts have long advocated that elements of "market structure" (i.e., net income and expense to sales ratio) indicate a firm's status. Applying the concept of market structure to NPO research, NPOs' organizational traits, including a variety of financial activities, can be used to measure their current status and compare them with Web development.

One of the significant elements in the discussion of structure among organizations is net income (Perry & Bodkin, 2002). It is assumed that organizational goals such as donation, volunteering, investment, and shared organization networks are more likely to be available to NPOs with high net income. Since NPOs' eventual goal is to return the revenue to society via services, expense also is an important organizational trait of NPOs to measure. Those organizations with better expense to service ratios are not only more efficient but also better investment for interested publics. Then, it is expected that NPOs' high income and expense are indicators to predict their success in achieving organizational goals both online and offline.

Perry and Bodkin (2002) suggest that public relations of Web site marketing communications among Fortune 500 manufacturers are differentiated in the market characteristics such as R&D, sales ratio, and net income. The Web sites of corporate companies with higher sales, net income, and R&D expenses were more likely than those with low income and expense to provide public relations information, shareholder information, and ease of interface functions. For media firms, media type, affiliations, and market ranking were the potential factors of the differences in promoting programs, news content, or communicating with the audiences among media Web sites (Chan-Olmstead & Park, 2001; Lin & Jeffres, 2001). However, virtually no study exists about the relationship between content of NPO Web sites and organizational traits. Examination of this subject can provide NPO professionals and researchers with an effective guideline to evaluate NPOs. Thus, we ask:

Q4: Are there any links between the content of NPOs Web sites and organizational traits such as net income and expense?

## Method

### Sample

The overall methodology involved a content analysis of NPOs' Web sites. A sample of the 100 largest NPOs in the United States compiled by the NonProfit Times (<http://www.nptimes.com/Nov02/sr1.html>), a business publication for nonprofit management and organizations, was used for the study. The NonProfit Times is read by over 85,000 full-time nonprofit executive/management professionals nationwide (Sinclair, 2002). Since a complete NPO list for sampling frame was not readily available, a purposive sampling frame selection from the 100 NPOs list was used to derive a reliable sample with respect to organizational characteristics.<sup>1</sup> This sample was drawn from an analysis of objective data reported on the federal 990 tax form.

The NonProfit Times annually publishes a special report of the 100 NPOs, based on information provided on the federal 990 tax form, the tax form for NPOs.<sup>2</sup> Form 990 is a reporting document that all tax-exempt organizations with revenues of \$25,000 or more are required to file with the Internal Revenue Service. It lists all revenues and expenses for an organization as well as other important financial information. It is a public document, the only one that nonprofits are required to make available to all who ask (Sinclair, Personal E-mail Interview, December, 2002). An official permission to use the list was acquired from the NonProfit Times.

Of interest in this study were the NPO rankings obtained through analyzing organizations' annual financial data collected from the 100 NPOs list. This study used financial data covering the fiscal year that began on July 1, 2000 and ended June 30, 2001 as was provided on the list.

### Measures and Coding Schemes

A home page has been defined by previous studies as the front door (Potter, 2002), or entry point to the site (Chan-Olmsted & Park, 2000). With this definition, this study assumed that the front page of a NPO site would contain the majority of content that visitors expect to find. Moreover, this study investigated hyperlinked pages from the front page because the linked pages would provide key information to content categories. Therefore, this study examines the complete Web sites of the organizations sampled including first and all sub-pages. Two trained coders, both graduate students, were employed to conduct the coding tasks after extensive instructions on both coding categories and analytical procedures. The coders were new communication technology majors and experienced computer and Internet users with Web site design knowledge.

The coders accessed the Web sites of the organizations and identified all types of content based on the content categories constructed for this study. Then, the coders checked all links to sub-pages to confirm the presence or agreement of the content categories. Therefore, the unit of analysis of this study is a NPO Web site including the front page and other hyperlinked sub-pages. A complete list of the variables and operational definitions for each category is provided in Table 1. Each site was coded for the presence or coders' agreement of 67 items in content categories and 4 organizational characteristics. The definitions and items of the features are as follows.

-----  
Table 1 Here  
-----

**Ease of Interface:** The items for ease of interface were gleaned from previous Web usability studies (Hallahan, 2001; Nielsen, 1997); an activist site analysis (Taylor et.

al., 2001); a study of NPO management on the Web (Rajani & Rosenberge, 1999); and a Web site analysis for profit organizations (Esrock & Leichty, 2001). The coders measured the Web sites by checking the presence or agreement of usability representation. Ease of interface was operationally defined as the level of representation of system compatibility, speed of use, writing style, ease of navigation, accuracy of use, success of search rates, and simplicity of design.

**Usefulness of Information:** This study measured usefulness of information by categorizing it into organization information, information for members, for nonmember visitors, for government officials, or for investors. The items were based on previous studies about profit or nonprofit organizations' Web site analyses (Esrock & Leichty, 2001; Perry & Bodkin, 2001; Taylor, et al., 2001). Usefulness of information was operationalized as the presence or absence of the following content categories: general organization information, promotional content, public involvement content, links to outside sources, and available information for publics.

**Relational Communication:** A NPO Web site should actively communicate with users in a synchronous or asynchronous way to maximize benefits of the Web. Since two-way communication on the Web is virtually identical regardless of type of sites, the items were drawn from several previous studies about media companies (Chan-Olmstead & Park, 2000); usability (Hallaran, 2001); and activist sites (Taylor, et. al., 2001). Relational communication was measured by the presence or absence of communication mechanisms, online data collection mechanisms, membership mechanisms, and electronic commerce mechanisms.

These 67 items were phrased in two-point options (1=yes 0=no) and coders were asked to record presence or agreement of each item because each item has its own measurement characteristics, for example, the presence or absence of system compatibility variables and agreement or disagreement in several writing styles.

**Organizational Characteristics:** From the list of NonProfit Time's annual survey of the 100 largest NPOs (Sinclair, 2002), the available and analyzable categories for organization ranking were provided in total income and income from public support as a source of income and total expense and expense for fundraising as a type of expense. Total income was a composite of public support, government support, investment, membership, program services, and other. Income from public support referred to gifts, grants, or contributions. Total expense was assessed by adding expenses associated with programs, fundraising, and administrative costs. Among these categories of expense, this study chose expense for fundraising, which provided analyzable data. Expense for fundraising refers to the costs incurred in organizing and hosting the fundraising events.

The coders sorted the organizational characteristics of the sampled NPOs based on the financial data of 2000-2001, including overall income, a source of income (public support), expense, and a type of expense (fundraising) because only those categories provided analyzable data.<sup>3</sup> Then, the data were divided into four groups based on their rankings (1-25, 26-50, 51-75, and 76-100). The organizational characteristics were coded as interval measures (1=low to 4=high).

### **Analytical Procedure**

Prior to coding the sampled sites, the coders met with the authors for tutorials on the coding method and to address any questions they had. Data collection took place



between January 20 and February 28, 2003, with 100 NPO Web sites accessed during this period. The coders first obtained Web site addresses of the sample NPOs from search engines (e.g., google, yahoo, msn). They visited each site to analyze the three content categories and completed coding sheets. Ninety-six of the 100 NPOs in the sample had Web sites at the time of the study in January and February of 2003.

The three categories of content (ease of interface, usefulness of information, relational communication) were comprised of groups of shared traits for each Web site characteristic. The coders and authors practiced coding a sample of 10 NPO sites and applying the coding schemes independently to assess the initial intercoder reliability. After the practice session, disagreements were discussed and the authors worked as disagreement arbiters. Approximately 10% ( $n = 7$ ) of the final content category items and 16% ( $n = 16$ ) of the NPOs sampled were re-assigned for subsequent coding by the authors in order to establish reliability levels. Intercoder reliability was calculated using Scott's pi. The Scott's pi's for all variables are listed in Tables 2-4, with numbers ranging from .67 to 1.00. The reliability using Scott's pi formula on 96 Web sites was .89. The most prominently disagreed items were writing style-related items. It seems that the coders had to make a decision on the Web sites' writing styles based on their self-interpretation. Dominick (2003) indicated that .75 or above was the minimum reliability coefficient when using pi. More than 95% of the variables in the present study had reliabilities that exceeded this criterion. Then, the financial characteristics (total income, income from public support, total expense, and expense for fundraising) were compared to the Web site content categories. All the data coded were entered in a file and analyzed using SPSS (Norusis, 1993).

Two-way contingency table analysis using cross-tabs were used to evaluate whether significant relationships existed between the organization characteristic variables and the Web content categories. Chi-square statistics was conducted to assess the statistical significance of the variable relationships at .05, .01, and .001. Since this study used nominal dependent variables (content categories), Cramer's V, a method of measurement based on chi-square with values range from 0 to 1, were reported to examine the relationships between the content categories and organizational characteristics.

### **Findings**

#### **RQ1: Ease of Interface Functions on NPO Web Sites**

The first research question considered usability functions on NPO sites. A completed list of the percentage of presence or agreement of the content categories is provided in Table 2.

*System Compatibility.* The sites coded were all compatible with multiple browsers such as Internet Explorer and Netscape (100%), different monitor sizes (100%), and screen resolutions (100%). The sampled organizations largely preferred simple design for their Web sites, which avoided significant compatibility difficulties.

*Speed of Use.* The NPO Web sites coded were not as graphically or textually intricate as commercial Web sites. Over 90% of the organizations coded used short scrolls of texts (93.8%), minimal navigation menus (94.8%), minimal pop-up windows (95.8%), and minimal unwanted or intrusive ads (99.0%). Nine out of ten sites only took minimal loading time, taking 1-2 seconds (91.7%) to download the whole page.

*Writing Style.* Replacing clichés with objective language (95.8%) appeared to be an important part of the organization's Web sites. A moderate number of the sites used active voice in their writing (72.9%). About 13% of the organizations used jargon on their Web sites.

*Ease of Navigation.* The organizations seemed to recognize the importance of consistency on their Web sites as all of them placed navigation bars on the majority of pages (100%), colors that symbolized the organizations (100%), and links to the front page (100%). Also, over 90% of the sampled organizations provided back links to tops of documents and main pages (97.9%) and simplified main menus (92.7%). About 60% of the organizations sampled used site maps (62.5%). Only about 19% of the organizations provided users with a glossary of terms (18.8%) on their sites.

*Accuracy of Use.* The coders observed only 5.2% of errors or abandoned searches when they used search functions. The organizations' use of language on their Web sites was predominantly consistent (99.0%). Nonetheless, only 13.5% of the organizations provided an online help menu option. Over half of the coded sites used identifiable URLs (54.2%), making finding these organizations easy for the casual surfer. Also, the organizations included meta tags on their HTML source codes so that their sites could appear in search engine results (100%).

*Simplicity of Design.* Although most of the sites coded used narrow text columns (94.8%), few sites provided a text-only version for the users who were not in favor of graphics (3.1%). This finding was predictable as the authors realized that the sites, compared to commercial sites, were relatively simple in design and not in great need of a text-only version. This interpretation was supported by the use of minimal animation with

high tech sound by the organizations sampled (94.8%) and three-quarters of the sampled organizations relied minimally on graphics (76%).

-----  
Table 2 Here  
-----

### **RQ2: Usefulness of Information Functions on NPO Web Sites**

The second research question considered if the sampled NPO Web sites were the providers of useful information. A list of the percentage of presence or agreement of the content categories is provided in Table 3.

*General Organization Information.* Except for speeches from the organization's president (28.1%), most of the organizations included press releases (87.5%), size information about the organization (82.3%), logos and icons (94.8%), and organizational history (95.8%). The organizations predominantly used their Web sites to promote their identities.

*Promotional content.* The attempts to promote the organizations' goals and responsibility were observed in the presence of policy issue statements (81.3%), mission statements (93.8%), and community service information (81.3%). However, information about social responsibility was moderately present (79.2%) and roughly one third of the sampled organizations used advertising marketing strategies on their sites (30.2%).

*Public Involvement Content.* The organizations were less active in attracting and retaining their members and site visitors. Few organizations provided statements inviting visitors to return (2.0%) and encouraging visitors to bookmark the site (1.0%). It seemed that the sampled organizations tended to stick to the philosophy of NPOs that emphasizes voluntary participation. Meanwhile, many sites detailed the information of how to

become affiliated with the organization (97.9%) and contribute money (90.6%). However, this finding indicated that still about 10% of the organizations did not use the Web as a public donation platform. About 64% of the organizations sampled included a breakdown of monetary contribution on their Web sites.

*Links to Outside Resources.* The analysis revealed that the organizations sampled were not likely to cooperate with other NPOs on the Web. Only 8.3% of the organizations provided links to other NPO sites. However, they were effective in making internal connections, with over half of the sampled sites providing links to local branches (59.4%).

*Information for Publics.* Compared to the inclusion of contact information (100%) and legal disclaimer/privacy policy (90.6), fewer than 50% of the sites offered downloadable graphic images (26.0%), downloadable files/documents (47.9%), an indication of update date and time (44.8%), or announcements of regularly scheduled news forums (10.4%). A moderate number of the organizations placed calendars of events (58.3%) and annual reports (74.0%). The number of annual reports on the sampled sites demonstrates the growing trend of including this information to investors and interested publics, although it is not required by the Securities and Exchange Commission as with profit organizations.

-----  
Table 3 Here  
-----

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

**RQ3: Relational Communication Functions on NPO Web Sites: The Use of Communication, Online Data Collection, Membership, and E-Commerce Mechanisms**

The third research question considered interactivity functions on NPO sites. A completed list of the percentage of presence or agreement of the content categories is provided in Table 4. While more than 85% of the organizations sampled provided visitors with email addresses, fewer than 10% of the sites included interactive functions such as discussion forums (8.3%), chat rooms (4.2%), online polls (3.1%), and online surveys (2.1%).

In regards to communication mechanism, fewer than 50% of the sites provided feedback forms (44.8%). The organizations' simple site design was likely a factor for the few number of bulletin boards or chat rooms, which generally require an intricate technical construction process. Pertaining to the online data collection mechanism, the organizations tended to avoid interactive functions on their sites such as online polls and online surveys. Instead, a fairly moderate number of organizations (67.7%) provided an updated information request function. Over two-quarters of the sites sampled provided an interactive function of the opportunities to join the organization via online forms (57.3%). Finally, less than a quarter of the sampled organizations used an online shopping mechanism on their Web sites (29.2%).

-----  
Table 4 Here  
-----

**RQ4: The Content Categories of NPO Web Sites and Organizational Characteristics**

*Total Income.* Total income of the sampled organizations consisted of public support, government support, investment, membership, and program services. Although

only a few relationships between the total income and content categories of NPO Web sites were significant, some important findings emerged (see Table 2-4). In regards to ease of interface functions, a strong relationship was found between total income and the presence of image maps with a Cramer's  $V$  of .477 ( $p < .001$ ). In relation to writing style, the higher the total income of the organizations sampled, the more likely active voice was used in the Web site's writing style ( $V = .325$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and the less likely the sites used jargon ( $V = .286$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The organizations with a site map also demonstrated a relationship to total income ( $V = .389$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Specifically, the organizations with medium-low (51-75) (31.7%) and high income (1-25) (30.0%) used a site map more frequently than those with medium-high and low income. Those organizations with high total income were more likely to use explanatory labels ( $V = .302$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and easily identifiable Web addresses ( $V = .323$ ,  $p < .05$ ) on their Web sites. Particularly, the organizations with medium-high income (26-50) (31.2%) used more explanatory labels than the three other ranked groups of organizations.

With respect to the relationships between total income and usefulness of information functions, a strong association was revealed between total income and indications of update ( $V = .408$ ,  $p < .01$ ), followed by links to local branches ( $V = .326$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and logos and icons to create a sense of identification ( $V = .298$ ,  $p < .05$ ). It was notable that the organizations with medium-low (51-75) (33.3%) and high income (1-15) (33.3%) used links to local branches more frequently than did the other two groups of the organizations. In regards to the relationships with relational communication functions, only one communication item: the presence of feedback form was related to total income ( $V = .330$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Interestingly, the organizations with low (76-100) (23.3%) and

medium-high income (26-50) (41.9%) used more included feedback forms than did the other two groups of the organizations.

*Income from Public Support.* The organizations sampled that earned income from public support such as gifts, grants, or contributions used minimal animation with high tech sound ( $V = .307, p < .05$ ) and simplified main menus ( $V = .297, p < .05$ ) on their Web sites. The organizations with low income from public support (75-100) (25.87%) used more simplified main menus than those with high income (1-25) (22.0%). Regarding usefulness of information functions on NPO Web sites, those organizations with high income from public support tended to include more legal disclaimer/privacy policy ( $V = .315, p < .05$ ) and provided downloadable files/documents ( $V = .346, p < .05$ ) than the other three groups of the organizations. The organizations with medium-low income from public support (51-75) (37.0%) were more likely than those with medium-high income from public support (26-50) (13.0%) to provide downloadable files/documents. Only one significant relationship was found between income from public support and relational communication: the presence of an online shopping function ( $V = .293, p < .05$ ). It is somewhat surprising to reveal that those NPOs with low income from public support (76-100) (42.9%) were more likely than those with high income from public support (1-25) (21.4%) to use an online shopping function on their Web sites.

*Total Expense.* Total expense was measured by adding the expense of programs, fundraisings, and administrations. There were significant relationships between total expense and the presence or agreement of image maps ( $V = .446, p < .001$ ); easily identifiable Web addresses ( $V = .381, p < .01$ ); avoiding jargon ( $V = .301, p < .05$ ); and simplified main menus ( $V = .297, p < .05$ ) on their Web sites. In particular, those NPOs



sampled with low expense (76-100) (27.0%) were more likely than those with high expense (1-25) (22.5%) to use simplified main menus.

In regards to usefulness of information functions, the organizations with high total expense included more links to local branches ( $V = .463, p < .001$ ) than did the organizations with low total expense. The relationship between total expense and legal disclaimer/privacy policy ( $V = .342, p < .05$ ) showed that the organizations with low expense (76-100) (25.3%) tended to provide more legal disclaimer/privacy functions than did the organizations with high expense (1-25) (21.8%). No significant relationship was observed between total expense and relational communication functions on the NPO Web sites sampled.

*Expense for Fundraising.* The amount spent for a variety of fundraising events by sampled organizations was only related to the "simplified main menu" item ( $V = .297, p < .05$ ) among ease of interface functions on NPO Web sites. The organizations with medium-high expense for fundraising events (51-75) (27.0%) tended to provide more simplified main menus than did the organizations with high expense for fundraising events (1-25) (22.5%). In relation to usefulness of information functions, those organizations with high expense for fundraising events tended to include more information about social responsibility ( $V = .462, p < .001$ ) than organizations with low expense for fundraising events. Along with this finding, high expense for fundraising events was associated with more links to local branches ( $V = .365, p < .01$ ); community service information ( $V = .332, p < .05$ ); and clear statements about organizational positions on policy issues ( $V = .313, p < .05$ ). No significant relationship was found

between expense for fundraising events and relational communication functions on the NPO Web sites sampled.

### **Discussion**

This study explored the extent to which nonprofit organizations utilize the benefits of the Web to reach their organization's public relations goals. The content analysis used ease of interface, usefulness of information and relational communication as areas of analysis to determine how well the selected nonprofit Web sites were meeting standard web design and existing public relations practices. Furthermore, the authors were interested if correlations existed between the reported financial information and the organization's strength in meeting organizational goals via these areas. Of particular interest was to find if the collected information supported the authors' research questions on the subject.

The first research question looked at the level that the NPOs would construct Web sites that were easily accessible. The analysis found that the sites were largely constructed to utilize interface functions and improve the experience a visitor would have at the site. The sites were simple in their design and easy to navigate with minimal graphics, back links to tops and home pages, presented accurate information in a manner that largely used active voice and avoided the use of clichés and jargon. The simple design also translated into faster download times and no compatibility issues between browsers. However, this simple design does not always translate into effective site management because these organizations generally have less money to spend on creation and maintenance of their site. Therefore, the simple design of the selected Web sites did create a faster download time, but, as will be discussed later, these sites largely did not

attempt to create any interactive links with their potential publics via relational communication devices. Thus, simple is not always better.

Secondly, the research questioned the usefulness of information found on the NPO sites. This is especially important to this type of sites because they are largely donor and volunteer based and therefore must provide information that will be beneficial to interested publics. The analysis found that the Web sites were very effective in presenting organizational and promotional information, including organizational histories, access to press releases, policy and mission statements, and community service information. The sites were also effective in connecting volunteers and donors with appropriate outlets. However, the sites were largely lacking in actively getting visitors to return to the site. For example, the sites generally did not offer additional resources, such as downloadable files or announcements of news forums. Additionally, the sites did not offer a way to verify the date when information was last updated, a common method for evaluating the quality of a Web site (Barker, 2003). Furthermore, the sites were hesitant to connect visitors with related NPOs. Although this last finding may be due to the constant struggle for funding, it is a well known marketing practice that including the name of your competition still gets their name publicized.

The third research question addressed how NPOs used relational communication devices on their Web sites. The supporting idea for the question proposes that the degree of relevancy between organizational goals and presence of relational communication functions on NPO Web sites will largely determine the site's usefulness for public relations. In these relational communication efforts, the NPO sites were largely lacking. Although they did offer e-mail addresses as methods of contact and allowed people to

request additional information on-line (largely through e-mail), they did not offer the opportunity for synchronous communication with the organization. There were very limited opportunities for discussion forums or chat rooms. Even attempts at asynchronous communication, beyond e-mail, such as polls or surveys or purchases via on-line shopping were limited. The authors believe these findings are in line with findings from the first research question. The simplistic design of the sites means that the selected NPOs have not fully explored the potential available in using Web sites to interactively connect with publics and instead are still using their sites as repositories of information. Although resources, both financial and in personnel, to develop interactive sites with relational communication components can be limited in NPOs, the benefit to their public relations efforts is obvious. These findings show that these NPOs are not fully utilizing benefits of Web sites as part of their overall public relations efforts.

Finally, the research questioned if there were possible links between NPOs' financial status and Web site content. The organizations were broken into four categories based on their total income, income from public support, total expense and expense for fundraising. Within each of these financial categories, the nonprofit organizations were grouped with 1-25 equaling high income or expense, 26-50 as medium-high income or expense, through 76-100 as low income or expense. Of the more significant findings in total income were the correlations to ease of interface. The NPOs with higher income levels had more explanatory labels, easily identifiable Web addresses, and active writing styles on their sites. However, it was surprising to find that NPOs with the lowest levels of public support were more likely than those with high levels of public support to use an online shopping function for relational communication. In considering total expense for

programs, fundraising, and administrative costs, organizations with high total expense provided more links to local branches when compared to those with low total expense. But the opposite was true when examining total expense and disclosure of privacy information. Finally, the highest levels expended for fundraising costs was linked with more information about social responsibility, links to local branches, community service information, and statements regarding positions on policy issues. When constructing links between the NPOs income and expenses, the authors expected higher income to be an indicator of online (and offline) success in meeting organizational goals. Although the organizations with the highest level of income and amount expended for fundraising did offer more relevant information and contacts in an easy interface, they still did not utilize the relational communication devices to interact with potential publics. In fact, the opposite was found regarding the use of online shopping features. Therefore, in presenting themselves as a worthy investment for time and financial resources, the higher income selected NPOs are not fully achieving the public relations goal of creating a dialogic loop with publics for thorough understanding and are limiting their future resources. Reasons for this finding are difficult to determine, especially considering that these NPOs would be most likely to have the resources available to construct Web sites with relational communication devices. However, these NPOs may be relying on more traditional models of two-way communication and not considering the possibilities available through a more dialogic approach.

Overall, the analysis proved what existing studies have already stressed. The selected NPOs are effectively using the Web to present traditional public relations materials and connect with publics. However, the organizations are largely unsuccessful

in making interactive, relational communications with publics. They are not effectively using the Web to connect with audiences via polls, surveys, chats, bulletin boards, and other technological advances which the Web can provide. Furthermore, they are not taking advantage of the freedom that people feel in responding and interacting with organizations on-line. The anonymous nature of the Internet could open a true dialogic loop between NPOs and potential publics. This loop would be beneficial in providing updated information about these publics and the best public relations methods to reach them.

These organizations need to be integrating these elements into their Web sites, both to meet the needs of their publics and to maintain the standards for effective two-way communication with their publics as emphasized by the two-way communication model (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). Practitioners working for these organizations need to understand that to remain marketable to publics, they need to offer the same services available at for profit organizations' Web sites. More effectively using the Web as a medium will allow these NPOs to potentially boost their volunteer, donor, and fundraising opportunities. For these organizations, which are reliant on the public support, they must actively and continually market themselves in the best and most proactive manner their existing budgets will allow. Given the lower relative expense associated with using the Web as a medium, NPOs should actively try to integrate more relational communication devices into their existing sites.

Although this study provides important, previously unexplored areas of public relations research and the influence of the Web into nonprofit public relations practices, it is not without limitations. One restraint of the current study is that the sample was

derived from an existing pre-published list and therefore provided only preexisting variables for analysis. Furthermore, the sample was rather small with 100 original Web sites on the published list. Another drawback of the sample used was that it analyzed only large leading NPOs, thus excluding the mid-sized and smaller NPOs nationwide. Finally, the study was conducted in a single time period and would be more accurate in a longitudinal analysis of the NPOs sites over several months or a year to see what updates are made, if any, to the Web sites.

Regardless of these limitations, the research provides a benchmark for analysis of content on nonprofit organization's Web sites. Future studies should verify the accuracy of findings from the current content analysis by obtaining a distinct sample for analysis. Additional studies should also further determine the skills levels of the public relations practitioners responsible for the organization's Web site creation and should question the organization's overall proficiency in utilizing the Web. From an alternative perspective, it is necessary to learn how much NPOs rely on outside firms for the creation and maintenance of Web sites and determine their overall experience with these outsourced services to accurately present the organization's goals and messages. Finally, future studies should consider the visitors' impressions of the Web sites and could question whether the organization's intended Web message is translating to members of potential publics.

### Endnotes

---

<sup>1</sup> For an official permission to use the list and correct understanding of terms of forms, the authors contacted the staff writer of the NonProfit Times Magazine (<http://www.nptimes.com>) through e-mail communication. The authors asked the structure of the list that consisted of the definitions of the categories that indicated organization ranks. The categories included total income, sources of income, expenses, types of expenses, and other.

<sup>2</sup> This study used the categories included in form 990 which consisted of the statements about NPO activities, reasons for NPO status, support schedule, lobbying expenditure by electing or nonelecting public figures, and information regarding transfers to and transactions and relationships with noncharitable exempt.

<sup>3</sup> The other items in the two categories contained many missing data that were impossible to use for analyses. Those items for the sources of income category included government, investment, membership, program services, and other. The items for the expenses category were programs and administration. Such categories as total assets, value of investments, total net change in net assets, unrestricted assets, temporarily restricted, and permanently restricted were provided in the data, but they were not analyzable either.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

295



## References

Abels E. G., White, M. D., & Hahn, K. (December, 1997). Identifying user-based criteria for Web pages. Internet Research, 7, 252-262.

Barker, J. (2003). Evaluating Web Pages: Techniques to Apply & Questions to Ask. URL (Consulted Jan. 2003):

<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/Evaluate.html>

Baskin, O., Aronoff, C., & Lattimore, D. (1997). Public Relations: The Profession and the Practice (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston, MA: McGraw Hill.

Chan-Olmstead, S.M. and Park, J.S. (2000). From On-air to Online World: Examining the Content and Structures of Broadcast TV Stations' Web Sites. Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly, 77(2), 321-339. Corby, K., & Sowards, S. (2000).

Authoring specialized Web sites: The education book reviews Web site. References Services Review, 28 (1), 47-54.

Cozier, Z. R., & Witmer, D. F. (2001). The development of a structuration analysis of new publics in an electronic environment. In R. L. Heath (Ed). Handbook of Public Relations (pp. 615-623). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Esrock, S. L., & Beichty G. B. (2000). Organization of corporate Web pages: Publics and functions. Public Relations Review, 26 (3), 327-344.

Gleason, M. (January, 20, 1997). Edelman sees niche in Web public relations. Advertising Age, 68, 30.

Grunig, J. E., & Hunt, T. (1984). Managing Public Relations. New York: Holt.

Hallahan, K. (2001). Improving public relations web sites through usability research. Public Relations Review, 27, 223-239.

Hill, L. N., & White, C. (Spring, 2000). Public relations practitioners' perception of the World Wide Web as a communications tool. Public Relations Review, 26 (1), 31-51.

Johnson, M. A. (1997). Public relations and technology: Practitioner perspectives. Journal of Public Relations Research, 9, 213-236.

Kaye, B. K. (1998). Uses and gratifications of the World Wide Web: From couch potato to Web potato. The New Jersey Journal of Communication, 6 (1), 21-40.

Kelly, K. S. (1993). Public relations and fund-raising encroachment: Losing control in the non-profit sector. Public Relations Review, 19 (4), 349-365.

Kensicki examines public service use of Web. (2003, Winter). The Murphy Reporter, 29.

Kent, M. L., & Taylor, M. (1998). Building dialogic relationships through the World Wide Web. Public Relations Review, 24 (3), 321-334.

Kiesler, S., Siegel, J., & McQuire, T. W. (1984). Social psychological aspects of CMC. American Psychologist, 39, 1123-1134.

Lee, T. E., Chen, J. Q., & Zhang, R. (Spring, 2001). Utilizing the Internet as a competitive tool for non-profit organizations. Journal of Computer Information Systems, 26-31.

Lin, C. A., & Jeffres, L. W. (2001). Comparing distinctions and similarities across Web sites of newspapers, radio stations, and television stations. Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly, 78 (3), 555-573.

Marken, G. A. (1995). Getting the most from your presence in cyberspace. Public Relations Quarterly, 40, 36-37.

Mitra, A. (1997). Diasporic Web sites: Ingroup and outgroup discourse. Critical Studies in Mass Communication 14 (2), 158-181.

Nielsen, J. (2000). Designing Web usability: The practice of simplicity. Indianapolis, IN: New Riders Publishing.

Norušis, M. J. (1993). SPSS: SPSS for windows base system user's guide Release 6.0. Chicago, IL: SPSS Inc.

Papacharissi, Z. (2002). The Self Online: The utility of personal home pages. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 46 (3), 346-368.

Papacharissi, Z., & Rubin, A. M. (2000). Predictors of Internet use. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 44 (2), 175-196.

Perry, M., & Bodkin, C. D. (2002). Fortune 500 manufacturer web sites: Innovative marketing strategies or cyberbrochures. Industrial Marketing Management, 31, 133-144.

Rouner D., & Camden, C. (1988). Not-for-profit appear to lack PR sophistication. Public Relations Review, 14, 31-44.

Sinclair, M. (November, 2002). One-third declined in total revenue. URL (Consulted Dec. 2002): <http://www.nptimes.com/Nov02/sr1.html>

Sinclair, M. (December, 2002). Personal communication via E-mails.

Taylor, M., Kent, M. L., & White, W. J. (2001). How activist organizations are using the Internet to build relationships. Public Relations Review, 27 (3), 263-284.

White, C., & Raman, N. (1999). The World Wide Web as a public relations medium: The use of research, planning, and evaluation in Web site development. Public Relations Review, 25, 405-419.

Wilcox, D. L., Ault, P. H., Agee, W. K., & Cameron, G. (2001). Essentials of Public Relations. New York, NY: Longman.

Wimmer, R. D., & Dominick, J. R. (2003). Mass Media Research: An Introduction. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Wood, A. F., & Smith, M. J. (2001). Online Communication Linking Technology, Identity, & Culture. Mahwah, NJ: LEA.

Table 1. Operational Definitions of Web Content Categories

	<b>Definitions</b>
<b>Ease of Interface</b>	
1. System Compatibility	The presence or agreement of compatibility with multiple browsers, monitor size compatibility, and screen resolutions
2. Speed of Use	The presence or agreement of short scrolls of text, minimal navigation menus, minimal pop-up windows, minimal unwanted or intrusive ads, and minimal loading time
3. Writing Style	The presence or agreement of writing in active voice, deleting excess clauses, writing concisely, using short words, avoiding jargon, and replacing clichés with objective language
4. Ease of Navigation	The presence of navigation bars on majority of pages, color and typographic coding of similar classes of information, back links to tops of documents and main pages, simplified main menus, site map, links to the home page, image maps, and glossary of terms
5. Accuracy of Use	The presence or agreement of errors and abandoned searches, explanatory labels, consistent use of language, a search feature or a link to a search engine, online help, easily identifiable URLs ( <a href="http://www.redcross.org">www.redcross.org</a> ), and including meta tags
6. Simplicity of Design	The presence or agreement of using narrow text columns, providing a text-only version, minimal graphic reliance, and minimal animation with high tech sound
<b>Usefulness of Information</b>	
1. General Organization information	The presence of press releases, speeches from president, composition and size of an organization's member/supporter, logos and icons to create a sense of identification, and organizational history
2. Promotional Content	The presence of clear statement about organizational positions on policy issues, statements on the philosophy and mission of the organizations, information about social responsibility, community service information, and promotional ads about the organization
3. Public Involvement Content	The presence of details on how to become affiliated with the organization, information about how to contribute money, appealing to visitors with statements inviting them to return, encouraging visitors to bookmark, and charity information (breakdown of monetary contribution)
4. Links to Outside Resources	The presence of links to other NPO sites and links to local branches
5. Information for Publics	The presence of downloadable graphic images, downloadable files/documents, indication of update (the date and time/current news), announcement of regularly scheduled news forums, calendars of events, legal disclaimer/privacy policy, annual report, and contact information
<b>Relational Communication</b>	
1. Communication Mechanism	The presence of email addresses, feedback form, discussion forum/Bulletin Board, and chat room
2. Online Data Collection mechanism	The presence of participation in online poll (s), participation in online survey, and request updated information from organization online
3. Membership Mechanism	The presence of opportunities to join organization via online forms
4. Electronic Commerce mechanism	The presence of online shopping via either phone or the Internet

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

300

Table 2. Ease of Interface Functions on NPO Home Pages

	% of Orgs Contain or Agree	Relationship with Org. Characteristics†			
		Total Income	Public Support Income	Total Expense	Fundraising Expense
<b>1. System Compatibility (Reliability)</b>					
Compatibility with browsers (1.00)	100.0%				
Monitor size compatibility (.87)	100.0				
Screen resolutions (.92)	100.0				
<b>2. Speed of Use</b>					
Short scrolls of text (.79)	93.8	.155	.185	.248	.076
Minimal navigation menus (.90)	94.8	.076	.197	.198	.196
Minimal pop-up windows (.80)	95.8	.165	.006	.158	.204
Minimal unwanted or intrusive ads (.87)	99.0	.194	.178	.188	.173
Minimal loading time (.94)	91.7	.091	.183	.138	.227
<b>3. Writing Style</b>					
Writing in active voice (.67)	72.9	.325*	.111	.173	.198
Deleting excess clauses (.79)	92.7	.122	.133	.077	.125
Writing concisely (.80)	91.7	.200	.185	.251	.230
Using short words (.86)	93.8	.076	.258	.187	.187
Avoiding jargon (.67)	87.5	.286*	.260	.301*	.244
Replacing clichés with objective language (.90)	95.8	.138	.006	.143	.140
<b>4. Ease of Navigation</b>					
Navigation bars on majority of pages (.94)	100.0				
Color and typographic coding of similar classes of information (.78)	100.0				
Back links to tops of documents and main pages (.76)	97.9	.140	.143	.140	.140
Simplified main menus (.98)	92.7	.225	.297*	.297*	.297*
Site map (.96)	62.5	.389**	.095	.211	.232
Links to the home page (.92)	100.0				
Image maps (.89)	60.4	.477***	.261	.446***	.171
Glossary of terms (.87)	18.8	.185	.093	.140	.082
<b>5. Accuracy of Use</b>					
Errors and abandoned searches (.92)	5.2	.195	.196	.196	.075
Explanatory labels (.75)	80.2	.302*	.137	.282	.264
Consistent use of language (.98)	99.0	.173	.183	.173	.173
A search feature or a link to a search engine (.94)	81.3	.226	.188	.242	.164
Online help (.91)	13.5	.143	.275	.163	.046
Easily identifiable URLs ( <a href="http://www.redcross.org">www.redcross.org</a> ) (.90)	54.2	.323*	.248	.381**	.190
Including meta tags (.87)	100.0				
<b>6. Simplicity of Design</b>					
Using narrow text columns (.89)	94.8	.199	.237	.196	.196
Providing a text-only version (.80)	3.1	.198	.193	.191	.193
Minimal graphic reliance (.91)	76.0	.183	.118	.137	.129
Minimal animation with high tech Sound (.93)	94.8	.166	.307*	.161	.198

N=96.

†Cramer's V correlation coefficients are reported here to measure the strength of the relationships.

\*p&lt;.05; \*\*p&lt;.01; p&lt;.001

Table 3. Usefulness of Information Functions on NPO Home Pages

	% of Orgs Contain or Agree	Relationship with Org. Characteristics†			
		Total Income	Public Support Income	Total Expense	Fundraising Expense
<b>1. General Organization Information</b>					
Press releases (.99)	87.5%	.029	.154	.089	.244
Speeches from president (.92)	28.1	.243	.206	.139	.107
Composition and size of organization's member/supporter (.83)	82.3	.239	.092	.177	.131
Logos and icons to create a sense of identification (.97)	94.8	.298*	.088	.160	.198
Organizational history (.79)	95.8	.138	.006	.011	.255
<b>2. Promotional Content</b>					
Clear statement about organizational positions on policy issues (.92)	81.3	.113	.241	.151	.313*
Statements on the philosophy and mission of the orgs. (.99)	93.8	.099	.258	.191	.253
Information about social responsibility	79.2	.095	.139	.223	.462***
Community service information (.98)	81.3	.085	.151	.269	.332*
Promotional ads about the organization (.93)	30.2	.132	.220	.133	.127
<b>3. Public Involvement Content</b>					
Details on how to become affiliated with the organization (.87)	97.9	.140	.143	.140	.143
Information about how to contribute money (.80)	90.6	.206	.177	.204	.233
Appealing to visitors with statements inviting them to return (.94)	2.1	.140	.143	.152	.143
Encouraging visitors to bookmark (.88)	1.0	.173	.178	.188	.178
Charity information (breakdown of monetary contribution) (.97)	63.5	.260	.066	.326*	.219
<b>4. Links to Outside Resources</b>					
Links to other NPO sites (.97)	8.3	.091	.009	.102	.016
Links to local branches (.76)	59.4	.326*	.214	.463***	.365**
<b>5. Information for Publics</b>					
Downloadable graphic images (.87)	26.0	.168	.188	.150	.164
Downloadable files/documents (.80)	47.9	.252	.346**	.239	.192
Indication of update (the date and time/current news) (.86)	44.8	.408**	.179	.232	.071
Announcement of regularly scheduled news forums (.92)	10.4	.145	.276	.055	.119
Calendars of events (.99)	58.3	.135	.200	.252	.127
Legal disclaimer/privacy policy (.92)	90.6	.261	.315*	.342*	.109
Annual report (.97)	74.0	.174	.181	.200	.280
Contact Information (.89)	100.0				

N=96.

†Cramer's V correlation coefficients are reported here to measure the strength of the relationships.

\*p&lt;.05; \*\*p&lt;.01; \*\*\*p&lt;.001

Table 4. Relational Communication Functions on NPO Home Pages

	% of Orgs Contain or Agree	Relationship with Org. Characteristics†			
		Total Income	Public Support Income	Total Expense	Fundraising Expense
<b>1. Communication Mechanism</b>					
Email addresses (.99)	85.4%	.155	.207	.093	.118
Feedback form (.98)	44.8	.330*	.134	.116	.221
Discussion forum/Bulletin Board (.93)	8.3	.023	.009	.158	.189
Chat room (.97)	4.2	.165	.209	.159	.158
<b>2. Online Data Collection Mechanism</b>					
Participation in online poll (s) (.87)	3.1	.095	.197	.098	.104
Participation in online survey (.89)	2.1	.140	.143	.143	.150
Requesting updated information from organization online (.79)	67.7	.108	.190	.243	.180
<b>3. Membership Mechanism</b>					
Opportunities to join organization via online forms (.79)	57.3	.194	.217	.264	.194
<b>4. Electronic Commerce Mechanism</b>					
Online shopping via either phone or the Internet (.92)	29.2	.097	.293*	.098	.247

†Cramer's V correlation coefficients are reported here to measure the strength of the relationships.  
\*p<.05; \*\*p<.01



Running head: GOOD, BAD AND UGLY

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly of How the General Public  
Views PR Practitioners: The Results of a Hybrid Survey/Experiment  
Employing a Nationwide Sample

by

Coy Callison  
Assistant Professor  
Texas Tech University  
School of Mass Communications  
Box 43082  
Lubbock, TX 79409-3082  
(806) 742-3385  
coy.callison@ttu.edu

Paper accepted for presentation in the Public Relations Division at the 2003 annual meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication in Kansas City, Missouri.

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly of How the General Public  
Views PR Practitioners: The Results of a Hybrid Survey/Experiment  
Employing a Nationwide Sample

Abstract

Public perception of PR practitioners was measured using a telephone survey with a source manipulation experiment interwoven into a standard opinion poll. The nationwide sample (N=593) revealed that sources affiliated with the organization on whose behalf they speak are viewed more negatively than unaffiliated sources. Additionally, PR practitioners were judged no more critically than other affiliated sources. Finally, a multi-item measure of public relations in general demonstrated that perceptions of practitioners are stable across demographics.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly of How the General Public  
Views PR Practitioners: The Results of a Hybrid Survey/Experiment  
Employing a Nationwide Sample

Introduction

Recent public opinion surveys and source credibility experiments have not painted a flattering picture of public relations. Both have labeled practitioners as spokespersons that the public highly doubts and have ranked them behind almost every other information source imaginable, including pollsters, student activists, and funeral directors. As a result of these findings, researchers have been quick to relegate practitioners to working in the wings, out of the public eye, and speaking through other company mouthpieces. These conclusions, however, have been tempered by claims of awkward research procedures, poor measurement of constructs, and research participant pools not accurately representing the overall U.S. population. This study attempts to speak to these methodological shortcomings by including in the research population members of all households in the contiguous United States and employing a hybrid telephone survey/experiment that allows for a spokesperson manipulation to more accurately gauge perceptions of public relations practitioners and their ability to serve as quality information sources. Additionally, general perceptions of practitioners are garnered using multiple items capable of being scales.

Literature Review

Credibility is the cornerstone attribute public relations practitioners must possess if they have any hopes of influencing an audience's perceptions or attitudes (Budd, 2000; Judd, 1989). From Hovland and Weiss' work (1951) during the middle of the last century to Priester and

Petty's research (1995) as the millennium ended, scholars have established credibility and its counterpart, trustworthiness, as the key source and message attributes necessary in communicating persuasive messages. Without credibility, the annals of research would suggest that any hopes of effectively garnering support for an espoused position are slight if present at all (O'Keefe, 2002; Perloff, 1993).

The volumes of research labeling the importance of credibility has not been disregarded by the public relations industry especially considering the evidence that exists demonstrating the public's lack of faith in practitioners being fully forthright (PR deserves its low credibility marks, 1999.) Perhaps the most revealing of the studies damning the industry is one conducted by the Public Relations Society of America itself. In September 1998, PRSA sponsored, along with the help of the Rockefeller Foundation, a telephone survey where 1,000 respondents were asked to rate the credibility of sources of information in general on a four-point scale anchored by "very credible" and "not at all credible" (The National Credibility Index, 1999). Of the 44 information providers rated by each respondent, "public relations specialist" finished third from the bottom, just above "famous entertainer" and "TV or radio talk show host" but behind "famous athlete," "pollster," and "student activist" among others. Incidentally, "Supreme Court justice" and "teacher" finished first and second respectively.

Research published two years later echoed the findings concerning negative public perception of practitioners. In this study, experimental methods were employed using teachers, whose demographics closely match those of the average newspaper reader, as research participants. These participants read one of two news stories with information presented attributed to either a public relations practitioner or a company spokesperson whose job title was not revealed (Callison, 2001). With all text in the articles held constant across message condition

other than identification of the information source as either a public relations specialist or a more non-descript company spokesperson, analyses revealed that participants were much more critical of the PR source and the organization employing the source than his/her unlabeled counterpart and accompanying organization. More precisely, the public relations source was perceived as less likely to be telling the truth, more dishonest, and less trustworthy. The author ultimately suggested that the negative perception of public practitioners was due, in part, to a perceived reporting bias (see Eagly, Wood, & Chaiken, 1978), where audiences see information sources as limited by situational constraints (i.e. organization affiliation) from taking an unbiased stance on an issue.

No doubt, the public and public relations practitioners themselves understand that company spokesperson are, to some extent, paid advocates for an organization, and as such are mandated to possess a reporting bias to some extent (Murphy, 2001). It would seem none fault public relations practitioners for taking their employing organization's side in a discussion; but it should come as no surprise that spokespersons who are paid to present their employers in the best possible light are not always seen as stalwarts of honesty, which often leads to motives being questioned. In fact, Sallot (2002), using a mixed participant pool of students and mall shoppers found that perceptions of motives were the key indicator of how people evaluate public relations and its practitioners. Through experimental manipulations, four brief news articles were created detailing a press conference held by a fictitious manufacturer of laser printers that had launched a recycling program. Manipulations centered on the motives of the organization involved with one manipulation employing a "selfish" backgrounder that explained the organization planned a recycling subsidiary and the program would ensure raw materials. Another backgrounder, labeled by the researchers as "altruistic," stated that company executives

personally supported conservation and that the company's sole objective with the program was to make a positive contribution to society. A "mixed" backgrounder explained that good corporate citizenship results in favorable publicity and profits while serving social interests. A final "control" backgrounder detailed no motive. The results suggested that motives were questioned and participants were critical of information and its source when a "personal" benefit to the organization seemed to be behind an activity and its accompanying communications. The author concluded, as could be expected, that in order to enhance credibility and trustworthiness, purely altruistic motives should be announced—and other motives, if present, concealed.

If audiences distrust PR practitioners and their employers when possible company benefits are assumed to result from their communications (Durham 1997; Sallot, 2002), it would seem that the very nature of the public relations industry, which involves guarding organization reputation, is at the root of its credibility problems. How can a practitioner, whose job it is to position her company in the best possible light, do so when the very public she is trying to influence doubt her honesty any time she speaks well of her employer? One remedy that has been suggested is filtering organizational positive information through third-party sources (Callison, 2001; Lamons, 2002; Murphy, 2001) eliminating any easy attribution of bias.

Research investigating the effects of organizational affiliation on public perception of spokespersons has indeed revealed that when it comes to communicating company positive news, any source is a good source as long as it is not viewed as working solely on behalf of the benefiting organization. In fact, experimental research employing sources of various organizational affiliation refuting negative claims has shown that sources identified as a company spokesperson are viewed, by a student subject pool, as less credible than unaffiliated sources providing the same refutational information (Callison & Zillmann, 2002). Equally

interesting, sources labeled as outside experts hired by the organization to investigate company-negative claims were viewed as equally credible as governmental agency experts investigating negative claims independently.

It would seem that affiliation must be clear and company ties must be absolute in order for the perceptions of bias to come into play and taint attitudes toward communications and communicators. Again, this points to public relations practitioners working in a no-win situation. Any organization-positive communication stemming from an organization itself, and especially from a PR practitioner employed by the organization, would seem to be unquestionably perceived as lacking credibility. As it stands, public opinion polls have shown that the public rates practitioners poorly in credibility indexes, and experimental research has suggested that the use of the term “public relations” harms an information source. Experimental research has also suggested that espousing positive news calls motives into question, especially when the source is seen as employed by the organization that stands to gain the most from communicative efforts. Limitations in these studies, however, have to be taken into account before drawing conclusions about public relations. The Public Relations Society of America’s National Credibility Index used a single-item measure to gauge credibility, a construct that research has shown is multidimensional (Berlo, Lemert, & Mertz, 1970; McCroskey, 1966), and the measure was taken free from any communicative context. No scenario was provided so as to allow respondents the opportunity to rate information sources in a “real life” situation. The Callison 2001 study employed only two possible sources, a public relations specialist and a generic company spokesperson. If as stated previously company affiliation influences perceptions, no manipulation was made to test internal sources against external, presumably less biased, sources. The Sallot 2002 research varied potential motives behind an announcement, but the company

spokesperson was always labeled as a public relations practitioner. With no variation in source occupation and affiliation performed, any conclusion about the effectiveness of public relations practitioners as opposed to other spokespersons is ungrounded. Finally, the Callison and Zillmann 2002 study manipulated the affiliation of the information sources employed but it did not clearly label the internal source as a public relations practitioner. The public relations position of the company spokespersons used in the article may have been assumed, but without direct testing of internal spokesperson titles, no data can be presented to bolster any claim that certain company sources are more credible than others (Durham, 1997).

The present study attempts to address these limitations by employing a hybrid of both methodologies used in the previous research and by gathering data using a “real world” context within which various sources—company affiliated and not; public relations labeled and not—communicate. Additionally, the present study employs a multidimensional scale to record perceptions of public relations practitioners. Lastly, it should be noted that the present study gauges perceptions held by a sample drawn from the overall general public and does not rely on subgroups to represent the typical information consumer.

### Hypotheses and Research Question

#### Credibility of Affiliated Spokespersons Hypotheses

Past research has suggested that perceived bias influences audience perception of spokesperson credibility and trustworthiness (Eagly, Wood & Chaiken, 1978). In research focusing on the PR industry, Sallot (2002) stated, “Audience knowledge of selfish...motives on the part of... advocates may...lead to greater distrust of public relations” (p. 152). This claim has been partially supported in experimental investigations of practitioner credibility, but researchers have yet to distinguish how sources with clear ties are perceived in contrast to sources clearly not



working on behalf of an organization. In fact, the previously described experiment (Callison & Zillmann, 2002) that pitted sources ranging in affiliation against each other blurred affiliation by employing one fictitious source who worked for an independent research firm that happened to have been hired by an accused organization. In this case, source motivation is not clear. Would a hired researcher be loyal to his craft or to the organization that had contracted his work? To further test how affiliation influences public perception, the following hypothesis directed the research:

H1a: A source directly affiliated with an organization will be viewed more negatively than a source not directly affiliated with an organization.

As a result of affiliated sources being viewed more negatively, these sources should be less persuasive in their communicative efforts. To determine how messages attributed to company-affiliated sources are perceived in contrast to messages attributed to non-affiliated sources, the following hypothesis directed the research:

H1b: Company-positive information stemming from a source directly affiliated with an accused organization will be less persuasive than the same information stemming from a source not directly affiliated with the organization.

### Credibility of Internal Spokespersons Hypotheses

When facing crises that potentially could have a profound impact on an organization and its various communities, crisis management teams often include public relations officials, legal counselors and members of top management (Lee, Jares, & Heath, 1999). Past research has suggested that attaching the words “public relations” to a spokesperson ruins any chance of a positive audience reaction (Callison, 2001). Previously published research, however, has not investigated the influence of different internal organizational affiliations against one another. The

present research pits various company-affiliated sources against each other in an effort to determine if reporting bias and the resulting negative perceptions are attributed equally across all internal spokespersons. To determine if clearly labeled public relations practitioners are viewed more negatively than other internal, company-affiliated sources, the following hypothesis directed the research:

H2a: A clearly labeled public relations source will be viewed more negatively than a source not clearly labeled as a public relations source.

Again as in H1b, negatively viewed sources should also be less persuasive in their communicative efforts. To determine if public relations sources are less persuasive than other internal sources, the following hypothesis directed the research:

H2b: Company-positive information stemming from a public relations source will be less persuasive than the same information stemming from a source not clearly labeled as a public relations source.

#### Perception Scale Research Question

Data that result in claims that public relations is “a tainted term” (Holmes, 2003, pg. 9) are often taken using single-item measures (National Credibility Index, 1999). Because subtle differences in perception are better measured using indexes composed of multiple components, the following research question guided the research:

RQ1: How will the general public indicate it perceives public relations practitioners on a multi-item scale and the individual items composing the scale?

#### Influence of Demographics on Perceptions Research Question

Additionally, research has suggested that respondent demographics affect perceptions of credibility across all information sources (National Credibility Index, 1999). As public relations

practitioners are asked to influence audiences ranging widely in demographic characteristics, the following research question guided the research:

RQ2: Do demographics such as gender, age, and level of education influence perceptions of public relations practitioner credibility as measured on a multi-item scale?

## Method

### Overview

US households were contacted through a telephone survey center, and qualifying individuals were asked to respond to a series of questions concerning perceptions of public relations practitioners and other professionals who may speak for companies during times of crisis. In addition to a common set of questions that all respondents were asked, one of four spokesperson conditions was randomly assigned to respondents, and measures related to the condition were employed.

### Respondents

English speaking persons over the age of 18 were eligible respondents. A purchased list of 3890 contiguous-US household telephone numbers served as the initial sample. Of these numbers, 662 were not called, and 597 were business numbers, fax numbers or numbers that had been disconnected. A total of 2595 numbers were deemed to represent households, and of these 919 eligible respondents were contacted. Ineligible non-English speaking respondents answered 36 calls. From the households where an eligible person answered the telephone, callers completed 293 interviews. As the goal was to record 500 interviews, two other number lists were generated from the first. Two randomly-generated digits were added to all numbers from the initial list resulting in an additional 7780 telephone numbers. For example, the random digits 5 and 7 were added to all initial numbers transforming (768) 639-4412 to (768) 639-4417 and

(768) 639-4419. These newly generated numbers had a higher problem incidence but nonetheless resulted in 262 additional completed interviews from the 2117 numbers actually used. In these additional calls, 1206 calls resulted in an eligible person actually answering the telephone. Ultimately, the rate of eligible, answering households who responded to the survey was 26.1 percent. This cooperation rate seems to be in line with recent survey research and reflects the declining response rates resulting from increased use of answering machines, caller identification systems, and the increased magnitude of telephone solicitation (Massey, O'Connor, & Krotki, 1997).

### Procedure

Trained student callers conducted the telephone survey from a 15-station telephone bank housed at a large Southwestern university. Calls were made Feb. 17 – 20, Feb. 24 – 27, and March 3 – 5 nightly from 5:30 p.m. CDT to 9 p.m. CDT. States in the Eastern Time Zone were called from 5:30 p.m. CDT to 8 p.m. CDT; states in the Central Time Zone from 6 p.m. CDT to 9 p.m. CST; states in the Mountain Time Zone from 6:30 p.m. CDT to 9 p.m. CDT; and states in the Pacific Time Zone from 7:30 p.m. CDT to 9 p.m. CDT. Callers recorded call disposition noting completed interviews, no answers, answering machines, refusals, language barrier, disconnects, fax numbers, and business numbers. Numbers that resulted in answering machines or no answers were called a maximum of seven times.

Callers introduced themselves to potential respondents by giving their name and university affiliation, providing a statement concerning the academic purpose of the call, and promising no attempt to sell goods or services. Callers then asked to speak to the person at least 18 years of age who experienced the most recent birthday. This method of selecting respondents

has proven effective at ensuring broad representation as demographics are equally distributed across the calendar year (Salmon & Nichols, 1983).

### Data Collection and Measures

A computer assisted data entry system prompted callers through the questionnaire, and responses were entered directly into a computer data file hosted on a main server. The measures were designed to collect two types of data through a joining of experimental and survey methods. The questionnaire was composed of three parts: a section on respondent demographics, a section on attributes of public relations practitioners, and a section that required respondents to listen to and respond to a randomly assigned fictitious scenario involving either a company president, a lawyer, a public relations practitioner or a newspaper journalist denying charges against a company. The demographics section always concluded the survey, but the sections on practitioner attributes and spokesperson perception were rotated between first and second positions. The reasoning behind this decision centered on an effort to keep responses to one section of the survey from systematically tainting responses to another. For example if questions concerning the fictitious scenario always followed the practitioner attribute section, which asked questions about ethics and honesty, the possibility exists that respondents would be prompted by previous questions to respond in a biased manner to questions that follow.

In an attempt to overcome limitations of previous public relations perception surveys that did not require respondents to view practitioners in light of an actual communication situation, the study contained a section, as described above, that varied spokespersons across a fixed condition. Following the rules of between-subject design, computer software randomly assigned one of four spokesperson conditions to respondents. In all cases, callers read a brief scenario to respondents with the spokesperson mentioned in the scenario varying between a company

president, a lawyer representing the company, a public relations specialist working for the company, or a newspaper reporter responding to accusations. The text of the scenario was as follows: “A company named Chapman Enterprises has been accused of polluting a stream that flows through your town. (*The president of Chapman*) (*The public relations specialist for Chapman*) (*A lawyer representing Chapman*) (*A reporter for the local newspaper*) is interviewed on television and says that Chapman did not pollute the stream.” The three questions that accompanied the scenario asked if the spokesperson was telling the truth, if the spokesperson was acting ethically, and if the respondent believed it would be safe to swim in the stream. Each question was accompanied by a 11-point scale anchored by “Definitely No” at 0 and “Definitely Yes” at 10.

For the public relations practitioner perception section of the survey, eight statements borrowed from past credibility research (Berlo, 1970; Callison, 2001; McCroskey, 1966) were adapted for the telephone survey environment. On an 11-point scale anchored by “Strongly Disagree” at 0 and “Strongly Agree” at 10, callers gathered responses to the statements “Public relations practitioners are (*intelligent*), (*trustworthy*), (*uniformed*), (*dishonest*), (*credible sources of information*), (*unethical*), (*virtuous*), and (*biased sources of information*).

## Results

### Description of the Sample

A cleaning of all data resulted in the responses of 593 individuals being left for analysis. Of these, 57.7% were female, and 42.3% male. Additionally, the mean respondent age was 42.7 years (SD = 15.7) while the modal age was 45 and the median 42. In terms of highest level of education achieved, 6.9% attended high school but did not graduate, 17.9% possessed a high

school degree; 30.4% attended college but did not earn a degree, 30.5% graduated from college, and 14.3% held graduate degrees.

### Credibility of Affiliated Spokespersons Hypotheses

H1a and H1b predicted that sources closely affiliated with an organization would be less credible than sources not directly employed by the organization. For data analysis, the company public relations practitioner, the company lawyer and the company CEO were combined into a single “affiliated source” group; the local newspaper journalist served as the “unaffiliated source.” Additionally, education level was collapsed into a “high school degree or less” category and a “college experience or more” category, and age was collapsed using a median split where all respondents 42 years old and younger were grouped as were all respondents 43 years old and older. These groupings allowed for a 2 (affiliation level) X 2 (education level) X 2 (age level) X 2 (gender) full factorial design. Demographics were included in analyses to help produce a more in-depth investigation of public perception of affiliation. Because initial statistical tests uncovered no main effects or interactions involving age level or gender, they were excluded from subsequent analyses.

Both H1a and H1b were supported. Analyses revealed a main effect for level of affiliation on perceptions of the source telling the truth ( $F(1, 589) = 10.06, p < .01$ ) and on perceptions of the source acting ethically ( $F(1, 589) = 4.07, p < .05$ .) Overall, respondents rated affiliated sources as less likely to be telling the truth ( $M = 3.40, SD = 2.78$ ) compared to unaffiliated sources ( $M = 4.79, SD = 3.06$ ) and affiliated sources as less ethical ( $M = 3.76, SD = 3.07$ ) than unaffiliated sources ( $M = 5.00, SD = 3.15$ ).

Analyses also revealed significant interaction effects involving level of education and affiliation for both measures. Affiliated sources fared better in terms of perceptions of telling the

truth with lower educated respondents ( $\underline{M} = 3.65$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 3.02$ ) than they did with higher educated respondents ( $\underline{M} = 3.32$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 2.69$ ). The finding reversed itself, however, on unaffiliated sources with lower educated respondents rating the spokesperson more negatively ( $\underline{M} = 4.03$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 3.18$ ) than did higher educated respondents ( $\underline{M} = 5.01$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 3.00$ ),  $F(1, 589) = 3.97$ ,  $p < .05$ . This interaction effect was consistent across the measure of ethical behavior. Lower educated respondents rated affiliated sources as more ethical ( $\underline{M} = 4.02$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 3.36$ ) than did higher educated respondents ( $\underline{M} = 3.67$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 2.96$ ), but nonaffiliated sources rated more positively with higher educated respondents ( $\underline{M} = 5.33$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 3.15$ ) than they did with lower educated respondents ( $\underline{M} = 3.81$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 3.57$ ),  $F(1, 589) = 6.79$ ,  $p < .01$ .

H1b predicted that information attributed to affiliated sources would be less persuasive than information attributed to sources not seen to be working directly for the organization. While neither source type was able to achieve scores above a 3 on a 0 to 10 scale with a higher number indicating more faith placed in the spokesperson, affiliated sources were less persuasive ( $\underline{M} = 1.68$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 2.75$ ) than were unaffiliated sources ( $\underline{M} = 2.58$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 3.27$ ), ( $F(1, 589) = 5.77$ ,  $p < .05$ ) at convincing respondents that the stream a company has been accused of polluting was safe for swimming. Analyses revealed no significant interactions between education level and the measure of persuasiveness.

### Credibility of Internal Spokespersons Hypotheses

H2a and H2b predicted that public relations practitioners would be less credible than other internal, affiliated sources. As outlined in the discussion of results relating to H1a and H1b, education level, age level, and gender were included in initial analysis. Mimicking the previous findings, initial statistical investigations revealed no simple main effects or interactions involving age level or gender, and the two factors were excluded from subsequent analyses.



Neither H2a nor H2b was supported. Respondents rated a company's public relations practitioner ( $M = 3.60$ ,  $SD = 2.71$ ), lawyer ( $M = 3.05$ ,  $SD = 2.73$ ), and president ( $M = 3.65$ ,  $SD = 2.87$ ) as equally unlikely to be telling the truth as compared to a local newspaper reporter ( $M = 4.79$ ,  $SD = 3.06$ ,  $F(3, 585) = 3.98$ ,  $p < .01$  (post hoc tests conducted using Student-Newman-Keuls). Incidentally, analyses also revealed a significant interaction effect between job title and education level,  $F(3, 585) = 4.53$ ,  $p < .01$ . Respondents in the low education group rated PR practitioners and lawyers more favorably ( $M = 3.82$ ,  $SD = 2.93$ ;  $M = 4.00$ ,  $SD = 3.13$  respectively) than did their more educated counterparts ( $M = 3.53$ ,  $SD = 2.64$ ;  $M = 2.68$ ,  $SD = 2.47$  respectively). The other sources, a company president and a local newspaper reporter, fared better with higher educated respondents ( $M = 3.87$ ,  $SD = 2.84$ ;  $M = 5.01$ ,  $SD = 3.00$  respectively) than they did with the lower educated respondents ( $M = 2.94$ ,  $SD = 2.90$ ;  $M = 4.03$ ,  $SD = 3.12$  respectively).

On the question of acting ethically, respondents rated a company's public relations practitioner ( $M = 3.97$ ,  $SD = 3.15$ ), lawyer ( $M = 3.78$ ,  $SD = 3.21$ ), and president ( $M = 3.52$ ,  $SD = 2.80$ ) as equally ethical as a local newspaper reporter ( $M = 4.99$ ,  $SD = 3.29$ ,  $F(3, 585) = 2.15$ ,  $p = .09$ ). Analyses did reveal, however, a significant interaction effect between job title and education level on the ethical behavior measure,  $F(3, 585) = 2.84$ ,  $p < .05$ . These findings mirrored those on the previous measure of "telling the truth." Respondents in the low education group rated PR practitioners and lawyers more favorably ( $M = 4.24$ ,  $SD = 3.86$ ;  $M = 4.35$ ,  $SD = 3.24$  respectively) than did their more educated counterparts ( $M = 3.89$ ,  $SD = 2.91$ ;  $M = 3.56$ ,  $SD = 3.19$  respectively). Also as earlier, company president and local newspaper reporter fared better with higher educated respondents ( $M = 3.59$ ,  $SD = 2.77$ ;  $M = 5.33$ ,  $SD = 3.15$  respectively) than

they did with the lower educated respondents ( $\underline{M} = 3.30$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 2.95$ ;  $\underline{M} = 3.81$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 3.57$  respectively).

H2b predicted that information attributed to public relations sources would be less persuasive than information attributed to other source types. Data analyses revealed that the company's public relations practitioner ( $\underline{M} = 1.87$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 3.07$ ), lawyer ( $\underline{M} = 1.60$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 2.52$ ), and president ( $\underline{M} = 1.61$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 2.69$ ) were equally unpersuasive in communicating the safety of swimming in the stream when compared to the local newspaper reporter ( $\underline{M} = 2.58$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 3.27$ ),  $F(3, 585) = 2.64$ ,  $p < .05$  (post hoc tests conducted using Student-Newman-Keuls). No significant interaction effects were revealed.

#### Perception Scale Research Question

The descriptive statistics associated with the eight individual items employed to measure public relations practitioner credibility are provided in Table 1. As can be seen in the Overall Mean column of the table, scores grouped around the measure mean (5). In fact, taking into account that a lower score is more positive on the measures of *uninformed*, *dishonest*, *unethical*, and *biased*, public relations practitioners scored better than the midpoint on all items other than *virtuous* and *biased*. Practitioners received the highest score on the *intelligent* measure and the lowest on the *biased* measure.

In order to group the single-item measures into a more complex multi-item scales, the eight individual ratings were subjected to a principal component analysis without rotation of components. With the ratings of *uninformed*, *dishonest*, *unethical*, and *biased* reverse coded, three factors emerged accounting for 65.0 % of the variance (30.5%, 21.1%, and 13.4 % respectively).

The first factor, labeled *truthful*, showed high loadings on three traits, namely *trustworthy* (.79), *credible* (.73), and *virtuous* (.61). A correlation analysis revealed that the traits showed a high degree of inter-item consistency ( $\alpha = .74$ ) indicating that the items were measuring a similar, single trait. This warranted the construction of a composite measure of *truthful* by averaging the ratings across all items.

The second factor, labeled *moral*, showed high loadings on the three traits – reverse-coded *dishonest* (.57), reverse-coded *unethical* (.63), and reverse-coded *biased* (.541). Averaging the ratings on the three items created a composite measure of *moral*. Inter-item consistency proved sufficient for this combination ( $\alpha = .62$ ).

The third factor, labeled *smart*, showed high loadings on *intelligent* (.50) and the reverse-coded *uninformed* (.68). Analysis revealed a low level of inter-item consistency between the two items ( $\alpha = .24$ ). Due to this low value, no composite score could be created for the third factor.

To answer the question of how the general public perceives PR practitioners as indicated on a multi-item scale as posited in RQ1, simple means of the indexes were calculated. The overall mean score on the *truthful* measure was 5.02 ( $SD = 2.05$ ), slightly above the scale midpoint. The overall mean score on the *moral* measure was 4.64 ( $SD = 2.02$ ), slightly below the scale midpoint.

#### Influence of Demographics on Perceptions Research Question

The first research question allowed for the creation of a scale that could be employed to measure public perceptions of PR practitioners. With a scale in place, the influence of demographic characteristics on views of public relations could be examined. In fact, researchers surveying the general public concerning public relations in the past have stated that demographics such as age and education influence perceptions of credibility in sources. (The

National Credibility Index, 1999). These researchers, however, did not statistically validate their claims.

Data analysis in the present study revealed that perceptions of practitioners were fairly stable across demographics. The only significant difference within gender, age or educational level groups appeared on the single-item measure of *virtuous* with men viewing PR practitioners as less virtuous than women viewed them,  $t(591) = 2.02, p < .05$ . All means are provided in Table 1. Approaching significance was the difference between the genders on practitioners being *intelligent, trustworthy*, and the single-item measure of *credible*,  $t(591) = 1.82, p = .07$ ,  $t(591) = 1.86, p = .06$ , and  $t(591) = 1.80, p < .07$  respectively. In each case, men were more critical of practitioners than were women. Additionally, the difference between low educated respondents and high educated respondents on perceptions of practitioner bias approached significance,  $t(591) = 1.95, p = .052$ , with those more highly educated seeing practitioners as more biased as compared to the less educated counterparts. No differences approached significance across the individual measures between young and old.

Employing the composite scores created through factor analysis, it was revealed that males view practitioners as less truthful ( $M = 4.80, SD = 1.95$ ) than females view them ( $M = 5.19, SD = 2.11$ ),  $t(591) = 2.32, p < .05$ . There was no difference between the genders on perceptions of practitioners being moral with men indicating a mean score of 4.56 ( $SD = 1.86$ ) and women indicating a mean score of 4.69 ( $SD = 2.14$ ),  $t(591) = 0.79, p = .43$ .

Age had no impact on perceptions of practitioners being truthful. Those 42 years old and younger rated practitioners with a mean score of 5.03 ( $SD = 1.94$ ) while those older than 42 gave practitioners a mean rating of 5.02 ( $SD = 2.11$ ),  $t(566) = 0.37, p = .97$ . Likewise, age did not

influence perceptions of practitioners being moral as the younger group's mean score was 4.64 ( $SD = 1.95$ ) and the more senior's was 4.61 ( $SD = 2.06$ ),  $t(566) = 0.19$ ,  $p = .85$ .

Finally, high and low educated respondents viewed practitioners as equally truthful ( $M = 4.98$ ,  $SD = 1.95$ ;  $M = 5.15$ ,  $SD = 2.31$  respectively),  $t(591) = .85$ ,  $p = .39$ . Likewise, the more educated did not attribute morality to practitioners any more than the less educated did ( $M = 4.62$ ,  $SD = 1.97$ ;  $M = 4.69$ ,  $SD = 2.17$  respectively),  $t(591) = .37$ ,  $p = .71$ .

### Discussion

The goal of this study was to determine how the general public views public relations practitioners. This in itself does not make this study noteworthy. Numerous research projects have been undertaken with that goal in mind. What does set this particular study apart, however, is that it attempted to measure perceptions of public relations through a combination survey/experiment where research participants not only could rate PR practitioners in a communicative setting and a real-world context, but that they could also register their opinions using a multiple-item measure in an effort to gauge the complete construct of credibility. On this level, the study has shown that experiment and survey can be married and that composites provide richer data than single items. Most important, however, is the fact that a more complete understanding of perceptions of practitioners results from the study—and the news for the PR industry is some good, some bad and some ugly.

Sources directly affiliated with an organization on whose behalf they speak were, as predicted, more negatively perceived and less effective than an independent source. This finding mimics the findings of other credibility research (Callison & Zillmann, 2002 in particular) but paints an even direr picture for public relations practitioners. Because ethically and practically a company spokesperson cannot disavow any connection to the company represented, it seems that

any attempt to communicate on an organization's behalf from the organization's own pulpit is doomed. Callison and Zillmann 2002 suggested that a company being accused of negative actions would do best to hope for an independent agent to take its side in public discourse. The present study supports that this method of crisis communication would, in fact, be most effective. What has yet to be uncovered is how an organization should pass its time in a firestorm waiting for an avenger to show up on the doorstep.

In particular, data suggested that affiliated sources are viewed as less likely to be telling the truth and less ethical than their independent counterparts. The finding in terms of telling the truth seems explicable in light of the research suggesting that company motives are often doubted, and audiences often doubt organizational intentions (Sallot, 2002). The ethics finding, however, is more troubling. Not detailing all motivations could be viewed, probably wrongly so, as a part of a savvy media plan; there is no way though to positively spin perceptions of unethical behavior.

Equally interesting is how level of education influenced perceptions of sources. College-educated respondents were more critical of affiliated sources and, on the other hand, more supportive of independent sources than their less educated counterparts. It would seem that this educated public is especially wary of source affiliation. The data does not offer an explanation for this effect or detail how the information should be used when planning communications, but assuming that a college-educated demographic serves as an important public, problems surrounding source affiliation may be even more pronounced than detailed here.

Finally, in terms of affiliation, sources viewed as married to the organization were less persuasive than the outside source at convincing the public that accusations against the organization were false. Past experimental research (Callison 2001; Callison & Zillmann, 2002)

has not linked negative perceptions of a spokesperson to lack of persuasive ability. The present study not only suggests that company spokespersons are saddled with a negative reputation, but it also suggests that their communications are not effective, providing even more convincing evidence that their use should be limited if possible.

It has been posited that a quality spokesperson can be selected from various personnel, including PR practitioners, company lawyers, CEOs and researchers (Budd, 2000; Callison, 2001; Durham, 1997; Reber, Cropp, & Cameron, 2001; Wisenblit, 1989). This study was particularly interested in determining how public relations sources rated in comparison to other internal sources. The findings in this regard could be offered up in terms of good news/bad news. The good news is that public relations were rated no more negatively or less persuasive than other affiliated sources; the bad news is that all internal sources fared poorly in comparison to an independent source. While it was not unexpected that the newspaper reporter source employed in the study would be seen most positively (see Budd, 2000, Lamons, 2003), it went against predictions that all those affiliated with the organization would rank so similarly, especially considering speculation that CEOs have taken a credibility hit due to recent corporate scandals (Dobrow, 2002) and the fact that lawyers seem to generally rate at the bottom of America's most trusted professionals (Trust in Priests, 2002). The good news is public relations practitioners are equally capable as other known company sources of representing an organization. Nonetheless, it is doubtful that PR practitioners want to be thought of as "the information source that is no worse than whatever else you could push behind a microphone."

In parceling out how demographics influenced perceptions of internal sources, data revealed that better educated respondents were more critical of the public relations practitioner and company lawyer speaking on an organization's behalf than they were of the CEO or

journalist. As before, this interaction effect reveals that the consumer group that may present the biggest obstacle in terms of communicating corporate news effectively is the highly educated demographic, one that is surely targeted in many communication campaigns.

The second component of the present study centered on measuring overall public perception of public relations practitioners independent of the experimental setting. Specifically, the use of multiple items to measure credibility that could later be combined into a composite index drove the research. On the single items, perceptions of public relations sources ranged around neutral to slightly positive. The only ratings that dipped into the negative tail of the scale were for *biased* and *virtuous*. The poor rating on *biased* comes as no surprise as research has suggested that audiences regularly question the motives behind organizational communications (Sallot, 2002) and that public relations practitioners are, in the end, employed to help an organization maintain a positive perception. The poor rating on *virtuous*, like the previous finding on organizational sources being unethical, presents more of a point of concern for the industry. Again, this study offers no remedy for these negative perceptions, but perhaps by outlining their existence along specific attributes, steps can be taken to correct misconceptions or improper actions by practitioners.

In gauging overall perceptions of practitioners, the fact that two composite measures of credibility could be created indicates that single item measures of credibility may be invalid. In particular, *credible* grouping with the measure for *trustworthy* and *virtuous*, but not with *intelligent*, the reverse-coded *dishonest*, the reverse-coded *unethical*, the reverse-coded *biased*, and the reverse-coded *uninformed* demonstrate the complexity of the credibility construct. Any attempt to portray public perception of PR practitioners must note that simply asking whether a source is credible or not does not reveal the subtle attributes that influence source effectiveness.



Finally, the comparison of perceptions across demographic groups revealed the consistency of the attitude toward PR practitioners. Comparing respondents of different genders, respondents of different age groups and respondents of different education levels, the only difference on the individual items that emerged was the males viewed practitioners as less virtuous than females viewed them. On the composite measures of *truthful* and *moral*, the only difference that surfaced was that males perceived practitioners as less truthful than did their female counterparts. While these differences should not be overlooked, it should be noted that of the 30 comparisons made, only two demonstrated significant discrepancy between perceptions. This finding indicates that no one group, of those investigated, is any more critical of the profession than the others. However, the fact that education level seemed to play such an important role in measures taken during the experimental portion of the study suggests two conclusions: 1) attitudes taken using a real-world context differ from attitudes taken using simple recall and recount measures, and 2) more research is needed into how different demographics react to organizational messages and their sources.

In conclusion, the present study revealed the good (PR perceptions are fairly stable across demographics), the bad (PR practitioners are no better than other company sources), and the ugly (All company affiliated sources are negatively viewed) as it relates to public perception of the industry and those working within it. No doubt other good and bad can be found in the results. Overall, however, like other similar studies this one does not place practitioners in an overly positive light. Also like other similar studies, this one does little to offer solutions to the problem. Ultimately, the value in this study may lie in the fact that it confirms the findings of past experimental research in a much broader population, and it outlines the importance of multi-item measures in future surveys of practitioner credibility.

## References

- Berlo, D. K., Lemert, J. B., & Mertz, R. J. (1970). Dimensions for evaluating the acceptability of message sources. Public Opinion Quarterly, *33*, 563-576.
- Budd, J. F., Jr. (2000). The incredible credibility dilemma. Public Relations Quarterly, *45* (3), 22-26.
- Callison, C. (2001). Do PR practitioners have a PR problem?: The effect of associating a source with public relations and client-negative news on audience perception of credibility. Journal of Public Relations Research, *13*, 219-234.
- Callison, C., & Zillmann, D. (2002). Company affiliation and communicative ability: How perceived organizational ties influence source persuasiveness in a company-negative news environment. Journal of Public Relations Research, *14*, 85-102.
- Dobrow, L. (2002, September 30). End of the CEO cult? Corporate PR heads rethink how much a CEO should personify a company. PR Week, *5* (38), 17.
- Durham, D. (1997). How to biggest the bang out of your next spokesperson campaign. Public Relations Quarterly, *42* (2), 38-41.
- Eagly, A. H., Wood, W., & Chaiken, S. (1978). Causal inferences about communicators and their effect on public opinion. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, *36*, 424-435.
- Hovland, C. I., & Weiss, W. (1951). The influence of source credibility on communication effectiveness. Public Opinion Quarterly, *15*, 633-650.
- Judd, L. R. (1989). Credibility, public relations and social responsibility. Public Relations Review, *15* (2), 34-40.
- Lamons, B. (2002, September 16). Advertising drops ball, new champ is PR. Marketing News, *8*.
- Lee, J., Jares, S. M., Heath, R. L. (1999). Decision-making encroachment and cooperative relationships between public relations and legal counselors in the management of organizational crisis. Journal of Public Relations Research, *11*, 243-270.
- Massey, J. T., O'Connor, D., & Krotki, K. (1997). Response rates in random digit dialing (RDD) telephone surveys. Proceedings of the American Statistical Association Survey Research Method Section, 707-712.
- McCroskey, J. C. (1966). Scales for the measurement of ethos. Speech Monographs, *33*, 65-72.

- Murphy, P. (2001). Affiliation bias and expert disagreement in framing the nicotine addiction debate. Science, Technology, & Human Values, 26, 278-299.
- The National Credibility Index. (1999). [http://www.prsa.org/\\_about/prsafoundation/nciIndex.asp](http://www.prsa.org/_about/prsafoundation/nciIndex.asp).
- O'Keefe, D. J. (2002). Persuasion: Theory and research (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Perloff, R. M. (1993). The dynamics of persuasion. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- PR deserves its low credibility marks. (1999, August). O'Dwyer's PR Service Report, 6.
- Priester, J. R., & Petty, R. E. (1995). Source attributions and persuasion: Perceived honesty as a determinant of message scrutiny. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 21, 637-654.
- Reber, B. H, Cropp, F., Cameron, G. T. (2001). Mythic battles: Examining the lawyer-public relations counselor dynamic. Journal of Public Relations Research, 13, 187-218.
- Sallot, L. M. (2002). What the public thinks about public relations: An impression management experiment. Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly, 79, 150-171.
- Salmon, C. T., & Nichols, J. S. (1983). The next-birthday method of respondent selection. Public Opinion Quarterly, 47, 270-276.
- Trust in priests and clergy falls 26 points in twelve months. (2002, November 27). [www.harrisinteractive.com/harris\\_poll/index.asp?PID=342](http://www.harrisinteractive.com/harris_poll/index.asp?PID=342).
- Wisnblit, J. (1989). Crisis management planning among U.S. corporations: Empirical evidence and a proposed framework. Advanced Management Journal, 54, 31-41.

Table 1. Mean Responses to Individual Items Employed to Measure Practitioner Credibility

Item	Overall Mean	Gender		Age		Education Level	
		Male	Female	42 & Under	43 & Over	H.S. Grad. & Less	Coll. Exp. & More
Intelligent	7.10	6.91 <sup>a</sup>	7.25 <sup>b</sup>	7.22 <sup>a</sup>	7.08 <sup>a</sup>	7.02 <sup>a</sup>	7.13 <sup>a</sup>
Trustworthy	5.04	4.81 <sup>a</sup>	5.20 <sup>b</sup>	5.06 <sup>a</sup>	4.98 <sup>a</sup>	5.04 <sup>a</sup>	5.03 <sup>a</sup>
Uninformed*	4.21	4.38 <sup>a</sup>	4.08 <sup>a</sup>	4.10 <sup>a</sup>	4.34 <sup>a</sup>	4.56 <sup>a</sup>	4.13 <sup>a</sup>
Dishonest*	4.67	4.74 <sup>a</sup>	4.62 <sup>a</sup>	4.67 <sup>a</sup>	4.68 <sup>a</sup>	4.80 <sup>a</sup>	4.63 <sup>a</sup>
Credible	5.29	5.05 <sup>a</sup>	5.46 <sup>b</sup>	5.23 <sup>a</sup>	5.35 <sup>a</sup>	5.57 <sup>a</sup>	5.19 <sup>a</sup>
Unethical*	4.65	4.69 <sup>a</sup>	4.61 <sup>a</sup>	4.65 <sup>a</sup>	4.65 <sup>a</sup>	4.76 <sup>a</sup>	4.61 <sup>a</sup>
Virtuous	4.75	4.52 <sup>a*</sup>	4.91 <sup>b*</sup>	4.79 <sup>a</sup>	4.73 <sup>a</sup>	4.83 <sup>a</sup>	4.72 <sup>a</sup>
Biased*	6.77	6.88 <sup>a</sup>	6.68 <sup>a</sup>	6.75 <sup>a</sup>	6.83 <sup>a</sup>	6.37 <sup>a</sup>	6.90 <sup>b</sup>
Intelligent	(2.56)	(2.08)	(2.37)	(2.09)	(2.32)	(2.71)	(2.09)
Trustworthy	(2.51)	(2.31)	(2.63)	(2.42)	(2.56)	(2.82)	(2.40)
Uninformed*	(2.95)	(2.85)	(3.03)	(3.00)	(2.94)	(3.14)	(2.89)
Dishonest*	(2.59)	(2.48)	(2.66)	(2.55)	(2.63)	(2.75)	(2.53)
Credible	(2.71)	(2.70)	(2.71)	(2.65)	(2.80)	(2.98)	(2.62)
Unethical*	(2.61)	(2.48)	(2.70)	(2.54)	(2.67)	(2.94)	(2.49)
Virtuous	(2.33)	(2.23)	(2.40)	(2.14)	(2.47)	(2.59)	(2.24)
Biased*	(2.88)	(2.92)	(2.85)	(2.84)	(2.91)	(3.18)	(2.76)
Sample Size	593	251	342	288	280	147	446

**Note.** All comparisons are horizontal within demographic grouping. Means are compared using *t* tests. Means within demographic grouping not sharing a subscript are significantly different at  $p < .10$ ; superscripts marked with an asterisk are significantly different at  $p < .05$ .

Items marked with an asterisk denote an item reverse coded for factor analysis.

Standard deviations are within parentheses.

All items were measured on an 11-point scale anchored by *Strongly Disagree* at 0 and *Strongly Agree* at 10. Items accompanied the following question: *Public relations practitioners are....*

Public Relations Division

**Utilizing John Rawls' "A Theory of Justice"  
To Examine the Social Utility of Contemporary Public Relations**

by

David L. Martinson  
Professor  
School of Journalism and Mass Communication  
Florida International University  
North Miami Campus  
North Miami, Florida 33181  
(305) 919-5626  
e-mail: FIUTrain@aol.com

Presented as a conference paper to the  
Public Relations Division  
Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication  
Annual Convention  
Kansas City, Missouri, July 30-August 2, 2003

**Utilizing John Rawls' "A Theory of Justice"  
To Examine the Social Utility of Contemporary Public Relations**

Even apologists for the public relations practice will acknowledge that many critics perceive practitioners as functioning in something well short of a socially responsible manner. Media scholar Stanley Baran argues that "public relations professionals are frequently equated with snake oil salespeople, hucksters and other willful deceivers."<sup>1</sup> He contends that "the term 'public relations' carries such a negative connotation that most independent companies and company departments now go by the name 'public affairs,' 'corporate affairs,' or 'public communications'."<sup>2</sup>

Two widely cited and very vocal critics of the practice, Sheldon Rampton and John Stauber, compare public relations practitioners to the Wizard of Oz. Practitioners, Rampton and Stauber, assert, "have perfected the craft of speaking in a booming, magisterial voice that inspires admiration and awe, but they fear being unmasked for what they really are--showmen who have learned to use hidden wires, smoke, and mirrors to make little men and little ideas seem grand and convincing."<sup>3</sup> The problem isn't so much that practitioners lie to the public, Rampton and Stauber argue, but rather the mindset which practitioners bring with them:

When there is no truth except what you  
create yourself, lies become unnecessary,  
even irrelevant. To lie is to respect reality

enough to falsify it. The practitioners of public relations do not falsify the truth, because they do not believe that it even exists.<sup>4</sup>

There is, of course, nothing inherently insidious from a societal good/public interest perspective about the efforts of an organization/business/governmental agency to communicate with impacted customers/publics. In fact, many who speak disdainfully about the public relations practice and public relations practitioners would be among the loudest objectors if a business or governmental agency did not attempt to communicate effectively with those who have a desire/need to know.

Critics of the practice immediately respond that it is not efforts to communicate with impacted publics to which they object. Their objection, they argue, is directed at the manner in which practitioners attempt to "spin" reality. Public relations, they contend, is directed not so much at providing useful information as it is at persuading in a manner that is disingenuous to the genuine truth. A journalism professor writing in *Quill*--the magazine of the Society of Professional Journalists--speaks for many such critics when he charges:

...the bottom line in PR is to make the client look good. If, in a given instance, it happens that truth and desired image coincide,

fine; but that is only a coincidental concern. No PR practitioner has ever been paid to tell the truth about a client whose financial practices, labor relations, product or service quality are unethical or dishonest.<sup>5</sup>

The problem with such editorial hyperbole is that it distracts from serious efforts to examine the societal utility of contemporary public relations from a broader--what one might term macro--perspective. Stated succinctly, there is a need to go beyond focusing on how particular practitioners respond in particular circumstances. Not to do so is equivalent to failing to examine the forest because one is not able to see beyond the individual trees!

#### **PR is Not a "Magic Bullet"**

Too frequently critics who focus on the short-term (micro) societal impact of contemporary public relations do not appear to be very well versed in communication theory. More particularly, they focus on the supposed impact of isolated public relations communication efforts as though each and every such attempt to influence relevant public opinion functioned much like a "magic bullet" in its effectiveness in inducing those to whom it is directed to react in the manner a practitioner desires.

It is true, of course, that at one time "experts" in communication theory assumed that even isolated media messages had an enormous and immediate impact. Such a belief evolved out of



mass society theory which tended to view:

...average people...(as) defenseless against...  
(media) influence....The fundamental assumption of  
this paradigm is sometimes expressed in the  
**hypodermic needle theory** or the **magic bullet theory**.  
The symbolism of both is apparent--media are a  
dangerous drug or a killing force that directly  
and immediately penetrate a person's system.<sup>6</sup>

Coming from such a perspective, a fear of the power of public  
relations practitioners to manipulate public opinion through  
particular communication efforts becomes logical. In effect, if  
members of the public are told in a particular communication  
message that they should jump, the only question asked will be:  
How high should we jump?

Contemporary mass communication researchers recognize the  
fallacy of the magic bullet (or hypodermic needle) theory.  
Research has clearly demonstrated that those who attend to  
particular communication messages are "simply not  
passive...(persons) who...(are) 'acted upon'."<sup>7</sup> Researchers now  
recognize that audiences expose "themselves selectively to...(media  
messages and that) **individual differences** (in psychological  
makeup), memberships in various **social categories** (age, education,  
gender, occupation, etc.), and...patterns of **social relationships**  
(with family, friends, work associates, etc.)" are critical factors  
in limiting the impact of any particular communication effort.<sup>8</sup>

Interestingly, acknowledgement that a single media message under ordinary circumstances is not a magic bullet (or hypodermic needle) has been critical to the ethical/societal justification frequently advanced by many public relations practitioners and public relations scholars who view the practitioner primarily as a **professional advocate**. Those who visualize the practitioner as essentially filling an advocacy role contend that in this role practitioners simultaneously serve the social good/public interest by assisting clients to inject client views into the "marketplace of ideas." From this perspective, practitioners serve an important social good because it is the public--made up of rational thinking persons--that in a democratic society ultimately and freely makes its choices from the multiplicity of ideas that public relations practitioners assist in placing before it. This viewpoint is perhaps best expressed by the late and legendary public relations scholar Scott Cutlip and is quoted here at some length:

The social justification for public relations in a free society is to ethically and effectively plead the cause of a client or organization in the free-wheeling forum of public debate. It is a basic democratic right that every idea, individual, and institution shall have a full and fair hearing in the public forum--that their merit ultimately must be determined by their ability to be

accepted in the marketplace. To obtain such a hearing, the idea, individual, or institution needs the expertise of the skilled advocate....

The public relations specialist contributes to the Miltonian principle of the self-righting process in a democracy...The advocate's role is essential in a democracy that must be responsive to the public will and dependent on the reconciliation of public and private interests in a mutually rewarding manner. John W. Hill saw the role of the practitioner as that of the advocate. He once wrote, "We're primarily advocates and we draw upon a deep reservoir of experience in advocating our clients' causes."<sup>9</sup>

#### **The Broader Social/Distributive Justice Question**

It is the thesis of this paper that efforts to examine the social utility of contemporary public relations must go beyond talk of an almost mystical struggle between competing ideas in the "marketplace." The examination needs to be broader because--and there is no kinder way to say this--it is simplistic to use Miltonian language in a society/world that has little resemblance to that which John Milton encountered when he wrote **Areopagitica** in 1644.

In this paper, an effort is made to examine that social

utility from a distributive/social justice viewpoint by considering how the work of the widely respected American philosopher John Rawls is relevant to investigating public relations from such a **macro** perspective. Rawls' work is relevant in this regard because his "aim is to give an account of justice that embodies a Kantian conception of equality."<sup>10</sup> This is important because too frequently efforts to explore the social justification of public relations focus, as noted, on **micro** concerns that ignore "the big picture."

Distributive justice can be defined as "a relation between the community and its members."<sup>11</sup> Social justice, on the other hand, refers to "the organization of society in such a way that the common good, to which all are expected to contribute in proportion to their ability and opportunity, is available to all the members for their ready use and enjoyment."<sup>12</sup> Viewed from this perspective, "justice is...an important concept in evaluating" the broader societal framework in which political/economic/social activity takes place--as well as the actions of the particular actors within that broader framework.<sup>13</sup>

The question of distributive and social justice becomes important in efforts to evaluate public relations from a broader social good/public interest--**macro**--perspective because it is frequently charged that the public relations profession too often performs dysfunctionally vis-a-vis broad societal concerns by providing unfair advantages to those individuals/groups/special

interests that already hold a disproportionate share of the wealth and/or power in society.

Critics taking this position contend, for example, that Cutlip is very short-sighted in asserting that public relations serves the broader common good/public interest simply by assisting clients to inject their views into the marketplace of ideas because one must question whether an **effective** marketplace of ideas exists. Jerome Barron, for example, argues that to suppose that ideas automatically compete with rival ideas in something approaching a fair and open contest in modern America is to replace a realistic view of the contemporary political/economic/social landscape with a romantic one.<sup>14</sup> Barron contends that one must differentiate what might be termed a First Amendment right to the marketplace, which all enjoy, from a **realistic** and **practical** hope of actually achieving access to it--which is too often limited to those who already enjoy a disproportionate share of political/economic/social power.<sup>15</sup>

Critics would suggest to Cutlip "that the so-called debate within the marketplace of ideas--thanks in part to the efforts of well-paid public relations practitioners--too frequently...(is skewed to the benefit of the few at the expense of the many)."<sup>16</sup> In effect, critics contend, public relations practitioners too often become something analogous to reverse Robin Hoods as they assist the rich in becoming richer while the poor become poorer thanks to the ability of those with the wealth and power to employ

public relations practitioners to assist them in their dominance of the marketplace where ideas theoretically are supposed to compete.

This becomes a question of distributive and social justice because:

Justice requires that the rich and well-placed not control the debate simply because they enjoy a disproportionate share of the resources required before one can inject his or her views into the marketplace. The demands of...justice require that practitioners not function primarily as facilitators who will enable powerful and privileged interests to transform the marketplace of ideas into a conduit for control and manipulation of the political--economic--social agenda.<sup>17</sup>

#### **John Rawls' "Theory of Justice"**

According to John Boatright, "the key to a well-ordered society is the creation of institutions that enable individuals with conflicting ends to interact in mutually beneficial ways."<sup>18</sup> He contends that "the principles of justice assist in this effort by assigning rights and duties in the basic institutions of society and distributing the benefits and burdens of mutual cooperation."<sup>19</sup>

Interestingly, talk about mutual cooperation comports rather well with the efforts of those who define the primary end/goal of public relations in terms of mutual understanding--in contrast to

the earlier cited emphasis on advocacy. According to what is frequently termed the two-way symmetric model of public relations, the public relations effort can be termed successful so long as the practitioner "brings...(various publics) together, and, as long as...(those publics) communicate well enough to understand the position of the other."<sup>20</sup> In fact, "if persuasion occurs...(at all) the public should be just as likely to persuade the organization's management to change attitudes or behavior as the organization is likely to change the publics' attitudes or behavior."<sup>21</sup>

For Rawls the very purpose of society hinges on a spirit of mutual cooperation. He asserts that "one basic characteristic of human beings is that no one person can do everything that he might do; nor a fortiori can he do everything that any other person can do."<sup>22</sup> Rawls notes that "the potentialities of each individual are greater than those he can hope to realize."<sup>23</sup> One might also add, that those particular potentialities can only be realized to their fullest potentiality in a mutually cooperative effort with others--and in that very process society/the public good will also benefit. Fagothey makes this point well when he states:

Scattered raindrops over a wide enough area may, if added together, equal the force of a waterfall, but they cannot do the work of a waterfall harnessed to a tribune. The common good is not an arithmetical sum

of each individual's contribution but something new resulting from the channeling of human energy...The economic products of an advanced civilization depend on the genius and labor of thousands of...(persons) who invented the machines, developed the processes, and continue to work them.<sup>24</sup>

Despite this need for mutual cooperation to achieve both individual and societal progress, it also remains true that individuals and organizations will frequently attempt to attain what can only be termed "conflicting ends." The key from a distributive/social justice perspective--as noted earlier--is to enable those with such self-perceived conflicting ends to pursue them in a mutually beneficial manner.

For a society to be just and mutually beneficial, individuals and groups must have an equal opportunity in striving to achieve these "conflicting ends." Rawls contends that two principles of equality must take priority:

1. Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all.

2. The principles of justice are to be ranked in lexical order and therefore liberty can be restricted only for the sake of liberty.



These are two cases: (a) a less extensive liberty must strengthen the total system of liberty shared by all, and (b) a less than equal liberty must be acceptable to those citizens with the lesser liberty.<sup>25</sup>

This means that Rawls does not require that a just and mutually cooperative society enforce some level of classless egalitarianism. Boatright notes, for example, that "the second principle recognizes...that there are conditions under which rational, self-interested persons would make an exception to the first principle...One such condition is that everyone would be better off with the inequality than without it."<sup>26</sup> An example would be role differentiation vis-a-vis professionals. Society, for instance, grants lawyers and physicians certain privileges with respect to clients in their role-defined positions that "ordinary" citizens do not enjoy. This is just because everyone is better off with that inequality than without it. Furthermore, to grant lawyers and physicians certain privileges in their role-defined positions does not subtract from the basic rights that all citizens enjoy equally. The same principle can be used to support legislation regarding reporter shield laws--legislation that exempts reporters from testifying in court under certain circumstances.

Viewed from this perspective, Rawls would likely have no problem supporting the "right" of public relations practitioners to

assist clients in injecting particular views into the marketplace of ideas **so long as that marketplace of ideas is open to all in something at least approaching a fair and just manner.** He states specifically, for example, that "we may take for granted that a democratic...(system) presupposes freedom of speech and assembly...These...are not only required by the first principle of justice but, as Mill argued, they are necessary if...(the affairs of society) are to be conducted in a rational fashion."<sup>27</sup>

Rawls also insists, however, that justice demands that the marketplace be open to all in something at least approaching a fair manner: "If the public forum is to be free and open to all...everyone should be able to make use of it."<sup>28</sup> He would explicitly tell those who defend public relations from the perspective of a simplistic advocacy model that "the liberties protected by the principle of participation lose much of their value whenever those who have greater private means are permitted to use their advantages to control the course of public debate."<sup>29</sup> This violates the principles of distributive and social justice because:

...eventually these inequalities will enable those better situated to exercise a larger influence...In due time they are likely to acquire preponderant weight in settling...(relevant political/social) questions, at least in regard to those matters upon which they normally agree, which is

to say those things that support their favored circumstances.<sup>30</sup>

Rawls would be objective to those who defend the public relations practice as it is defined in simplistic advocacy terms from a utilitarian viewpoint because such a perspective "does not give adequate attention to the way in which utility is distributed among different individuals."<sup>31</sup> Some adopting a narrow utilitarian perspective vis-a-vis the role of public relations practitioners might defend the practitioner acting in an advocacy policy if in that role he/she contributed to the overall advancement/good of society even if significant numbers of persons were effectively excluded from participation in the marketplace.

Rawls, however, contends that justice "does not allow that the sacrifices imposed on a few are outweighed by the larger sum of advantages enjoyed by the many."<sup>32</sup> It is not just to argue that "equality of opportunity means an equal chance to leave the less...(favored) behind in the...quest for influence and social position."<sup>33</sup> In effect, justice is not served in contemporary society if public relations practitioners assist clients in injecting viewpoints into a marketplace of ideas based **entirely on a negative concept of freedom which effectively excludes a substantial number of voices from being heard.**

From the perspective of a just society, freedom from restraint (negative freedom) is good only if members of that society have an opportunity to effectively exercise it (positive freedom).<sup>34</sup> The

right to inject ideas into the marketplace free of restraint is central to the democratic ideal. But that negative freedom is an empty freedom if there is no positive opportunity to exercise it. It is equivalent to philosopher William Hocking's classic example of the person lost in the desert without food and water. What is the point in telling that person that he/she is free to eat and drink if the means to that end are not available. "Unrestraint without equipment," Hocking argued, "is not liberty for any end which demands equipment."<sup>35</sup>

#### **Justice and Genuine Professionalism**

Instead of relying on arguments from 1644 to defend the social utility of what it is they do from a distributive/social justice perspective, public relations practitioners will be better served by working to build a **genuine** sense of professionalism in a greater number of their colleagues. A movement toward genuine professionalism will necessitate moving beyond Miltonian rhetoric. It means moving towards a process in which a commitment to genuine mutually beneficial two-way symmetric communication becomes the norm.

Professionals--by definition--must be dedicated to serving the common good/public interest. Professionals, according to William May, "orient to service."<sup>36</sup> Orienting to service means, in the context of this paper, recognizing that the requirements of distributive and social justice must not be ignored simply because the practitioner has a "right" to assist clients in injecting their

viewpoints into the marketplace of ideas. This certainly seems at least implicit in the declaration of another legendary figure in public relations--Carroll Bateman--when he stated: "The public interest takes precedence over the interest of those I represent."<sup>37</sup>

It is not only the public relations practitioners, of course, who have encountered difficulties addressing the tension arising between service to clients and the greater common good/public interest. Michael Bayles notes correctly that "many of the most...difficult problems in professional ethics concern conflicts between a professional's obligations to a client and to others."<sup>38</sup> Too frequently, he asserts, "discussions of these problems...appear to sacrifice society's interests to those of individual clients."<sup>39</sup> Certainly a movement toward genuine professionalism is not a panacea for all the problems/difficulties confronting contemporary public relations and public relations practitioners--it is only a step in the right direction.

It also needs to be emphasized that a movement toward professionalism does not mean that public relations practitioners must totally abandon the advocacy role. It means, rather, that such an advocacy role must be placed into the proper perspective--and be balanced against other societal claims. Bayles, in fact, proposes a test in this regard that would seem to have direct applicability to public relations:

...what balance of responsibilities...(does)

a person who may be in the role of...(an advocate) or affected person...(believe) best promotes a society with the values of governance by law, freedom, equality of opportunity, prevention of harm, welfare, and privacy. The balancing is between what people would want done for themselves as clients and the effect of such conduct upon themselves as affected third parties.<sup>40</sup>

It also needs to be underscored that a call for greater professionalism and concern regarding distributive and social justice issues does not require that each and every public relations practitioner assume a "social worker" role. Particular practitioners can continue serving the rich and powerful--just as it is in the common good/public interest that particular lawyers be permitted to represent clients with substantial resources.

What is required, is that the **public relations practice as a whole** confront the question of distributive and social justice and find ways--**as a practice generally**--to address the obvious inequities. The legal profession--in theory--maintains that every individual charged with a crime is entitled to adequate representation before a court of law. Penniless "street people" accused of a crime are entitled--theoretically--to adequate legal representation. A particular attorney, however, is not professionally required to accept a particular "street person" as a client. Similarly, every American--theoretically--is entitled to

health care in an emergency--but that is the responsibility of the medical profession as a whole. A particular physician is obviously not professionally responsible for treating each and every person requiring emergency health care. That the legal and medical professions have too often failed to respond in a just manner in this regard is not an indictment of professionalism--but rather an indictment of the failure of both fields to live up to the professional ideal.

### **Conclusions**

The considerable time public relations practitioners, scholars and educators have spent examining the ethical landscape surrounding public relations has not been time wasted. It is important that an effort be made to determine more precisely--at the micro level--what will be considered ethical conduct for those active in the field.

Those efforts will not, however, remove the societal cloud under which practitioners have labored. It will not remove that cloud because many believe that public relations, as it has evolved within the context of the contemporary American political/economic/social landscape, too often serves as a tool to facilitate a domination by the privileged and powerful interests at the macro level. In doing so, critics charge, public relations too frequently operates dysfunctionally vis-a-vis distributive and social justice.

A major problem, as underscored here, centers around the fact

that America law (the First Amendment) provides a near absolute **negative** protection for those who wish to inject particular ideas into the marketplace. Society--government--is prohibited from regulating speech. Practitioners have every constitutional right to assist clients to inject their viewpoints into the marketplace. Unfortunately, as noted, reality is such that the marketplace doesn't function in the manner envisioned by John Milton in 1644. Many do not have a **realistic** opportunity to enter into it. John Rawls would suggest this violates basic principles of justice. It means practitioners need to be more concerned about bringing about mutual understanding--and less focused on their legal right to advocate clients' positions.

John Merrill notes that the American icon Walter Lippmann recognized that freedom to enter the marketplace of ideas does not necessarily advance the truth--particularly if there is not a genuine opportunity for all ideas to enter it.<sup>41</sup> For truth to emerge, Lippmann argued, there must be a **genuine** debate. Merrill also points out that Lippmann understood that "if there is no underlying desire for the truth and no effective debate, then...(in Lippmann's words), 'the unrestricted right to speak will unloose so many propagandists, procurers, and panders upon the public that sooner or later in self-defense the people will turn to censors to protect them'."<sup>42</sup>

From a broader societal perspective, Lippmann is speaking to yet another significant danger. Clearly in the eyes of critics



public relations too often skews the debate in the direction of the privileged and powerful at the **macro** level. If large segments of the public are pushed too far, what may transpire is a movement to correct "the problem." The First Amendment rests on fragile ground. If a large number of persons perceive that their interests are not being heard within the context of the marketplace of ideas, an effort may be made to "bring things under control." What may transpire is reminiscent of the words of the military office who attempted to justify destroying a Vietnamese village by suggesting that it "was necessary to destroy the village in order to save it." It is not unimaginable that an ill advised effort to "improve" (regulate) the marketplace of ideas could effectively destroy it.

To question reliance on a marketplace model to justify the societal value of public relations, it must be noted, "is not to question...the sincerity...of...(those who advance) that theory."<sup>43</sup> It is, rather, to question--in the spirit of John Rawls--whether that theory/model does, in fact, serve the broader public good from a **macro** societal perspective within the context of contemporary political/economic/social reality. Public relations practitioners and scholars must formulate justifications for public relations that take into consideration that reality--which by definition must include responding to the demands of distributive and social justice.

**Endnotes:**

1. Stanley J. Baran, **Introduction to Mass Communication: Media Literacy and Culture** (Mountain View: CA: Mayfield, 2001), p. 247.
2. **Ibid.**
3. Sheldon Rampton and John Stauber, **Trust Us, We're Experts!** (New York: Tarcher/Putnam, 2001), p. 30.
4. **Ibid.**, p. 58.
5. Dave Berkman, "The Rush to PR," **Quill**, April 1992, p. 32.
6. Baran, **Introduction to...**, p. 318.
7. Melvin L. DeFleur and Everette E. Dennis, **Understanding Mass Communication**, 6th ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), p. 456.
8. **Ibid.**
9. Scott M. Cutlip, **The Unseen Power: Public Relations. A History** (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1994), pp. xii-xiii.
10. John R. Boatright, **Ethics and the Conduct of Business**, 4th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2003), p. 79.
11. Austin Fagothey, **Right and Reason: Ethics in Theory and Practice**, 6th ed. (St. Louis: C.V. Mosby, 1976), p. 177.
12. **Ibid.**
13. Boatright, **Ethics and the Conduct of Business**, p. 73.
14. Donald M. Gillmor, Jerome A. Barron and Todd F. Simon, **Mass Communication Law: Cases and Comment**, 6th ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1998), p. 462.
15. **Ibid.**, p. 462.
16. David L. Martinson, "A Question of Distributive and Social Justice; Public Relations Practitioners and the Marketplace of Ideas," **Journal of Mass Media Ethics**, 13(3) 1998, p. 146.
17. **Ibid.**
18. Boatright, **Ethics and the Conduct of Business**, p. 80.
19. **Ibid.**

20. James E. Grunig and Todd Hunt, **Managing Public Relations** (Fort Worth: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1984), p. 23.
21. **Ibid.**
22. John Rawls, **A Theory of Justice** (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 523.
23. **Ibid.**
24. Fagothey, **Right and Reason**, p. 248.
25. Rawls, **A Theory of Justice**, p. 250.
26. Boatright, **Ethics and the Conduct of Business**, p. 81.
27. Rawls, **A Theory of Justice**, p. 225.
28. **Ibid.**
29. **Ibid.**
30. **Ibid.**
31. Boatright, **Ethics and the Conduct of Business**, p. 80.
32. Rawls, **A Theory of Justice**, p. 4.
33. **Ibid.**, p. 106-107.
34. Fagothey, **Right and Reason**, p. 138.
35. Cited in Martinson, "A Question of...", p. 144.
36. William May, "Professional Ethics, the University, and the Journalist," **Journal of Mass Media Ethics**, 1(2) 1986, p. 21.
37. Martinson, "A Question of...", p. 149.
38. Michael Bayles, **Professional Ethics** (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1981), p. 92.
39. **Ibid.**
40. **Ibid.**, p. 99-100.
41. John C. Merrill, **Journalism Ethics: Philosophical Foundations and New Media** (New York: St. Martin's, 1997), p. 116.
42. **Ibid.**

Running head: ORGANIZATION-PUBLIC RELATIONSHIPS

Organization-Public Relationships, Organizational Representations, and the Overall Evaluation  
of Organizational Performance: A Causal Model

Sung-Un Yang  
Ph. D. Student  
University of Maryland  
Department of Communication  
2102 Skinner Building, College Park, MD 20742-7635  
(301) 477-5498  
[sungpal2002@hotmail.com](mailto:sungpal2002@hotmail.com)

James E. Grunig  
Professor  
University of Maryland  
Department of Communication  
2112 Skinner Building, College Park, MD 20742-7635  
(301) 405-6525  
[jg68@umail.umd.edu](mailto:jg68@umail.umd.edu)

Paper Presented to the Public Relations Division, AEJMC, Kansas City, MO  
July 30-August 2, 2003

(One of Top Faculty-Student Research Papers in the PR Division)

Organization-Public Relationships, Organizational Representations, and the Overall Evaluation of Organizational Performance: A Causal Model

The purpose of this paper is to explain causal relationships among organization-public relationships, organizational representations, and the overall evaluation of organizational performances. Authors posited that active communication behavior and familiarity are correlated causes of organization-public relationships, while the quality of organization-public relationships affects the overall evaluation of organizational performance directly as well as through organizational representations. Defining organizational reputation as cognitive representations held by publics in the collective level, authors measured organizational reputation separately from behavioral constructs and attitude measures to increase validity of a reputation measure. Varying types of five Korean organizations were studied with 317 residents in a metropolitan city of Korea. The results of the present study indicate that the quality of organization-public relationships significantly affects organizational representations and the overall evaluation of organizational performance in tenable models of studied organizations.

Key Words: Organization-Public Relationships; Reputation; Evaluation of Org Performances

### Organization-Public Relationships, Organizational Representations, and the Overall Evaluation of Organizational Performance: A Causal Model

There have been divergent stances between scholars and practitioners on how to demonstrate the effectiveness of public relations to an organization (Heath, 2001). Whereas public relations scholars have increased their focus on organization-public relationships (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999, 2000; L. Grunig, J. Grunig, & Dozier, 2002; Ledingham, 2001; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998, 2000), practitioners have widely embraced reputation management (Hutton, Goodman, Alexander, & Genest, 2001) to show the financial returns produced by public relations practice.

However, it is our contention that organization-public relationships and organizational reputation are not distinctive, but intertwined in a causal model and, hence, in public relations practice: The quality of organization-public relationships predicts organizational reputations and public evaluation of organizational performances, with exogenous influences such as active communication behavior and familiarity that publics have with an organization.

Methodologically, we argue that most reputation measures, in general, lack validity by blending behavioral constructs (i.e., dimensions of organization-public relationships such as trust and satisfaction), cognitive representations, and attitude measures (e.g., evaluations of social responsibility, organizational culture, and financial performance), while reputation is commonly defined as *cognitive representations* perceived by publics in the collective level.

To define organizational reputation, scholars (e.g., Fombrun, 1996; Fombrun & Shanley, 1990; Fombrun & Van Riel, 1997; Rindova & Fombrun, 1999; Rindova & Kotha, 1998) have focused on *evaluative* components of cognitive representations shared by multiple stakeholders. This operational definition of organizational reputation, as evaluative representations, is very close to *attitude*. In the psychology literature, evaluation has been suggested as the critical measure of attitudes (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Eagly and Chaiken (1993) defined attitude as “a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor” (p. 1), suggesting attitude can be inferred by measuring evaluation of attitude objects (i.e., entities that are evaluated).

Cognitive representations, however, may not always be evaluative, meaning that evaluative representations are a dimension of cognitive representations (Carlston & Smith, 1996). For this reason, J. Grunig and Hung (2002) defined organizational reputation as “the distribution of cognitive representations that members of a collectivity hold about an organization, representations that may, but do not always, include evaluative components” (p. 20). In the research on the interplay between organization-public relationships and reputation, J. Grunig and Hung (2002) empirically found that organizational representations are “not always” evaluative but include non-evaluative representations of objects, attributes, and behaviors.

Reputations measures tend to use organization-public relationships (i.e., customer loyalty or commitment in their terms), cognitive representations, and evaluation of organizational performances as indicators of organizational reputations (Jeffries-Fox Associates, March 24, 2000). Combining these distinct constructs would significantly diminish validity of a reputation measure.

Therefore, the purpose of the present paper is to explain causal relationships among organization-public relationships, organizational representations, and evaluation of organizational performances by measuring these constructs separately in a model. We propose that active communication behavior and familiarity are correlated causes of organization-public relationships, while the quality of organization-public relationships predicts the overall

evaluation of organizational performances directly as well as through organizational representations (Figure 1).

This purpose is significant because there has been minimal research on the link between organization-public relationships and organizational reputations, even if these are key concepts in public relations, except the research by J. Grunig and Hung (2002), Yang and Mallabo (2003), and Yang and Yang (in press). Scholars (e.g., Caywood, 1997; Coombs & Holladay, 2001; Fombrun, 1996; Rindova & Kotha, 1998) have increasingly suggested effects of quality organization-public relationships on favorable reputations. This study will offer theoretical and methodological insights on how the quality of organization-public relationships predicts organizational reputation and public attitudes over organizational performances, with significant implications for public relations practice.

### Conceptualization

#### *Exogenous Variables*

*Active communication behavior.* J. Grunig (J. Grunig & Disbrow, 1977; J. Grunig & Hunt, 1984; J. Grunig, 1997) has developed the situational theory of publics to explain how individuals become active publics that have consequences to an organization. His situational theory of publics has been shown to be useful for segmenting publics (Heath, Bradshaw, & Lee, 2002; Major, 1993, 1998) and for predicting the quality of organization-public relationships (Youngmeyer, 2002).

In J. Grunig's (1997) situational theory of publics, three independent variables have been identified to account for publics' active communication behavior. J. Grunig (1997) defined problem recognition as the extent to which people detect something should be done about a situation and stop to think about what to do. Constraint recognition refers to the extent to which people perceive obstacles about the situation that limit their ability to do anything about the situation. Level of involvement is defined as the extent to which people connect themselves with a situation. Therefore, J. Grunig (1997) proposed that active communication behavior in a situation is explained by high problem recognition, high level of involvement, and low constraint recognition<sup>1</sup>.

The quality of organization-public relationships would differ depending on publics' behavior to solve their problems throughout active communication with an organization; in a reflexive manner, an organization may be more actively engaged in managing quality relationships with these active publics because of their consequence on the autonomy of organizational decision-making (J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1997; L. Grunig, J. Grunig, & Dozier, 2003). Findings of Youngmeyer's (2002) study, on university department-student relationships, suggest that students' involvement significantly affects estimation of their relationships with a university department by a non-chance amount.

Therefore, for this study, we suggest the following hypothesis about the effect of active communication behavior on estimation of relationships with an organization (Figure 1):

H1: The more active the communication behavior of publics with an organization, the more quality relationships they estimate with the organization.

*Familiarity.* Familiarity is commonly referred as knowledge about an entity, often acquired by direct or indirect experience (Bromley, 2000). Sources of individual familiarity with

<sup>1</sup> For this paper, we will measure active communication behavior with "an organization," rather than about a situation. That is, for example, we view level of involvement as the extent to which participants of our study connect themselves with each of the five organizations studied for this paper.



an organization can be described as direct experience with an organization and indirect experience mediated throughout mass media (Rindova & Kotha, 1998) and social networks, or interpersonal relationships (Bromley, 1993).

About familiarity, J. Grunig and Hung (2002) coined a term “reputational” relationships (i.e., second-order relationships) to describe organization-public relationships that are not based on direct experience with an organization, differentiating from “experiential” relationships that result from direct experience (p. 20). When active communication behavior and familiarity through direct experience are present, J. Grunig and Hung (2002) proposed that organization-public relationships are more likely to affect organizational reputation, or organizational representations. Yang and Mallabo (2003) found, from their case study of a Korean activist organization, that publics with direct prior experience tended to perceive organizational reputations based on their estimation of relationships with the case organization.

We posit that active communication behavior and familiarity are correlated causes of organization-public relationships. Therefore, in addition to the preceding hypothesis about active communication behavior, the following hypothesis is suggested about the effect of familiarity on organization-public relationships (Figure 2):

H2: The more familiar publics are with an organization, the more quality relationships they estimate with the organization.

#### *Endogenous Variables*

*Organization-public relationships.* Broom et al. (2000) defined the concept of organization-public relationships as “the patterns of interaction, transaction, exchange, and linkage between an organization and its publics” (p. 18). Organization-public relationships have been suggested as a key concept to demonstrate the value of public relations to an organization (e.g., Dozier, J. Grunig, & L. Grunig, 1995) and to a society (e.g., J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1996, 2001; Kruckeberg, 2000; Ledingham, 2001; Stark & Kruckeberg, 2000). In a study of over 300 organizations in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, Dozier, L. Grunig, and J. Grunig (1995) empirically found that effective organizations differ in the affects of “quality relationships” and “conflict avoidance” that result from effective public relations programs to communicate with active publics (pp. 226-229).

It is noteworthy that, in addition to public relations, organization-public relationships as a strategic asset for an organization have been widely recognized in other fields as well. Fombrun (1996), an editor of *Corporate Reputation Review* and founder of the Reputation Institute, emphasized quality relationships as an antecedent for favorable reputation: “To acquire a reputation that is positive, enduring, and resilient requires managers to invest heavily in building and maintaining good relationships with their company’s constituents” (p. 57). Findings of Rindova and Kotha’s (1998) research also suggest that relational actions of organizations to establish interactions with constituents can affect firms’ reputation building over time.

In terms of loyalty effects, scholars in marketing (Reichheld, 1996; Peppard, 2000) have suggested that the evidence that quality relationships with publics increase the profits of firms overwhelmingly. Peppard (2000), for example, advocated relationship management by saying “retained customers [by quality relationships] are inevitably more profitable” (p. 321). Walker Information, a research firm offering a reputation measure, *Corporate Reputation Report*, highlights the importance of customer relationships in terms of customer loyalty: “Customer relationships determine business success. Companies with loyal and committed customers become market leaders; organizations without them battle to survive (Walker Information, n.d.a).

In integrated marketing communication (IMC), an increasing number of scholars (e.g.,



Caywood, 1997; Duncan & Caywood, 1996; Grönstedt, 2000; Schultz et al., 1993) have embraced the notion of “relationship management” with the extended range of target audiences from customers to multiple stakeholders. Duncan and Caywood (1996) maintained that the quality of organization-public relationships with broadened target audiences results in “a direct or indirect impact on organizational operations and profitability” (Duncan & Caywood, 1996, pp. 18-19).

Despite these benefits of organization-public relationships, Broom and Dozier (1990) pointed out difficulties in developing measures of organization-public relationships:

“Conceptually, public relations programs affect the relationships between organizations and their publics, but rarely program impact on the relationships themselves measured” (pp. 82-83).

However, there has been significant progress in developing measures for organization-public relationships. Recently, Hon and J. Grunig (1999) identified two types of relationships (i.e., communal and exchange relationships); Huang (1997, 2001) and J. Grunig and Huang (2000) identified four relationship outcomes (i.e., trust, satisfaction, control mutuality, and commitment), which can be used to measure the quality of organization-public relationships.

For this study, we focus on *relationship outcomes* to measure the quality of organization-public relationships, using the following four indicators of organization-public relationships. Trust is “the level of confidence that both parties have in each other and their willingness to open themselves to the other party” (Hon & J. Grunig, p. 3), and is comprised of underlying dimensions such as integrity (i.e., the belief that an organization is fair and just), dependability (i.e., the belief that an organization will do what it says it will do), and competence (i.e., the belief that an organization has the ability to do what it says it will do). Satisfaction is defined as “the extent to which both parties feel favorably about each other because positive expectations about the relationship are reinforced” (Hon & J. Grunig, p. 3). Control mutuality stands for “the degree to which parties agree on who has the rightful power to influence one another” (p. 3); despite the nature of power asymmetry, control mutuality is used to measure the status of organization-public relationships that organizations and publics each have a desired amount of control over the other. For the final indicator of relationship outcomes, commitment is “the extent to which both parties believe and feel that the relationship is worth spending energy on to maintain and promote” (Hon & J. Grunig, p. 3).

*Organizational representations.* According to Smith (1998), “psychologists generally define a representation as an encoding of some information, which an individual can construct, retain in memory, access, and use in various ways” (p. 391). J. Grunig and Hung (2002) defined organizational reputation as “the distribution of cognitive representations that members of a collectivity hold about an organization, representations that may, but do not always, include evaluative components” (p. 20). For this study, we adopt J. Grunig and Hung’s (2002) definition of reputation as cognitive representations held by publics in the collective level.

Reputation management was catalyzed in the 1990s by *Fortune* magazine (Deephouse, 2002). Deephouse said that interest in reputation management in the United States grew, as a result of *Fortune* magazine’s ‘Most Admired Corporations’ survey. Other magazines and public interest groups began evaluating corporations and publishing their findings.

Despite popular surveys to measure reputations (Deephouse, 2000, 2002; Fombrun, 1996; Hall, 1992), several issues have been raised over the operational definitions of organizational reputation (Bromley, 1993, 2000; J. Grunig & Hung, 2002; Pruzan, 2001) and, hence, measures of organizational reputation that are commonly referred as a “ranking system” (Bromley, 2000; Fombrun & Gardberg, 2000; J. Grunig & Hung, 2002; Hutton et al., 2001;

Schultz, Mouritsen, & Gabrielsen, 2001).

Controversy in reputation research has been about how organizational reputation can be distinct from other concepts such as image, identity, brand, or impression. From the reputation literature, J. Grunig and Hung (2002) found the confusing use of such terms as reputations, image, identity, brand, or impression. According to J. Grunig and Hung (2002), "With the exception of identity, most of these terms describe essentially the same phenomenon: what publics think of an organization [i.e., organizational representations held by publics]. Identity describes what an organization thinks of itself" (p. 2).

In fact, among research firms offering reputation measures, Young and Rubicam, Market Facts, and Opinion Research Corporation called their reputation measures *The Brand Asset Valuator*, *Brand Vision*, and *Brand Perceptions* respectively; Landor Associates called its reputation measure *Image Power* (Jeffries-Fox Associates, March 24, 2000).

Some scholars (e.g., Bromley, 1993, 2000; Fombrun, 1996; Fombrun & Shanley, 1990; Fombrun & Van Riel, 1997; Rindova & Kotha, 1998; Weigelt & Camerer, 1988) have suggested that organizational reputation is a distinct concept that represents an intangible asset of organizations. For example, on the website of the Reputation Institute (n.d.b), the founder Fombrun asserted: "People often confuse the words reputation, brand, and image. They mean different things ... A company has many different images and can have many brands. In contrast, a corporate reputation signals the overall attractiveness of the company to *all* of its constituents, including employees, customers, investors, reporters, and the general public."

Others (e.g., Caruana & Chircop, 2000; Pruzan, 2001) have more emphasized the "association" of organizational reputation with other terms such as image, identity, brand, or impression. For example, Caruana and Chircop (2000) analyzed the background of reputation research and stressed the interconnectedness of terms: "Research on corporate reputation is rooted in earlier work on corporate image, corporate identity and personality ... Corporate reputation emerges from the images held by various publics of an organization ... Corporate reputation is closely related to brand equity" (p. 43).

Regarding this conceptual confusion of organizational reputation, or lack of discriminant validity of the reputation concept with other related concepts, Bromley (2000) put it as follows: "Identity is defined as the way key members conceptualize their organization; image is defined as the way an organization presents itself to its publics, especially visually; and reputation is defined as the way key external stakeholder groups or other interested parties actually conceptualize that organization" (p. 241).

For measuring organizational reputation as organizational representations, Bromley (1993, 2000) recommended an open-ended measure of the distribution of cognitive representations analyzed using content analysis. Bromley (1993) asked students to write a paragraph describing their instructor and then coded the responses into different categories of attributes; he found that many of those students assigned the same attributes to the subject. J. Grunig and Hung (2002) explicated Bromley's (1993) method of reputation measure when they identified a taxonomy of cognitive representations, which included types of representations such as objects, attributes, and the connections among them (i.e., behavioral representations).

*Evaluation of organizational performances.* In the psychology literature, evaluation has been suggested as the critical feature of attitudes (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Oskamp, 1991). Eagly and Chaiken defined evaluation as "the imputation of some degree of goodness or badness to an entity" that can be expressed as approval or disapproval, favor or disfavor, liking or disliking, or similar reactions (p. 3). Eagly and Chaiken (1993) suggested that

attitude is inferred by measuring evaluation of attitude objects (i.e., entities that are evaluated).

Several research firms, conducting reputation surveys, tend to measure attitude by focusing on evaluation of organizational performances (Jeffries-Fox Associates, March 24, 2000). According to Jeffries-Fox (May 13, 2002), in general, reputation measures are centered on the following dimensions: ethical, employees and workplace, financial performance, leadership, management, social responsibility, customer focus, quality, reliability, and emotional appeal. More specifically, the Reputation Quotient, developed by Fombrun and Harris Interactive, measures organizational reputation by making respondents evaluate 20 attributes on the following six dimensions: emotional appeals, products and services, financial performance, vision and leadership, workplace environment, and social responsibility (Harris Interactive, n.d.). As in the Reputation Quotient, most reputation indices are evaluation of organizational performances or attributes.

On this point, it can be observed that reputation is most commonly defined as collective representations held by publics, or multiple stakeholders, (e.g., Fombrun, 1996; Fombrun & Shanley, 1990; Fombrun & Van Riel, 1997; Rindova & Fombrun, 1999; Rindova & Kotha, 1998), whereas the operational measure for measuring reputation is a measure of attitudes. We believe that this discrepancy significantly affects the validity of reputation measures. We argue that reputation measures should not assign respondents preset categories to evaluate organizational performances, particularly driven by financial performance. Instead, an open-end measure can be useful to examine individual cognitive representation about an organization; by looking at the distribution of individual cognitive representations, reputation as collective representations can be measured.

Carlston and Smith (1996) suggested that evaluative representations are a type of representation, meaning that representations can be either affective (i.e., evaluative representations) or simply cognitive. In addition, representations entail objects, attributes, and connections among them (Anderson, 2000; J. Grunig & Hung, 2002).

For this reason, we measured organizational representations separately from public evaluations of organizational performances in this study. In our model, organization-public relationships affect evaluation of organizational performances directly as well as through organizational representations.

Regarding the effect of organization-public relationships on organizational representations, Planalp (1987) first suggested the concept of “relationship schemas” or “relational schemas” in referring to cognitive working models of how one’s relationships with others operate. Like Planalp (1987), a number of scholars (e.g., Baldwin, 1997, 1999; Collins & Read, 1990) have defined relationships as schemas that influence how others perceive an individual (i.e., representations). In addition, scholars (e.g., Coombs & Holladay, 2001; Fombrun, 1996; J. Grunig & Hung, 2002; Rindova & Kotha, 1998) suggested that organizational reputation depends on the quality of organization-public relationships. Coombs and Holladay (2001) found that a negative relationship history produced an effect on organizational reputation and crisis responsibility. From these insights, we suggest the following hypothesis on the effect of organization-public relationships on organizational representations (Figure 1):

H3: The more quality relationships that publics estimate with an organization, the more positive representations they hold of the organization.

Broom et al.’s (2000) three-stage model of relationships is useful in explaining why organizations come to build relationships with specific publics (J. Grunig and Huang, 2000). Their framework consists of three stages, including antecedents, the concept of relationships, and

consequences (p. 16). Broom et al. (2000) defined antecedents as follows: "Antecedents to relationships include the perceptions, motives, needs, behaviors, and so forth, posited as contingencies or as causes in the formation of relationships" (p. 16). The notion of antecedents in their model well reflects our earlier hypotheses: active communication behavior and familiarity are correlated causes of organization-public relationships.

The term "consequences of relationships" were defined earlier by Cutlip, Center, and Broom (2000) as "the outputs that have the effects of changing the environment and of achieving, maintaining, or changing goal states both inside and outside the organization" (p. 213). We regard evaluation of organizational performances as consequences of organization-public relationships as well as organizational representations from the side of publics to an organization. Therefore, the effects of organization-public relationships and organizational representations on evaluation of organizational performances are hypothesized as follows (Figure 1):

H4: The more quality relationships that publics estimate with an organization, the more positive their overall evaluation of organizational performance.

H5: The more positive representations publics hold of the organization, the more positive their overall evaluation of organizational performance.

#### Methods

##### *Participants*

Participants were residents ( $n = 317$ ) in a metropolitan city of Korea. Response rate was about 50.9 percent: 623 residents in the city were initially contacted in person; 317 questionnaires were completed by personal interviews. Demographic information was collected from participants on sex, age, marital status, and education. Participants in the age range from the 20s to 40s were selected because these participants were believed most likely to have prior experience with the five organizations studied. Participants were purposively selected in proportion to the ratio of sex and age in the 2002 Census (Stat-Korea, n.d.) from each district of the city.

Participants were 49.5 percent male ( $n = 157$ ) and 50.2 percent female ( $n = 159$ ). One participant did not specify sex. The age of participants ranged from 20 to 49 years old distributed as follows: 20s ( $n = 111$ ), 30s ( $n = 110$ ), and 40s ( $n = 92$ ). Four participants did not report age. Participants were 47.3 percent married ( $n = 150$ ) and 50.9 percent unmarried ( $n = 161$ ). Six participants did not specify marital status. For participants' education level, 64 percent of participants ( $n = 203$ ) are either currently enrolled in a college or college graduates; 28.4 percent of participants ( $n = 90$ ) graduated lower than or equal to high school; and 7.6 percent of participant ( $n = 24$ ) have a master's degree or more.

The following five organizations in Korea were selected to increase variability of types of organizations: SK Telecom, SAMSUNG Electronics, the Korea Football Association (KFA), the Korean National Red Cross (KNRC), and IBM Korea. SK Telecom and SAMSUNG Electronics were chosen for their market leadership in each industry. The Korea Football Association (KFA), as an association, was selected for its high visibility after the Korea-Japan 2002 FIFA World Cup. The Korean National Red Cross (KNRC), as a non-profit organization, was selected for its social performance. Finally, IBM Korea, as a multinational firm, was selected to compare with these domestic organizations.

##### *Procedure*

Individuals who agreed to participate in the survey were given a brief description of the research. Once they agreed to participate in the research, all participants were asked to complete



the questionnaire of the study via personal interviews. The questionnaire was made up with measures for communication behaviors, familiarity, relationship outcomes, and the overall evaluation of organizational performances, along with an open-ended measure of organizational representations.

#### *Measures and Data Reduction*

This study replicated J. Grunig and Hung's (2002) open-end measure of organizational representations, which reads: "In a few phrase, please tell me what comes to your mind when you think of the following organization." According to J. Grunig and Hung (2002), this is essentially the same as Bromley's (1993) method of measuring reputation and similar to Slovic, Flynn, and Layman's (1991) question to measure participants' images, perceptions, and affective states on a nuclear waste repository. To code this open-end question, using J. Grunig and Hung's (2002) taxonomy of cognitive representations, two graduate students coded and had 92.5% agreement. Each response in the open-end measure was then coded to three-point Likert-type scale with the number one indicating "negative," two "neutral," and three "positive."

Active communication behavior was measured through three items to measure problem recognition, constraint recognition, and level of involvement, developed by J. Grunig's situational theory of publics. Table 5 indicates that reliability of the measure for active communication behavior ranged from Cronbach's alphas of .68 to .81 for the five organizations studied.

To measure organization-public relationships, this study used Hon and J. Grunig's (1999) relationship indicators. For this study, we replicated a 26-item scale of relationship indicators measuring trust (6 items), control mutuality (4 items), commitment (4 items), satisfaction (4 items), communal relationship (4 items), and exchange relationship (4 items). Among them, the 16 items for measuring the quality of relationship outcomes were used for this study. Since the number of the organizations studied is five, the shortest scale was used to minimize response time for participants and hence reduce attention drift.

To reduce the number of measured items to one for each of the four indicators, principal components analysis (PCA) was used. Throughout the five organizations studied, the same procedure of PCA was employed to prevent potential bias from varying association between the extracted component and other measured items. Scree plots for every PCA analysis suggest extracting one component; extracted composite explained variances from 44.97% to 63.10% of the total variance accounted for by measured items for each indicator. Table 5 indicates that reliability of the measure for the quality of relationships ranged from Cronbach's alphas of .91 to .93 for the five organizations studied.

In addition, we developed two questions to measure the overall evaluation of organizational performance, with one measuring personal evaluation and the other measuring perceived collective evaluation about the overall performance of each organization. This measure used nine-point Likert-type scales with the number one indicating "most negative," five "neutral," and nine "most positive." Table 5 indicates that reliability of the measure for the overall evaluation of organizational performance ranged from Cronbach's alphas of .70 to .79 for the five organizations studied. Finally, a question asked participants to estimate their familiarity with each of the organizations studied, replicating J. Grunig and Hung's (2002) question for measuring personal familiarity with an organization.

#### Results

EQS (version 5.7b) was used to develop a structural equation model (SEM) by analyzing covariances of latent variables and measured variables (Bentler, 1997; Byrne, 1994; Muller,

1996). Our conceptualization of concepts produced five hypotheses about causal relationships of constructs among organization-public relationships, organizational representations, and the overall evaluation of organizational performance, with exogenous influences of active communication behavior and familiarity (Figure 1). We tested hypotheses in the five organizations studied by developing structural equation models for each organization, and compared assessment of data-model fit for each model (Table 4).

#### *Direct Effects*

For hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 2, we predicted that active communication behavior and familiarity would be correlated causes of organization-public relationships (Figure 2).

Hypothesis 1 posited that active communication behavior with an organization increases the estimation of quality relationships with the organization. The results indicate that there is a statistically significant effect of active communication behavior on relationship outcomes for all five organizations studied (Table 1). Estimates of standardized path coefficients (i.e.,  $\beta$  weight in each path) were .49 to SK Telecom ( $p < .01$ ), .41 to Samsung Electronics ( $p < .01$ ), .44 to the Korea Football Association ( $p < .01$ ), .37 to the Korean National Red Cross ( $p < .01$ ), and .38 to IBM Korea ( $p < .01$ ).

Hypothesis 2 posited that familiarity with an organization increases the estimation of quality relationships with the organization. As in the previous hypothesis, the results indicate that there is a statistically significant effect of familiarity on relationship outcomes for all five organizations studied (Table 1). Estimates of standardized path coefficients were .20 to SK Telecom ( $p < .05$ ), .29 to Samsung Electronics ( $p < .01$ ), .30 to the Korea Football Association ( $p < .01$ ), .26 to the Korean National Red Cross ( $p < .01$ ), and .24 to IBM Korea ( $p < .01$ ). Comparing the results for hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 2, active communication behavior has stronger effect on the estimation of quality relationships than familiarity throughout all of the five organizations.

For the remaining hypotheses, we proposed that the quality of organization-public relationships affects the overall evaluation of organizational performance directly as well as through organizational representations. Hypothesis 3 posited that estimation of quality relationships causes more positive organizational representations. The results indicate that there is a statistically significant effect of relationship outcomes on organizational representations for three out of the five organizations that have tenable data-model fits (Table 1, Table 4). Estimates of standardized path coefficients were .09 to SK Telecom (*NS*), .18 to Samsung Electronics ( $p < .01$ ), .27 to the Korea Football Association ( $p < .01$ ), .16 to the Korean National Red Cross ( $p < .01$ ), and .11 to IBM Korea (*NS*).

Hypothesis 4 posited that estimation of quality relationships causes better overall evaluation of organizational performance. The results indicate that there is a statistically significant effect of relationship outcomes on the overall evaluation of organizational performance for all five organizations studied (Table 1), which is the strongest path of all causal relationships in our model. Estimates of standardized path coefficients were .68 to SK Telecom ( $p < .01$ ), .72 to Samsung Electronics ( $p < .01$ ), .81 to the Korea Football Association ( $p < .01$ ), .63 to the Korean National Red Cross ( $p < .01$ ), and .73 to IBM Korea ( $p < .01$ ).

Finally, Hypothesis 5 posited that positive organizational representations cause better the overall evaluation of organizational performance. Overall, the results are not statistically supportive for this hypothesis (Table 1). This path turned out the weakest link among proposed causal relationships in the model. Estimates of standardized path coefficients were .10 to SK Telecom ( $p < .05$ ), .08 to Samsung Electronics (*NS*), .10 to the Korea Football Association (*NS*),

.13 to the Korean National Red Cross ( $p < .05$ ), and .10 to IBM Korea (*NS*). Therefore, comparing the results among the three preceding hypotheses, the quality of relationships has a far stronger effect on the overall evaluation of organizational performance than organizational representations.

#### *Indirect Effects*

An indirect effect is the hypothesized causal effect of one construct to another as mediated by one or more interceding constructs. For the additional analysis of indirect effects in our model, Table 2 indicates that the effect of active communication behavior on the overall evaluation of organizational performance, via relationship outcomes, is statistically significant for all five organizations. Estimates of standardized indirect effects were .34 to SK Telecom ( $p < .01$ ), .30 to Samsung Electronics ( $p < .01$ ), .37 to the Korea Football Association ( $p < .01$ ), .24 to the Korean National Red Cross ( $p < .01$ ), and .29 to IBM Korea ( $p < .05$ ).

Another meaningful path, in terms of indirect effects, is the effect of familiarity on the overall evaluation of organizational performance, mediated by relationship outcomes. Estimates of standardized indirect effects were .13 to SK Telecom ( $p < .05$ ), .21 to Samsung Electronics ( $p < .01$ ), .25 to the Korea Football Association ( $p < .01$ ), .17 to the Korean National Red Cross ( $p < .01$ ), and .18 to IBM Korea ( $p < .01$ ). Comparing indirect effects between active communication behavior and familiarity on positive overall evaluation of organizational performance, for all of the five organizations, the effect of active communication behavior was greater than familiarity (Table 2).

#### *Data-model Fit*

Assessment of data-model fit in a structural equation model has been controversial. Loehlin (1992) described this controversy of data-model fit as follows: "This area is in a state of flux. There have been numerous articles in the past few years criticizing existing indices and proposing new ones. The only strong recommendation that seems justified at present is to treat the indications of any one such index with caution" (p. 71). Recently, Hu and Bentler (1999) created joint-cutoff criteria for fit indexes in SEM, which can be useful to test tenable data-model fit. According to them, a SEM model with "CFI  $\geq .96$  and SRMR  $\leq 1.0$ " or "RMSEA  $\leq .06$  and SRMR  $\leq .10$ " can be suggested having a tenable fit between the data and the proposed model. According to Hu and Bentler's (1999) cutoff criteria to retain a model, Table 4 shows that models for three organizations (i.e., Samsung Electronics, the Korea Football Association, and the Korean National Red Cross) have tenable data-model fits.

Among several fit indices, Bentler's (1990) Comparative Fit Index (CFI) is one of the most popular fit indices. For this incremental fit index, models with values above .90 have traditionally been considered acceptable models; more recently, values closer to .95 have suggested as a desirable level. All models have CFI more than .90. Especially, models such as SK Telecom (CFI = .96), the Korea Football Association (CFI = .97) and the Korean National Red Cross (CFI = .96) have a desirable fit to the data.

#### Discussion

The purpose of this paper was to explain causal relationships among organization-public relationships, organizational representations, and the overall evaluation of organizational performance in a structural equation model (SEM). With the five hypotheses, we proposed that active communication behavior and familiarity are correlated causes of organization-public relationships; the quality of organization-public relationships affects the overall evaluation of organizational performance directly as well as through organizational representations.

Overall, our model turned out to be well performed across organizations studied. For the

five organizations studied, the proposed model explained variances from 44% to 71% of the overall evaluation of organizational performance. With Hu & Bentler's (1999) cutoff criteria in SEM, models for three organizations have tenable fits.

For hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 2, we posited that active communication behavior and familiarity are correlated causes of quality organization-public relationships. The results indicate that the effect of active communication behavior on organization-public relationships was statistically significant for all of the five organizations we studied ( $p < .01$ ), whereas the effect of familiarity on organization-public relationships was significant to all models but weaker than the effect of active communication behavior.

For the rest of the hypotheses (H3, H4, and H5), we proposed that the quality of organization-public relationships affects the overall evaluation of organizational performance directly as well as through organizational representations. The results indicate that relationship outcomes had a far stronger effect on the overall evaluation of organizational performance than organizational representations. It is noteworthy that the path from relationship outcomes to the overall evaluation of organizational performance was the strongest among the proposed causal relationships throughout all of the five organizations studied ( $p < .01$ ), whereas the path from organizational representations to the overall evaluation of organizational performance was the weakest across all of the five organizations studied.

For indirect effects in our causal model, two statistically significant paths were identified. The effect of active communication behavior on the overall evaluation of organizational performances, mediated by relationship outcomes, was statistically significant for all five organizations. Also, the effect of familiarity on the overall evaluation of organizational performance, mediated by relationship outcomes, was statistically significant in all models but weaker than the effect of active communication behavior.

By testing these five hypotheses (Figure 2.2, Figure 2.3, Figure 2.4, Figure 2.5, and Figure 2.6 for each path model of the five organizations studied), the results of this study suggest, first, that quality organization-public relationships, facilitated by publics' active communication behavior, have the strongest impact on their positive evaluation of organizational performances. The effect of organization-public relationships on publics' evaluation of organizational performances can be mediated by organizational representations. However, positive organizational representations alone have scant impact on publics' positive evaluation of organizational performances.

Second, in terms of indirect effects in our causal model, the effect of familiarity on other constructs is weaker than that of active communication behavior for models of all organizations studied. That is, indirect effects of familiarity on organization-public relationships, organizational representations, the overall evaluation of organizational performance are weaker than indirect effects of active communication behaviors on these constructs. For example, the indirect effect of active communication behavior on positive organizational representations is greater than familiarity for all five organizations studied (Table 2).

The implication of these findings includes that, as J. Grunig and Hung (2002) suggested in their study, the quality of organization-public relationships strongly affects organizational reputation and public evaluation of organizational performances, suggesting that organizational reputation is a byproduct of quality relationships between an organization and its publics.

Many scholars (e.g., Fombrun & Shanley, 1990; Rindova & Kotha, 1998) and practitioners (e.g., Jeffries-Fox, May 13, 2002) tend to emphasize effects of familiarity and organizational reputation for better public evaluation of organizational performances through



increasing media coverage of an organization. For example, Jeffries-Fox (May 13, 2002) said analyzing media coverage is critical in explaining positive reputation as follows: (1) Media coverage of issues and companies has enormous influence on what people think and how they act, (2) studies have shown that news stories are often as powerful or even more powerful than advertising, and (3) news coverage can be influenced via media relations so it is important to understand what the media are saying.

However, findings of this study suggest that active communication behavior of publics has greater impact on organizational reputation and the overall evaluation of organizational performance than familiarity, considering the results of direct and indirect effects in our causal model (Table 2). Fombrun and Shanley (1990) hypothesized that visibility in the media produces favorable reputation of the firms studied; however, the results of their study indicated that media visibility had a “negative” correlation with organizational reputation.

Given that the media tend to cover negative issues or issues providing negative framing, it is not surprising to know this result of their hypothesis about the relationship between media visibility and organizational reputation. Therefore, as the results of this study suggest, practitioners should identify active publics (i.e., publics motivated with active communication behavior to build relationships with an organization) and engage in developing quality and long-term relationships with these publics so as to obtain favorable reputation and positive evaluation of organizational performances.

As limitations of the present study, first, this study used a single measure of familiarity. For future studies, perhaps, variables such as salience or visibility in the media, valence of media coverage, and extent of direct experience can be added to measure familiarity, after careful examination of theoretical connections. Also, because we purposively sampled respondents in proportion to the ratio of sex and age in the Census, generalizing the results of this study is somehow limited.

## References

- Anderson, J. R. (2000). *Cognitive psychology and its implications* (5th ed.). New York: W. H. Freeman.
- Baldwin, M. W. (1997). Relational schemas as a source of if-then self-inference procedures. *Review of General Psychology, 1*, 326-335.
- Baldwin, M. W. (1999). Relational schemas and cognition in close relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 12*, 547-552.
- Bentler, P. M. (1990). Comparative fit indexes in structural models. *Psychological Bulletin, 107*, 238-246.
- Bentler, P. M. (1992). On the fit of models to covariances and methodology to the Bulletin. *Psychological Bulletin, 112*, 400-404.
- Bentler, P. M. (1997). *EQS: Structural equations program manual*. Encino, CA: Multivariate Software.
- Bentler, P. M., & Bonnet, D. G. (1980). Significance tests and goodness of fit in the analysis of covariance structures. *Psychological Bulletin, 88*, 588-606.
- Bromley, D. B. (1993). *Reputation, image, and impression management*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons.
- Bromley, D. B. (2000). Psychological aspects of corporate identity, image, and reputation. *Corporate Reputation Review, 3*, 240-252.
- Broom, G. M., Casey, S., & Ritchey, J. (2000). Concepts and theory of organization-public relationships. In J. A. Ledingham and S. D. Bruning (Eds.), *Public relations as relationship management: A relational approach to the study and practice of public relations* (pp. 3-22). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Broom, G. M., & Dozier, D. M. (1990). *Using research in public relations: Application to program management*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Bruning, S. D., & Ledingham, J. A. (1999). Relationships between organizations and publics: Development of a multi-dimensional organization-public relationship scale. *Public Relations Review, 25*, 157-170.
- Bruning, S. D., & Ledingham, J. A. (2000). Perceptions of relationships and evaluation of satisfaction: An exploration of interaction. *Public Relations Review, 26*, 85-95.
- Byrne, B. M. (1994). *Structural equation modeling with EQS and EQS/Windows: Basic concepts, applications, and programming*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Carlston, D. E., & Smith, E. R. (1996). Principles of mental representation. In E. T. Higgins and A. W. Kruglanski (Eds.), *Social psychology: Handbook of basic principles* (pp. 184-210). New York: The Guilford Press.
- Caruana, A., & Chircop, S. (2000). Measuring corporate reputation: A case example. *Corporate Reputation Review, 3*, 43-57.
- Caywood, C. (Ed.). (1997). *The handbook of Strategic public relations & integrated communications*. Boston, MA: McGraw Hill.
- Collins, N. L., & Read, N. J. (1990). Adult attachment, working models, and relationship quality in dating couples. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 58*, 644-663.
- Coomb, W. T., & Holladay, S. J. (2001). An extended examination of the crisis situations: A fusion of relational management and symbolic approaches. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 13*, 321-340.
- Cutlip, S. M., Center, A. H., & Broom, G. M. (2000). *Effective public relations* (8th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

- Deephouse, D. (2002). The term "Reputation Management": Users, uses and the trademark tradeoff. *Corporate Reputation Review*, 5, 9-18.
- Deephouse, D. L. (2000). Media reputation as a strategic resource: An integration of mass communication and resource-based theories. *Journal of Management*, 26, 1091-1112.
- Dozier, D. M., Grunig, L. A., & Grunig, J. E. (1995). *Manager's guide to excellence in public relations and communication management*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Duncan, T., & Caywood, C. (1996). The concept, process, and evolution of integrated marketing communication. In E. Thorson and J. Moore (Eds.), *Integrated communication: Synergy of persuasive voices*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Eagly, A. H., & Chaiken, S. (1993). *The psychology of attitudes*. Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.
- Fishbein, M., & Ajzen, I. (1975). *Belief, attitude, intention, and behavior: An introduction to theory and research*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Fombrun, C. J. (1996). *Reputation: Realizing value from the corporate image*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Fombrun, C. J., & Gardberg, N. (2000). Who's tops in corporate reputation? *Corporate Reputation Review*, 3, 13-17.
- Fombrun, C. J., & Rindova, V. (1996). *Who's tops and who decides? The social construction of corporate reputations*. New York University, Stern School of Business, Working Paper.
- Fombrun, C. J., & Van Riel, C. B. M. (1997). The reputational landscape. *Corporate Reputation Review*, 1, 5-13.
- Fombrun, C., & Shanley, M. (1990). What's in a name? Reputation building and corporate strategy. *Academy of Management Journal*, 33(2), 233-258.
- Grönstedt, A. (2000). *The customer century: Lessons from world-class companies in integrated communications*. New York: Routledge.
- Grunig, J. E. (1997). A situational theory of publics: Conceptual history, recent challenges, and new research. In D. Moss, T. McManus, & D. Vercic (Eds.), *Public relations research: International Perspectives* (pp. 5-47). London: International Thompson Business Press.
- Grunig, J. E., & Disbrow, J. B. (1977). Developing a probabilistic model for communication decision making. *Communication Research*, 4, 145-168.
- Grunig, J. E., & Grunig, L. A. (1996, May). *Implications of symmetry for a theory of ethics in public relations*. Paper presented to the International Communication Association, Chicago.
- Grunig, J. E., & Grunig, L. A. (1997, July). *Review of program of research on activism: Incidence in four countries, activist publics, strategies of activist groups, and organizational response to activism*. Paper presented at the 4th public relations research symposium, Managing Environmental Issues, Lake Bled, Slovenia.
- Grunig, J. E., & Grunig, L. A. (2001). *Guidelines for formative and evaluative research in public affairs: A report for the Department of Energy Office of Science*. Washington, DC: U. S. Department of Energy.
- Grunig, J. E., & Huang, Y. H. (2000). From organizational effectiveness to relationship indicators: Antecedents of relationships, public relations strategies, and relationship outcomes. In J. A. Ledingham and S. D. Bruning (Eds.), *Public relations as relationship management: A relational approach to the study and practice of public relations* (pp. 23-53). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

- Grunig, J. E., & Hung, C. F. (2002). *The effect of relationships on reputation and reputation on relationships: A cognitive, behavioral study*. Paper presented at the PRSA Educator's Academy 5th Annual International, Interdisciplinary Public Relations Research Conference, Miami, FL.
- Grunig, J. E., & Hunt, T. (1984). *Managing public relations*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Grunig, L. A., Grunig, J. E., & Dozier, D. M. (2002). Excellent public relations and effective organizations: A study of communication management in three countries. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Hall, R. (1992). The strategic analysis of intangible resources. *Strategic Management Journal*, 13, 135-144.
- Harris Interactive (n.d.). *The 20 attributes of Reputation*. Retrieved March 11, 2003, from [http://www.harrisinteractive.com/pop\\_up/rq/20.asp](http://www.harrisinteractive.com/pop_up/rq/20.asp).
- Heath, R. L. (Ed.) (2001). *Handbook of public relations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Heath, R. L., Bradshaw, J., & Lee, J. (2002). Community relationship building: Local leadership in the risk communication infrastructure. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 14, 317-353.
- Hon, L., & Grunig, J. E. (1999). *Guidelines for measuring relationships in public relations*. The institute for public relations.
- Huang, Y. H. (1997). *Public relations strategies, relational outcomes, and conflict management strategies*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Maryland, College Park.
- Huang, Y. H. (2001). OPRA: A cross-cultural, multiple-item scale for measuring organization-public relationships. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 13, 61-90.
- Hutton, J. G., Goodman, M. B., Alexander, J. B., & Genest, C. M. (2001). Reputation management: The new face of corporate public relations? *Public Relations Review*, 27, 247-261.
- Hu, L., & Bentler, P. M. (1999). Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. *Structural Equation Modeling: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 6(1), 1-55.
- Jeffries-Fox Associates (2000, March 24). *Toward a shared understanding of corporate reputation and related concepts: Phase II: Measurement systems analysis*. Basking Ridge, NJ: Report Prepared for the Council of Public Relations Firms.
- Jeffries-Fox, B. (2002, May 13). Measuring corporate reputation: An overview of several approaches. Presentation at Corporate Communication Institute (CCI) Symposium on Reputation Management.
- Jöreskog, K. G., & Sörbom, D. (1989). *LISREL 7: A guide to the program and applications* (2nd ed.). Chicago: SPSS.
- Kruckeberg, D. (2000). Public relations: Toward a global professionalism. In J. A. Ledingham and S. D. Bruning (Eds.), *Public relations as relationship management: A relational approach to the study and practice of public relations* (pp. 145-158). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Ledingham, J. A. (2001). Government-community relationships: Extending the relational theory of public relations. *Public Relations Review*, 27, 285-295.
- Ledingham, J. A. (2001). Government-community relationships: Extending the relational theory of public relations. *Public Relations Review*, 27, 285-295.

- Ledingham, J. A., & Bruning, S. D. (1998). Relationship management in public relations: Dimensions of an organization-public relationship. *Public Relations Review, 24*, 55-65.
- Ledingham, J. A., Bruning, S. D. (Eds.) (2000), *Public relations as relationship management: A relational approach to the study and practice of public relations*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Loehlin, J. C. (1992). *Latent variable models: An introduction to factor, path, and structural analysis* (2nd ed.). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Major, A. M. (1993). Environmental concern and situational communication theory: Implications for communicating with environmental publics. *Journal of Public Relations Research 5*(3), 251-268.
- Major, A. M. (1998). The utility of situational theory of publics for assessing public response to a disaster prediction. *Public Relations Review, 24*, 489-508.
- Mueller, R. O. (1996). *Basic principles of structural equation modeling: An introduction to LISREL and EQS*. New York, Springer.
- Oskamp, S. (1991). *Attitudes and opinions* (2nd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Peppard, J. (2000). Customer relationship management (CRM) in financial services. *European Management Journal, 18*, 312-327.
- Planalp, S. (1987). Interplay between relational knowledge and events. In R. Burnett & P. McGhee (Eds.), *Accounting for relationships: Explanation, representation and knowledge*. New York: Info Methuen.
- Pruzan, P. (2001). Corporate reputation: Image and identity. *Corporate Reputation Review, 4*, 50-64.
- Reinhold, F. (1996). *The loyalty effect: The hidden force behind growth, profits and lasting value*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Reputation Institute (n.d.a). *Corporate réputations*. Retrieved April 28, 2002, from [http://www.reputationinstitute.com/sections/who/rep\\_mn\\_1.html](http://www.reputationinstitute.com/sections/who/rep_mn_1.html).
- Reputation Institute (n.d.b). *Corporate réputations*. Retrieved April 28, 2002, from [http://www.reputationinstitute.com/sections/who/rep\\_mn\\_2.html](http://www.reputationinstitute.com/sections/who/rep_mn_2.html).
- Rindova, V. P., & Fombrun, C. J. (1999). Constructing competitive advantage: The role of firm-constituent interactions. *Strategic Management Journal, 20*, 691-710.
- Rindova, V. P., & Kotha, S. (1998). *Accumulating reputation through strategic action flows: Lessons from Amazon.com and its competitors in Internet retailing*. Unpublished paper, University of Maryland, College Park.
- Schultz, D. E., Tannenbaum, S. I., & Lauterborn, R. F. (1993). *Integrated marketing communications*. Chicago, IL: NTC Business Books.
- Schultz, M., Mouritsen, J., & Gabrielsen, G. (2001). Sticky reputation: Analyzing a ranking system. *Corporate Reputation Review, 4*, 24-41.
- Slovic, P., Flynn, J. H., & Layman, M. (1991). Perceived risk, trust, and the politics of nuclear waste. *Science, 254*, 1603-1607.
- Smith, E. R. (1998). Mental representation and memory. In D. Gilbert, S. Fiske, and G. Lindzey (Eds.), *The handbook of social psychology* (4th ed.) (pp. 391-445). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Starck, K., & Kruckeberg, D. (2001). Public relations and community: A reconstructed theory revisited. In R. L. Heath (Ed.), *Handbook of public relations* (pp. 51-60). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Stat-Korea (n.d.). *The 2002 Census of district and age*. Retrieved September, 1, 2002, from [http://culture.cyberarts.kwangju.kr/cgi-bin/sws\\_999.cgi](http://culture.cyberarts.kwangju.kr/cgi-bin/sws_999.cgi).
- Walker Information (n.d.a). *Customer loyalty*. Retrieved March, 11, 2003, from <http://www.walkerinfo.com/products/customer>.
- Weigelt, K., & Camerer, C. (1988). Reputation and corporate strategy: A review of recent theory and applications. *Strategic Management Journal*, 9, 443-454.
- Yang, S., & Mallabo, J. (2003, May). *Exploring the link between organization-public relationships and organizational reputation in PR management: A relational approach*. Paper presented to Public Relations Division, 53rd Annual Conference of ICA, San Diego, CA.
- Youngmeyer, D. R. (2002). *Measuring organization-public relationships: The case of a university department of communication and its undergraduate student public*. Paper presented to the Educators' Academy, Public Relations Society of America International Conference, November 16-19, San Francisco.

Table 1

Standardized Path Coefficients

Paths	H	Organizations				
		SKT <sup>a</sup>	SSE <sup>b</sup>	KFA <sup>c</sup>	KNRC <sup>d</sup>	IBMK <sup>e</sup>
Active Communication Behavior → Quality Relationships	H1	.49**	.41**	.44**	.37**	.38**
Familiarity → Quality Relationships	H2	.20*	.29**	.30**	.26**	.24**
Quality Relationships → Positive Org Representations	H3	.09	.18**	.27**	.16**	.11
Quality Relationships → Positive Overall Evaluation of Org Performance	H4	.68**	.72**	.81**	.63**	.73**
Positive Org Representations → Positive Overall Evaluation of Org Performance	H5	.10*	.08	.10	.13*	.10

Note. SKT<sup>a</sup> is SK Telecom; SSE<sup>b</sup> is Samsung Electronics; KFA<sup>c</sup> is the Korea Football Association; KNRC<sup>d</sup> is the Korean National Red Cross; IBMK<sup>e</sup> is IBM Korea.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .



Table 2

Decomposition of Standardized Total Effects

Organizations	Path	Direct Effects	Indirect Effects	Total Effects
SKT	Active Communication Behavior → Quality Relationships	.49**		.49
	Active Communication Behavior → Positive Org Representations		.04	.04
	Active Communication Behavior → Positive Overall Evaluation of Org Performance		.34**	.34
	Familiarity → Quality Relationships	.20*		.20
	Familiarity → Positive Org Representations		.02	.02
	Familiarity → Positive Overall Evaluation of Org Performance		.13*	.13
	Quality Relationships → Positive Org Representations	.09		.09
	Quality Relationships → Positive Overall Evaluation of Org Performance	.68**	.01	.69
	Positive Org Representations → Positive Overall Evaluation of Org Performance	.10*		.10
SSE	Active Communication Behavior → Quality Relationships	.41**		.41
	Active Communication Behavior → Positive Org Representations		.08*	.08
	Active Communication Behavior → Positive Overall Evaluation of Org Performance		.30**	.30
	Familiarity → Quality Relationships	.29**		.29
	Familiarity → Positive Org Representations		.05*	.05
	Familiarity → Positive Overall Evaluation of Org Performance		.21**	.21
	Quality Relationships → Positive Org Representations	.18**		.18
	Quality Relationships → Positive Overall Evaluation of Org Performance	.72**	.02	.74
	Positive Org Representations → Positive Overall Evaluation of Org Performance	.08		.08
KFA	Active Communication Behavior → Quality Relationships	.44**		.44
	Active Communication Behavior → Positive Org Representations		.12**	.12
	Active Communication Behavior → Positive Overall Evaluation of Org Performance		.37**	.37
	Familiarity → Quality Relationships	.30**		.30
	Familiarity → Positive Org Representations		.08**	.08
	Familiarity → Positive Overall Evaluation of Org Performance		.25**	.25
	Quality Relationships → Positive Org Representations	.27**		.27
	Quality Relationships → Positive Overall Evaluation of Org Performance	.81**	.03	.84
	Positive Org Representations → Positive Overall Evaluation of Org Performance	.10		.10
KNRC	Active Communication Behavior → Quality Relationships	.37**		.37
	Active Communication Behavior → Positive Org Representations		.06*	.06
	Active Communication Behavior → Positive Overall Evaluation of Org Performance		.24**	.24
	Familiarity → Quality Relationships	.26**		.26
	Familiarity → Positive Org Representations		.04*	.04
	Familiarity → Positive Overall Evaluation of Org Performance		.17**	.17
	Quality Relationships → Positive Org Representations	.16**		.16
	Quality Relationships → Positive Overall Evaluation of Org Performance	.63**	.02	.65
	Positive Org Representations → Positive Overall Evaluation of Org Performance	.13*		.13
IBMK	Active Communication Behavior → Quality Relationships	.38**		.38
	Active Communication Behavior → Positive Org Representations		.04	.04
	Active Communication Behavior → Positive Overall Evaluation of Org Performance		.29**	.29
	Familiarity → Quality Relationships	.24**		.24
	Familiarity → Positive Org Representations		.03	.03
	Familiarity → Positive Overall Evaluation of Org Performance		.18**	.18
	Quality Relationships → Positive Org Representations	.11		.11
	Quality Relationships → Positive Overall Evaluation of Org Performance	.73**	.01	.74
	Positive Org Representations → Positive Overall Evaluation of Org Performance	.10		.10

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .



Table 3

Correlation Matrix (N= 317)

		M	SD	Correlation Matrix											
SKT	Problem Recognition	5.18	2.05	1.000											
	Constraint Recognition	4.8265	2.2875	-.420	1.000										
	Involvement	6.08	1.91	.371	-.463	1.000									
	Familiarity	5.89	1.93	.437	-.468	.519	1.000								
	Satisfaction	2.1E-16	1.00	.317	-.387	.361	.470	1.000							
	Trust	-9.6E-17	1.00	.310	-.377	.368	.464	.783	1.000						
	Control Mutuality	-6.9E-17	1.00	.265	-.358	.324	.412	.763	.770	1.000					
	Commitment	-1.2E-16	1.00	.350	-.401	.330	.441	.777	.724	.702	1.000				
	Representations	2.15	.49	.154	-.080	.083	.173	.063	.088	.084	.024	1.000			
	Individual Evaluation	6.03	1.77	.377	-.441	.430	.610	.509	.494	.435	.439	.119	1.000		
Collective Evaluation	6.44	1.58	.312	-.365	.340	.496	.469	.464	.421	.384	.151	.654	1.000		
SSE	Problem Recognition	5.46	2.05	1.000											
	Constraint Recognition	4.62	2.33	-.462	1.000										
	Involvement	6.20	1.94	.437	-.463	1.000									
	Familiarity	6.11	2.00	.465	-.375	.476	1.000								
	Satisfaction	7.1E-17	1.00	.308	-.332	.345	.448	1.000							
	Trust	-5.2E-17	1.00	.369	-.318	.409	.418	.732	1.000						
	Control Mutuality	5.0E-17	1.00	.321	-.328	.315	.439	.709	.719	1.000					
	Commitment	-3.5E-18	1.00	.310	-.316	.306	.399	.764	.692	.701	1.000				
	Representations	2.28	.51	.097	-.123	.052	.125	.101	.178	.165	.159	1.000			
	Individual Evaluation	6.39	1.78	.425	-.393	.415	.638	.500	.459	.416	.417	.184	1.000		
Collective Evaluation	6.76	1.47	.327	-.286	.449	.459	.432	.487	.413	.378	.135	.578	1.000		
KFA	Problem Recognition	5.23	2.05	1.000											
	Constraint Recognition	5.29	2.36	-.522	1.000										
	Involvement	5.33	2.09	.512	-.591	1.000									
	Familiarity	5.21	2.04	.531	-.529	.638	1.000								
	Satisfaction	1.0E-16	1.00	.419	-.384	.462	.504	1.000							
	Trust	1.5E-17	1.00	.431	-.416	.466	.524	.794	1.000						
	Control Mutuality	1.4E-16	1.00	.387	-.407	.473	.538	.748	.768	1.000					
	Commitment	-1.7E-17	1.00	.429	-.386	.472	.542	.819	.787	.759	1.000				
	Representations	2.03	.40	.200	-.129	.150	.185	.204	.208	.252	.282	1.000			
	Individual Evaluation	5.84	1.78	.516	-.438	.468	.610	.573	.547	.543	.528	.259	1.000		
Collective Evaluation	6.41	1.81	.411	-.306	.444	.542	.527	.566	.511	.521	.216	.576	1.000		
KNRC	Problem Recognition	4.73	2.06	1.000											
	Constraint Recognition	5.13	2.36	-.552	1.000										
	Involvement	5.15	2.09	.450	-.579	1.000									
	Familiarity	4.83	1.89	.535	-.468	.585	1.000								
	Satisfaction	1.3E-16	1.00	.303	-.314	.392	.391	1.000							
	Trust	-3.3E-17	1.00	.353	-.357	.394	.448	.717	1.000						
	Control Mutuality	-9.0E-17	1.00	.338	-.337	.432	.454	.710	.694	1.000					
	Commitment	2.2E-17	1.00	.324	-.335	.377	.375	.745	.701	.754	1.000				
	Representations	2.10	.38	.080	-.002	-.023	.011	.189	.191	.100	.102	1.000			
	Individual Evaluation	5.88	1.98	.455	-.360	.394	.527	.458	.529	.421	.437	.186	1.000		
Collective Evaluation	5.95	1.70	.323	-.254	.356	.414	.405	.442	.400	.387	.210	.658	1.000		
IBMK	Problem Recognition	3.67	2.02	1.000											
	Constraint Recognition	6.09	2.17	-.599	1.000										
	Involvement	4.32	2.08	.539	-.613	1.000									
	Familiarity	3.84	1.88	.585	-.525	.645	1.000								
	Satisfaction	3.5E-18	1.00	.293	-.344	.378	.417	1.000							
	Trust	-7.2E-19	1.00	.309	-.352	.423	.416	.726	1.000						
	Control Mutuality	5.4E-17	1.00	.320	-.343	.396	.386	.730	.757	1.000					
	Commitment	-9.4E-17	1.00	.308	-.308	.367	.375	.776	.731	.708	1.000				
	Representations	2.02	.30	.067	-.141	.091	.090	.081	.105	.061	.090	1.000			
	Individual Evaluation	4.61	1.70	.499	-.478	.620	.665	.489	.482	.452	.412	.166	1.000		
Collective Evaluation	4.83	1.66	.467	-.443	.563	.547	.433	.478	.473	.417	.101	.602	1.000		

Note. Measured items in relationship indicators (i.e., satisfaction, trust, control mutuality, and commitment) were standardized using principal components analysis (PCA).

Table 4

Data-Model Fit							
Model	$\chi^2$	df	AIC	CFI	SRMR	RMSEA	Cutoff Criteria <sup>b</sup>
SK Telecom	110.03	37	36.03	.96	.07	.08 (.06, .10) <sup>a</sup>	Tenable fit
Samsung Electronics	152.78	37	78.78	.93	.07	.10 (.08, .12)	Rejected
The Korea Football Association	106.53	37	32.53	.97	.05	.08 (.06, .09)	Tenable fit
The Korean National Red Cross	99.93	37	25.93	.96	.06	.07 (.06, .09)	Tenable fit
IBM Korea	192.14	37	118.14	.92	.10	.12 (.10, .13)	Rejected

Note. CFI: incremental fit indices; SRMR: absolute fit indices; AIC, RMSEA: parsimonious fit indices.  
<sup>a</sup>90% Confidence Interval of RMSEA.

<sup>b</sup>Hu, L., & Bentler, P. M. (1999). Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. *Structural Equation Modeling: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 6(1), 1-55.

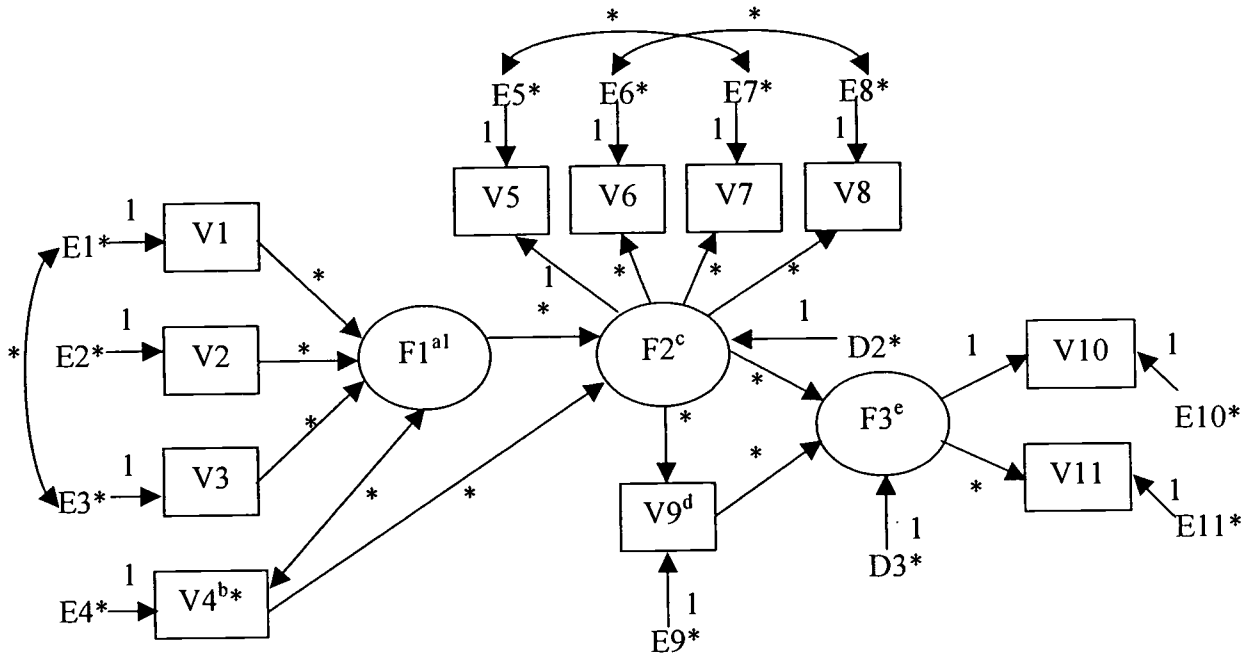
Table 5

Reliability of Latent Variables (in Cronbach's Alpha) (N = 317)

Organizations	Latent Variables	Measured Variables	$\alpha$
SKT <sup>a</sup>	Active Communication Behavior	Problem Recognition	.68
		Constraint Recognition	
		Level of Involvement	
	Quality of Relationships	Satisfaction	.92
		Trust	
		Control Mutuality	
	Overall Evaluation of Org Performance	Commitment	.79
		Individual Evaluation	
		Perceived Collective Evaluation	
SSE <sup>b</sup>	Active Communication Behavior	Problem Recognition	.71
		Constraint Recognition	
		Level of Involvement	
	Quality of Relationships	Satisfaction	.91
		Trust	
		Control Mutuality	
	Overall Evaluation of Org Performance	Commitment	.72
		Individual Evaluation	
		Perceived Collective Evaluation	
KFA <sup>c</sup>	Active Communication Behavior	Problem Recognition	.78
		Constraint Recognition	
		Level of Involvement	
	Quality of Relationships	Satisfaction	.93
		Trust	
		Control Mutuality	
	Overall Evaluation of Org Performance	Commitment	.73
		Individual Evaluation	
		Perceived Collective Evaluation	
KNRC <sup>d</sup>	Active Communication Behavior	Problem Recognition	.77
		Constraint Recognition	
		Level of Involvement	
	Quality of Relationships	Satisfaction	.91
		Trust	
		Control Mutuality	
	Evaluation of Org Performance	Commitment	.79
		Individual Evaluation	
		Perceived Collective Evaluation	
IBMK <sup>e</sup>	Active Communication Behavior	Problem Recognition	.81
		Constraint Recognition	
		Level of Involvement	
	Quality of Relationships	Satisfaction	.92
		Trust	
		Control Mutuality	
	Overall Evaluation of Org Performance	Commitment	.75
		Individual Evaluation	
		Perceived Collective Evaluation	

Note. SKT<sup>a</sup> is SK Telecom; SSE<sup>b</sup> is Samsung Electronics; KFA<sup>c</sup> is the Korea Football Association; KNRC<sup>d</sup> is the Korean National Red Cross; IBMK<sup>e</sup> is IBM Korea.

Figure 1  
Proposed Structural Equation Model



Note. \* Parameters to be estimated (37 df).

F1<sup>a</sup> = Active Communication Behaviors; V4<sup>b</sup> = Familiarity;

F2<sup>c</sup> = Quality Organization-Public Relationships; V9<sup>d</sup> = Positive Organizational Representations;

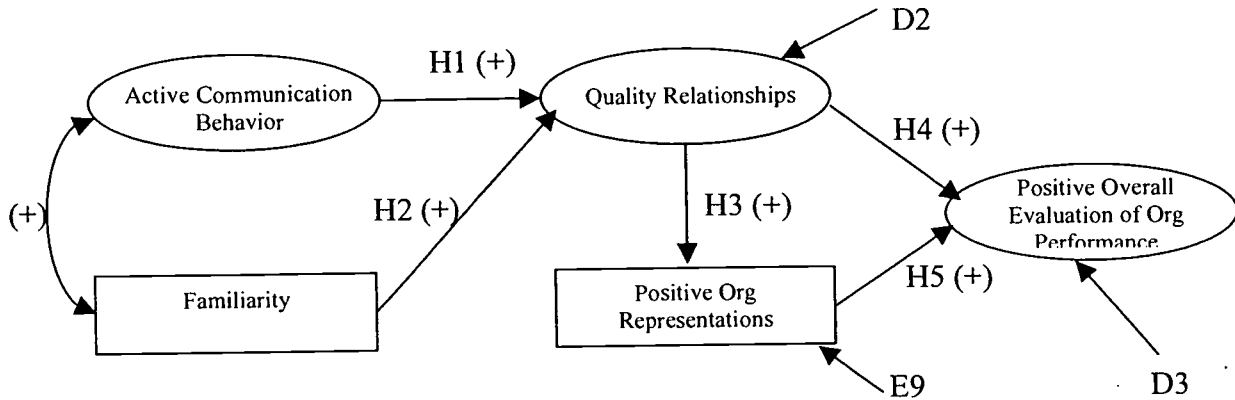
F3<sup>c</sup> = Positive Overall Evaluation of Organizational Performance.

Errors of the following pair of variables were allowed to covary: problem recognition (V1) and level of involvement (V3), satisfaction (V5) and control mutuality (V7), and trust (V6) and commitment (V8).

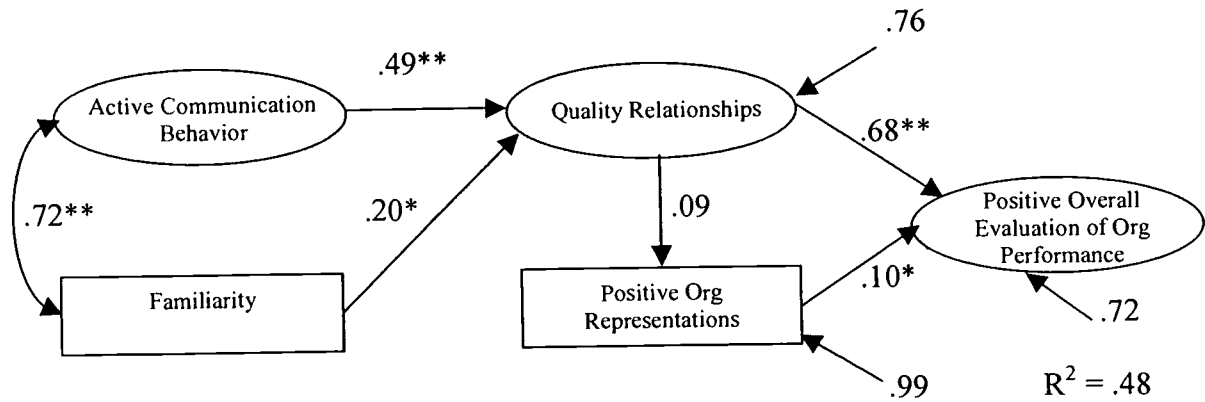
BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Figure 2  
Diagram of Structural Models

2.1  
Structural Model with Hypotheses Notation

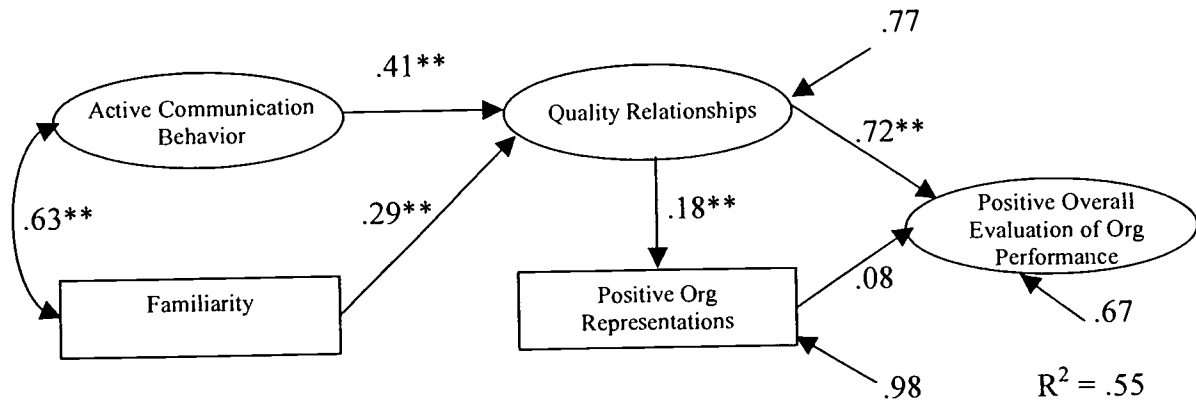


2.2  
Structural Model for SK Telecom



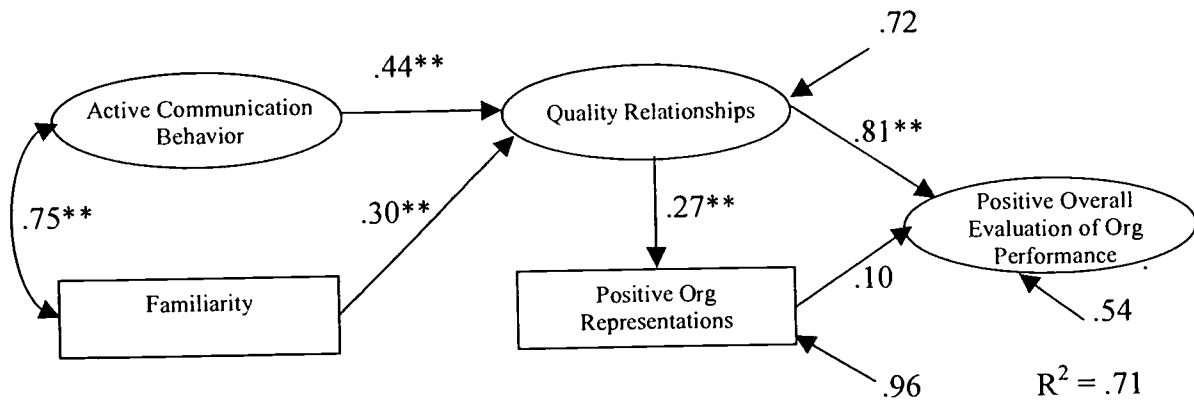
$\chi^2 = 110.03, df = 37, AIC = 36.03$   
 $CFI = .96, SRMR = .07, RMSEA = .08 (.06, .10)$

2.3  
Structural Model for Samsung Electronics



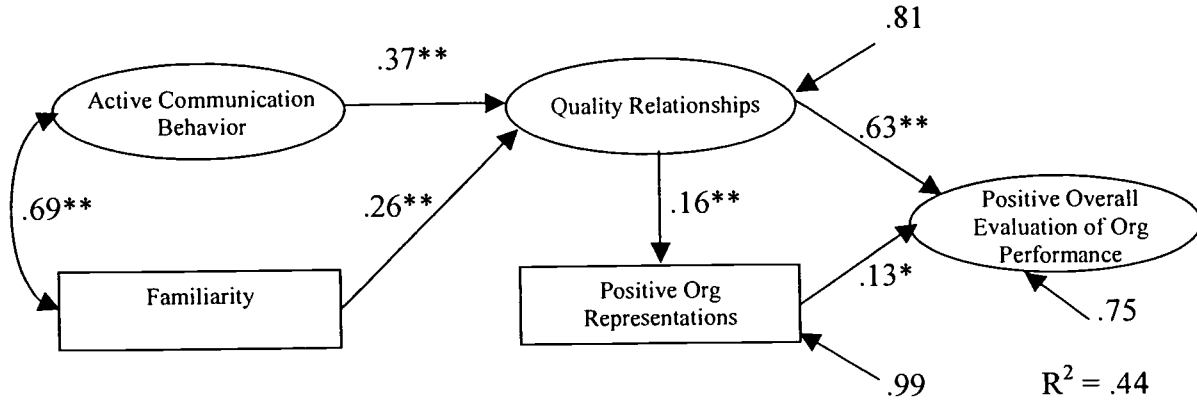
$\chi^2 = 152.78, df = 37, AIC = 78.78$   
 CFI = .93, SRMR = .07, RMSEA = .10 (.08, .12)

2.4  
Structural Model for the Korea Football Association



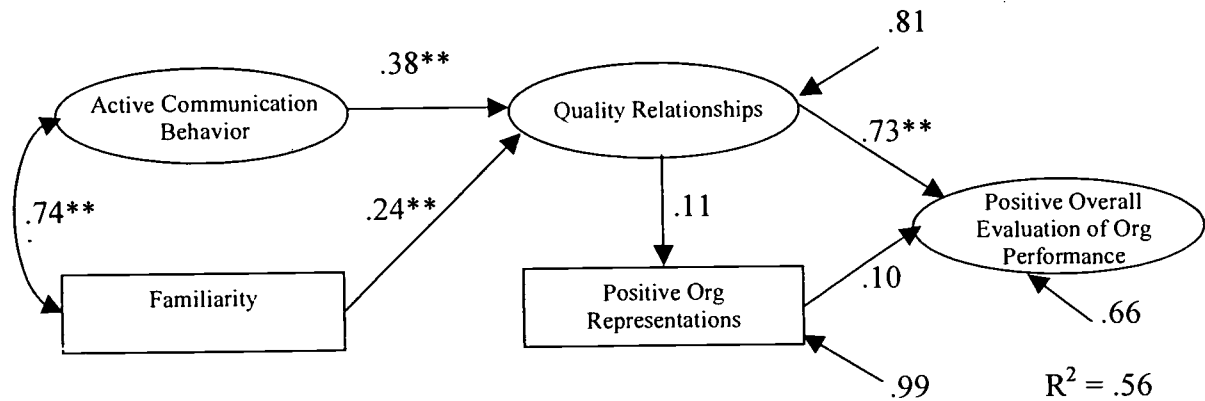
$\chi^2 = 106.53, df = 37, AIC = 32.53$   
 CFI = .97, SRMR = .05, RMSEA = .08 (.06, .09)

2.5  
Structural Model for the Korean National Red Cross



$\chi^2 = 99.93, df = 37, AIC = 25.93$   
 CFI = .96, SRMR = .06, RMSEA = .07 (.06, .09)

2.6  
Structural Model for IBM Korea



$\chi^2 = 192.14, df = 37, AIC = 118.14$   
 CFI = .92, SRMR = .10, RMSEA = .12 (.10, .13)

**Developing the "Dynamic" Public Relations Case Class:  
I Don't Know Anything About Science and You Want Me to Say *What?***

**RUNNING HEAD: Dynamic Case Class**

**b j Altschul, APR  
Assistant Professor**

**[bia@american.edu](mailto:bia@american.edu)  
202/885-2103 voice  
202/885-2019 fax**

**School of Communication  
American University  
4400 Massachusetts Ave. NW  
Washington, DC 20016-8017**

**Presented at the Association for Education in Journalism  
and Mass Communication Convention, Public Relations Division  
Kansas City, MO  
July 30-August 2, 2003**



**A "Dynamic" Public Relations Case Class:  
I Don't Know Anything About Science and You Want Me to Say What?**

Sports and entertainment often top the list of specialties that undergraduate public relations and communication majors say they want to pursue professionally. Or they may know they want to go to law school, or work for a non-profit, either in the arts or social services. Indeed, these fields are popular for internships, and upperclassmen come into their senior year full of enthusiasm for entering the profession if they can just find a job when they graduate and make the transition into the first stages of their professional lives.

But suggest that they consider going into public relations for scientific or technical organizations, or ask what they think about headlines on science policy decisions that may affect their health, what they eat, the air they breathe, how they get to and from campus or work, and a host of other issues of contemporary life... and their reactions frequently fall silently to the classroom floor. The apathy among communication majors toward such everyday problems rooted in science may be more pronounced at schools whose science departments don't have a strong presence on campus, but it also may parallel the ups and downs of our national effort to increase science literacy throughout the educational system.

Indeed, a key policy area that receives less attention in many public relations courses is strategic analysis as it relates to broad policy issues, especially in the sciences. To help fill that gap, the public relations case class is a good venue for focusing on such issues that make a significant impact on society. As our seniors plan to enter the job market full-time and become decision-makers themselves -- voters, taxpayers, consumers in the marketplace, community leaders and policy makers -- it makes sense to acquaint them with tools to help them deal with the complex choices they soon will face. This means going beyond knowing how to produce

technically excellent communication pieces, to articulating the messages and the strategic roles that communication and public relations play in managing an organization.

To suggest ways we as educators can encourage this emerging public of soon-to-be recent graduates to look at the big picture, in this paper I describe my experiences to date with a hybrid instructional design, a “dynamic” case method that provides a bridge connecting both lay and scientific perspectives. I also suggest next steps in the continually evolving pedagogy.

A dynamic approach can provide students an interdisciplinary framework for applying the public relations management theories and principles they have studied to date to a current problem in a “real world” simulation. It can acquaint pre-professionals – both communicators and scientists – with ways to improve decision-making on scientific issues and simultaneously to acquaint scientists with ways to improve how they communicate about scientific information with lay policy-makers. The intent is to prepare students from many majors to make communication decisions that are well-informed and considered in a long-term perspective. Their mastery of critical thinking skills can help strengthen their problem-solving ability in ways that are useful not only as they enter their respective careers but also as they take on the various decision-making roles. The structure gives undergraduate students a stage from which to experience the role of the “practitioner in the middle” (Rogers, 1986) and engage in the strategic decision-making process.

### **An interdisciplinary approach**

Given the differences in outlook toward science, science education, and communication among practicing scientists, students, and public relations professionals (Coburn, 1989; Rabino, 1994; Rowan, 1999; Priest, 2001), a linking of related disciplines represents a step toward bringing

about increased understanding among them all. For the dynamic case design, deliberately seeking out controversial issues with stakeholders from diverse perspectives ensures not only that discussion and debate will be lively but also that majors from any one department will learn from majors in another.

The format draws on the literature of education research regarding online course design, public relations management, and science communication. In addition, it bridges the world of academic research and current practice in public relations.

While most case classes look at a program or campaign that has already taken place -- and this is true for most of the case course that I teach as well -- a forward-looking group of scenarios makes students think for themselves. One of the roles frequently attributed to public relations professionals is that of a boundary spanner (White & Dozier, 1992), someone who brings information about external publics and news developments to the organization's management, and vice versa. To achieve this, practitioners conduct environmental scans, especially helpful in an issues management capacity. Students already work on this kind of assignment in their writing classes, so it becomes a natural extension for the case class.

The "what if" questions posed through scenarios help them work through ways to handle uncertainty in their organizations' external environments, while recognizing that the variety of possible outcomes may or may not happen in reality (van der Werff, July-August 2000). With a topic that's frequently in the news, there's a good chance that a class scenario actually may play out in real headlines before the semester is over, presenting a spontaneous opportunity to compare student solutions against the actual decision-makers' choices.

The problem-solving approach in this course unit emphasizes symmetrical communication (Grunig, J.E., 1989; Grunig, J.E., & Grunig, L.A., 1992). The purpose of this

model is to facilitate understanding and communication, based on research about publics. A theory of particular interest and relevance for the dynamic case is that of coorientation, which considers the level of agreement and degree of accuracy of organizations and their publics with regard to their perceptions of each other (Broom & Dozier, 1990).

### **Choice of issue(s)**

My classes build the dynamic unit around public debates on food and agricultural biotechnology. Broadly speaking, some life science issues may encompass food and health-related topics for which advocacy organizations develop campaigns for or against particular positions, or for which major public relations counseling firms develop programs for their clients. In particular, the issues surrounding food and agricultural biotechnology lend themselves well to understanding public issues processes. The subject area is new for virtually everyone in the class, and it is richly diverse in viewpoints among the myriad organizations involved. It brings into sharp focus the difficulties of communicating with publics that have different world views, since scientists tend to think in terms of "facts," while non-scientists often make policy choices based on "values." Working with organizational roles at highly polarized ends of the debate help make the concepts we're studying more readily apparent.

To pique interest among the high percentage of my students who either are not especially interested in science or who think they don't like it, this topic is one that can appeal through a number of other practice areas: Corporate communication, issues management, public affairs, government relations, consumer relations, activist relations, media relations, non-profit and humanitarian interests, NGOs, international relations and globalization, and others. In terms of communication styles, the organizations with a stake in the real-life debate undertake serious,

issue-oriented efforts involving both rhetoric and symmetrical communication, as well as asymmetrical persuasion and activism sometimes for its own sake. There are educational and informational campaigns that have been successful and those that have been failures, as well as elements of stuntsmanship that are clever attention-getters if not always strategic. My syllabus does not specify that the dynamic case revolves around science issues, although, interestingly, one student's criticism at the end of the exercise was that she had not expected so much of the course to be about science.

### **Class introduction to the dynamic case and role-playing**

To kick things off, opening activities have varied, from my own brief presentation of the topic, accompanied by articles distributed to both the class at large and to individual students based on the organizations they respectively represent; to watching a recent news video (PBS and Frontline both have tapes available that present an overview of the issue, media coverage, and interviews with both supporters and opponents); to a presentation by an expert guest speaker. Most recently I invited one of the biology professors on campus to give a lay explanation of the science of biotechnology, along with a science policy analyst who formerly worked for Hill & Knowlton and is currently on staff at the Pew Initiative on Food Biotechnology. An independent source, the Pew Initiative, with offices in Washington, does not take sides but, rather, seeks to provide information and encourage debate to help all parties make their own decisions (<http://www.pewagbiotech.org>).

Assigned readings lead to class discussion of the pros and cons of being knowledgeable about science (or any other specialty that's relevant to one's employer) when you are in the

position of communicating about the subject with key publics. Again, the role of boundary spanner gets some focus.

Delegating roles is a key part of organizing this segment of the course. When I first began assembling the pieces of the puzzle, I made up index cards with the names of a couple of dozen actual stakeholder organizations and let each student draw from the deck of cards. That determined in whose “voice” each student would speak for the duration of the case. In some instances students drew roles that they later learned were radically different from their own perceptions, sometimes growing from that experience, sometimes becoming quite frustrated.

To generate more buy-in among the students and hence greater interest, I’ve recently shifted to a learner-centered approach (Azevedo, 1998; Hanna, Glowacki-Dudka, & Conceicao-Runlee, 2000). I name the categories of stakeholders (for example, corporate, government agency, consumers, news media, scientists and agricultural producers, international organization, or food retailer) as well as several prospective “client” organizations within each category. Students then self-select both the category and a single client, ultimately forming teams of about three students who will function either as in-house counsel or outside agency representing that client. Informal feedback suggests this is indeed more effective than the one student/one organization assignment.

While we are still in this organizing stage, I steer the class to the bulletin board on the classroom intranet, such as WebCT or Blackboard. They will have several Web-based forums throughout the case, but before we get underway with full-blown role-playing, I ask for an *inventory* in their own voices to find out what they know or believe, or think they know, about the topic first. Eventually this first post serves as a point of reference against which they can reflect at the end of the case whether and how their opinions have changed, or been reinforced.

Where food and ag biotech is concerned, not surprisingly, this is a subject largely unfamiliar to public relations and communication students. This presents an opportunity to learn not only about a new subject, but also some new ways of thinking and analyzing what is going on around them.

### **Structure**

Student teams explore the public relations dimensions of food biotech from multiple stakeholder perspectives, along a continuum from supporting through opposing. They examine how these different stakeholder interests communicate and negotiate on behalf of their organizations regarding environmental impacts, pros and cons of applying contemporary technological solutions to improving food production and distribution, health concerns, and the sustainable prospects of ag biotech, among other uses.

For the moment, it's helpful to recognize that numerous approaches exist for teaching case studies classes, within both the public relations curriculum and business schools (Kruckeberg & Bowen, 2003, in press; O'Rourke, 2000; Rangan, 1996). The pedagogical mix described in this paper integrates asynchronous learning for research and discussion, role-playing and Socratic Dialogue for negotiation and conflict management, and development of a mini-campaign plan to wrap up the experience. I'll discuss each of these segments in the sections that follow. All segments evolve concurrent with ongoing review of theory and principles.

### **Phase One: Online research and discussion**

As I discuss elsewhere (Altschul, 2003, in press), online discussion provides an additional useful forum to develop this skill although some educators have found no significant

difference between in-class and asynchronous discussion (Kelleher & O'Malley, 2001).

Regardless of the mode, however, the ability to listen attentively to what someone else is saying and to give relevant feedback is a primary skill for effective communicators and strategic counselors.

The online part of the dynamic case lays the foundation for the Socratic Dialogue panels in class. The format is also adaptable in the classroom to foster creative and analytical skills so often cited as essential for meeting professional requirements in a constantly changing environment (Gower & Cho, 2001).

After the inventory of initial knowledge described above, the first major step in the role play is for students to conduct online research about their assigned organizations on the organization's own Web site, critics' Web sites, and Lexis-Nexis. This gives them a view not only of the organization itself but also the perspective involved in environmental scanning. As they learn, they inform each other of their findings through several asynchronous discussions. Writing now in their clients' voices, they post what they *discover* about the client's position on the issue, along with a discussion of the client's "persona" as it communicates and makes decisions. At this point, for example, the model(s) of public relations should be apparent.

While they continue to discover typical communication behaviors, discussion proceeds to a *perception* or coorientation stage to identify what each client thinks other stakeholders think about them and vice versa, and why. At this point I encourage my students to begin *enacting* online the communication behaviors and strategies of their organizations.

In my most recent class, for example, the team representing the FDA initiated and responded to posts from several of the other stakeholders as follows:



Subject: Government

The FDA conducts extensive studies on all biogenetically engineered food products before they hit the market. We take special care to make sure that every product created is just as safe (if not more safe) than the original host. However, we do recognize consumer concerns with these new products and we wish to work with all sectors of the food industry, including producers, consumers, and marketers to ensure that everyone is as comfortable (sic) and content with the scientific progression of food products as possible. Our role is to protect the American marketplace as one of the strongest sectors in the world, while also protecting American consumers.

With this in mind, we are announcing today plans to research and develop a method of product labelling that will be required for all genetically engineered foodstuffs. Our research includes the possibility of a new logo that will serve as a universal symbol for biogenetically (sic) engineered products.

Current research involves cost analysis and feasibility. During this time period, the government will hear feedback from the industry as to specific needs and concerns before announcing our plan for implementation.

Subject: Re: Media

The FDA would like to make arrangements where we could meet with the media and discuss our plans on a public issues campaign for the topic of genetically altered foods. Our position is to educate the public about this issue so that they may feel more comfortable with the idea. The FDA is willing to share whatever information we have on the issue with the media. We are aiming to use various kinds of media to make the public aware of our future plans. Please contact the FDA regarding any questions you may have on our position.

Subject: In Response (sic) to Concerned Consumers

The FDA fully understands the concern on behalf of the consumers. Though many consumers may believe that GM foods have just arrived on their shelves, biotechnology has been used for a great deal of time. In 1992, the FDA published a policy explaining how existing regulations for food safety would also apply to bioengineered foods. GM foods are altered using biotechnology to help make the crop produce better. There is nothing different with the end product. There are voluntary guidelines that allow companies to label GM products. The reason that they are only guidelines is because of our previous position that GM foods are no different. The FDA's job is to ensure the safety of all food regardless if they are regular or GM foods. It is our position that all GM foods are safe and that consumers should in no way be alarmed. As earlier released, we are planning are beginning a public education program to inform the public on the issue of GM foods. We have also established a

website which can help answer questions of consumer and allow them to submit their comments to the FDA.

We value the opinion of the consumer (sic) and feel that it is our job to make sure all products produced are safe. We have no reason to believe that GM foods are unsafe or should not be consumed.

The Greenpeace team submitted a plea for legitimacy, phrased perhaps different from how the organization might speak in reality, which gave us an opportunity to talk in class about power and power-control relationships:

Subject: Greenpeace-->Re: Government

As a member of Greenpeace's in-house PR counsel, I applaud the FDA for taking measures to work on labeling. But I hope that this will be more than talk and actually be implemented.

I noticed that something was absent, however, from the FDA's statement regarding how it will work with all sectors of the food production industry to arrive at mutually acceptable food products. What about Greenpeace? Doesn't the FDA care to include Greenpeace in this discussion? We may have a radical reputation yet we are reasonable people who can negotiate civilly. The FDA need not be afraid of Greenpeace. Please include us in your negotiations, we deserve a seat at that "conference table" because we represent the interests of many people. Those people's views should not be ignored. Thank you.

Technology thus supports learning, rather than being an end in itself. It provides a space for students to report, formulate and test their own ideas and arguments (Morgan, 2000), leading up to their ability to participate in "live" panel discussions, the next phase of the dynamic case.

### **Phase Two: In-class Socratic Dialogue Panel Discussions**

One management training technique that the Public Relations Society of America has incorporated into programs at national conferences and large chapters is a Socratic Dialogue panel discussion modeled after the popular PBS programs moderated by Fred Friendly (Galloway,

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

1999). At the professional level, a panel of experts responds to a hypothetical crisis scenario for a given industry during an intense hour and a half of questions from a moderator. PRSA's Strategic Communications Scenario Program says success depends on choosing a critical issue and posing a scenario that "realistically demonstrates how the issue might affect a wide variety of stakeholders and observers of the industry" (Public Relations Society of America [PRSA], n.d. a).

Intended to demonstrate the power and value of public relations with key management audiences (PRSA, n.d. b), the format also works as a creative springboard for students to extend their own analytical and critical thinking skills, essential for meeting professional requirements in a constantly changing environment (Parkinson & Ekachai, 2002; Gower & Cho, 2001). For undergraduate students, who don't yet have substantial professional experience or expertise, each panel lasts about a half hour.

Although philosophy professors may point out that what PRSA calls "Socratic" goes counter to what Socrates himself practiced (J. Leshner, personal communication, September 14, 2000), the adaptation for the dynamic case nevertheless seems to work well. Socrates worked with his learners on a one-to-one basis, assuming the individual initially knew little or nothing about the subject at hand.

The classroom situation comes slightly closer to Socratic method than the PRSA programs in that the starting point for discussion is a subject about which the students know very little at first. Up to the time of the in-class panels, they have phrased and rephrased what they have been learning, advancing to the point where they can take their client organizations' viewpoints and relate them to the beginning of the dynamic case. When they are confronted with scenarios that now ask them to attempt communication solutions, they must finally apply the

other public relations theories discussed in class and test what is effective. This synthesis is the heart of the process (Munns, 2001; Strauss, 2000).

Every stakeholder team is represented over a series of three different scenarios (see sample, Appendix). Non-participating team members may “prompt” the panelists during the discussion or otherwise engage in communication activities relevant to the scenario. Teams in my classes have prepared and distributed complete media kits, flyers and posters, and staged mock protests, some more convincing than others. In both professional settings and the classroom, an engaging panel is one in which all parties come to realize the value of dialogue throughout the problem-solving process.

After the in-class panels, students “debrief” in a final online discussion in which they post their overall reactions, what they learned, and how the entire study may have changed or reinforced their initial beliefs. Collectively, these activities give students a chance to examine the interchange and decision-making processes among publics who affect and are affected by broad policy issues.

### **Phase Three: Mini-campaigns**

The final part of the dynamic case design segues to a campaign component, but not in as much depth as would be expected for a campaigns class. Mainly due to time constraints at this point in the semester, teams are limited in how much research they can do beyond an environmental scan or situation analysis, so the emphasis is on matching objectives and tactics to the right public(s). For this assignment each team develops a plan for the client it has represented throughout the exercise, making recommendations geared to solving problems posed by the issues that emerged during the online and Socratic Dialogue phases. We take a full class

period for all teams to present their proposals, with a concluding discussion of what the teams think the outcome would be and an evaluation of which stakeholders actually are communicating most effectively in the real world.

### **Results and next steps**

Student feedback in the online debriefing has yielded both support for the dynamic case process and a number of suggestions to improve it. Some students prefer discussion only in the face-to-face mode, while others realize they have more time to think during asynchronous exercises. Most develop an understanding of the subject, if not an actual interest in it; on occasion a student will forward a pertinent online news article to me well after the semester is over, suggesting a continuing increased level of awareness.

Here's a sampling of student reactions:

...the dynamic panels were an excellent idea. It was a good way to practice thinking on your feet because that is what PR practitioners will be forced to deal with. I think in the future I will be more confident when asked questions on the spot... I learned more about dialogue. In addition, negotiation was very much evident in the panel discussions.

...it was nice to split up into smaller groups and interact with everyone to present each side of the debate. I think that type (of) forum makes it easier to learn (the) truth about the issue. Plus, being involved in kinesthetic learning allows much more information to be retained than just listening to lecture.

I liked the roundtables. It really brought the case issues to life... I also really liked the group aspect of the dynamic case and that we each assumed the role of a different group. It got us involved in the project.

Many times group work is difficult to coordinate, but the online discussion forum made it easy to collaborate (on) ideas.

I found many of our in class discussions quite engaging as heated discussions (took place) more often than not.

Working with groups and having discussions online helped me understand a little bit more of what many people knew already about biotechnology... we needed to step back and think about all the different ways that each organization can express their facts, beliefs and research to their publics in a fair and unbiased way.

I truly enjoyed the interactive aspects of the dialogues (sic). On the subject matter of biotechnology and GM foods, I began this class with little knowledge. I have come to learn about these foods through our discussions online, class speakers, and individual case projects.

In terms of teaching technique and course design, a shorter timeframe for each online forum likely will compel a quicker response from students, rather than a longer duration. To date I've worked with a 10-day to two-week turnaround time, but this does seem to drag out the discussion. Depending on the frequency of class meetings, four to seven days may be more effective. In addition, the entire dynamic case can probably be condensed; instead of taking up the bulk of the semester, interwoven throughout all of the other activities the class is working on simultaneously, a concentrated five- or six-week module may be more workable.

By responding to scenarios about the importance of food, environmental and health crisis issues, students become better positioned to understand not only food biotech but other headline cases in the sciences, for example, the Alar apple scare or Mad Cow disease. Because of the nature of the different roles undertaken -- industry, scientists, government, activists, consumers, international interests, and the news media -- the dynamic case appears to be a natural candidate to involve students from these other disciplines, both within communication and journalism departments as well as public affairs, business, international studies, the life sciences, agriculture and natural resources.

Collaboration opportunities exist with colleagues on campus and at other universities; using the online discussion forum provides a useful tool for this kind of expansion. While my classes so far have relied solely on the asynchronous features, the chat, or synchronous,

capability can offer yet another resource, especially to bring in guest experts who might not be able to visit the classroom in person. To the extent that an instructor can arrange for one or more experts, these voices could address and answer questions from the entire class, selected teams, or students from more than one campus.

Additionally, the scenario-writing activity lends itself to future collaboration prospects. Individual student teams can be assigned to write a situation for the other teams to respond to during the in-class panels, or guest experts may be invited to challenge the class with a scenario from their own organizations. Each semester leads to refinement that further improves the learning experience, making the interactions among students, instructor and guests an ongoing construction of knowledge. On balance, the dynamic case contributes to professional development grounded in application of theory to real world situations, with potential to simulate real world interdisciplinary problem-solving.

###



## APPENDIX

**Sample Scenario: Feeding the Hungry in the Developing World**

It is 5 p.m. on Tuesday evening. The Embassy of **Zambia** is hosting a reception for decision-makers and opinion leaders who may be able to help them with their urgent need to reduce hunger. The reception is being catered by **Restaurant Nora**, the first certified organic restaurant in the U.S., located in Washington, DC. Among the guests will be representatives of the **U.S. Food & Drug Administration**, the **American Farm Bureau Federation**, and the **Organic Consumers Association**. U.S. trade negotiators have just worked out a deal with several agribusiness companies to donate 100,000 tons of corn and cheese products to Zambia and other developing countries. These products – that have been produced using techniques of genetic engineering – have been sold and consumed for several years in the U.S. with no ill effects. Zimbabwe has agreed to accept the shipment. Zambia is undecided. More than 30% of its population is suffering from malnutrition as a result of inadequate food supplies and faces starvation in the not-too-distant future. Outside, **Greenpeace** is staging a demonstration against U.S. exports of GE food products, and a media crew has arrived on the scene from **Channel 7** (the local NBC affiliate). It's been a slow news day and the TV people smell an opportunity to get a quick story on the 6:00 evening news

Entering this scenario, your client is either for the use of biotechnology to produce food and agricultural products, neutral, opposed, or conflicted.

**Every time you hear one of the other stakeholders present his or her position, try to enter the dialogue to persuade that stakeholder to adopt your position.** Initially, try to express positions, actions, and communications that you've learned are typical of your client. That means you may stick to your guns, or you may engage in "principled negotiation" like the activity we did in class with the oranges, or points in between. Likewise, you may communicate asymmetrically ("scientific persuasion") or you may try a more sophisticated coorientation approach, or anything else you think might work.

**Your goal is to resolve this situation to your client's satisfaction.** After some initial discussion, if you feel it is necessary to counsel your client to adopt a new perspective on the issue, please express your advice out loud when appropriate. If your client is reluctant to heed the wisdom of your expert counsel, be prepared to tell what steps you would take to convince the organization's leadership to come around.

Consider:

- *Communicating Uncertainty*, Ch. 11, The Importance of Understanding Audiences (Rogers)
- Matters of trust and credibility where scientific uncertainty is concerned
- Cultural and international factors that affect public perception
- RACE or ROPE processes you might follow in choosing an appropriate response

###

NOTE: Additional instructions were provided that were specific to each team.



## REFERENCES

- Altschul, b j (2003; in press). Using Technology to Teach Critical Thinking and Public Relations Problem-Solving Skills in the Case Studies Course. In *Learning to Teach: What You Need to Know to Develop a Successful Career as a Public Relations Educator*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Educators Academy, Public Relations Society of America.
- Azevedo, A. (1998). Computers Don't Teach – People Teach: The Socrates Online Method. Retrieved December 13, 2000 from the World Wide Web:  
<http://goldwarp.com/essays/teaching.htm>
- Broom, G.M., & Dozier, D.M. (1990). *Using research in public relations: Applications to program management*. Englewood Cliffs, NH: Prentice-Hall.
- Cobern, W.W. (1989, March-April). World view theory and science education research: Fundamental epistemological structure as a critical factor in science learning and attitude development. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Association for Research in Science Teaching, San Francisco, CA. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 304 345)
- Galloway, D. D. (1999, November). Considering a Socratic Dialogue. *The Strategist*, 28-36.
- Gower, K.K., & Cho, J-Y. (2001, Summer). Use of the Internet in the Public Relations Curriculum. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, (56)2, 81-91.
- Grunig, J.E. (1989). Symmetrical presuppositions as a framework for public relations theory. In Botan, C.H., & Hazleton, V., Jr. (Eds.), *Public relations theory* (pp. 17-44). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

- Grunig, J.E., & Grunig, L.A. (1992). Models of public relations and communication. In Grunig, J.E. (Ed.), *Excellence in public relations and communication management* (pp. 285-325). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Hanna, D.E., Glowacki-Dudka, M., & Conceicao-Runlee, S. (2000). *147 Practical Tips for Teaching Online Groups: Essentials of Web-Based Education*. Madison, WI: Atwood Publishing. See also <http://www.teambasedlearning.com>
- Kelleher, T., & O'Malley, M. (2001, Fall). Two Schools, Two time Zones, One Set of PR Class Objectives: On Asynchronous Learning Networks and In-Class Discussions. In Morton, L. (Ed.), *Teaching Public Relations*, Public Relations Division, Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. Retrieved March 20, 2003, from the World Wide Web: <http://lamar.colostate.edu/~aejmcpr/54kelleherandomalley.htm>
- Kruckeberg, D., & Bowen, S. (2003; in press). Using Case Studies in the Classroom. In *Learning to Teach: What You Need to Know to Develop a Successful Career as a Public Relations Educator*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Educators Academy, Public Relations Society of America.
- Morgan, M.C. (n.d.). Online Discussion in the FY Writing Classroom. Retrieved October 12, 2000, from the World Wide Web: <http://cal.bemidji.musu.edu/english/morgan/onlineDiscussion/discussinFYW.html>
- Munns, C.A. (2001, October). The Socratic Dialogue: Step-By-Step. *The Teaching Professor*, (15)8, p. 3.
- O'Rourke, J.S. (2000). Analyzing a Case Study. Eugene D. Fanning Center for Business Communication. Retrieved September 15, 2002, from the World Wide Web: <http://www.awpagesociety.com/public/news/analysis.pdf>

- Parkinson, M.G., and Ekachai, D. (2002). The Socratic Method in the Introductory PR Course: An Alternative Pedagogy. *Public Relations Review*, v. 28 n. 2, pp. 167-174.
- Priest, S.H. (2001). *A Grain of Truth: The Media, the Public, and Biotechnology*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Public Relations Society of America (n.d. a). Using Dialogue as a Strategic Management Tool: Strategic Communications Scenario Program sponsored by the Public Relations Society of America. Program description available from PRSA, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003-2376.
- Public Relations Society of America (n.d. b). Using Dialogue as a Strategic Management Tool: A Socratic Dialogue Program Sponsored by Public Relations Society of America. Edited and abridged transcript of an actual program. Booklet available from PRSA, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003-2376.
- Rabino, I. (1994). How European and U.S. genetic engineering scientists view the impact of public attention on their field: A comparison. *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, 19 (1), 23-46.
- Rangan, V.K., with the President and Fellows of Harvard College (1996, Apr. 19). Choreographing a Case Class. Revised. Teaching note. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Publishing.
- Rogers, C.L. (1986). The practitioner in the middle. In Friedman, S.M., Dunwoody, S., & Rogers, C.L. (Eds.). *Scientists and Journalists: Reporting Science as News* (pp. 42-53). Washington, DC: American Association for the Advancement of Science.
- Rowan, K.E. (1999). Effective Explanation of Uncertain and Complex Science. In Friedman, S.M., Dunwoody, S., & Rogers, C.L. (Eds.), *Communicating Uncertainty: Media*

- Coverage of New and Controversial Science* (pp. 201-224). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Strauss, V. (2000, Oct. 31). Philosophy's Resurgence: Not Just for Theorists Anymore, Courses Now Contemplate Real-Life Issues Raised by Technology and Genetics. *The Washington Post*.
- van der Werff, T. (2000, July-August). Scenario-based Decision Making. *Knowledge Management*, (3)10. Web only article available to subscribers only. Retrieved July 1, 2000, from the World Wide Web: <http://www.kmmagazine.com>
- White, J., & Dozier, D.M. (1992). Public relations and management decision making. In Grunig, J.E. (Ed.), *Excellence in public relations and communication management* (pp. 91-108). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.



***Legitimate Strategy versus Smoke Screen:  
Framing Philip Morris' Name Change to Altria***

**Cristina Popescu  
University of Florida  
College of Journalism and Communications  
2044 Weimer Hall  
Gainesville, FL 32611  
352/392-6660  
cristina@jou.ufl.edu**

Abstract

Using the theory of framing in constructing and maintaining corporate reputations, this paper addresses the case of Philip Morris Companies, Inc., which changed its name to Altria Group, Inc. in January 2003. The research compares the frames used by the company to justify the name change with the framing used by the mainstream media to reflect the event, and the reaction of various publics published online. Different frames are exemplified and implications are provided.

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The current study uses the concept of framing and applies it to the construction of corporate image and mass-mediated messages. Specifically, the paper represents a case study of Altria Group, Inc. (formerly Philip Morris Companies, Inc.), a multinational corporation that changed its name on January 27, 2003.<sup>2</sup>

Shortly after the change, there were comments from the mass media and tobacco watchdog organizations arguing that the new name was merely a public relations strategy deemed to distance the parent company from the negative tobacco image associated with it.

Through press releases and executive statements, Altria Group explained that the name change reflected “important evolutions in our development,” and will clarify “[our] identity as what it is: a parent company to both tobacco and food companies that manage some of the world’s most successful brands.”<sup>3</sup> The name “Altria” derives from the Latin word “altus” which means “high,” and is intended to signify quality performance and continuous strive for improvement.

This paper will identify the frames Philip Morris/Altria set forth to enhance its corporate image, and then compare and contrast the frames used by media and activist groups to report and react to the name change. Implications regarding Philip Morris’ short-term and long-term corporate communications effectiveness will be offered.

---

<sup>1</sup> The author is a first year doctoral student in the College of Journalism and Communications, University of Florida. She wishes to thank Marilyn Roberts, PhD, for supervising this research and providing invaluable feedback, Meg Lamme, PhD, APR, for her creative ideas, Mary Ann Ferguson, PhD, for always being there, and Rebecca Ann Lind, PhD.

<sup>2</sup> Four companies are grouped under Altria’s umbrella: Kraft Foods, Philip Morris USA, Philip Morris International, and Philip Morris Capital Corporation.

<sup>3</sup> Altria Group, Inc. “Corporate Identity Change” and “Message from the Chairman,” available at [http://www.altria.com/about\\_altria/01\\_01\\_corpidenchange.asp](http://www.altria.com/about_altria/01_01_corpidenchange.asp) and [http://www.altria.com/about\\_altria/01\\_01\\_02\\_MessageChairman.asp](http://www.altria.com/about_altria/01_01_02_MessageChairman.asp), respectively.

This research expands the area of framing studies beyond political communication, where a great many studies have been conducted. The focus here is on frames used to build and promote Philip Morris' corporate image, and as such, can be looked at from a public relations perspective. Moreover, given the concerns surrounding the tobacco industry, of which Philip Morris is a major player, this discussion may have ethical implications as well. Finally, the researcher believes this paper valuable because of the timeliness of its topic.

### Literature Review

Two theoretical groundings are of particular relevance for this study. First, the author will present the concept of framing, and the process by which framing occurs. Second, because the paper addresses the case of a company's name change for the purpose of a corporate image change, the concept of reputation management will be discussed, along with interpretations, pitfalls, and opportunities of such actions.

According to Goffman (1974), framing is the process by which individuals make sense of events taking place in the outside world. Frames emphasize certain meanings or connotations of the message over the others, with or without a predetermined purpose. As Gamson (1989, p. 157) explains, "Facts have no intrinsic meaning. They take on their meaning by being embedded in a frame or a story line that organizes them and gives them coherence."

The process of framing occurs within individuals, who subjectively conceptualize objective realities. Roeh (1981) wrote that "No author or speaker is free of the necessity to choose words, syntax, and order of presentation" (p. 78).

Entman (1993) notes that "To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text" (p. 52). As such, it appears obvious that frames can originate in more than one "location." First, it is the sender of the message who



decides how to frame its content. Secondly, it is the communicator, which may or may not be the same as the sender. In mass mediated communication, the communicator is the journalist or the medium through which the message is being disseminated. The mass media, known as gatekeepers in the communication process, have the ability to re-frame the original message, and assign it new or latent meanings. The third framing may occur at the receiver's end, who will make sense of the frames through her or his own set of values. The resulting interpretation "may or may not reflect the frames in the text and the framing intention of the communicator" (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Finally, the decoding of the message will depend upon the context and/or the culture in which the message is formulated.

For the purpose of this research, the sender of messages and initial framer is Philip Morris/Altria, through press releases and other corporate statements. This author will compare those frames with the frames found in mainstream media, here the mass communicator or disseminator. The receivers of Philip Morris' messages are individuals and activist organizations, whose reactions and own frames posted on the World Wide Web will be examined and discussed. The culture, in this case, can be Philip Morris' overall corporate image, financial challenges, public's perception of the tobacco industry, litigations within the industry, or legislation regulating tobacco manufacturing.

Both Entman (1989) and Graber (1988) concluded that "Because salience [of frames] is a product of the interaction of texts and receivers, the presence of frames in the text, as detected by researchers, does not guarantee their influence in audience thinking" (Entman, 1993, p. 53). Thus, this paper will analyze whether the frames embedded in the original text and the frames decoded by various audiences are similar or different. In so doing, the author will be looking at headlines, keywords, metaphors, symbols, images, and other literary devices used in textual communications.

The concept of framing has traditionally been studied in relation to political communication and public opinion. Through content analysis of news media coverage of political campaigns and poll results, scholars have found evidence that media frames are likely to be accepted and embraced by audiences (Gitlin, 1980; Iyengar, 1991; Lang and Lang, 1983; Weaver, Graber, McCombs, Eyal, 1981). The media's framing or encoding may be balanced toward the story, or unbalanced. As Tankard (2001) points out, "Much of the power of framing comes from its ability to define the terms of a debate without the audience realizing it is taking place. [...] Attention is directed to one point so that people do not notice the manipulation that is going on at another point" (p. 97).

Likewise, it can be reasonably assumed that frames used in non-political messages have the potential to influence the public opinion. This research addresses such question by looking at the frames used by Philip Morris/Altria to justify the corporation's change of name, and by comparing them with the public's reactions to those frames.

Tankard (2001) discusses a series of approaches to framing measurement, each of which presents opportunities and limitations. One possible approach is unsystematic, which gives the researcher liberty to select whatever aspects of the communication she or he is interested in, but allows room for great subjectivity in frame selection. The systematic, or empirical, approach uses a list of frames, uniquely identified for the topic under study. Further, "each frame would then be defined in terms of specific keywords, catchphrases, and images" (p. 101). This method, while easier to follow because of its objectivity, looks at components of the message but not at the message as a whole. Thus, the overall perspective and underlying meanings cannot be captured. In this paper, the researcher decided to use the qualitative or unsystematic approach, though paying close attention to some framing mechanisms suggested by the quantitative method

such as quotes, images, captions, logos, etc (see also Messaris & Abraham, 2001, for a discussion of the role of images in framing).

Since Philip Morris took on a different name, there have been comments especially on the side of anti-tobacco activist groups that the decision to change a well-established name represented a public relations strategy designed to refresh and better the manufacturer corporate reputation. Consequentially, this second part of the literature review focuses on reputation management and the impact of reputation on the overall corporate image.

The management of corporate reputation is seen as an essential public relations function (Morley, 2002) – “the orchestration of public relations initiatives designed to promote or protect the most important brand you own – your corporate reputation” (p. 10). While quality of reputation is the result of a number of intertwined factors, it is the overall corporate image that leads the tone of how the company is perceived by its various publics. Good reputation has direct implications on many aspects of the business, Morley explains – among others, high stock price, loyal customers, successful partnerships and strategic alliances, employee satisfaction and high productivity, and influence in the formation and adoption of public policies.

Thevissen (2002) likewise agrees that good reputation in corporate communication is seen as a credit. “Having a bad reputation therefore implies getting less credit – or no credit at all, while a good overall reputation creates expectations and possibilities based on earlier experiences” (p. 320). In light of such approach, and given the negative image tobacco manufacturers have long been associated with, Philip Morris’ change of name can be interpreted as an attempt to rebuild its reputation and redeem itself in the eyes of the general public. The framing of corporate statements will likely contribute to the position the company wants to be perceived in.

Analyzing elements that assess a company's reputation, Thevissen considers factors such as quality of products, financial performance, corporate citizenship/social responsibility, leadership/management, and emotional appeal to stakeholders. Thus, it makes sense to look for these types of messages originating within a company that faces reputation problems. As the analysis section will demonstrate further in the paper, these are the exact frames used by Philip Morris/Altria to justify its sudden change of name.

From *Fortune's* America's Most Admired Companies study, the key characteristics that define and strengthen a corporation's reputation are: management quality, product quality, wise use of corporate assets, value as a long-term investment, ability to attract, develop and keep talented people, financial soundness, responsibility to community and/or environment, and innovativeness (Atkins, 2003).

"Your reputation will always mirror the absolute reality of who you are," said Steve Marshall, CEO of United Kingdom's Railtrack, quoted in an article from Wharton School of Business and AON Corporation. Players in the business world seem to agree, it is a mistake to believe that reputation can be changed without changing the very essence of the business itself. For that matter, Philip Morris/Altria acknowledges the company had been in turmoil in the past, but it has learned from its own wrongdoings and has changed to win the battle in the court of public opinion.

However, the process of change does not appear to be one easy step. Moreover, management statements of responsible corporate behavior and commitment to change may or may not accomplish their desired goal. "The least effective way to engender trust, of course, is to declare oneself to be trustworthy. Trust is built over time, based on what companies do, not say" (Atkins, 2003). This paper will content analyze Philip Morris' official releases, focusing on common themes the company is trying to send across.

### Research Questions

1. How was Altria's attempt to frame its name change covered by the traditional media and other groups and organizations on the Internet?
2. Which frames are similar and which frames are different?

### Method

The research method used in this paper is qualitative content analysis. The researcher decided to use a qualitative as opposed to quantitative approach in order to fully analyze the frames embedded in the text. Qualitative analysis is more appropriate for examining latent content, whereas quantitative analysis is used for manifest content of communications.

The unit of analysis was one single article or communication such as image or ad.

The population analyzed was comprised of three sets of messages: (1) Altria's press releases and official statements regarding the name change, available on its website; (2) traditional media articles retrieved via the Lexis/Nexis database; and (3) websites searched for using Google, a commercial search engine. The final sample contained seventy-two cases related to the corporate name change from Philip Morris Companies to Altria..<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Logging on to Altria's website at <http://www.altria.com>, the researcher selected all corporate statements, press releases, executive speeches, and graphic representations such as advertisements that directly related to the name change and new corporate identity. There were sixteen such elements. In LexisNexis, the author of this paper conducted a search using "Altria" as keyword in "Headline, Lead Paragraph, Terms," and two strings: News -> General news -> Major papers, and News -> Business news -> Industry news. The time period used was the past six months (Since the name change occurred at the end of January 2003, the author wanted to capture both prior and post coverage.). The search yielded thirty-two articles. Finally, a Web search was conducted using Google as search engine. Google was chosen because it is considered the most comprehensive and relevant collection of web pages available on the Internet. The author conducted an advanced Boolean search for "Altria and name and change," and restricted the results to English language and pages updated within six months. The search generated eight hundred seventy hits. Then the researcher went through them and selected the pages most relevant for the topic (regardless of the valence of the material), for a total of twenty-four Web pages.

## Findings

Before proceeding with the analysis of frames, a brief discussion of the context surrounding Philip Morris as a tobacco manufacturer seems appropriate.

In November 1998, attorneys general from forty-six states signed an agreement with the five major tobacco manufacturers in the United States, an agreement that became known as the Master Settlement Agreement (MSA).<sup>5</sup> Attorneys general dropped lawsuits against tobacco manufacturers, and in exchange the latter agreed to allocate large funds to each of the settling states to develop anti-smoking campaigns, reduce teen smoking, and pay for treatment of tobacco-related diseases.<sup>6</sup>

By signing the MSA, the tobacco industry agreed to pay \$206 billion to the forty-six states over the next twenty-five years. Of this, \$300 million a year for five years would go to a newly created Legacy Foundation, “for a public education program to reduce underage tobacco use and educate consumers about the causes and prevention of diseases associated with the use of tobacco products” (MSA, 1998). Moreover, funding for the foundation would continue beyond the five years, as long as the tobacco manufacturers signing the MSA controlled more than 99.05 percent of the U.S. tobacco market.

Beside monetary compensation to states, what the MSA accomplished was an unprecedented and severe restriction on tobacco advertising. The settlement banned outdoor tobacco billboards and transit ads, and reduced the advertising outside of retail stores to fourteen

---

<sup>5</sup> The complete text of the document can be found at <http://www.naag.org/cigmsa.rtf>. Four states, Mississippi, Florida, Texas, and Minnesota, settled separately from the rest and from one another. The five tobacco companies signing the document were Brown & Williamson, Liggett Group, Lorillard Tobacco, Philip Morris, and R.J. Reynolds

<sup>6</sup> For commentary on the MSA, see for example *Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids*, at <http://www.tobaccofreekids.org>.

square feet. It prohibited the use of cartoon characters to promote tobacco products,<sup>7</sup> and tobacco product placement in "any motion picture, television show, theatrical production, or other live performance, live or recorded performance of music, commercial film or video, or video game" (MSA, 1989). Tobacco brand-name sponsorship of music and sports events when contestants or audiences are under 18 was banned, and brand-name sponsorship of other events was limited to one event or series per year per tobacco manufacturer.

In the face of such strict prohibitions, tobacco manufacturers in the United States had to find alternative ways to subsidize the industry and maintain their customers. Shortly, accusatory statements against the tobacco companies appeared, for violation of the MSA's terms.

The first annual report of the Federal Trade Commission after the MSA indicated the tobacco industry's expenditures, as well as earnings. While the sale of cigarettes decreased by 10.3 percent from 1998 to 1999, the cost of advertising and promotions increased by 22.3 percent. Specifically, the FTC noticed substantial increases in magazine advertising spending (34.2 percent), promotional allowances (23.1 percent), cigarette giveaways (135.5 percent), and retail value added (64.6 percent). The only substantial decrease was in spending on outdoor advertising, by 81.7 percent from 1998 to 1999.

Further addressing the idea of MSA violation, a 2000 press release of the National Center for Tobacco-Free Kids cited researchers at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. The researchers found that tobacco advertising in magazines with at least 15 percent readership by youth ages 12 to 17 had increased by 33 percent from 1998 (prior to the settlement) to 1999

---

<sup>7</sup> In 1997, the Federal Trade Commission, agency regulating advertising, filed a lawsuit against R.J. Reynolds for using a cartoon character, Joe Camel, in its advertising campaign for Camel cigarettes. The FTC alleged that the company, through the use of the cartoon character, "unlawfully caused or was likely to cause substantial and ongoing injury to the health and safety of children and adolescents under the age of 18." Fueroghne, D.K. (2000). *Law & advertising: Current legal issues for agencies, advertisers, and attorneys* (2nd ed.). Chicago: Copy Workshop. The case was dismissed shortly after the MSA came into being. However, the settlement did not ban the use of human images such as the Marlboro cowboy (a Philip Morris image) in tobacco ads.

(after the settlement). The director of the Massachusetts Tobacco Control Program explained, “Our study shows clearly that the tobacco companies have not stopped marketing to children since the Master Settlement Agreement; they have merely altered the way they do it, and in fact, may be doing it even more effectively.”<sup>8</sup>

The American public had already witnessed numerous lawsuits against the tobacco industry since the late 1960s. The public was already skeptical of the way the manufacturers were complying with the settlement agreement when in 2002 Philip Morris Companies announced it would change its name to Altria Group, Inc. The change took place on January 27, 2003.

### I. Corporate messages and framing of name change

First, the researcher looked at the messages that Altria, formerly Philip Morris Companies, sent out to justify the change of name at the corporate level. It is important to identify the reasons behind the change right from the source, before looking at and interpreting media and activist public’s framing of the event.

Logging on to [www.philipmorris.com](http://www.philipmorris.com), a visitor is greeted with Altria’s logo, a combination of bright and pastel colors, and the headline “Philip Morris Companies Inc. is now Altria Group, Inc.” Underneath, the explanation follows:

Thank you for visiting [philipmorris.com](http://philipmorris.com). Effective January 27, 2003, at 8:00 a.m., Philip Morris Companies Inc. will change its name to Altria Group, Inc. [...] Our name change [...] reflects the fact that we are no longer the same company we once were structurally, culturally or behaviorally. This change better reflects who we are today and who we want to be in the future. It will focus attention on the qualities we want to convey such as superior performance, financial strength and a commitment to integrity and corporate

---

<sup>8</sup> The study provided evidence that tobacco companies, instead of reducing their advertising budgets entirely in accordance to the MSA, reallocated the money mainly for magazine advertising. Brown & Williamson, for example, increased its Kool brand spending by 75 percent in the months following the MSA, while Philip Morris’ Marlboro brand spent 25 percent more on magazine ads.



responsibility. We believe our new identity as Altria Group, Inc., allows us to communicate with greater clarity our corporate structure and how our companies manage their respective business.<sup>9</sup>

The website visitor then has the option of continuing to Altria.com, or visiting the three companies united under the name of Altria - Kraft Foods, Philip Morris International, and Philip Morris USA.

The name change appears intended to present the company in a new light, and change the public's often negative perceptions associated with the parent corporation's well-known tobacco component. "People hear 'Philip Morris' and think 'tobacco.' They don't think 'Toblerone,' 'Altoids,' 'Oreo,' or 'Kraft Macaroni and Cheese.'" Similarly, when people think of Philip Morris Companies, they rarely conjure an image of the world's largest diversified consumer products company," declared Mark Berlind, associate general counsel, Corporate Affairs Legal.<sup>10</sup>

Indeed, continuing the investigation to Altria.com, nothing on the home page points directly to cigarettes, the Marlboro man, or any other symbols Philip Morris has been known for. The page is characterized by simplicity and color. Altria's logo is in the top left-hand corner – a square containing twenty-five small squares, displayed in different shades of primary and secondary colors: red, yellow, blue, green, and orange. In a message to employees, the new chairman and CEO Louis C. Camilleri explains: "Aiming higher, reaching further, innovating and growing. The Altria name and logo powerfully express these enduring qualities. The colorful mosaic evokes our enormous diversity, our energy and our operating companies' astounding portfolios of successful brands." A corporate press release states that the new logo signifies "drive toward excellence, companies' focus on building brands, passion for success,

---

<sup>9</sup> "Philip Morris Companies Inc. is now Altria Group, Inc." available at <http://www.philipmorris.com>.

<sup>10</sup> "The Art of Change," available at [http://www.altria.com/media/executive\\_speech/03\\_09\\_02\\_artOfChange.asp](http://www.altria.com/media/executive_speech/03_09_02_artOfChange.asp).

openness to innovation, commitment to [Altria's] communities and societies, and focus on people."<sup>11</sup>

Three small images and links, in the center of the Web page, pinpoint to more information about the name change: a message from the chairman, an official statement about the identity change, and the advertising campaign launched to promote the new identity.

Chairman Camilleri's message states the new name as "an important milestone in the evolution of our family of companies. It doesn't signify a beginning or an end. Rather, it marks how far we have come and gives us a framework for how much farther we aim to go." The message is framed in powerful words such as *passion, commitment, dedication, responsibility, excellent, always*. These words are hoped to convey the image of a multifaceted corporation oriented toward brand building, customer satisfaction, and responsible community involvement.

The corporate identity change statement puts the issue directly:

The name "Philip Morris" is truly a tobacco name – a name associated with a remarkable history as a leader in that industry both in the United States and around the world. But we have also come to own a number of companies that are not tobacco-based, companies such as General Foods, Kraft, Jacobs Suchard, and Nabisco. By changing its name, Altria Group will clarify its identity as what it is: a parent company to both tobacco and food companies that manage some of the world's most successful brands.<sup>12</sup>

The Latin-derivate name seeks to represent seven attributes defining the corporation: performance, marketing excellence, commitment to responsibility, financial strength, innovation, compliance and integrity, and dedication to people.

The company bluntly admits a possible different interpretation of its intentions: "Some have speculated that the name change to Altria is an effort to distance the family of companies from its tobacco heritage. It isn't. Altria Group takes pride in owning what we believe to be the

---

<sup>11</sup> "Altria Group, Inc., new name of parent company of Kraft Foods, Philip Morris International and Philip Morris USA," available at [http://www.altria.com/media/press\\_release/03\\_02\\_pr\\_2003\\_01\\_27\\_01.asp](http://www.altria.com/media/press_release/03_02_pr_2003_01_27_01.asp).

<sup>12</sup> "Corporate Identity Change", available at [http://www.altria.com/about\\_altria/01\\_01\\_corpidenchange.asp](http://www.altria.com/about_altria/01_01_corpidenchange.asp)

two premier tobacco companies in the world.” However, as the content analyses of media coverage and activists websites will demonstrate, this has been the case in numerous instances.

The name change was overwhelmingly approved by 95 percent of the shareholders at the annual meeting held in April 2002. For one reason or another, they all felt the need for a change. Moreover though, as internal company memos unveiled by the media demonstrated, there had been talk about a necessary and imminent change since early 1990s. This aspect will be referred to later in the paper.

Through press releases and other corporate statements, Altria presented itself as more than Philip Morris, the manufacturer of successful tobacco brands. David P. Nicoli, vice president for corporate communications at Altria, emphasized in his speech the company’s involvement in the community – employment opportunities, contribution to state and local taxes, and donations to national programs designed to prevent hunger, combat domestic violence, support the arts, and provide disaster relief.

Referring to legal disputes around the company’s tobacco business, Nicoli stated:

Over time, society had become increasingly concerned with the sale and consumption of tobacco products. [...] The tobacco industry as a whole failed to respond to those concerns, choosing instead to slug it out in the courts. [...] Here is what we have learned: if you expect society to continue to give a company a license every business needs to operate, it has to do more than obey the letter of the law. Companies have to reach out to find common ground, and try to work out problems in a responsible way.<sup>13</sup>

To support the claim of company change, Nicoli provided examples of Philip Morris’ involvement in youth smoking prevention programs, coordinated through a special department with an annual budget of \$100 million. One such program is LifeSkills Training, allegedly endorsed by the American Medical Association and proved to decrease smoking among high-schoolers by 25 percent. The speech mentioned other organizations and federal entities (the

---

<sup>13</sup> “The Altria Family of Companies: Listening, Learning & Changing,” available at [http://www.altria.com/media/executive\\_speech/03\\_09\\_02\\_nicoliHarrisburg.asp](http://www.altria.com/media/executive_speech/03_09_02_nicoliHarrisburg.asp).

Center for Disease Control, the American Dietetic Association, American Academy of Family Physicians, the Food and Drug Administration, and the US government) with which the Altria family of companies had been developing partnerships.

“All these steps reflect our attempt to learn from the past, position ourselves for the future, and ensure that our evolution keeps pace with society’s expectations. [...] For us, adopting the name Altria is an opportunity to reflect – on the sources of our successes, and the sources of our failures. And it is an opportunity to commit to a future built on learning from the past,” vice-president Nicoli stated.

To introduce and promote the new identity to the general public, Altria has launched an eight-week advertising campaign in newspapers, magazines, on television and the Internet. The four ads are intended to communicate attributes such as performance, marketing excellence, commitment to responsibility, and financial strength. The campaign, developed by the Leo Burnett advertising agency, consists of four metaphor-advertisements, and their print version is available on Altria’s website.<sup>14</sup>

The first ad represents a green tree with numerous branches reaching the blue sky, and is accompanied by an explanatory message. The tree signifies Altria, the parent company “whose roots are firmly planted in success, through years of strong financial performance and global reach.” The branches departing from the tree are the many successful companies housed under Altria’s umbrella, such as Marlboro, Maxwell House, Nabisco, Altoids, Post, etc.

The second ad displays a bridge and the sky in the background. It can signify crossing “into new areas of expertise,” a link between old and new, between the American company and its international markets, and exceptional strength and endurance.

---

<sup>14</sup> “Our Advertising Campaign” available at [http://www.altria.com/about\\_altria/01\\_01\\_01\\_advertising.asp](http://www.altria.com/about_altria/01_01_01_advertising.asp). The page contains links to all four print version ads included in the campaign.

The third ad represents a column, and suggests that the role of a parent company is “to provide strength and guidance for its family” through “world-class people and performance,” as well as leadership. And that is the role of Altria Group, Inc.

The final ad shows a waterfall, representing a source of energy, growth, nurture, and continuous and spectacular change. “There are many sources of future growth for our consumer products companies, replenished daily with innovation and product development,” the advertising states, “and we’re well positioned for the next big brand to come from the Altria family of companies.”

All in all, Altria’s messages available online conveyed the same type of information, and provided similar interpretations for the company’s name change. Its messages appeared powerful and sincere. The corporation tactfully discussed the name change in light of its long history, presence on the market, diversity of activities and products, and well-known reputation. Factored in were impressive community involvement and partnerships with governmental bodies and other organizations that could lend Altria legitimacy and credibility.

## II. Framing change in traditional media

Secondly, the researcher looked at the frames used by traditional media (newspapers, magazines, trade publications, wire services) to cover Philip Morris’ change of name to Altria. All publications and articles analyzed in this section were selected using LexisNexis database (see note 3). Among the publications content analyzed here were *The New York Times*, *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Financial Times*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *Boston Herald*, and *Toronto Star*, to name just a few.

One article from *The New York Times*, entitled neutrally “A New Name That Says More or Less,”<sup>15</sup> addresses businesses’ decisions to change their names from a general perspective. According to the reporter, companies undergo name changes for a variety of reasons, “including clarifying the nature of their business, indicating an expansion or redirection of services and trying to increase recognition.” While the article does not take a specific position on Altria’s name change, it discusses advantages and disadvantages of changing the name of a business and still maintaining its profitability. A generic name like Altria’s does not identify the specific service provided by the company, but on the other hand it may provide more opportunity for dialogue and discussion around the new name.

*The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* takes a harsher approach in “Philip Morris Isn’t Fooling Anyone.”<sup>16</sup> The article begins,

In the last decade, Philip Morris slipped from fifth to 496<sup>th</sup> on *Fortune Magazine*’s most admired American corporations list. Today, the world’s largest and most profitable tobacco corporation is banking on the short memory span of consumers and hoping that yet another massive PR campaign will win back a U.S. public that has adamantly rejected its deadly business practice.

However, according to the authors of this article, “[w]hatever name Philip Morris goes by, it will not be able to distance itself from the Marlboro Man’s global rampage that claims 4.9 million lives each year, a number that is projected to skyrocket to 10 million per year by 2030.” The article further condemns “Big Tobacco’s deceptive practices,” and suggests that “Philip Morris would do better to reform its ways than change its name.” One of the wrongdoings Philip Morris/Altria is accused of is interference with the adoption and development of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, the world’s first global public health treaty that, if adopted, would ban tobacco advertising completely.

---

<sup>15</sup> Susan Hodara. (2003, February 23). “A New Name that Says More or Less,” *The New York Times*, section 14WC, p.3

<sup>16</sup> Kathryn Mulvey and Daniel Blumenthal. (2003, February 4). “Philip Morris Isn’t Fooling Anyone,” *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, p.15A.

A letter to the editor in *Los Angeles Times* titled “Philip Morris Is Trying to Mask Its True Identity”<sup>17</sup> puts an interesting spin on the interpretation of Altria’s logo. The writer explains, “I saw the accompanying logo [...] I was instantly reminded of the scrambled, digitized photos you see on TV when they want to shield the true identity of someone, and I immediately understood. Now when I look at the name Altria and its logo, I will always remember that it is Philip Morris trying to shield its true identity from the public.”

*Financial Times of London* features an interview with Altria’s chairman Louis Camilleri (“Food for Thought in Marlboro’s New Face: Interview Louis Camilleri, Altria”).<sup>18</sup> In the interview, Camilleri reiterates the reason the company decided to change its name - “Philip Morris was solely associated with tobacco.” A link to a full transcript of the interview is provided at the end of the article.

A short note featured in *The Daily Telegraph* (“Philip Morris Draws on Latin”)<sup>19</sup> acknowledges the name change and the explanation given by the company, but ends with an ironical “I’m sorry to say, though, that the ingredients in its ciggies remain the same.”

*The Boston Herald*, quoting the campaign director for Infact, a Boston-based watchdog group, interprets the name change as “basically yet another PR stunt from Philip Morris” (“Marlboro Maker Drags Out New Name”).<sup>20</sup> A branding expert based in Western Springs, Ill., also quoted in the material, appreciates “I don’t think [Philip Morris is] going to get any mileage out of it. [...] The public is critically looking at motives, and in this case the motives are transparent.” Hence, in a subtle way, through direct quotes from experts, the article seems to suggest its own opposition to Philip Morris’ attempt to frame a new corporate image.

---

<sup>17</sup> (2003, February 3). “Philip Morris is Trying to Mask Its True Identity,” *Los Angeles Times*, p.3.

<sup>18</sup> Neil Buckley. (January 31, 2003). “Food for Thought in Marlboro’s New Face: Interview Louis Camilleri, Altria,” *Financial Times*, p.12.

<sup>19</sup> Adam Jay. (January 29, 2003). “Philip Morris Draws on Latin.” *The Daily Telegraph*, p.32.

<sup>20</sup> Greg Gatlin. (January 28, 2003). “Marlboro Maker Drags Out New Name,” *The Boston Herald*, p.30.

From a short satirical article in *Financial Times*, the reader learns that “the inventive, pseudo-Latin word Altria” had not been adopted without a fight.<sup>21</sup> Two other companies with similar names, Denver-based venture capital firm Altira Group, and Altria Healthcare of Alabama, had filed lawsuits against Philip Morris/Altria for trademark violations. “Altira Group and Altria Healthcare must be scratching their heads at Altria’s insistence that its name change will bring better clarity to the corporate structure,” the article states. Eventually, both suits were settled under undisclosed financial terms. Discussing Altria’s new ad campaign, the article mentions,

Leo Burnett designed the campaign, centered on eye-catching (if undeniably irrelevant) images of trees, a suspension bridge, a classical colonnade, and a waterfall. But it’s only in the fine print that Altria gets around to mentioning a handful of brands found in many households [...] – products that aren’t exactly littering the ads’ pristine scenery.

Despite the metaphors embedded in Altria’s new advertisements, it appears that they may be hard to decode, thus counterproductive. The article ends, “If consumers aren’t confused yet about what exactly Altria is selling, they surely will be very soon.”

A word of caution is suggested by “Pitfalls of Rebranding” in *Financial Times* of London.<sup>22</sup> Using another three examples of name changes from the industry, those of the Post Office in Britain, PricewaterhouseCoopers and one of Kellogg’s cereal brands, this article demonstrates that changing the name of a company can be a risky business and turn into failure. According to marketing consultant Tod Norman, “Changing your name means rejecting your past and thus rejecting your customers. If the goal is to open your brand to new customers, developing a sub-brand may be far safer and more appropriate.” And business professor Lesley de Chernatony of the University of Birmingham points out that consumers these days are more

---

<sup>21</sup> (January 28, 2003). “Mixed Messages,” *Financial Times*, p.14.

<sup>22</sup> Simon Brooke. (October 3, 2002). “Pitfalls of Rebranding,” *Financial Times*, p.15.



“vociferous and marketing literate” than in the past, demanding compelling and thoughtout arguments instead of passively accepting the name change.

Other articles found by the researcher in LexisNexis were purely informative and neutral of Altria’s new identity, without taking sides or commenting on the name change as a strategic move. Overall, there appeared to be two tendencies to interpret and frame the name change in the mainstream media. One direction presented the news straightforward and covered both aspects of the rebranding – corporate statements explaining its change of identity, as well as industry experts discussing the pitfalls and implications of a name change of such proportions. The other position tended to approach the topic in ironical terms, and search for underlying meanings in Altria’s corporate releases. The one approach missing in the articles reviewed was supportive of the name change.

### III. How the world is making sense of Philip Morris’ name change

While traditional media have taken a conservative stance on the issue in most instances, the Internet has allowed individual voices, activist groups, healthcare and watchdog organizations from all over the world to comment on Philip Morris and Altria, and express their opinions.

Almost unanimously, people framed the name change event as a public relations strategy deemed to better the image of the company, and to distant from the reputation of a tobacco business.

Essential Action is a Washington, DC, -based corporate accountability organization.

Excerpts from a series of statements collected from participants in its Global Partnerships for Tobacco Control program read:<sup>23</sup>

“Philip Morris’ change of name will never be able to hide its misdeeds committed throughout the world, especially in the developing countries.” (India)

“Philip Morris, a company that is to blame for the global destruction, disease, and death through tobacco products, is now trying to hide behind the abstract name of Altria.” (Mauritius)

“A name change from Philip Morris to Altria is quite an understandable move in Ukraine, where it made headlines after releasing a billboard featuring a pregnant woman. [...] A new name is not going to lessen the number of frail babies born to smoking mothers, and will not lessen the number of babies that contract colds, ear infections, and lung diseases due to cigarette-addicted parents.” (Ukraine)

“A new name does nothing to diminish the load of immorality, corruption, perversion and lies upon which the company has constructed its global economic empire.” (Uruguay)

“Look carefully at ALTRIA and you will see LIAR, TAR, RAT (as in rat poisoning), AIL (ment), and TRIAL.” (United States, New York)

“Philip Morris has stated that the name [Altria] comes from a Latin word meaning ‘high.’ But shockingly the word ‘alt’ in German means ‘old,’ and the word ‘trias’ means triad. It appears that in every way, Philip Morris will be following its ‘old’ ways.” (United States, Minnesota).

SatireWire.com takes a humorous, yet ironical approach to the issue, emphasizing that a change of name does not equal a change of identity, at least not at a structural and functional level.<sup>24</sup> Parodying a press release, the website states: “Just days after Philip Morris declared it will change its name to Altria Group, lung cancer today announced it will change its name to Philip Morris.”

“The ‘lung cancer’ brand certainly evokes something powerful and terrible, but that brand essence is palpable only in English-speaking markets. [...] ‘Philip Morris,’ by contrast, needs no translation. When you hear Philip Morris, you think lung cancer.”

---

<sup>23</sup> “What the World is Saying re: Philip Morris Changing Its Name to Altria,” available at <http://www.essentialaction.org/tobacco/qofm/0204/altria.html>.

<sup>24</sup> “Lung Cancer to Change Its Name to Philip Morris,” available at <http://www.satirewire.com/news/0111/altria.shtml>.

The Web page includes a fictional ad/poster representing a young adult smoking. A message on his forehead reads, “I don’t worry about getting Philip Morris (i.e. lung cancer). I’m too young, right?” The explanation underneath the poster is “As part of its rebranding effort, lung cancer will place posters like this in doctor’s offices.”

Another example of satirical treatment of the name change is found at BorowitzReport.com, mocking yet another press release.<sup>25</sup>

“Officials from the newly renamed company announced today that their primary product, cigarettes, will now be known as ‘Health Stix.’ ‘We want to assure our customers that, even though the name has changed, the product remains the same,’ said company spokesman Dirk Slive, who will now be known as Sandy Nice. [...] In a related decision, Altria has renamed tar and nicotine ‘sugar and spice.’ In addition, desperate, hacking, phlegmy coughs will now be known as ‘breathing.’ At press time, Altria officials were still mulling new names for death. While no decision has been reached as of yet, sources say that Altria executives were leaning heavily towards “Happy Nappy Time.”

Not all material found went down this humorous path. Some commentators made serious accusations against Philip Morris/Altria, most of which were supported with evidence.

At the Philip Morris shareholders meeting in April 25, 2002, when an overwhelming majority voted in favor of the name change, Eva Kralikova, M.D. in the Czech Republic, asked Philip Morris to change more than its name.<sup>26</sup> “Today we have heard a lot about Philip Morris being a responsible company. But a responsible company would not do what Philip Morris did in the Czech Republic last year. When our government tried to increase tobacco taxes, Philip Morris commissioned a report to tell us that because of smoking, our country would save almost 1,227 U.S. dollars in reduced benefits for the elderly.” The speaker thus went beyond the name and associated the corporation with its behavior.

---

<sup>25</sup> “Philip Morris, Now Called Altria, Changes Name of Cigarettes to ‘Health Stix,’” available at [http://www.borowitzreport.com/archive\\_rpt.asp?rec=101](http://www.borowitzreport.com/archive_rpt.asp?rec=101).

<sup>26</sup> “Eva Kralikova Takes on Philip Morris/Altria,” available at <http://lists.essential.org/pipermail/intl-tobacco/2002q2/000722.html>.

One of the most successful and outspoken anti-tobacco activist organizations is the National Center for Tobacco-Free Kids based in Washington, D.C. In an essay released in 2002, shortly after the announcement of name change, the organization's president stated:

Why has Philip Morris changed its name to the Altria Group? The answer is obvious. The public isn't buying Philip Morris' image makeover. In January, Philip Morris ranked second to last in a US survey of corporate reputations conducted by The Reputation Institute and Harris Interactive. [...] Philip Morris' name change represents a classic public relations gesture – to create the illusion of change.<sup>27</sup>

Renaming itself Altria, Tobacco-Free Kids (TFK) asserts, is but “the latest and most desperate of [Philip Morris]' self serving changes as it seeks to protect its political allies and its non-tobacco enterprises from the taint of its tobacco business.”

To counteract Philip Morris' name change campaign, TFK launched a national newspaper ad campaign, co-sponsored by the American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, and American Lung Association.<sup>28</sup> The photo represents a live snake, and the headline reads “No matter how often a snake changes its skin... it's still a snake. Altria is Philip Morris.” The ad suggests that Philip Morris is trying to hide from the past by changing the company name to Altria Group. “Why is Philip Morris changing its name? After decades of marketing to kids, deceiving the public and manipulating its products, Philip Morris now wants to hide from the past. [...] Philip Morris may be changing its name, but it's not changing its ways.” The ad's conclusion is “New name, same deadly habits.” The president of TFK acknowledges the ad is, and was intended to be, shocking, because “Philip Morris' behavior has been shocking.”

---

<sup>27</sup> Matthew L. Myers, “Philip Morris changes its name, but not its harmful practices,” available at <http://www.tobaccocontrol.com>.

<sup>28</sup> “New National Ad Campaign Asks Why Philip Morris is Changing Its Name, But Not Its Deadly Habits,” available at <http://tobaccofreekids.org/Script/DisplayPressRelease.php3?Display=481>.

The same organization also created an online campaign in the form of a short animated movie that mocks Philip Morris' change of name.<sup>29</sup> The animation, which can be viewed on the Web at [www.philipmorriscanhide.org](http://www.philipmorriscanhide.org), is about a Marlboro Man criminal, wanted for the death of millions, who undergoes plastic surgery and transforms into a young girl named Altria to sell cigarettes to children. (This idea taps on an investigation published by *The New York Times*, accusing Philip Morris of recruiting underage girls overseas to give away cigarettes to their peers.) The name of the surgeon who performs the operation in the movie is P.R. Whitewash, suggesting that Philip Morris' decision to change its name was a public relations strategy.

The animation, titled "The Movie Philip Morris Doesn't Want You to See," ends with a call to action. Viewers are invited to log on to another website and send a fax message to President Bush, urging him to support the government's action against the tobacco industry.

Contacted by AdAge.com, a spokesperson for Philip Morris said the online movie was "a misrepresentation of our motives behind our proposal to change the name of Philip Morris Companies, the parent company." Though according to a TFK press release from March 2002, Philip Morris proposed changing its name after a \$250 million corporate image advertising campaign, highlighting its charitable contributions, failed to improve the company's negative image. As stated previously (see note 22), in January 2002 the company ranked second to last in an annual survey of corporate reputations.

Another discussion at AdAge.com about the "strategic move to leave tobacco-stained image behind" unveils what could be a key element in the name change campaign. According to one Philip Morris internal document titled "Top Secret. Operation Rainmaker," discovered prior to the 1998 Master Settlement Agreement between the tobacco industry and state attorneys

---

<sup>29</sup> (March 7, 2002). "Philip Morris Changes Name But Not Tactics. Warning: Dangerous Killer of Millions May Be Disguised," available at <http://www.corpwatch.org/bulletins/PBD.jsp?articleid=1959> (March 5, 2002). "Online Movie Mocks Philip Morris Name Change," *Advertising Age*, available at <http://www.adage.com/news.cms?newsId=34158>.

general, there had been discussions at Philip Morris since at least 1990, addressing the company's need to improve its public image. "We must immediately change the name of either Philip Morris USA or PM Companies," the document said.<sup>30</sup> During the 1990s, the same theme of an imminent change was brought up over and over in public polls conducted by the company.

In 1993, a separate document prepared by the public relations agency Hill & Knowlton and reproduced at AdAge.com read: "The identity and image of the principal corporate brand – Philip Morris – is weak compared with other major U.S. companies, but can be strengthened dramatically if audiences are told about the company's diverse product line and other corporate attributes."

United Kingdom's *The Guardian* ironically headlines "You're stuck in a dying industry, selling a product with a reputation for killing your customers, what do you do? Just change your name, duck out of any nasty associations and carry on as before." Directly referring to the tobacco company, "The Game of a Name" states "Philip Morris – best known for Marlboro cigarettes – is changing its name to avoid all those nasty tobacco stains sticking to its corporate image."<sup>31</sup> Commenting on the new name Altria, which "sounds like some sort of medical procedure shouted out on ER," *The Guardian* explains it means absolutely nothing in terms of its intended effects. Don Pettit, president and CEO of brand consultancy Sterling Group, declares:

The name and the logo isn't [*sic*] as much connected to where the company came from and what the company is. It is an abstraction and it's not an abstraction that's obvious to the consumer. Even if you buy Philip Morris' explanation that it's an aspirational name and that they want their companies to reach higher, it's not inspirational and does not really connect with what their businesses do.

Pushing the irony on the dark side, the director of the Wellness Center online compares Philip Morris' name change to Altria with "Osama bin Laden changing his name to Cuddly Bear,

---

<sup>30</sup> (April 24, 2002). "Behind the Philip Morris Name-Change Plan," Advertising Age, available at <http://www.adage.com/news.cms?newsId=34548>.

<sup>31</sup> (May 6, 2002). "The Game of the Name," available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/Archive/Article/0,4273,4407854,00.html>.

or Saddam Hussein renaming himself Abraham Lincoln. Osama, Saddam and Philip Morris alike should somehow be ‘estopped’ from such phony transformation.”<sup>32</sup>

An obvious pattern emerges from most of the materials mentioned above. Unlike the traditional media, online writers and commentators seem to have taken a liberal approach to Philip Morris’ attempt to reframe its identity and corporate image. From satire to irony, from harsh words to accusatory statements, the online media has read Altria’s corporate statements in a different light and provided alternative interpretations for the name change.

### Discussion, limitations and conclusion

Using the concepts of framing and reputation management, and content analysis as research method, this paper addressed the recent change of name from Philip Morris Corporations to Altria Group. The author first looked at the frames used by Philip Morris to justify the name change, using press releases and corporate statements. Secondly, the author analyzed the coverage of the event in the mainstream media – articles available via LexisNexis, and the frames used in those instances. The third set of data was comprised of commercial websites containing reactions to the name change from individuals, activist organizations, tobacco-related groups, etc.

Several directions appeared obvious throughout the research. The statements put forth by Philip Morris/Altria could be summarized as the “change” frame. The company emphasized that the new name was a necessary strategy, in order to reflect evolutions in the development of the business, and to clarify the identity of the parent company, manufacturer of tobacco and food

---

<sup>32</sup> (May 16, 2002). “Wellness in the Headlines,” available at [http://www.seekwellness.com/wellness/daily\\_reports/may2002/may\\_16\\_2002.htm](http://www.seekwellness.com/wellness/daily_reports/may2002/may_16_2002.htm).

products alike. The name choice, Altria, was intended as a metaphor for quality performance, drive toward excellence, and continuous growth and improvement.

For the most part, the mainstream media covered the event neutrally. The articles found in LexisNexis presented Altria's position, along with statements from activist groups that condemned the change as being a public relations "makeover." The press also addressed implications and pitfalls of a well-known company's name change, by exemplifying with other successful and unsuccessful changes across the time. The overall media coverage can be labeled as the "business" frame.

The Internet has allowed different voices and positions to be heard. However, despite the multitude of voices, this research found overwhelming support for a "smokescreen" frame. Individuals from all over the world, activist groups, and watchdogs interpreted the name change event as a public relations strategy intended to distance the parent company from the reputation of a tobacco business, and instead create a family- and community-oriented image using Kraft Foods as a symbol.

The author recognizes the limitation of this present research. The first limitation is due to the sample size and makeup, in the case of online material. The Google search generated eight hundred seventy hits, of which the researcher used only twenty-four. The selection was done based on perceived relevance of the material to the topic of interest. However, the diversity of sources, as well as the unanimity of positions on the issue, led to the assumption that there was a small likelihood of obtaining different results, had the author selected more items in a random manner. The second limitation is due to the qualitative and exploratory nature of the research method. Quantitative content analysis, on the other hand, greatly reduces the richness of the results and limits the researcher's ability to find latent content embedded in the material under



analysis. The choice between quantitative and qualitative research needs to be made depending upon the nature of the research, and in this case a qualitative approach seemed appropriate.

While the present research has identified some interesting patterns, more framing studies need to be conducted to test for the transfer of salience of corporate messages from the sender to the media, to the general public. In addition, different research methods such as surveys and focus groups could be employed, to test for the encoding, decoding, and effectiveness of specific corporate messages.

References

- Atkins, C. (Winter 2003). Restoring trust in business. *Public Relations Strategist*, 9(1), 11-12.
- Entman, R.M. (1989). *Democracy without citizens: Media and the decay of American politics*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Entman, R. M. (Autumn, 1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 43(3), 51-58.
- Federal Trade Commission. (2001). *FTC Cigarette Report for 1999*. Retrieved November 10, 2002, from <http://www.ftc.gov/reports/cigarettes/1999cigarettereport.pdf>.
- Gamson, W.A. (1989). News as framing. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 33(2), 157-161.
- Gitlin, T. (1980). *The whole world is watching: Mass media in the making and unmaking of the New Left*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame analysis*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Graber, D.A. (1988). *Processing the news: How people tame the information tide* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Longman.
- Iyengar, S. (1991). *Is anyone responsible? How television frames political issues*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lang, G.E. & Lang, K. (1983). *The battle for public opinion: The president, the press, and the polls during Watergate*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Massachusetts Department of Public Health. (May 15, 2002). *Cigarette advertising expenditures before and after the Master Settlement Agreement: Preliminary findings*. Retrieved January 10, 2003 from <http://www.state.ma.us/dph/mtcp/report/mag.htm>.

*Master Settlement Agreement*. (1998). Retrieved November 10, 2002, from <http://www.naag.org/cigmsa.rtf>.

Messaris, P. & Abraham, L. (2001). The role of images in framing news stories. In S.D. Reese, O.H. Gandy, & A.E. Grant (Eds.), *Framing public life: Perspectives on media and our understanding of the social world* (pp. 215-226). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Morley, M. (2002). *How to manage your global reputation: A guide to the dynamics of international public relations*. Washington Square, NY: New York University Press.

National Center for Tobacco-Free Kids. (May 17, 2000). *Two studies confirm tobacco industry has increased advertising aimed at children since state settlement*. Retrieved November 15, 2002, from <http://tobaccofreekids.org/Script/DisplayPressRelease.php3?Display=264>.

Roeh, I. (1981). Israel in Lebanon: Language and images of storytelling. In W.C. Adams (Ed.), *Television coverage of the Middle East*. (pp. 76-88). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Tankard, J.W. (2001). The empirical approach to the study of media framing. In S.D. Reese, O.H. Gandy, & A.E. Grant (Eds.), *Framing public life: Perspectives on media and our understanding of the social world* (pp. 95-106). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Thevissen, F. (2002). Corporate reputation in the eye of the beholder. *Corporate Reputation Review*, 4(4), 318-326.

Weaver, D., Graber, D., McCombs, M., & Eyal, C. (1981). *Media agenda-setting in a presidential election: Issues, images, and interest*. New York: Prager.

Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania & AON Corporation. (2003). *Corporate reputation: Not worth risking*. Retrieved April 1, 2003, from [http://www.aon.com/about/publications/issues/2002\\_wharton\\_reputation.jsp](http://www.aon.com/about/publications/issues/2002_wharton_reputation.jsp).

Radio Business on the World Wide Web: An Examination of the Streaming Terrestrial  
and Internet-Based Radio Stations in the United States

Submitted for Presentation to the MME Division at AEJMC

March 2003

By

Wen Ren

Mass Communication Master's Program  
College of Journalism and Communications  
University of Florida

And

Sylvia M. Chan-Olmsted, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor, Department of Telecommunication  
College of Journalism and Communications  
University of Florida

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Radio Business on the World Wide Web: An Examination of the Streaming Terrestrial and Internet-Based Radio Stations in the United States

Abstract

This study explores the Web content of the Internet-based radio stations and the terrestrial radio stations streaming online. It also compares the different strategies adopted by these two groups of Internet radio stations as reflected by their online contents. The websites of 176 stations were analyzed to examine two broad interactive dimensions—audience-oriented and source-oriented—and six strategic patterns—virtual information space, virtual promotion space, virtual distribution space, virtual communication space, virtual sponsorship space, and virtual transaction space. The findings indicate that the online presence of information, promotion, and communication was highly visible for both the terrestrial and Internet-based radio stations. However, the terrestrial and Internet-based radio stations had very different means of structuring these functions online. Strategically, the terrestrial radio stations have acted more as information providers, while the Internet-based stations the information collectors.

Radio is the first mass medium that enables the instant dissemination of information from one to many. It is often regarded as a “local” and “personable” medium to its audience (Albarran & Pitts, 2001). The Internet, on the other hand, is the first mass medium to provide the qualities of instant dissemination, worldwide reach, as well as customization. The characteristics of unlimited geographical reach and the enhancement that furthers the personable nature of radio, now available through the Internet medium, present an attractive opportunity for the radio industry to boost its competitiveness in the increasingly crowded media marketplace.

Internet radio, which includes terrestrial radio stations streaming online and Internet-based radio stations as defined in the context of this study, began to emerge in 1999 despite the limited bandwidth in most delivery systems (Lee, 1999). Since then, terrestrial radio stations have constructed websites with streaming material at an accelerated speed, while entrepreneurs began to develop Internet-based radio stations transmitting radio programs targeted at a worldwide audience. In late 2002, BRS Media reported that there were more than 10,000 radio stations online with over almost 4,000 of them provided streaming content (BRS, 2002).

With the increasing presence of Web radio and the accessibility of streaming software, at least one in four Americans have listened to radio online by 2002 (Arbitron, 2002a). The Cable and Telecommunications Association for Marketing found that approximately 56% of all Internet users have accessed streaming media. Of all Internet users, 26% of them have watched news clips, 21% have downloaded music, and 22% have listened to music on Internet radio stations (Beard, 2002). The American Internet users are not only flocking to the Internet for radio material, they are listening longer.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The total time audiences listen to Internet radio stations increased 702% from January 2001 to July 2002 (MeasureCast, 2002). Arbitron also found that audiences' time spent listening to all sources of Internet audio had grown from nearly five hours in January 2001 to almost six hours in January 2002 (Arbitron, 2002a).

There are many inherent differences between the two groups of Internet radio stations. Many terrestrial radio stations webcast material that is similar to their on-air programs. On the other hand, many Internet-based radio stations offer alternative, non-mainstream music. While terrestrial radio stations often target segmented groups, Internet radio needs to attract individual surfers. The combination of radio and Internet characteristics present a challenge in audience marketing as well as financing models. For example, while most terrestrial radio stations regard Internet as a value-adding tool for their established on-air advertising, Internet-based radio stations need to find innovative, multiple avenues to generate revenues (Palumbo, 2002).

Considering the significance of Internet radio in the emerging Internet-led media environment, limited scholarly work has addressed this first true medium of convergence. The current study will explore the similarities and distinctions in strategic and interactive approaches the terrestrial and Internet-based radio stations have adopted as evidenced by their streaming online contents. Note that terrestrial radio stations streaming online refer to traditional radio stations broadcasting using a land-based transmitter and webcasting via the Internet at the same time. On the other hand, Internet-based radio stations are Web stations using streaming technologies to webcast programs that users can listen to only through the Internet. Their programming content is created solely for distribution over the Internet.

### Literature Review

Most existing scholarly work that examine broadcasting media's Internet strategies have focused on the television industry (Kiernan & Levy, 1999; Chan-Olmsted, 2000; Chan-Olmsted & Park, 2000). A few studies have researched radio stations' websites (Gwynne, 1998; Murphy, 1998; Lind & Medoff, 1999; Evans, 2000); however, they largely emphasized motivations behind the consumers' use of Internet radio. No specific studies have compared terrestrial radio stations streaming online and Internet-based radio stations as two distinct Internet business entities. Followings are the literature that led to our research questions and analytical framework for this study.

#### Consumer Preferences of Radio Websites

Audiences seem to visit online radio stations for a variety of reasons. Murphy (1998) found seven basic motivations why people visit radio station websites: familiarity with the radio station; aesthetic; downloading; entertainment; information; interaction; and relaxation appeal. His study also showed a linear relationship between the times spent visiting radio station websites and visiting more radio station websites, listening to the radio, as well as contacting radio stations to request songs and enter contests. A 2000 report released by Arbitron suggested that radio station website visitors sought a station's website to be an extension of its on-air broadcast. Website visitors wanted to know more information about songs and concerts, enter the station's contests, and listen to the station over the Internet (Arbitron, 2000). For some music enthusiasts, the diversity that Internet radio stations provide is the reason they keep visiting online radio stations (Foege, 2001). Rogers and Woodbury (1996) found a positive relationship across markets between the level of radio programming variety and the share of population listening to radio; therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that audiences value diversity. Currently, Internet



radio provides a wider range of music choices than terrestrial radio stations offer. The category called “world music,” for instance, which accounted for 8.2% of the 2,500 global sites covered by RealGuide, is not a standard music format in the U.S. radio industry (Compaine & Smith, 2001; Broadcast & Cable Yearbook, 2001).

### Strategic Approaches of Internet Radio

It is difficult to consider the two groups of Internet radio providers as direct market competitors as the market of Internet radio is still in flux and the two types of stations compete under dissimilar business environments. We will now review relevant literature in Internet business strategies in the context of broadcast media to develop a strategic framework for analyzing the website content of these Internet radio stations.

### Characteristics of Online Communication and Content Management

Hoffman and Novak (1997) proposed a structural model of consumer navigation behavior and pointed out three characteristics of the commercial Web medium. First, users interact in a many-to-many communications environment. With multiple transmissions online, information is gathered and formed freely by participants. Second, flow in computer-mediated environments involves Web-based marketing efforts. Flow is exploratory in nature and repetition should be encouraged from a user’s perspective (Nel et al., 1999). Third, consumers’ experiential activities (intrinsic) toward goal-directed behaviors (extrinsic) lead to flow experiences.

Sullivan (1999) noted that corporate websites are designed to manage at least one of the four activities: electronic commerce; disclosure of information in accordance with regulatory requirements; control of information flow; and reduction of communication expenses. Quelch and Klein (1996) suggested that established companies would start

their websites by offering information to address the needs of customers, collecting information from the markets, providing customer and internal services, and eventually providing online transactions. Another type of website allows Internet start-ups to begin with transactions and then continue to establish a brand image, provide product support, and win repeat purchases (Quelch & Klein, 1996). The Web characters of terrestrial radio stations streaming online (established companies) and Internet-based radio stations (Internet start-ups) could be distinguished from this strategic aspect.

Many studies have examined the topic of “interactivity” in online context. Coyle and Thorson (2001) found that interactivity is associated with users’ increased feelings of telepresence (i.e., the simulated perception of direct experience) (Steuer, 1992).

Tremayne and Dunwoody (2001) discovered that users of more complex sites engaged in more interactive behavior and demonstrated greater levels of cognitive elaboration and subsequent recall of content. In general, research suggests that interactivity is one of the key ingredients in creating a website to attract consumers (Hoffman et al., 1995; Hoffman & Novak, 1997; Haeckel, 1998; King, 1998).

Linking the interdependent relationship between companies and consumers, Gupta et al. (2001) advocates the importance of the website content management. As the volume of information online continues to grow at a rapid pace, controlling complexity is central. Centralized, distributed, and hybrid approaches had been suggested to enrich information sharing and collaboration, improve data security, and lower Web publishing costs, as well as reutilize the content for multiple media. In summary, the characteristics and content management of a commercial website would shape the strategic value of the Internet medium for that organization.

### Internet Strategic Approaches

Radio stations' strategic approaches toward the Internet medium might be examined from the perspective of content design and the salient functions provided by specific content designs. Concerning the first aspect, Ha and James (1998) examined 110 business websites to assess the business strategic approaches on the Web. They examined these sites by "audience-oriented interactivity dimension" and "source-oriented interactivity dimension." Audience-oriented interactivity includes the presence of curiosity arousal devices and games (playfulness), choice of color, speed, language, and information about content of interest to the visitor (connectedness). Source-oriented interactivity is measured by monitoring mechanisms, such as registration at websites (information collection) and response mechanisms, such as e-mails, purchasing, surveys, and chat rooms (reciprocal communication). In fact, the audience-oriented dimension was considered as the attraction leading users to source-oriented interactivity. The study found that reciprocal communication, a source-oriented interactivity dimension, is most prevalent accounting for 61%, while choices, an audience-oriented interactivity dimension, ranked second (Ha & James, 1998).

As for the functional perspective, Angehrn (1997) suggested the ICDT model as a systematic framework to analyze Internet business opportunities. A virtual information space (VIS), a virtual communication space (VCS), a virtual distribution space (VDS), and a virtual transaction space (VTS) are segmented as channels of the Internet commercial activities. The VIS is for presenting and accessing information related to company, products, and services. Presence in the VIS means the intention of a business expanding its traditional marketing strategy by exchanging information through Internet-

based initiatives interactively from a one-to-many to a many-to-many marketing flow (Hoffman & Novak, 1996), which leads to the VCS presence. The VCS is a communication channel for a deeper engagement with actions in relationship, ideas, and opinions. A business presence in the VCS reveals that the Internet is used for monitoring and affecting the targeted groups to strength the perception of company, products, and services, which may operatively improve a company's entire image and may provide positive periphery effects. The VDS is for distributing products and services, such as digital goods and software. Its business presence offers a new channel for effective delivery, which could be utilized to reduce the cost, make progress on the quality, and distribute auxiliary services. The VTS is for initiating and executing business-related transactions, such as invoicing and payments. A VTS presence reflects strategies engaging in business-to-business or business-to-consumer transactions online, which cannot only speed the process and provide convenience, but also keep the transaction expense down. The proposed business dimensions can also be assessed by their levels of sophistication and customization level, which indicate the degree of development in the Internet's specific characteristics and the individualization of the services to users (Angehrn, 1997).

#### Broadcast Media's Internet Approaches and Influencers

Kiernan and Levy (1999) examined 62 websites of commercial TV stations and found no relationship between the characteristics of a station's website and the degree of broadcast competition faced by the station or the extent of websites operated by competing stations. Chan-Olmsted and Park (2000) analyzed 300 broadcast TV stations' websites and observed little interactivity and personalization. They also concluded that news-related content played an important role for these stations. While there is a great

percentage of network logos on homepages as part of a branding strategy, market size was marked as the least relevant to all variables investigated regarding website content. In general, broadcast television stations reassembled and repurposed their existing products for online delivery. Lind and Medoff (1999) examined radio stations' websites combining survey, interview, and content analysis. Of 900 radio station websites, only 210 provided streaming audio, and 83 of them had other downloadable audio. As a result, most radio broadcasters were underutilizing the Internet and their websites at the time of the study. Lin and Jeffres (2001) analyzed 422 websites associated with local newspapers, radio stations, and TV stations in 25 of the largest metro markets. The findings showed that radio websites were utilized primarily as station promotion for branding efforts. News was not a strong feature except for public radio and news/talk radio stations. The results regarding TV websites confirmed previous studies in that market size was of minimal importance in shaping the online content of a TV station.

In regards to specific Internet business models, Anajana (2000) suggested that online revenue sources might include advertising, subscription sites, customer services, directory services, content providers, and product sales. Palumbo (2002) further concluded that, among these options, advertising is perhaps the most common method of revenue in the Internet radio industry. Arbitron suggested that advertisers, who want to target high-value Internet users, should focus their marketing on streaming media consumers because these users spent more time online and were more oriented to e-commerce (Arbitron, 2001). Some advertising support systems seem to be developing as five media companies allied to create LMiV, an independent media company that helps local radio stations and advertisers build business by expanding their relationships with

audiences online. The aim of this group is to urge smaller radio stations to go online and to attract national advertising by coordinating content-sharing, signing up e-commerce partners, and providing technological support (Rathbun, 2000; LMiV, 2002).

In spite of Internet radio being a relatively new industry, the subscription option is becoming more and more popular. Arbitron found that nearly 16 million listeners would pay a subscription fee for the audio channel they listen to the most. The result shows a great subscription opportunity for business models involving unique and compelling audio content (Arbitron, 2002b). Listen.com has begun to sell standard subscription services, ranging from \$5.95 to \$7.95 a month, which offer commercial-free Internet radio and a variety of on-demand music (Boulton, 2001).

Another e-commerce choice for Internet radio stations is product sales. Some webcasters provide links to their sponsors' e-commerce sites that sell CDs, cassettes, and relevant products. No matter which users are browsing the site or are listening to the music online, the easy access and content relevancy help lead consumers to the e-commerce sites that they are interested in. An alternative choice of product sales is through affiliated network programs, as product providers pay a slight fee to the webcasters for purchases made through links. Moreover, selling digital downloads, media products, and other merchandise or content gives Internet radio stations an alternative to reach consumers and to generate profits at the same time. RAB eCom Solution, presented by the Radio Advertising Bureau, is an e-commerce shopping mall with links to selected national retailers. A customized local page can be added for an additional charge to generate local revenue by selling links to other websites, banner advertisements, click-throughs, and more (RAB, 2000). More than 400 participating Internet radio stations earn

85% of the total commission on each purchase that visitors to the websites make through the mall.

Chan-Olmsted and Ha (2002) suggested that a TV broadcaster may choose to utilize the Internet to generate revenue from the sales of online advertising space, sponsorship, e-commerce, content subscription, content syndication, and/or affiliate programs. However, the findings showed that TV stations have focused their online activities on building audience relationship, rather than generating online ad sales. It is reasonable to conclude that the Internet is in a support position to complement the off-line core products (Chan-Olmsted & Ha, 2002). Its promotional character is essential in broadcasting business. As promotion is often the most important marketing activity to increase traffic in terrestrial radio stations, it is plausible that the benefit of promotion may be transferred online.

#### Differential Characteristics between Internet-Based and Terrestrial Radio Stations

The business opportunities offered by the Internet are realized differently by the two groups of Web radio station because of their inherent differences in resources and the subsequent strategic priorities. Figure 1 depicts the dissimilarity between the two types of business entities. While the terrestrial radio stations have a reciprocal relationship between radio and the Internet, is able to share programming and generate income from advertisers through online or offline means, the Internet-based radio stations do not have another source of audience, content, or ad revenues.

#### The Framework for Analyzing Internet Radio Content

Integrating the concepts presented in previous literature, we propose to analyze an Internet radio station's content using the ICDT framework of four virtual spaces (VIS,

VCS, VDS, and VTS). Two other characteristics (VPS and VSS) are added to address the promotion and financing aspects that are unique to the Internet radio market (see Figure 2). The interactivity criteria suggested by Ha and James (1998) were modified to analyze the tendency of website contents. “Audience-oriented interactivity dimension” observes the presence of information delivery to users’ interest (connectedness), as well as the playfulness and choice of distribution software, products, or prizes from the consumers’ viewpoint; therefore, VIS, VPS, and VDS represent this strategic disposition. “Source-oriented interactivity dimension” is based on interdependent commercial communications of collecting information to improve business and of processing transactional functions to further generate profits for a company. Accordingly, they are represented in the VCS, VSS, and VTS.

In examining the Web content of Internet radio stations, we propose that Internet-based radio stations and terrestrial radio stations streaming online would have different emphases. For example, because the lack of off-line ad revenue alternatives, sponsorship and transaction elements may be more crucial to the Internet-based stations. Moreover, because the lack of established off-line audience, Internet-based radio stations may provide more personalized communication options (e.g. a customized radio function that the users’ preference can be matched by requesting) in order to increase audience loyalty.

Accordingly, the following research questions are proposed:

1. What are the typical features of Internet radio?
2. According to the Web contents of Internet radio stations, what strategic patterns (VIS, VPS, VDS, VCS, VSS, and VTS) and interactive dimensions (audience-oriented and source-oriented) have the Internet radio stations adopted?



3. Do two types of Internet radio firms—Internet-based radio stations and terrestrial radio stations streaming online—have different strategies regarding “information,” “promotion,” “distribution,” “communication,” “sponsorship,” and “transaction” elements in their website contents?

4. Do two types of Internet radio firms—Internet-based radio stations and terrestrial radio stations streaming online—have different strategies regarding the interactive dimensions of “audience-oriented” and “source-oriented” in their website contents?

#### Research Method

A content analysis of Internet radio sites was conducted to explore and compare the features of Internet-based radio stations and terrestrial radio stations streaming online.

#### Sample and Procedures

The authors used a U.S.-based Internet radio stations list reported on the BRS website in the fall of 2002. Excluding terrestrial radio stations without webcasting, there were 3,113 terrestrial radio stations streaming online. Excluding Internet-based radio stations outside of the United States, 197 Internet-based radio stations were listed on the BRS Web-radio list as of September 2002. Compared to the number of terrestrial radio stations, the size of Internet-based radio stations is relatively small. To ensure representation, more units from the smaller portion of the population are selected. Disproportional stratified sampling guarantees that the group of Internet-based radio stations is adequately represented. After checking the links on the list of Internet-based radio stations, we found some duplicated websites and several dead links. A possible reason for those dead links may be because this study researched at the time when the final regulation of webcasting royalty fees has just been ruled and the situation for

independent webcasters has been uncertain. There were only 88 websites left conforming to the criteria as Internet-based radio stations, including commercial and noncommercial groups. All 88 websites were examined because of the small population of Internet-based radio stations. Another 88 terrestrial radio streaming websites were chosen by using a skip interval sampling with a random start. A sample of 176 Internet radio websites was examined in total. The websites were collected and analyzed between 9 October and 19 October 2002. All website contents under the same radio station's domain name were analyzed, but the actual audio streaming content is not included in the analysis.

#### Measures and Coding Scheme

The unit of analysis in this study was an Internet radio station's complete website. Starting with the homepage, all other HTML pages under an Internet radio station's domain name were examined. However, the extension content of audio streaming programs is excluded. The variables under "virtual information space" are related to the information a website provides, including company, product, and service information. The variables under "virtual promotion space" are related to the internal and external promotion a website provides to promote company image, products, and services. Note that while internal promotion includes the promotion of the station itself using its own resources, external promotion is a promotion for other firms that often lead to revenues for the station. The variables under "virtual distribution space" are related to the distribution channels a website provides to distribute products and services. The variables under "virtual communication space" are related to direct but maybe delayed communication a website provides. The variable under "virtual sponsorship space" is related to monetary sponsorship and/or donation a website provides. The variables under

“virtual transaction space” are related to a transaction process, such as orders and payments a website provides. Table 1 details the coding categories for the analysis.

Two coders were trained on both coding category systems and procedures. The coders clicked through and coded items seen on the homepage and then on all subsequent pages. To obtain intercoder reliability, the coders practiced coding for 10% of the analyzed Internet-based radio websites and terrestrial radio streaming websites. To account for the element of chance in coder agreement, Scott’s pi formula was utilized to calculate intercoder reliability. The final overall intercoder reliability for the selected sample coding was satisfactory at .87.

## Results

### Major Website Content of Internet Radio Stations

As shown in the “Total” column of Table 2, station logo (99%), media links (92%), and station information (85%) are the most dominant content in the virtual information space. The least common features are stations press release (6%), sitemap (7%), and regulation information (14%). Advertisement is the most common promotional content in the virtual promotion space, with station ads (internal) reaching 70% and outside ads (external) approximately 69%. The finding supports that advertising is the most adopted business strategy of the websites. Also, 46% of the websites mentioned sponsors, partners, or affiliates. Online couponing is the least frequently seen promotional content.

In the virtual distribution space, software downloads/links (79%) have the most presence. This feature is almost inherently needed as a player software is required to listen to streaming radio in these sites. Besides software links, audio download/streaming (35%) has a higher percentage than video and text/photo downloads. Conversely,

text/photo files download is the least common feature with 13% of the radio websites. The majority of the download files is flyers, posters, or even wallpapers for collection and distribution.

E-mail click-through (97%) and form mechanism (69%) are the two most popular contents in the virtual communication space. The one-way communication seems to still be the dominant function offered by the radio websites. Only 8% of the radio websites request listeners to rate the music that the station plays. Chat room (19%) is also not as common, considering the fact that online radio is a good channel to create a community of music lovers.

Monetary sponsorship/donation (28%) is the only variable examined in the virtual sponsorship space. The variable is described as a request or a link to form a mechanism that specifically invite listeners to sponsor or donate either online or offline. It is mostly found in the public radio station websites, but is increasingly widespread on the websites of the Internet-based radio stations.

In the virtual transaction space, the most common feature is online shopping through affiliate programs with a 47% presence. Most of the affiliate programs are multimedia-related e-commerce websites such as CDNow and Amazon vending music products. Thirty-one percent of websites sell station merchandise. The least common function of the VTS is paid subscription (10%).

#### Internet Radio's Interactive and Strategic Approaches

As shown in the "Total" column of Table 2, VIS and, to a lesser degree, VCS appear to be the dominant space on the stations' websites. This finding is consistent with most content analyses of broadcast media's websites. While almost 80% of software

download/links indicates a VDS presence, instead of delivering the station's own products, the distribution mainly offers links to download streaming media players for listening to webcasting, thus enhancing the value of the stations' web content.

In the VPS space, both station and non-station advertising account for nearly 70% of radio websites. The dominant presence of outside advertisements (external) supports the notion that ad revenue is the most popular business strategy for generating income. In the VTS space, most stations choose to be an e-commerce partner rather than the actual merchant, as online shopping through affiliate programs (47%) appears to be adopted more than online shopping for station merchandise (31%), non-station merchandise (18%), and paid subscription (10%). As for the VSS presence, a little less than one third of the websites have set up a system to solicit sponsorship or donation online. The presence of this viewer-supported financing mechanism seems to be unique to this online outlet.

In summary, both audience-oriented and source-oriented interactive functions are found on the Internet radio websites. As shown in Table 2, audience-oriented interactivity seems to exhibit greater significance regarding the online presence of these Internet stations. Note that though the findings also show that the Internet radio stations have a strong presence in the VCS space, most stations have adopted a basic one-way communication mechanism.

#### Differences between the Internet-Based and Terrestrial Radio Stations

##### Radio Formats

Of the 176 websites, 65% of the stations provided mainstream and 14% of them offered nonmainstream radio formats, while 21% of the stations had a mix of programming emphases (see Table 3). The range of mainstream music is according to the

music formats reported by R&R Online (a leading industry trade group), which includes AC (adult contemporary), Alternative, CHR (current hit radio)/POP, Christian, Country, News/Talk/Sports, Rock, Smooth Jazz, Triple A (adult album alternative), and Urban.

There was a significant relationship between the two type of Internet radio stations and the choice of radio formats (mainstream vs. nonmainstream) ( $\chi^2=6.50$ ;  $p=.011$ ). Specifically, Internet-based radio stations (72%) provided more nonmainstream radio formats for listeners compared to the terrestrial radio stations streaming online (28%). Since terrestrial radio stations often stream the same music format online as they broadcast on-air, it is logical that Internet-based radio stations would contribute to the diversity of radio content online.

#### Strategic Approaches

The significant chi-square results for contrasting website contents between the Internet-based and the terrestrial radio stations are listed in Table 4. In the VIS space, these radio stations seem to differ significantly in areas of company information about the station ( $p=.000$ ) and its personnel ( $p=.000$ ), all product information, and service information such as weather report, coverage report, and community information. The results indicate that the terrestrial radio websites were more likely to provide detailed information about a station, its staff, and its community. This difference may be partially due to the fact that many Internet-based radio stations are owned and operated by individuals rather than organizations. It's interesting that while the terrestrial radio's websites provided more product news (55%), program schedule (68%), and program information (66%), the Internet-based stations were more aggressive in offering product reviews (64%), regulatory information (96%), and playlist (62%). Because of the significance of the Internet copyright policy in impacting the operation of these Internet-

based stations, as the Web is their only outlet to distribute content, it is logical for the Internet-based station to utilize their websites as a tool to influence the public opinion.

A possible reason for product reviews being more prominent on the Internet-based radio websites might be because more Internet-based radio stations were owned and operated by individuals, who tend to have a stronger content preference and product review, unlike basic programming and scheduling information, might need more personnel investment from the terrestrial stations. As for the playlist function, traditional radio broadcasters announce title and singer in between each song. Since their webcasting is the repurposed program of the on-air broadcasting, playlist has been offered in the program. Moreover, many privately-owned Internet-based radio stations stream their program via one of the biggest independent streaming providers—Live365.com. The company, which is the host hub for more than 30,000 Internet radio stations, helps these stations generate their playlist while webcasting.

In the VPS space, we did not observe any significant differences between the two groups of stations regarding their external promotions online; however, these stations do differ significantly in some of their internal promotional content online. While the terrestrial stations focused on contests/sweepstakes (69%) and station promos (71%), the Internet-based stations opted for the strategy of requesting referral links (87%). In a way, terrestrial radio seems to extend its offline promotional tactics, such as contests and events, to its online presence.

As for the VDS space, two of the four variables were found to be somewhat significant ( $p < .05$ ) with Internet radio types. While terrestrial radio offered more audio

download/streaming with the original radio program streaming excluded (61%), Internet-based radio provided a slightly higher percentage of software download/links (54%).

In the VCS space, chat room ( $p=.001$ ) and forum/bulletin ( $p=.035$ ) are the only two variables that are significantly related to the types of Internet radio firms. It seems that the Internet-based radio stations have a stronger emphasis on interactive communication than their terrestrial counterpart. A possible reason is that the Internet-based stations have to make connections and develop audience communities with their listeners and the Web is the only avenue to foster such relationships.

We did not observe any significant differences between the Internet-based and terrestrial radio websites in utilizing the sponsorship and transaction mechanisms. It might be due to the fact that both commercial and public radio stations were included in the analysis. More Internet-based stations are adopting the public radio model in requesting financial sponsorship online, even using online payment transaction companies such as PayPal. In the virtual transaction space, although no statistically significant relationship was found, the percentages show that Internet-based radio stations have a slightly stronger presence regarding using websites as an electronic commerce mechanism. In sum, the websites of terrestrial radio stations tend to have more audience-oriented interactivities and Internet-based radio stations source-oriented interactivities.

### Conclusions and Discussion

This study investigated the strategic and interactive dimensions of the Internet radio from a descriptive and comparative perspective. We found that Internet-based radio stations and terrestrial radio stations had distinct approaches in regard to website contents. We also found that both terrestrial radio stations and Internet-based radio



stations provided more audience-oriented interactivity with heavy informational content. Comparatively, the Internet-based radio stations tended to build more on source-oriented interactivity to collect users' information and develop relations with users through more interactive Web functions.

Our findings are generally consistent with past studies involving broadcast media website contents. For example, the high-percentage presence of information and communication functions among different Internet radio websites is consistent with a similar study of television station websites (Chan-Olmsted & Park, 2000). Nevertheless, Internet-based radio stations as Internet start-ups and terrestrial radio streaming stations as established companies have provided different contexts in which the radio stations strategize on how to best utilize the Internet medium. From the standpoint of market revenue sources, the online presence of terrestrial radio stations means an additional avenue for branding, direct communication to consumers, and potential advertising/retailing opportunities (Lin & Jeffres, 2001). Nonetheless, the Internet is the only outlet for Internet-based radio stations to brand, communicate, and generate income. It is thus reasonable that the Internet-based radio stations are more motivated to provide innovative, interactive web contents to encourage audience loyalty, while the terrestrial radio stations merely transform their on-air content online. Surprisingly, however, as the Internet is the major conduit for generating revenues, Internet-based radio stations have not developed a clear business model to sustain their operations as evidenced by their Web content.

Table 5 summarizes and compares the business models between the Internet-based and terrestrial radio stations as reflected by their websites. Traditional advertising

seems to be the most embraced approach, while the public broadcasting model of direct donation is becoming an alternative. About half of the Internet radio stations have provided indirect sponsorship and shopping through affiliate programs, which are the second dominant business models online. Some other financing mechanisms, such as paid subscription and online shopping for station or non-station merchandise have also been adopted. It's interesting that while the two groups of radio stations are operating under very different economic structures (see Figure 1), they have approached the Internet with very similar business models. Overall, the Internet-based stations were slightly more aggressive in pursuing revenues from subscription, e-commerce, and affiliate programs.

It is obvious that Internet radio as "business entities" is struggling to become self-sustainable. This is especially true for Internet-based radio stations. While trying to classify the commercial/noncommercial status of certain radio sites, the authors had some personal e-mail communication with the owners and staff of several stations. Almost all the terrestrial radio stations have relatively clear positions regarding their online approaches and purposes, many Internet-based radio stations, on the other hand, were operating without stable revenue sources and admitting feeling inadequate in developing viable subscription or advertising income models.

It is clear that the existence of Internet-based radio stations increases the diversity of radio, in both content and interactivity, available to the public; encourages entrepreneurship; and has the potential to promote competition in an increasingly consolidated radio market. It seems crucial that the evolving webcasting and Internet copyright policy addresses this group of constituents with a different set of

considerations. Legislation such as the Small Webcaster Settlement Act of 2002, which offers these webcasters a different percentage-of-revenues royalty rate (Pruitt, 2002) is a step in the right direction.

Limitations are inherent in any research effort and this study was no exception. Some potential weakness must be noted when interpreting the findings of this analysis. First, even though a valid and complete database was used in this research, the population of Internet-based radio stations was somewhat a limited list. Unlike terrestrial radio stations, Internet-based radio stations can be established from any independent location. With its short history and fluid regulatory enforcement, it is more difficult to generate a complete list, especially from an organization with credibility. Although the BRS Web-radio directory is updated once or twice every week according to the company, many stations listed were not functional. The second notable limitation is that the corresponding variables could not be divided equally under each virtual space. The comparison of six strategic patterns had been made with regard to the percentage ranking of each variable. Therefore, a virtual space was considered having a better strategic presence, even though only one variable under the virtual space ranks higher (yet with the relevant findings also noted under the same virtual space). This is a drawback concerning the interactive dimensions because the variables in examining source-oriented interactivity were relatively few compared to those of audience-oriented interactivity.

The focus of the study was only on Internet radio stations in the United States. It would be interesting to compare the results with Internet radio stations outside the United States. Also, music formats of Internet radio stations, though coded and categorized in this research, were not distinguished and analyzed in detail. There could be some unique

findings regarding diverse music formats. As distinct music formats attract different groups of listeners, their online contents may also present heterogeneous characteristics. This study was researched just after the ruling of the copyright regulation; therefore, the industry might be in a period of flux. A longitudinal study could be further applied after a few years of development, when Internet radio is more matured as economic entities.

Figure 1. The Differential Economic Structures of Web Radio Stations.

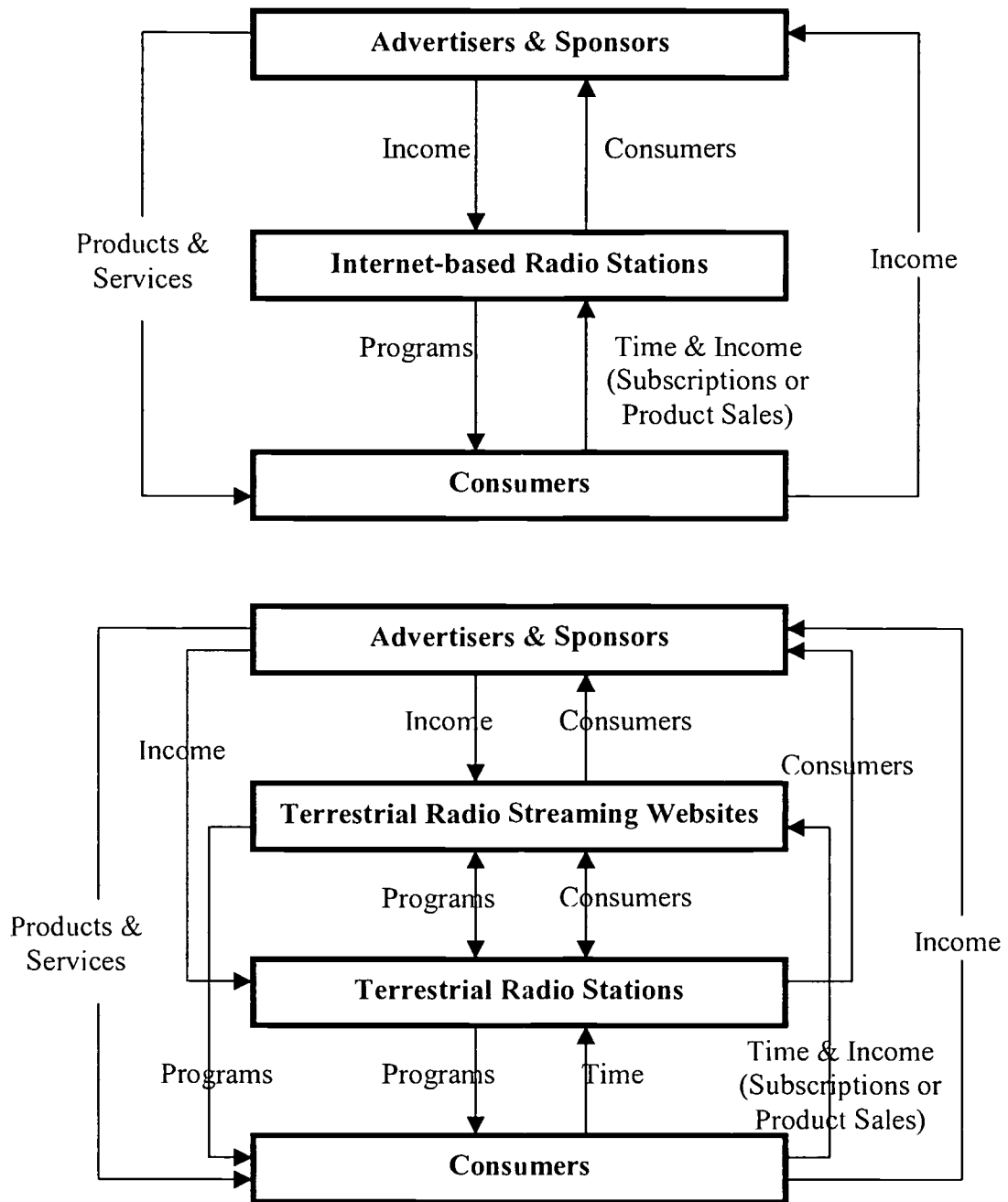
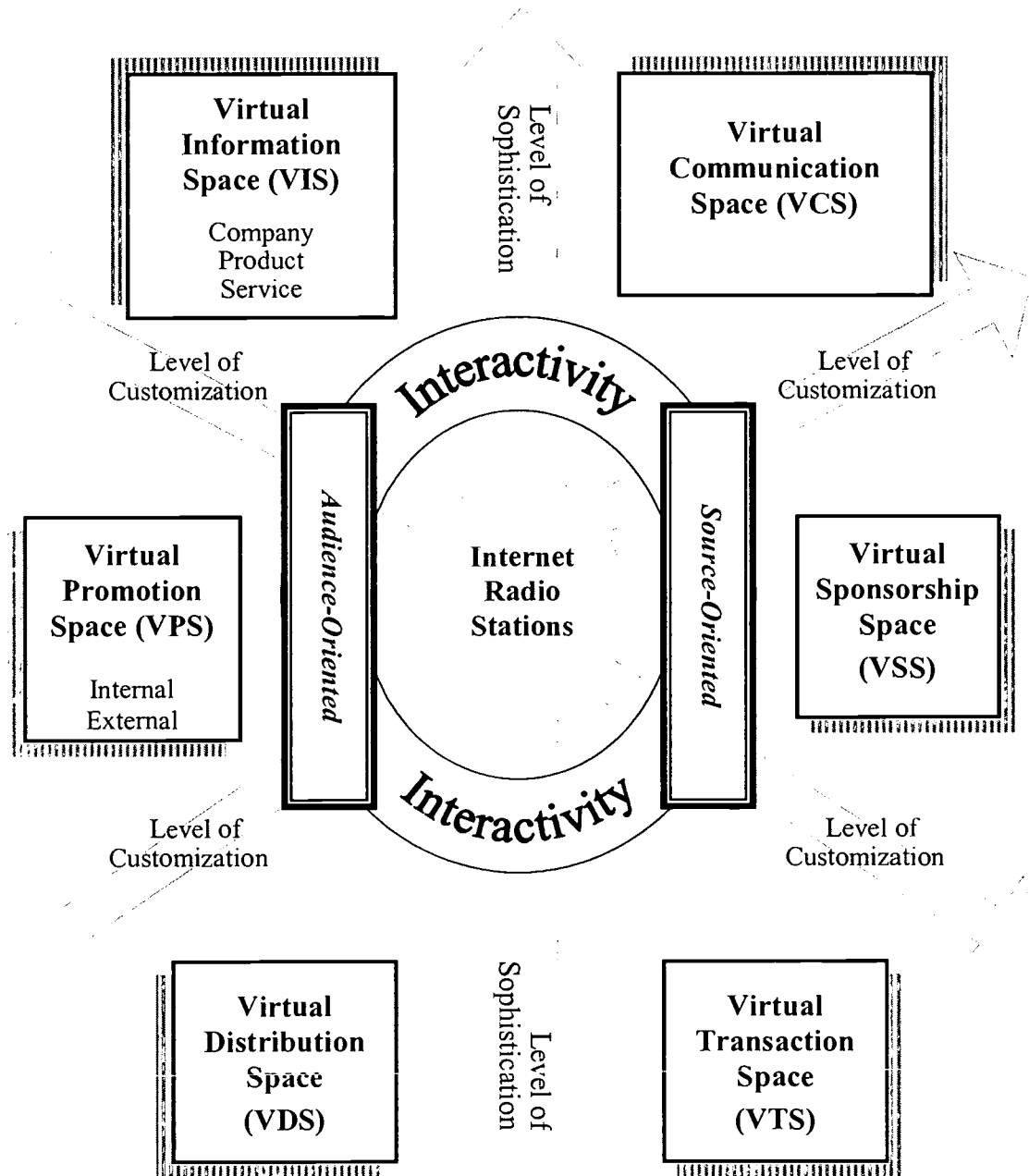


Figure 2: Proposed Framework of Analysis for Internet Radio Stations



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Table 1. Website Content Coding Categories

<b>Audience-oriented interactivity</b>	Measured by the presence of a virtual information space, a virtual promotion space, and a virtual distribution space.
<i>Virtual Information Space</i>	Two-point (yes and no) coding categories were established to measure a station's company, product, and service information.
Company information	Measured by the presence of station-related content such as station information, logo, press release, personnel information, and employment opportunities.
Product information	Measured by the presence of programming-related content such as product reviews, product news, playlist, program schedule, and program guide.
Service information	Measured by the presence of service-related content such as date/time, weather, sitemap, coverage map, community events, entertainment/leisure section, media links, general news, search engine, and customer support.
<i>Virtual Promotion Space</i>	Two-point (yes and no) coding categories were established to measure a station's internal and external promotion.
Internal promotion	Measured by the presence of station ads, contests, promotional events, coupons, bookmark request, and referral links.
External promotion	Measured by the presence of non-station ads, mention of sponsors or partners, and non-station coupons.
<i>Virtual Distribution Space</i>	Two-point coding categories were established to measure the presence of distribution content such as text or photo files, and audio, video, and software goods.
<b>Source-oriented interactivity</b>	Measured by the presence of a virtual communication space, a virtual sponsorship space, and a virtual transaction space.
<i>Virtual Communication Space</i>	Two-point coding categories were established to measure the presence of e-mail click-through, form mechanism, rating, survey or poll, newsletter subscription, chat room, forum or bulletin, and referral mail.
<i>Virtual Sponsorship Space</i>	Two-point coding categories were established to measure the presence of monetary sponsorship or donation.
<i>Virtual Transaction Space</i>	Two-point coding categories were established to measure the presence of paid subscription and online shopping for station or non-station merchandise and through affiliate program.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

462

Table 2. Web Contents of the Internet Radio Stations.

<i>VARIABLES</i>	<i>Internet-Based Radio</i>		<i>Terrestrial Radio Streaming</i>		<i>Total<sup>b</sup></i>	
	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>
<b>AUDIENCE-ORIENTED INTERACTIVITY</b>						
<b>Virtual Information Space (VIS)</b>						
<u>Company Information</u>						
<i>Station Information***</i>	43.3	65	56.7	85	85.2	150
Station Logo	49.7	87	50.3	88	99.4	175
Station Press Release	72.7	8	27.3	3	6.3	11
<i>Personnel Information***</i>	34.3	35	65.7	67	58.0	102
Employment Opportunity	43.7	31	56.3	40	40.3	71
<u>Product Information</u>						
<i>Product Reviews**</i>	63.8	37	36.2	21	33.0	58
<i>Product News*</i>	45.0	58	55.0	71	73.3	129
<i>Regulation Information***</i>	95.8	23	4.2	1	13.6	24
<i>Playlist**</i>	62.3	48	37.7	29	43.8	77
<i>Program Schedule***</i>	31.6	37	68.4	80	66.5	117
<i>Program Information***</i>	39.4	43	60.6	66	61.9	109
<u>Service Information</u>						
<i>Date/Time***</i>	29.1	16	70.9	39	31.3	55
<i>Weather Report***</i>	21.3	16	78.7	59	42.6	75
Sitemap	33.3	4	66.7	8	6.8	12
<i>Coverage Map***</i>	20.0	5	80.0	20	14.2	25
<i>Local/National Community Information***</i>	39.0	46	61.0	72	67.0	118
<i>Entertainment/Leisure Section**</i>	31.4	16	68.6	35	29.0	51
Media Links	49.4	80	50.6	82	92.0	162
<i>Non-product News*</i>	39.0	23	61.0	36	33.5	59
Search Engine	51.7	45	48.3	42	49.4	87
Customer Support/FAQs	44.9	48	55.1	59	60.8	107
<b>Virtual Promotion Space (VPS)</b>						
<u>Internal Promotion</u>						
Station Advertisements	47.2	58	52.8	65	69.9	123
<i>Contests/Sweepstakes***</i>	31.1	23	68.9	51	42.0	74
<i>Station Promotional Events***</i>	29.3	22	70.7	53	42.6	75
Station Online Coupons	100.0	2	0.0	0	1.1	2
Bookmark/Homepage Request	50.0	9	50.0	9	10.2	18
<i>Referral Links***</i>	87.0	20	13.0	3	13.1	23



Table 2 - Continued

<i>VARIABLES</i>	<i>Internet-Based Radio</i>		<i>Terrestrial Radio Streaming</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>
<b>External Promotion</b>						
Outside Advertisements	50.4	61	49.6	60	68.8	121
Mention of Sponsors/Partners/Affiliates	54.3	44	45.7	37	46.0	81
Non-station Online Coupons	28.6	2	71.4	5	4.0	7
<b>Virtual Distribution Space (VDS)</b>						
Text/Photo Files Download	54.5	12	45.5	10	12.5	22
Audio Download/Streaming <sup>a*</sup>	39.3	24	60.7	37	34.7	61
Video Download/Streaming	44.4	20	55.6	25	25.6	45
Software Download/Links*	54.0	75	46.0	64	79.0	139

### SOURCE-ORIENTED INTERACTIVITY

#### Virtual Communication Space (VCS)

E-mail Click-through	49.4	84	50.6	86	96.6	170
Form Mechanism	47.9	58	52.1	63	68.8	121
Online Rating	64.3	9	35.7	5	8.0	14
Online Survey/Poll	43.9	25	56.1	32	32.4	57
Newsletter Subscription	46.5	33	53.5	38	40.3	71
Chat Room***	75.8	25	24.2	8	18.8	33
Forum/Bulletin*	61.8	34	38.2	21	31.3	55
Referral Mail	45.7	16	54.3	19	19.9	35

#### Virtual Sponsorship Space (VSS)

Monetary Sponsorship/Donation	44.9	22	55.1	27	27.8	49
-------------------------------	------	----	------	----	------	----

#### Virtual Transaction Space (VTS)

Paid Subscription	61.1	11	38.9	7	10.2	18
Online Shopping for Station Merchandise	57.4	31	42.6	23	30.7	54
Online Shopping for Other Merchandise	62.5	20	37.5	12	18.2	32
Online Shopping through Affiliate Program	57.3	47	42.7	35	46.6	82

Note: <sup>a</sup>Original radio program streaming is not included here. <sup>b</sup>The percentage here is the number of websites that exhibit the specific content over total number of websites examined. \* =  $p < .05$ ; \*\* =  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* =  $p < .001$ .

Table 3. Frequency and Comparison of Music Formats.

<i>Mainstream vs. Nonmainstream</i> <sup>a</sup>	<i>Music Formats</i>	<i>Frequency</i>		<i>Internet- based Radio</i>		<i>Terrestrial Radio Streaming</i>		<i>Total (N=176)</i>	
		<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Mainstream Music Formats	Adult Alternative	8	4.5						
	Adult Contemporary	10	5.7						
	CHR-Top 40	10	5.7						
	Christian (Religion)	20	11.4						
	Country	8	4.5	50	43.9	64	56.1	114	100.0
	Jazz/Smooth Jazz	5	2.8						
	News/Talk/Sports	20	11.4						
	Rock	31	17.6						
	Urban	2	1.1						
	<i>Total</i>	<i>114</i>	<i>64.8</i>						
Nonmainstream Music Formats	Adult Standards	1	0.6						
	Classical	3	1.7						
	Dance	2	1.1						
	Easy Listening	1	0.6	18	72.0	7	28.0	25	100.0
	Oldies	6	3.4						
	Other	12	6.8						
	<i>Total</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>14.2</i>						
Not Applicable	Variety <sup>b</sup>	37	21.0	-	-	-	-	-	-

$$X^2=6.498, df=1, p=.011$$

<sup>a</sup>The range of mainstream music is according to R&R Online. Other music formats that are not included as mainstream music are classified as nonmainstream music.

<sup>b</sup>Variety is a music type that contains more than one kind of music format, which could be both mainstream and nonmainstream; therefore, it is not analyzed in this table.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Table 4. Comparisons of Web Contents Differentiating Internet Radio Stations.

Interactive dimensions	VARIABLES	Internet-based Radio		Terrestrial Radio Streaming	
		%	N	%	N
AUDIENCE-ORIENTED INTERACTIVITY	<b>Virtual Information Space (VIS)</b>				
	Station Information***	43.3	65	56.7	85
	Personnel Information***	34.3	35	65.7	67
	Product Reviews**	63.8	37	36.2	21
	Product News*	45.0	58	55.0	71
	Regulation Information***	95.8	23	4.2	1
	Playlist**	62.3	48	37.7	29
	Program Schedule***	31.6	37	68.4	80
	Program Information***	39.4	43	60.6	66
	Date/Time***	29.1	16	70.9	39
	Weather Report***	21.3	16	78.7	59
	Coverage Map***	20.0	5	80.0	20
	Local/National Community Information***	39.0	46	61.0	72
	Entertainment/Leisure Section**	31.4	16	68.6	35
	Non-product News*	39.0	23	61.0	36
	<b>Virtual Promotion Space (VPS)</b>				
	Contests/Sweepstakes***	31.1	23	68.9	51
Station Promotional Events***	29.3	22	70.7	53	
Referral Links***	87.0	20	13.0	3	
<b>Virtual Distribution Space (VDS)</b>					
Audio Download/Streaming*	39.3	24	60.7	37	
Software Download/Links*	54.0	75	46.0	64	
SOURCE-ORIENTED INTERACTIVITY	<b>Virtual Communication Space (VCS)</b>				
	Chat Room***	75.8	25	24.2	8
	Forum/Bulletin*	61.8	34	38.2	21
	<b>Virtual Sponsorship Space (VSS)</b>	-	-	-	-
	<b>Virtual Transaction Space (VTS)</b>	-	-	-	-

Note: \* =  $p < .05$ ; \*\* =  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* =  $p < .001$ .

Table 5. Comparison of Business Models among Internet Radio Stations as Reflected by Web Contents

<b>Internet Radio Types</b>		<i>Internet-based</i> (N=88)	<i>Terrestrial Streaming</i> (N=88)
<b>Business Models</b>			
<i>Advertising</i> <sup>a</sup>		69 %	68 %
<i>Paid Subscription</i>		13 %	8 %
<i>Sponsorship/ Donation</i> <sup>b</sup>	<i>Indirect</i>	50 %	42 %
	<i>Direct</i>	25 %	31 %
<i>E-commerce</i> <sup>c</sup>	<i>Station</i>	35 %	26 %
	<i>Outside</i>	23 %	14 %
<i>Affiliate Programs</i> <sup>d</sup>		53 %	40 %
<p>Note:</p> <p><sup>a</sup> Advertising refers to websites that offer outside (external) advertisements.</p> <p><sup>b</sup> Indirect sponsorship refers to websites that mention sponsors, partners, and/or affiliates. Direct sponsorship refers to websites that request directly monetary sponsorship or donation.</p> <p><sup>c</sup> Station e-commerce refers to a transactional presence of online shopping for station merchandise. Outside e-commerce refers to a transactional presence of online shopping for non-station merchandise.</p> <p><sup>d</sup> Affiliate programs refer to a transactional presence of online shopping through affiliate programs.</p>			

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

## References

- Albarran, A. B., & Pitts G. G. (2001). *The radio broadcasting industry*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Anajana, C. S. (2000). Internet business models. *Stylusinc.com*. Retrieved August 14, 2002, from [http://stylusinc.com/website/business\\_models.htm](http://stylusinc.com/website/business_models.htm)
- Angehrn, A. (1997). Designing mature Internet business strategies: The ICDT model. *European Management Journal*, 15 (4), 361-369.
- The Arbitron Company. (2000). Radio station website content: an in-depth look. *Edison Media Research/Arbitron*. Retrieved August 14, 2002, from <http://www.arbitron.com/downloads/radiostationwebstudy.pdf>
- The Arbitron Company. (2001). Internet VI: streaming at a crossroads. *Arbitron/Edison Media Research*. Retrieved August 14, 2002, from <http://www.arbitron.com/downloads/internetvi.pdf>
- The Arbitron Company. (2002a). Internet study VIII: advertising vs. subscription – which streaming model will win? *Arbitron/Edison Media Research*. Retrieved September 9, 2002, from <http://www.arbitron.com/downloads/Internet8.pdf>
- The Arbitron Company. (2002b). Internet study VIII: the media and entertainment world of online consumers. *Arbitron/Edison Media Research*. Retrieved November 20, 2002, from <http://www.arbitron.com/downloads/I9summary.pdf>
- Beard, M. (2002). Streaming media gains with broadband. *Media Life*. Retrieved August 13, 2002, from [http://www.medialifemagazine.com/news2002/may02/may06/3\\_wed/news4wednesday.html](http://www.medialifemagazine.com/news2002/may02/may06/3_wed/news4wednesday.html)
- Boulton, C. (2001). Listen.com pumps up volume on rhapsody. *Internet.com*. Retrieved August 10, 2002, from [http://www.internetnews.com/ec-news/article/0,,4\\_932471,00.html](http://www.internetnews.com/ec-news/article/0,,4_932471,00.html)
- Broadcast & Cable Yearbook. (2001). New Providence, NJ: R.R. Bowker.
- BRS Media Inc. (2002). Retrieved September 27, 2002, from <http://www.brsmedia.fm>
- Chan-Olmsted, S. M. (2000). Strategizing the net business: How television networks compete in the age of the Internet. *Broadcast Education Association 2001 Conference*.
- Chan-Olmsted, S. M., & Park, J. S. (2000). From on-air to online world: Examining the content and structures of broadcast TV stations' websites. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 77 (2), 321-339.

- Chan-Olmsted, S. M., & Ha, L. (2002). *Internet business models for broadcasters: How television stations perceive and integrate the Internet*. Paper submitted for publication to the Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media.
- Compaine, B., & Smith, E. (2001). Internet radio: a new engine for content diversity? *International Telecommunications Society Conference*, Dublin, Ireland.
- Coyle, J. R., & Thorson, E. (2001). The effects of progressive levels of interactivity and vividness in Web marketing sites. *Journal of Advertising*, 30 (2), 65-78.
- Evans, C. L. (2000). Broadcasters streaming into the future: a Delphi study on the future of broadcasting on the World Wide Web. *Doctoral Dissertation*. Oklahoma State University.
- Foege, A. (2001). Radio days. *ON Magazine*. Retrieved August 13, 2002, from <http://www.onmagazine.com/on-mag/magazine/article/0,9985,174257,00.html>
- Gupta, V. K., Govindarajan, S., & Johnson, T. M. (2001). Overview of content management approaches and strategies. *Electronic Markets*, 11 (4), 281-287.
- Gwynne, R. E. (1998). Radio broadcasting and the World Wide Web: an exploratory study. *Doctoral Dissertation*. The University of Tennessee, Knoxville.
- Ha, L., & James, E. L. (1998) Interactivity reexamined: a baseline analysis of early business websites. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 42 (4), 457-474.
- Haeckel, S. H. (1998). About the nature and future of interactive marketing. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 12 (1), 63-71.
- Hoffman, D. L., Novak, T. P., & Chatterjee, P. (1995). Commercial scenarios for the Web: opportunities and challenges. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 1 (3).
- Hoffman, D. L., & Novak, T. P. (1996). Marketing in hypermedia computer-mediated environments: Conceptual foundations. *Journal of Marketing*, 60 (3), 50-68.
- Hoffman, D. L., & Novak, T. P. (1997). A new marketing paradigm for electronic commerce. *The Information Society*, 13, 43-54.
- Kieman, V., & Levy, M. R. (1999). Competition among broadcast-related websites. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 43 (2), 271-279.
- King, R. E. (1998). The uses and gratifications of the World Wide Web: an audience analysis for local television broadcasters. *Doctoral Dissertation*. The University of Tennessee, Knoxville.
- Lee, S. (1999). Adoption of Internet broadcasting among radio stations in the United States. *Doctoral Dissertation*. Ohio University, Athens.

- Lin, C. A., & Jeffres, L. W. (2001). Comparing distinctions and similarities across websites of newspapers, radio stations, and television stations. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 78 (3), 555-573.
- Lind, R. A., & Medoff, N. J. (1999). Radio stations and the World Wide Web. *Journal of Radio Studies*, 6 (2), 203-221.
- LMiV. (2002). *The LMiV Company*. Retrieved August 16, 2002, from <http://www.lmiv.com>
- MeasureCast, Inc. (2002). MeasureCast Internet radio listening index 2001-2002. *MeasureCast*. Retrieved August 6, 2002, from <http://www.measurecast.com>
- Murphy, R. E. (1998). Determining the value of radio station websites: an exploratory study. *Doctoral Dissertation*. University of Tennessee.
- Nel, D., van Niekerk, R., Berthon, J. P., & Davies, T. (1999). Going with the flow: websites and customer involvement. *Internet Research: Electronic Networking Application and Policy*, 9 (2), 109-116.
- Palumbo, P. (2002). Streaming content sites favor advertising over subscription. *Streamingmedia.com*. Retrieved August 16, 2002, from <http://streamingmedia.com/article.asp?id=8240>
- Pruitt, S. (2002). Congress approves bill to help small webcasters. *IDG News*. Retrieved November 18, 2002, from [http://www.idg.net/english/crd\\_webcasters\\_964781.html](http://www.idg.net/english/crd_webcasters_964781.html)
- Quelch, J. A., & Klein, L. R. (1996). The Internet and international marketing. *Sloan Management Review*, 37 (3), 60-75.
- The Radio Advertising Bureau. (2000). RAB debuts newest phase (level III) of its e-commerce program: Radio stations can now offer online shopping options to local retailers. Retrieved August 9, 2002, from <http://www.rab.com/pr/ecomlev3.html>
- Rathbun, E. A. (2000). Emmis Internet club. *Broadcasting & Cable*, 130 (40), 6-7.
- Rogers, R., & Woodbury, J. (1996). Market structure, program diversity, and radio audience size. *Contemporary Economic Policy*, 14, 81-91.
- Steuer, J. (1992). Defining virtual reality: dimensions determining telepresence. *Journal of Communication*, 42 (4), 73-93.
- Sullivan, J. (1999). What are the functions of corporate home pages? *Journal of World Business*, 34 (2), 193-210.
- Tremayne, M., & Dunwoody, S. (2001). Interactivity, information processing, and learning on the World Wide Web. *Science Communication*, 23 (2), 111-134.

## **The Role of Clients in the Public Relations Campaigns Course**

Vince Benigni, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor  
College of Charleston  
[benigniv@cofc.edu](mailto:benigniv@cofc.edu)

I-Huei Cheng, M.A.  
Doctoral Student  
Missouri School of Journalism  
[ica84@mizzou.edu](mailto:ica84@mizzou.edu)

Glen T. Cameron, Ph.D.  
Professor & Gregory Chair  
Missouri School of Journalism  
[camerong@missouri.edu](mailto:camerong@missouri.edu)

All correspondence to: Vince Benigni, Ph.D.

Department of Communication  
College of Charleston  
66 George Street  
Charleston, SC 29424

Paper submitted to the Teaching Public Relations Division of the 2003 Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication conference in Kansas City, MO



**Abstract**

Extending Benigni and Cameron (1999), this study provides a current review of teaching methods for the public relations campaigns course based on a national survey. In addition to offering up-to-date descriptions of how the campaigns course is constructed and valued in public relations programs, this study analyzed what may be important factors that influence the course outcomes. Clients' satisfaction, implementation of plan books that are developed by students, and job/internship opportunities that students receive based on their performance in the campaign course are all indicators for the effectiveness of teaching campaign courses. Certain course features, client involvement in class, and clients' payment for services rendered also contribute to more positive course outcomes.

## Introduction

Within a public relations major or sequence, students are generally required to understand the principles of the profession, and then take subsequent courses in research, writing, management, and finally, the campaigns course (Undergraduate Commission citation). Because it is generally considered the capstone course (Benigni and Cameron 1999) of public relations education, the campaigns class has a multi-faceted obligation to its students.

In one semester, students are often asked to conduct focus groups, formulate questionnaires and analyze data to fulfill a primary research requirement. Setting measurable objectives, and devising strategies and tactics are planning prerequisites (Wilcox, Cameron, Ault and Agee 2003) bridging research to the communication phase (e.g. press kits, web site copy and broadcast tactics). Finally, an effective evaluation proposal may include assessment strategies ranging from advertising equivalency and other motivational objectives to benchmarking and more evolved informational outcomes.

Students (and sometimes professors) may find the process overwhelming, but necessary, because of the pivotal assessment of outcomes. In other words, the portfolio and final presentation are not only intrinsic rewards for the exhaustive rite of passage/survival skills (Bourland-Davis 2002), but more importantly, are tangible recruiting tools for internship and/or career opportunities. Not only do participants benefit, but the department and university also gain positive exposure and enrichment from holistic learning experiences.

However, many would argue that the primary beneficiaries of the campaigns course are the clients (Aldoory and Wrigley 2000). In most cases, campaign students work in teams on behalf of a campus or community organization, presenting their findings and portfolios to the client at semester's end. In many respects, the clients are the essence of the major's most important course.

While replicating most elements of Benigni and Cameron's national survey in 1999, this study adds greater focus on the client's role in the campaigns course, based on the perceptions and experience of the professors, particularly with regard to client expectations, involvement, and trust.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Teaching the Campaigns Course**

Public relations pedagogy has been a rich source of scholarship in recent years, both in a holistic sense, and through analysis of specific courses. Most scholars agree that all public relations courses should incorporate "real-world" scenarios, even though it often adds to professor workload.

Over the past decade, a number of articles have dissected individual components of the suggested elements of the public relations major by the Undergraduate Commission on Public Relations Education. These include works on the introduction/principles course (Benigni, Weaver-Lariscy and Tinkham 2002), the writing course (King 2001), case studies (Rybacki and Worley 2000) and management (Kinnick and Cameron 1994).

In fact, case studies (Hendrix 2001) and management (Schick 1997) are considered by some researchers as capstone tenets. That being said, most scholars have

agreed that the campaigns class involves the most complete application of essential skills in public relations. Some universities even use a two-semester approach (Metzler and Nadler 2000) because of the rigor involved in synthesizing skills learned in prerequisite courses. Because of the didactic nature of prerequisites, upper-level offerings should foster “active learning” or collaborative strategies (Lubbers and Gorcyca 1997) that represent real-world opportunities.

Many universities espouse hybrid programs that fuse concepts of business and public relations (Pincus and Rayfield 1992). While integrated communication (Reber, Frisby, and Cameron, in press) has gained significant momentum, other scholars believe that public relations is a distinct profession, and not a subset of related professional areas or disciplines (Kruckeberg 1998).

Traditionally, the purveyors of student excellence are their professors, who write recommendation letters, make phone calls to companies or graduate schools, and serve as mentors and confidants. Indeed, teachers set a tone for future success, both with theoretical grounding and practical application. The latter tonic is often more palatable to students, because their motivational objectives usually revolve around their success after college. Research suggests that those students with considerable “real-world” application are more competitive in today's job market. Outcomes are not just measured by news release competency, but also in attitude (Neff et al. 1999).

Most campaigns courses are taught within a team-based framework (Benigni and Cameron 1999). Oftentimes, objectives are compromised when one or more students do not pull their weight (Lordan 1996). These difficulties can be assuaged by more proactive strategies, such as incorporating teams in the intro course (Adams 1994).

## Teaching Campaign-Based Skills

Research, viewed as the critical impetus for decision-making (Broom & Dozier 1990), is given lip service by many public relations professors (DeSanto 1996). Stacks (2002) argued that the introduction to public relations course must allay students' fears of numbers to provide a positive stimulus for the subsequent research methods offering. He offers "Four Myths" (Research as Math, Memorization, Non-Career Oriented, and Hindrance in Competing with Business Students) that professors must address through theoretical and application exercises.

One of the key elements of a campaign's planning phase is the setting of strategic objectives. Fall (1998) noted that event management was listed as a critical need area in student internships and organizational campaigns, with motivational objectives (Wilcox et al. 2003) being a particularly illuminating evaluative tool. Informational, awareness-based objectives (Beasley 1992) are more difficult to ascertain, hence the reason that many campaigns professors require survey instruments to gauge public sentiment.

While highly evolved research techniques are stressed, Coombs and Rybacki (1999) lament the limited use of new media pedagogy in public relations classes. Brody (2002) notes that traditional media relations tactics (i.e. news releases) are outmoded, and need to manage transitions into a new age of "experience-based messaging systems." Still, a number of professors are embracing new technologies within the pedagogical construct. Kent (2001) espouses a mediated approach emphasizing web-based education of secondary research of media outlets and key databases. Forde (2000) suggests a requisite integration of desktop publishing skills (i.e. PowerPoint and Netscape

Composer) in the campaigns course for competitive portfolio building, because portfolios are the critical tool of student assessment (Flynn and Russell 2000).

Many capstone courses address the issue of evaluation, but time constraints do not allow for campaign implementation (Benigni and Cameron 1999). However, public relations education task forces are emphasizing equal weights for implementation as well as planning, because outcome perspectives (Gibson 1992) are not being properly addressed in capstone education. Benchmarking (Richter and Drake 1993) should assess the impact of financial rewards of organizations.

Rybacki and Lattimore (1999) argue that many professors eschew opportunities to assess student outcomes at their institution, and therefore, are ill-equipped to broach evaluative issues in public relations classes. Forde (2000) notes that focus groups can offer insights of current students and graduates toward academic departments. In sum, outcome perspectives and university perception are key variables that can be strategically ascertained.

### **Service Learning**

Relationship building has long been a primary tenet of excellent (Grunig, 1992) public relations. Bruning and Ledingham (1999) operationalized three types of relationships – personal, professional, and community – that significantly influenced key public member evaluations of satisfaction with the organization.

University professors are increasingly espousing the notion of service learning as a “counter to ivory tower intellectualism” (Schwartzman 2001), a networking tool for graduates (Tucker and McCarthy 2001), a practice to alleviate tensions inherent in non-reciprocal relationships (Dubinsky 2002), and an extension of traditional university

missions (Fall 2002). In public relations courses, managing university-student relationships is a critical variable in gauging student retention (Bruning and Ledingham 1999), and in ascertaining alumni attachments and subsequent donation behaviors (Sallot 1996). Service learning provides a forum to build professionalism (Bourland-Davis 2000), but only if the emphasis of learning is equal or greater to the notion of service (Patterson 2002).

### **The Role of the Client**

While many capstone courses use case studies to illustrate do's and don'ts of public relations campaigns, students are not properly prepared unless they are thrust into a situation filled with problems and opportunities. Fortunately, there is a captive audience within shouting distance of every college campus, ranging from local or regional corporations, to area nonprofits (McPherson 1993), to college offices/organizations. The daunting task for campaigns professors is to choose a set of willing clients.

Worley (2001) notes that the most consistently difficult aspect of the campaigns course is to get students to understand, develop, and maintain the team-client relationship. She proposes a “Letter of Agreement” that outlines student needs from the client, along with ways to fulfill client expectations. Filson (1998) adds that a challenge for practitioners is to make the transition for clients into a “leadership” role that extends beyond presentations.

Oftentimes, “intellectual readiness” (Maglio-Jung 1994) is required to overcome difficult or even hostile clients, a difficult trait for inexperienced college students to develop quickly. Students should learn client-centered approaches (Motschall and Najor

2001) in the intro course to better prepare for complex organizational issues. Rentner (2000) adds that variables of access and logistics lead campaigns professors to offer only on-campus clients.

Conventional wisdom notes that presentations to clients often cement, or doom, the decision to partner with an agency. Miga (1994) suggests a proactive approach where key constituents are briefed at least a week before the presentation.

While the terminal nature of the campaigns course rarely includes the notion of retention, the course should incorporate notions of searching for and retaining clients. Whitney (1997) notes that most sales come from existing customers, and recommendations from those customers. Weems (2001) reports that nearly two-thirds of clients prefer Web-based financial information and advisor-specific sites. Practitioners should emphasize the notion of “clients as long-term investments” over the oft-static nature of current customers/publics. Engaging the client is critical, and trust and satisfaction only come with client involvement in the process (Marken 1997), and keeping clients better informed (Miles 1997).

### **Research Questions**

Based on the literature, the following research questions were formulated to gauge the role of the client in the public relations campaigns course:

**RQ1: How are campaigns courses structured?**

RQ1.1: How are courses offered and structured overall (e.g. being offered to undergraduate or graduate students, use of real clients, and types of clients)?

RQ1.2: Does the structure of campaign course differ by type of schools or programs?



**RQ2: How are clients involved in the campaigns course?**

RQ2.1: What is the level of research required for clients (e.g. secondary and primary research)?

RQ2.2: What is the level of client input in terms of access and grading?

**RQ3: What are the outcomes of the campaigns courses?**

RQ3.1: Are clients satisfied with the work provided?

RQ3.2: Are students offered with internship/job opportunities based on campaign efforts?

**RQ4: How do the outcomes of campaigns course differ?**

RQ4.1: Do the outcomes differ by course features?

RQ4.2: Do the outcomes differ by types of client or other client-related factors?

**RQ5: How do clients pay for services rendered in the campaigns course?**

RQ5.1: Is there any formal client payment for services rendered?

RQ5.2: Do the outcomes of the campaigns course differ by whether clients pay?

**Method**

**Sample**

Based on tenets from Benigni and Cameron's 1999 study of public relations campaigns professors, and Wrigley and Aldoory's 2000 manuscript on student and client reactions to the course, we formulated a 60-question survey. Respondents were targeted through a combination of three directories of educational institutions in public relations. Using the 2002-2003 Association for Education in Journalism & Mass Communication Directory of Colleges and Universities, along with the 2002-2003 National Communication Directory of Colleges and Universities, the authors mailed the survey to

every institution listed which included public relations as a major, sequence, or course of study. We obtained additional respondents from the “2002 Where Shall I Go to Study Advertising and Public Relations Handbook”. Our directories indicated that 387 universities fulfilled the aforementioned criteria, which was, interestingly, 107 more than the respondent pool from Benigni and Cameron’s survey sent to a similar audience.

### **Variables**

This study surveys current structure and design of the public relations campaigns course in general, and focuses on the client's role in the campaigns course, as well as the course outcomes that may be used to assess the effectiveness of teaching campaign courses.

Course structures are explored with questions pertaining to the number of class sections, student enrollment numbers, whether the courses are offered to undergraduate and graduate students, whether prerequisites are required for the campaigns course, whether the campaigns courses are required for the public relations program, and whether campaign courses are a “capstone” class in the program.

Other course features concern the level of research required in the class, use of class time, involvement of a real client, whether clients are invited to the class to offer an overview, whether students are teamed, how students are grouped, whether students are encouraged to ask more confidential information from clients, and whether clients are formally involved in the grading process. For example, to describe the emphasis of research, these questions were asked, “What percentage of the course is devoted to primary research (in general) and to primary research of the client itself (e.g. client interviews, etc.)?” and “What percentage of the course is devoted to secondary research

(in general) and to secondary research of the client?” Concerning the use of class time, these questions were asked, “What percentage of overall class time is devoted to prepared lectures, coach/team meetings, other teaching strategies?”

Institution and programs were described by their institutional enrollment size, what degrees are being offered in public relations, and whether the programs are accredited by professional or educational public relations organizations such as Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) and the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA).

Clients’ roles are explored in the aspects regarding their organization type, their willingness to provide information, the interval to offer inputs to the professor, and whether they pay for services rendered in the campaigns course. Regarding the type of clients, respondents were asked with these questions, “Is your client based typically: campus organizations or off-campus organizations?” and “If clients are "off campus," what percentage of your total client base is: government/non-profit, corporate/for-profit, agency, or other?” In addition, respondents were asked to break down percentages of type of clients in response to these questions, “Please break down the approximate percentage(s) of "types of clients" for the following: on-campus vs. off-campus, and non-profit vs. for-profit?” Clients’ willingness to provide information to students was measured on a 5-point Likert scale (where 1 is “not willing at all” and 5 is “very willing”) in response to the question, “How willing are clients - to your knowledge - to provide information regarding the organization?”

Professors’ relationship with and selection of clients are further explored with these questions, “Do you usually have a prior affiliation or relationship with the client

before the organization is chosen?” “Do you seek/accept "referrals" for potential clients from other sources?” and “How much research do you typically do before choosing campaign clients?” measured on a 5-point Likert scale (where 1 is “none/very little research” and 5 is “very much research”). In addition, respondents were asked to report their professional experiences in response to this question, “Please list your background in the following areas in terms of years worked: non-profit PR, corporate/organizational (in-house) PR, agency PR, government PR, and other.”

Course outcomes are the satisfaction of the clients, implementation of plan book by the clients, and job or internship opportunity received by students, based on the perceptions and experience of the professors. The satisfaction of clients were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (where 1 is not satisfied at all, and 5 is very satisfied) in response to the question “How satisfied are clients with the final plan book/portfolio from student groups?” and “How satisfied are clients with the final presentation from student groups?” The implementation of the plan book developed by students was asked with the question, “In your estimation, are student plans used ‘significantly’ by clients?” And to assess the job or internship opportunities students received, this question was asked, “Have any of your students ever received a job/internship opportunity based on the performance of the campaigns course?”

### Results

There were a total of 101 questionnaires completed and returned. The response rate was 26.3 percent, with a number of 384 questionnaires successfully delivered. A total of 387 questionnaires were mailed to the institutions that teach public relations, and three questionnaires returned with an “undeliverable address.”

## Structures of Course (RQ1)

RQ1.1: How are courses offered and structured overall (e.g. being offered to undergraduate or graduate students, use of real clients, and types of clients)?

A general description of the sample denoted the following: the average enrollment of responding schools was about 12,400. About 80 percent of responding schools offered a stand-alone campaigns course. About 73 percent of schools offered campaigns classes to undergraduates only, about eight percent to graduate students only, and about 20 percent to both undergraduate and graduate students. Similarly, about three-quarters of respondents indicated they offered a public relations undergraduate major, 28 percent a master's degree, and six percent a Ph.D. program. More than three-quarters of respondents considered public relations as at least a sequence, concentration, or major within a specific department. Among the 101 returned questionnaires, there were 30 programs accredited by AEJMC, and 17 by PRSA. The average school had about two full-time faculty members in public relations. Prerequisite classes are required by almost all the schools (except one) for their campaigns course, which is generally a requirement course (about 89 percent) and often considered as a "capstone" course (81 percent) for the public relations major/sequence.

Since most respondents indicated that the campaigns course represents a capstone experience, it is not surprising that about 96 percent of the campaigns teachers use actual clients in the class. About 59 percent of professors have a prior affiliation with the client before the organization is chosen, and 92 percent seek or accept "referrals" for potential clients from other sources. Professors generally engage in "moderate" research of potential clients ( $M= 3.25$ ).

Because of the relative difficulty in finding new clients, 29 percent of professors use the same client in more than one semester. This practice may also be reflected in the large enrollment per class (average of 22 students, and mode of 19 students) and team-based nature of agency work, which requires a good deal of client contact by the professor, especially for new clients. About 92 percent of campaigns are handled by student groups, with an average of five students per group. Interestingly, about 44 percent of groups compete against other groups in the class for the same client.

Student teams are primarily formed by professors based on student interest and input (about 47 percent), followed by the students themselves (about 33 percent) and “random choices” by professor (about 15 percent). About 90 percent of courses work with an “agency” structure, with 49 percent having weekly meetings, and 26 percent having fewer meetings than once per week.

Nearly 58 percent of respondents invite clients to “offer an overview” about their organization before the teams are chosen. Campaigns clients are typically off-campus as opposed to on-campus organizations (average of 67 percent vs. 30 percent), and mostly nonprofit as opposed to for-profit organizations (average of 77 percent versus 23 percent).

RQ1.2: Does the structure of campaign course differ by type of schools/programs?

Regardless of the size of the institutions and whether the programs are accredited by AEJMC or PRSA, the average class enrollment is about the same, with larger schools offering more sections of classes. Regarding the degrees offered, accredited programs are, not surprisingly, more likely to offer graduate degrees in public relations than unaccredited programs (41% vs. 20%, one-sided Fisher’s Exact Test: p-value = .03).

Similarly, these accredited programs then offered their campaigns course at graduate level only or both more often than the unaccredited do (47.2% vs. 12.8%, one-sided Fisher's Exact Test:  $p$ -value = .001).

The programs accredited by AEJMC or PRSA are found more likely to offer public relations campaigns course than the unaccredited programs (91% vs. 70%, one-sided Fisher's Exact Test:  $p$ -value= .01). Accredited programs, as opposed to the non-accredited ones, more often require the campaigns course for the public relations major (97% vs. 85%, one-sided Fisher's Exact Test:  $p$ -value = .054) and have the course as a capstone class (87% vs. 74%, one-sided Fisher's Exact Test:  $p$ -value = .14), but such differences were not statistically significant. And there was not much other difference either in requiring prerequisites, using real-world clients, or generally having mainly off-campus, non-profit clients.

### **Levels of Client Research and Client Involvement (RQ2)**

RQ2.1: What is the level of research required for clients (e.g. secondary and primary research)?

Since prerequisite courses should broach elements of secondary research, it stands to reason that all respondents expect students to employ web-based research of the client and the client's industry. In fact, only 18 percent of all lecture sessions are devoted to secondary research, nearly all of that regarding the client itself (please note that only 35 percent of the entire course structure is devoted to lectures, the same percentage earmarked to team/student meetings).

In general, clients are willing ( $M= 3.80$ ) to provide information regarding their organization. Students are slightly more willing ( $M= 4.03$ ) to ask clients for information

regarding their organization. Nearly 60 percent of professors do not ask students to seek “confidential” information from clients. If they do, students are generally asked to request clients’ internal information regarding budgets (91 percent), organizational plans (91 percent), organizational hierarchy/charts (88 percent), or timetables/Gantt charts (75 percent).

Regarding the areas where students conduct secondary research, nearly 94 percent of professors require a review of organizational brochures, 91 percent require a review of media accounts regarding the organization, 90 percent require a perusal of newsletters, and 81 percent expect students to review web sites of an organization’s competitors.

Primary research takes up almost one-fifth of all lecture time. This research includes the forms of focus groups, in-depth interviews and/or a survey instrument. In fact, survey data ranks favorably among other campaign components.

Three-quarters of respondents utilize conversation and meetings with clients during the term, and about 73 percent indicate a formal meeting with clients at the end of the term as well. More than 57 percent of respondents incorporate a formal group evaluation and/or a client questionnaire at the end of the term.

RQ2.2: What is the level of client input in terms of access and grading?

Client input generally does not foray into grading, as two-thirds of respondents noted that clients aren’t a formal part of the process. Even those who enlist clients in the grading process do not provide for significant impact, with client input accounting for just 18 percent of the final grade. The client suggests a final grade for the student/team in



nine percent of all cases, even though final presentations are given for 89 percent of all campaigns, and portfolios are also a significant assessment requirement.

As for the frequency that clients provide input, 38 percent of professors reported that they seek clients' input "about two or three times" during the term, while 22 percent said they do so "at the end of the term only." About 18 percent of professors are quite proactive, consulting with clients "weekly or regularly."

### **Client Satisfaction and Other Outcomes of Course (RQ3)**

RQ3.1: Are clients satisfied with the work provided?

While client assessment generally doesn't involve grading, it is highly valued by professors and students. Generally, assessment is highly positive. Final presentations from student groups were considered outstanding (M= 4.37). The final plan book/portfolio also merited great praise (M= 4.26).

RQ3.2: Do clients offer students internship/job opportunities based on campaign efforts?

Client satisfaction often carries over beyond the presentation, as 89 percent of campaigns students have received a job or internship opportunity based on their performance in the course. In some cases, clients have received positive exposure because of the campaign. About 16 percent of student groups have received media coverage from the final presentation, primarily from local print media.

Satisfaction also extends beyond the scope of the presentation. Nearly 70 percent of clients, in professors' estimations, use the student plans "significantly." Special event tactics were perceived as the most utilized campaign components, followed by collateral/communication materials (e.g. releases, press kits), and data from surveys/focus groups. Other components that ranked well behind the others included: research

appendices (e.g. mailing/phone lists, media contacts), revised mission/objectives, research strategies, evaluation techniques, timetable/Gantt charts, social responsibility strategies, and budgetary suggestions.

#### **Important Course Features and Client-related Factors (RQ4)**

RQ4.1: Do the outcomes differ by course features?

Certain course features are found to have influence on clients' satisfaction regarding final presentation and plan book, their implementation of the plan book, as well as provision of job/internship opportunities. Professors who designed the course to include the client in the formal grading process, are more likely to report that plan books are used (91% vs. 61%, one-sided Fisher's Exact Test:  $p\text{-value} = .01$ ), and more likely that their students have been offered a job/internship opportunity (100% vs. 82%, one-sided Fishers' Exact Test:  $p\text{-value} = .02$ ). In addition, campaign courses that involve graduate students (courses offered to graduate students only or to both undergraduates and graduates) are more likely to be reported with actual use of the plan book, as opposed to courses offered only to undergraduate students (95% vs. 58%, one-sided Fishers' Exact Test:  $p\text{-value} = .00$ ).

Student competition seems to lead to higher satisfaction with the plan book, but the difference was not significant ( $M = 4.35$  vs.  $4.17$ ,  $F = 1.47$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 2.3$ ). Similarly, it was found that students competing in courses may result in more implementation of the plan book, but with a non-significant difference as well (35% vs. 28%, one-sided Fisher Exact Test:  $p\text{-value} = .34$ ). Courses where the plan books were used by the clients usually involved more research elements, especially more primary research of the client (in terms of class percentage). Although the difference was not statistically significant ( $M = 16\%$

vs. 11%,  $F= 3.2$ ,  $p\text{-value} = .08$ ), a notable difference was found with plan book use being half again higher in use of primary research. Other research elements (i.e. primary research in general, secondary research in general, and secondary research of client) were found with also positive but less influence in contributing to the use of the plan book.

RQ4.2: Do the outcomes differ by types of client or other client-related factors?

Few other client-related factors were found potentially influencing client satisfaction about the plan book and presentation, use of plan book, and internship opportunity. It was only found that if clients were invited to class to offer an overview about their organization, the plan books developed by students were more likely to be used than the cases where there were no clients' overview in class (84% vs. 46%, one-sided Fisher's Exact Test:  $p\text{-value} = .002$ ). The level of client satisfaction with plan books was found positively correlated with the level of clients' willingness to provide information, but the result was not significant (Person Correlation = .22,  $p\text{-value} = .06$ ). However, whether clients pay for services rendered in the campaign course may relate to their use of plan book and provision of internship opportunity, which will be addressed below.

#### **Pro Bono Assistance: Opportunity Lost? (RQ5)**

RQ5.1: Is there any formal client payment for services rendered?

Benigni and Cameron (1999) note that a "formal payment" by clients (for services rendered) should be strongly considered by campaigns professors. Only about one-quarter of respondents ask for payment. Of those clients that pay, about 62 percent reimburse students only for materials used to formulate the plan and presentation, 19

percent offer a stipend to be used by the academic department/class for academic purposes, and about 10 percent pay for research software implemented in the class.

RQ5.2: Do the outcomes of campaign course differ by whether clients pay?

Respondents who reported that their clients paid also thought that their clients are more satisfied with the work, although the result was not statistically significant. But in courses where their client have paid for services rendered, plan books developed by students are more likely to be used (90% vs. 79.6%, one-sided Fisher's Exact Test: P-value = .016) and students were more likely to receive internship opportunity based on the class performance (100% vs. 83.6%, one-sided Fisher's Exact Test: P-value = .045).

These findings are probably a reflection of the finding that 75 percent of respondents use nonprofit clients, and only 24 percent enlist corporate/for-profit businesses. However, professors are generally trained in both corporate (average of 3.75 years of experience in agency public relations and/or corporate and organizational public relations) and nonprofit/government (average of 3.6 years of combined experience).

### **Discussion**

Our research questions were addressed to depict current structures of campaigns courses in public relations programs, clients' involvement in the course and the outcomes that indicate the effectiveness of course elements, as well as to explore course features that may influence the outcomes. We found that although campaigns courses are structured in a variety of ways, some clear patterns emerge. Most public relations programs offer campaigns courses (about 79 percent), primarily to undergraduate students (about 73 %), and generally students are required to take this course. The

campaigns courses, almost all requiring prerequisite classes, are also often considered as a capstone course in the program (81%).

Most campaigns courses use actual clients, typically off-campus, non-profit organizations. Clients' involvement in class have been found important in many ways, such as paying for services rendered, introducing their organizations in class, providing information to students, and being involved in the grading process. Professors should encourage payment from clients, at least for materials used for creating plan books. Moderate stipends to academic departments are a reasonable expectation in an agency setting where real-world firms would charge tens of thousands for a typical campaign.

Clients should be invited to the class to make a "pitch", offering an organizational overview and addressing their situation to the class, early in the semester, before the teams are chosen. Alternatively, students could visit the respective venues. Our findings showed that professors who invited clients to their classroom often found the students' plan books significantly used by the clients. Clients' overview of their organizations in class, as opposed to institutional brochures and web sites, are informative, personal and evocative backdrops that also motivate students to engage in client services work.

The willingness of clients to provide information is found positively related to their later satisfaction with the presentation of students' work and the developed plan books. Professors need to engage clients in the need for full disclosure because students may not be able to delve into problems or opportunities unless they are privy to budgets, timetables, and organizational mission and objectives. Clients need to be more accessible with regard to "confidential" information, and students need to "demand" that information more, through professor guidance.

Our data showed that if clients were involved in the formal grading process, students' plan books were also more likely to be used by the clients. This may be because clients in this case are more engaged in providing feedback to professor and potentially to students also. We value the clients' feedbacks as inputs but do not suggest their direct role in grading. We applaud professors' autonomy in their carefully involving clients in the grading process. While our survey showed that clients have a "formal say" in the grading process (33 percent), client input is mainly a supplemental tool (accounting for only 18 percent of final grade, and only 9 percent of those courses including client in formal grading process would have clients suggest a final grade).

While plan book and presentation are critical outcomes to the course, a third "p" (publicity), is generally eschewed. Professors should encourage students to pursue local and regional media during the campaign process. Media and other outlets should be used as a proactive tactic (invited to presentations, etc.), not just post hoc to the campaign itself. Professors should also stress to students and clients, the importance of virtually ignored campaign components such as evaluation techniques (i.e. benchmarking), social responsibility strategies, budgetary suggestions, timetables, and evaluation of mission and objectives. Sometimes, the course gets bogged down into a replication of short-term technical tasks, rather than as an evolved management function.

Research components, especially primary research of the clients, were found positively related to higher clients' satisfaction and more use of plan books. The average percentages of class devoted to secondary and primary research, in general and of the client, all range around 15 to 19 percent. Because of the important contribution of research to the quality of plan books, and its value in training students' intellectual

abilities in the profession, prerequisite courses should cover research methods and how to interpret research findings, and campaigns course teachers should guide students to apply the research results to the development of communication strategy.

### **Limitations**

We recognize that our findings can be better generalized with a larger final sample size or higher response rate, even though our response rate would be considered good for a mail survey. We suspect that the non-responses included large numbers of individuals at programs that do not provide public relations campaigns courses. Ignoring this confound between non-response and ineligibility for inclusion in the study, findings of our survey still provide a useful description of the designs and important features of today's campaigns courses, which are crucial in teaching students to become professionals in our field.

Our respondents were campaigns course instructors in the educational institutions where degrees or concentrations in public relations were offered. Many of our measurements concerning course outcomes or effectiveness of elements of campaigns courses were based on the instructor's subjective perception, experience, and projection. Answers provided by our respondents were also based on their overall, aggregate impression, not specifically for one client or a particular campaigns class.

We believe that future research focusing on students' and clients' perspectives with a triangulation approach can provide more in-depth description of the interaction among the professors, clients, and students, and a better understanding of why certain course features and client-related factors become important for course outcomes.

## References

- Adams, W.C. (1994). Using Case Studies in the Introductory Public Relations Course, Public Relations Division/AEJMC, 34 (Todd Hunt, editor).
- Aldoory, L. & Wrigley, B. (2000). Exploring the Use of Real Clients in PR Campaigns Courses. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, 54 (4), 47-58.
- Beasley, W. (1992). Towards Student Autonomy: A Standards-Based Approach. *The Science Teacher*, 59 (6), 46-49.
- Benigni, V.L., Weaver-Lariscy, R.A., & Tinkham, S.F. (2002). To Evolve is to Involve: Analyzing Student Choice in the Introduction to Public Relations Class. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, 56 (4), 6-18.
- Benigni, V.L. & Cameron, G.T. (1999). Teaching Public Relations Campaigns: The Current State of the Art. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, 54 (2), 51-60.
- Bourland-Davis, P.G. (2002). A Cultural Perspective of the Course Students Love to Hate: The Capstone Course. Paper Presented to Public Relations Division of National Communication Association Annual Conference, New Orleans, LA.
- Bourland-Davis, P.G. (2000). Does Service Learning Extend to and Beyond the Public Relations Internship? Paper Presented to Public Relations Division of National Communication Association Annual Conference, Seattle, WA.
- Brody, E.W. (2002). Clients and Employers. *Public Relations Quarterly*, 47 (2), 7-9.
- Broom, G.M. and Dozier, D.M. (1990). *Using Research In Public Relations*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice-Hall.
- Bruning, S.D. & Ledingham, J.A. (1999). Relationships Between Organizations and Publics: Development of a Multi-Dimensional Organization-Public Relationship Scale. *Public Relations Review*, 25, 157-170.
- Coombs, W.T. & Rybacki, K.C. (1999). Public Relations Education: Where is Pedagogy? *Public Relations Review*, 25 (1), 55-63.
- DeSanto, B.J. (1996). The State of Research Education in the Public Relations Curriculum. *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator*, 51 (3), 24-31.
- Dubinsky, J.M. (2002). Service-Learning as a Path to Virtue: The Ideal Orator in Professional Communication. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, Spring 2002, 61-74.



Fall, L.T. (2002). Assessing Service Learning Among Student Interns: Attitudes of Experiences While in the Field. Paper Presented to Public Relations Division of National Communication Association Annual Conference, New Orleans, LA.

Fall, L.T. (1998). Management by Objectives: An Effective Tool for Measuring the Success of Public Relations Classroom Projects. Public Relations Division/AEJMC, 47 (Gay Wakefield, editor).

Filson, B. (1998). The Golden Public Relations Dictum. Public Relations Quarterly, 43 (3), 12-13.

Flynn, T. & Russell, B. (2000). Organizing Public Relations Portfolio Review: The Communication Seminar Course as Means of Assessing Student Portfolio Development. Paper Presented to Public Relations Division of National Communication Association Annual Conference, Seattle, WA.

Forde, J.E. (2000). Integrating New Technologies into the Public Relations Capstone Course. Paper Presented to Public Relations Division of National Communication Association Annual Conference, Seattle, WA.

Forde, J.E. (2000). Using a Public Relations and Advertising Research Course Focus Group for Departmental Assessment. Paper Presented to Public Relations Division of National Communication Association Annual Conference, Seattle, WA.

Gibson, D.C. (1992). ASK/PR: An Outcome Perspective on Public Relations Education. Public Relations Quarterly, 37 (34), 45-48.

Grunig, J. E. (1992). Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Hendrix, J. (2001). Public Relations Cases (5<sup>th</sup> ed.), Belmont, CA, Thomson.

Kent, M.L. (2001). Teaching Mediated Public Relations. Public Relations Review, 27 (1), 59.

King, C.M. (2001). The Write Stuff: Teaching the Introductory Public Relations Writing Course. Public Relations Review, 27 (1), 27.

Kinnick, K. & Cameron, G.T. (1994). Teaching Public Relations Management: The Current State of the Art, Public Relations Review, 20 (1), 73-88.

Kruckeberg, D. (1998). The Future of PR Education: Some Recommendations. Public Relations Review, 24 (2), 235-248.

- Lordan, E.J. (1996). Using Group Projects to Help Students Sharpen PR Skills. *Public Relations Quarterly*, 41 (2), 43-47.
- Lubbers, C.A. & Gorcyca, D.A. (1997). Using Active Learning in Public Relations Instructions: Demographic Predictors of Faculty Use. *Public Relations Review*, 23 (1), 67-80.
- Maglio-Jung, F.N. (1994). Dealing with Difficult PR Clients. *Communication World*, 11 (8), 18-19.
- Marken, G.A. (1997). Clients Have Responsibilities in PR Program's Success. *Public Relations Quarterly*, 42 (2), 10-11.
- McPherson, D. (1993). Twelve Tips to Stretch Your Nonprofit Media Relations Dollar, *Public Relations Quarterly*, 38 (3), 41-42.
- Metzler, M.S. and Nadler, M.K. (2000). Engaging the Student in Public Relations Education: Linking Courses to Meet Objectives. Paper Presented to Public Relations Division of National Communication Association Annual Conference, Seattle, WA.
- Miga, G.P. (1994). Quality Presentations Boost Decision-Making Power. *Public Relations Journal*, 50 (2), 24-25.
- Miles, L. (1997). Marriage of Convenience? *Marketing*, 5/1/97, III (2).
- Motschall, M. & Najor, M.A. (2001). The Client-Centered Approach as a Foundation for Teaching the Introductory Course in Public Relations. *Public Relations Review*, 27 (1), 3-15.
- Neff, B.D., Walker, G., Smith, M.F., & Creedon, P.J. (1999). Outcomes Desired by Practitioners and Academics. *Public Relations Review*, 25 (1), 29.
- Patterson, S.A. (2002). Integrating Service Learning into the Public Relations Curriculum. Paper Presented to Public Relations Division of National Communication Association Annual Conference, New Orleans, LA.
- Pincus, J.D. & Rayfield, R.E. (1992). Public Relations Education: Our Future is Banking On It. *Communication World*, 9 (2), 12-16.
- Reber, B., Frisby, C. & Cameron, G. T. (in press). Changing Direction: Assessing Student Thoughts and Feelings About a New Program in Strategic Communication. *Journal of Advertising Education*, in press.

- Rentner, T.L. (2000). Four Agencies, One Client and a Pizza: Effective Use of Competition in the Public Relations Campaign Course. Paper Presented to Public Relations Division of National Communication Association Annual Conference, Seattle, WA.
- Richter, L. & Drake, S. (1993). Apply Measurement Mindset to Programs. *Public Relations Journal*, 49 (1), 32.
- Rybacki, K.C. & Worley, D.A. (2000). Innovations in the Case Studies Course: Teaching Strategies for Public Relations. Paper Presented to Public Relations Division of National Communication Association Annual Conference, Seattle, WA.
- Rybacki, D. & Lattimore, D. (1999). Assessment of Undergraduate and Graduate Programs. *Public Relations Review*, 25 (1), 65.
- Sallot, L.M. (1996). Using a Public Relations Course to Build University Relationships. *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator*, 51 (1), 51-60.
- Schick, T.A. (1997). Real Clients and Hard-Headed Reviews: Using Hands-On Classroom Work to Teach Public Relations Management.
- Schwartzman, R. (2001). Service Learning Responds to Technological Enchantment and Intellectual Isolation. *College Student Journal*, 35 (3), 423-432.
- Stacks, D.W. (2002). Teaching Public Relations Research From a PR Research Primer. Paper Presented to Public Relations Division of Association for Education in Journalism & Mass Communication Annual Conference, Washington, DC
- Tucker, M.L. & McCarthy, A.M. (2001). Presentation Self-Efficacy: Increasing Communication Skills Through Service Learning. *Journal of Managerial Issues*, 13 (2), 227.
- Weems, C. (2001). Searching for and Keeping Clients. *Trusts & Estates*. 140 (4), 64.
- Whitney, H. (1997). The Marketing Manager's Job is, Above All, to Make Sure that the Clients are Satisfied. *Direct Marketing*, 60 (6), 56-59.
- Wilcox, D.L., Cameron, G.T., Ault, P.H., Agee, W.K. (2003). *Public Relations: Strategies and Tactics* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.), Boston, MA, Longman.
- Worley, D.A. (2001). Teaching the Public Relations Campaigns Course. *Public Relations Review*, 27 (1), 47.

## Appendices

Table 1. Descriptions of Campaign Courses (Frequencies)

	Yes	(%)	No	(%)	N
Offer a public relations campaigns course	80	79.2	21	20.8	101
Require the course for PR majors/concentration/sequence	71	88.8	9	11.3	80
Course available to:					
Undergraduates only	58	72.5	22	27.5	80
Graduate students only	6	7.5	74	92.5	80
Undergraduates and graduates	16	20.0	64	80.0	80
Others	6	7.5	74	92.5	80
Prerequisites required	78	98.7	1	1.3	79
Considered as "capstone" course	64	81.0	15	19.0	79
Students work in groups	73	92.4	6	7.6	79
Use actual clients	76	96.2	3	3.8	79
Clients are typically: campus organizations	19	24.1	60	75.9	79
Clients are typically: off-campus organizations	63	80.8	15	19.2	78
Used the same client in more than one semester	22	29.3	54	70.7	76
Clients offer overview in class before teams are formed	42	56.8	31	41.9	73
The way teams are formed:					
Professor base on students' interest/input	34	46.6	39	53.4	73
Random choice by professor	11	15.3	61	84.7	72
Primarily by students themselves	24	33.3	48	66.7	72
Client input after researching student interest	0	0	72	100	72
Other	7	9.7	65	90.3	72
Students can choose clients	38	50.7	36	48.0	74
Class has agency/team meetings	70	89.7	8	10.3	78
Groups "compete" against other for same client	34	44.2	43	55.8	77
If students compete, clients choose winners	20	51.3	19	48.7	39
Client is a formal part of the grading process	26	32.9	53	67.1	79
Client suggests a final grade for the course	7	9.1	70	90.9	77
Students make formal presentation to clients at the end	67	89.3	8	10.7	75
Had media coverage for any final presentation	16	20.8	61	79.2	77
Client pays for services rendered	19	26.0	57	74.0	76
If client pays, they pay for:					
Materials for the plan/ presentation	13	61.9	8	38.1	21
A stipend to dept./class for academic purpose	4	19.0	17	81.0	21
Research software used in the class	2	9.5	19	90.5	21
Other	7	33.3	14	66.7	21
Students are asked to seek confidential info from clients	32	41.0	46	59.0	78
Internal information that students seek from clients:					
Budgets	29	90.6	3	9.4	32
Organizational plans	29	90.6	3	9.4	32
Organizational charts	28	87.5	4	12.5	32
Timetables	24	25.0	8	75.0	32
Other	11	34.4	21	65.6	32
Students received job/intern. based on class performance	69	88.5	9	11.5	78
Student plans are used significantly by clients	48	69.3	21	30.7	69
Professor has prior affiliation or relationship with the client	31	41.3	44	58.7	75

Table 2: Description of Campaign Courses (Means)

	Mean	St. Dev.	N
Course sections	2.1	1.6	80
Class enrollment	22.1	6.5	80
Class time in percentage devoted to:			
Prepared lecture	.35	.20	80
Coach/team meeting	.35	.22	80
Other teaching strategy	.27	.20	79
Number of students in a group	5.0	1.6	78
Percentage of off-campus clients are:			
Government/ nonprofit	.58	.37	67
Corporate/ for-profit	.20	.23	67
Agency	.05	.12	67
Other	.08	.21	67
If client suggests final grade, the percentage of grade counted	.18	.13	31
Percentage of class devoted to research:			
Secondary research in general	.18	.18	75
Secondary research of clients	.17	.17	71
Primary research in general	.19	.13	77
Primary research of clients	.15	.11	71
Willingness of students to ask clients for info.	4.0	.88	74
Willingness of clients to provide info.	3.8	.76	74
Clients' satisfaction w/ student presentation	4.3	.63	70
Clients' satisfaction w/ student plan book	4.4	.49	62
Percentage of students received job/intern. opportunity	.17	.18	65
Percentage of type of clients:			
On-campus vs.	.30	.31	69
Off-campus	.67	.34	70
Non-profit vs.	.77	.27	70
For-profit	.23	.27	70
Research done by the professor before choosing the client	3.3	1.2	73
Professors' professional background (years):			
Non-profit PR	87	3.0	4.8
Corporate (in-house) PR	89	2.0	3.7
Agency PR	87	1.8	4.8
Government PR	87	1.8	3.9
Other	87	3.8	6.7

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Table 3: Comparisons between Accredited and Unaccredited Public Relations Programs

	Programs accredited by AEJ, PRSA, etc.						
		No		Yes		Total	
Offers graduate degree in PR*	No	48	80%	22	60%	70	72%
	Yes	12	20%	15	40%	27	28%
	Total	60	100%	37	100%	97	100%
Offers campaigns course*	No	17	30%	4	9%	21	21%
	Yes	39	70%	39	91%	78	79%
	Total	56	100%	43	100%	99	100%
Offers campaigns course to graduate students*	No	34	87%	19	52%	53	71%
	Yes	5	13%	17	48%	22	29%
	Total	39	100%	36	100%	75	100%
Offers campaigns course to graduate students*	No	34	87%	19	53%	53	71%
	Yes	5	13%	17	47%	22	29%
	Total	39	100%	36	100%	75	100%
Campaigns course is required for PR majors	No	6	15%	1	3%	7	9%
	Yes	33	85%	38	97%	71	91%
	Total	39	100%	39	100%	78	100%
Campaigns course is the "capstone" class for PR major	No	10	26%	5	13%	15	19%
	Yes	29	74%	33	87%	62	81%
	Total	39	100%	38	100%	77	100%

\*. Difference is significant at level of .05 in one-sided Fisher's Exact Test

Exploring the Effects of Organization-Public Relationships (OPRs)  
on Attitude toward the Organization, Brand, and Purchase Intention

Submitted for Presentation to the Public Relations Division at AEJMC

July 30, 2003

By

Jeesun Kim  
Master's Student  
College of Journalism and Communications  
University of Florida  
2901 SW 13th Street #240  
Gainesville, FL 32608  
(352) 846-5001  
jsun1225@ufl.edu

Soobum Lee  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Mass Communication  
University of Incheon  
soolee@incheon.ac.kr

ByengHee Chang  
Ph.D. Student  
College of Journalism and Communications  
University of Florida  
ufmediaboy@hotmail.com

## Exploring the Effects of Organization-Public Relationships (OPRs) on Attitude toward the Organization, Brand, and Purchase Intention

### Abstract

This study investigated the effects of organization-public relationships (OPRs) on attitude toward the organization (Ao), brand (Ab), and purchase intention (PI). For this purpose, this study devised an integrated model which holds that the effects of OPRs on PI are mediated by Ao and Ab and that the effect of Ao is mediated by Ab. Estimated coefficients and model fit indices by SEM showed this model is appropriate. Comparisons with competing models confirmed these results.



## Introduction

Deciding which particular measure to use when evaluating public relations is crucial given the importance of relationship building as a new paradigm in the field of public relations. Recently, examination of the relationship that exists between an organization and its key publics has emerged as a fertile area of public relations scholarship (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999). As many scholars agree that the ultimate goal of public relations is to build a desirable relationship between an organization and its publics, how to measure the invisible relationship, and how to demonstrate the value of the public relationship become significant matters to public relations practitioners and top management as well (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998; Lindenmann, 1999; Huang, 2001).

One perspective that has been a focus of a good deal of recent scholarly interest is that of relationship management: the notion of public relations as the management of relationships between an organization and its key publics (Ledingham and Bruning, 2000). According to Ehling (1992), the relationship management perspective shifts the practice of public relations away from the manipulation of public opinion and toward a focus on building, nurturing, and maintaining organization-public relationships. This shift is important because the focus of program evaluation moves from measuring the dissemination of communicated messages to determining the influence that organizational activities have on key publics' perceptions of the organization-public relationship, as well as determining the outcomes of organizational activities on key publics' behaviors (Bruning & Ledingham, 2000).

Ledingham and Bruning (2000) argue that organizations have to engage in

communication and action that facilitates a sense of trust, openness, involvement, commitment, and investment. It builds both the symbolic and behavioral relationships with key publics that J. Grunig (2001) contends. In addition, Ledingham and Bruning (1998) also found a link between relationships and public loyalty toward an organization. Their research showed that consumers who ranked the organization high with regard to the five dimensions more often said they would stay with that company in the face of competition. In other words, their research showed that building effective relationships can center evaluation of public relations activities on attitudinal and behavioral outcomes (Bruning, 2002).

To build a successful relationship, it is necessary to demonstrate the value of relationship building to outcomes that contribute to the organizational goals. In contrast to business in the past, today's marketplace puts a much higher value on intangible assets. Companies such as Coca-Cola, McDonald's, Microsoft, and Nike have high brand equity. If the organization has strong brand equity, they build intangible and valuable assets that can influence customer preference and ultimately strengthen the organization's bottom line. Therefore, showing the link between organization-public relationships and its contribution to brand associations will develop the practical application of relationship-building theory.

Ries (2002) asserts that public relations quietly has become the most powerful marketing discipline. He argues that public relations, specifically publicity and the resulting word of mouth, is what build new brands in his book. Marken (2001) also argues what public relations can and should do for a brand. He contends the importance of branding, which is all about how customers feel about the organization, the relationship, and the products.

The literature is rich in studies that have assessed the effect of advertising attitude on brand attitude and purchase intentions. However, there is no study which has examined the impact of organization-public relationships on attitude toward the organization, brand, and purchase intentions.

For seeking to measure the overall impact or effectiveness of a particular public relations program or activity, assessing individuals' opinions, attitudes, and preferences become extremely important measures of possible outcomes. Lindenmann (2002) asserted that attitude research measures not only what people say about something, but also what they know and think, what they feel, and how they are inclined to act. Given the importance of attitude research in measuring public relations outcomes, the organization-public relationships can be used to predict consumers' attitude toward the organization and brand.

Thus, the purpose of this study is to assess the impact of organization-public relationships on attitude toward the organization, brand and purchase intention. The attitude toward the advertising literature (MacKenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986) serves as a foundation for proposing and testing the model of organization-public relationships' effects on attitude toward the organization, brand, and purchase intention.

## Literature Review

### Relationship Management in Public Relations

The origin of the relationship management perspective has been found in Ferguson's (1984) call for increased attention to relationships within the study and practice of public relations. Cutlip, Center, and Broom (1994) included a relational definition of public relations in their text as "the management function that establishes and maintains

mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends.” In particular, Broom and Dozier (1990) suggested co-orientational approach to measure organization-public relationships, rather than communication efficiencies, as a function of public relations evaluation. J. Grunig (1992) defined the purpose of public relations as “building relationships with publics that constrain or enhance the ability of the organization to meet its mission” (p. 20). L. Grunig, J. Grunig and Ehling (1992) go so far as to suggest that relationships are the center of public relations. “Building relationships — managing interdependence — is the substance of public relations. Good relationships, in turn, make organizations more effective because they allow organizations more freedom — more autonomy — to achieve their missions than they would with bad relationships” (p. 69).

Center and Jackson (1995) even assert that the proper term for public relations is actually public relationships. Moreover, the relational perspective explains the function of public relations within an organizational structure (Ledingham and Bruning, 1998), and provides methods to determine the impact of public relations on organizational objectives (Ledingham and Bruning, 1997). Hutton (1999) noted that “Relationship management refers to the practice of public relations as an exercise in identifying mutual interests, values, and benefit between a client-organization and its publics” (p. 208). He wrote that mutual trust, compromise, cooperation, and win-win situations are important for successful relationship management.

The keystone of relationship management perspective is its focus on managing OPRs to produce benefit not only for organizations, but for publics as well (Ledingham, 2001). Further, relationship management theory provides a paradigm for scholarly inquiry, serves as

a perspective for public relations education, equips practitioners with an outcome-based means of accounting for the cost of program initiatives, and requires public relations experts to be conversant with management concepts and practices.

### The Organization-Public Relationships (OPRs)

Scholarship concerning the management of OPRs has increased significantly in recent years. Ledingham and Bruning (1998) offered the following definition of an OPR based on interpersonal relationship principles: “An organization-public relationship 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).

Subsequently, Broom, Casey and Ritchey (2000) defined organization-public relationships: “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 the identities, attributes, and perceptions of the individuals and social collectives 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).

With regard to those relationships, L. Grunig, J. Grunig and Ehling (1992) suggested that the quality of OPRs might be measured through the dimensions of reciprocity, trust, mutual legitimacy, openness, mutual satisfaction, and mutual understanding (p. 136). In that same regard, Ledingham, Bruning, Thomlison and Lesko (1997) conducted a multi-discipline review of relationship literature and identified 17 dimensions (investment, commitment, trust, comfort with relational dialectics, cooperation, mutual goals, interdependence/power imbalance, performance satisfaction, comparison

level of the alternatives, adaptation, nonretrievable investment, shared technology, summative constructs, structural bonds, social bonds, intimacy, and passion) that various relationship scholars have held to be central to interpersonal relationships, marketing relationship and other relationships. The initial list of the 17 dimensions then was reduced to five dimensions (trust, openness, involvement, commitment, and investment) and operationalized through research with key publics (Ledingham and Bruning, 1998). Ledingham and Bruning (1998) then examined the link between the five operationalized dimensions and attitudes toward an organization.

Ledingham and Bruning (1998) advanced a "Theory of Loyalty" that holds that: "organizational involvement in and support of the community in which it operates can engender loyalty toward an organization among key publics when that involvement/support is known by key publics" (p. 63). They further concluded that "what emerges is a process in which organizations must (1) focus on the relationships with their key publics, and, (2) communicate involvement of those activities/programs that build the organization-public relationship to members of their key publics" (p. 63). They also suggested: "To be effective and sustaining, relationships need to be seen as mutually beneficial, based on mutual interest between an organization and its significant publics" and concluded that "the key to managing successful relationships is to understand what must be done in order to initiate, develop, and maintain that relationship" (p. 27).

In further research, Bruning and Ledingham (1998) found that the relationship dimensions of trust, openness, involvement, commitment and investment predicted customer satisfaction in a competitive environment. Based on that study, they noted that "the relationship between an organization and its key publics should be considered when

developing customer satisfaction initiatives and should be included in future models of satisfaction research” (p. 199). An additional study by Ledingham, Bruning, and Wilson (1999) found that OPRs can and do change over time, and in some cases that it may require decades to solidify an OPR. As a result, the researchers emphasized the need to maintain attention to an OPR throughout its life cycle, not simply when the OPR is initiated or when it is declining. At this point, linkage between OPR perceptions and loyalty toward an organization has been documented within the context of the utilities industry, local government, the insurance industry, banking, and higher education.

Hon and J. Grunig (1999) use the research in interpersonal communication and psychology of interpersonal relationships that show the characteristics. They state control mutuality, trust, satisfaction, commitment, exchange relationship, and communal relationship are good indicators of successful interpersonal-relationships. Public relations research shows that those six elements can be applied equally well to organization-public relationship settings (Huang, 1997).

J. Grunig and Huang (2000) have identified trust, control mutuality, relationship commitment, and relationship satisfaction as the most important outcome factors in an organization-public relationship. They identified these four dimensions as the most significant because they appear consistently in both organizational and interpersonal communication literature (J. Grunig & Huang, 2000). They argue that most of these factors identified by other researchers are components of trust, control mutuality, satisfaction, and commitment.

Based on previous literature, this study adopts trust, control mutuality, satisfaction, and commitment as the four most important dimensions of organization-public relations.

The characteristics of these four outcomes of organization-public relations summarized as follows:

### Trust

Trust is widely accepted as an important part of interpersonal, organizational, and organization-public relationships (J. Grunig and Huang, 2000). Hon and J. Grunig (1999) defined trust as “one party’s level of confidence in and willingness to open oneself to the other party” (p. 14). It is generally viewed as an essential element for successful relationships (Berry 1995; Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh, 1987; Moorman, Deshpandé, and Zaltman 1993; Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Morgan and Hunt (1994) define trust as the perception of “confidence in the exchange partner’s reliability and integrity.” Because trust is so critical, it is foolish for an organization to compromise trust for a short-term payoff. The long-term reputation the organization will acquire by being trustworthy will make the relationship between the organization and its publics better (Hon and J. Grunig, 1999).

### Control Mutuality

Control mutuality is related to the concept of power (J. Grunig & Huang, 2000). According to Huang (2001), the concept of control mutuality is similar to other concepts suggested as being significant to relationships, such as Bruning and Ledingham’s (1999) concept of mutual legitimacy, Aldrich’s (1975, 1979) concept of reciprocity, Ferguson’s (1984) idea of distribution of power in the relationship, Millar and Rogers’s (1976) construct of power, and Moore’s (1986) notion of empowerment. Hon and J. Grunig (1999) defined control mutuality as “the degree to which parties agree on who has rightful



power to influence one another” (p. 13). J. Grunig and Huang (2000) stated that some imbalance of power is inevitable in many relationships and that control mutuality recognizes this asymmetry in power. However, if one party attempts to have unilateral control over the relationship, the other outcome factors — trust, satisfaction and commitment — will suffer (Hon and J. Grunig, 1999). Therefore, it is more beneficial for parties to agree on the level of control mutuality in a relationship.

### Satisfaction

Having satisfaction means that the organization and its publics feel positive toward each other. Hon and J. Grunig (1999) defined relationship satisfaction as “the extent to which one party feels favorably toward the other because positive expectations about the relationship are reinforced” (p. 14). Ferguson (1984) held that the degree to which both an organization and its public were satisfied with their relationship is one of the significant indicators for gauging organizational relationships with strategic publics. Wulf, Odekerken-Schröder, and Lacobucci (2001) defined relationship satisfaction as a consumer’s affective state resulting from an overall evaluation of his or her relationship with an organization.

### Commitment

Lastly, commitment examines the degree to which both the organization and its public believe that the relationship is worthy of spending time and resources on to keep and promote (Hon and J. Grunig, 1999). Hon and J. Grunig (1999) defined relationship commitment as “the extent to which one party believes and feels that the relationship is worth spending energy to maintain and promote” (p. 14). The literature reveals that commitment has long been a central notion in the social exchange approach (Stafford &

Canary, 1991). In relationship marketing literature, Morgan and Hunt (1994) conceived of brand loyalty as a form of commitment. Following a similar line of conceptualization, the four components contributing to organizational relationships identified by Aldrich (1975, 1979) — formalization, intensity, reciprocity, and standardization — can be viewed as forms of commitment in OPRs.

Commitment is generally regarded to be a significant result of good relational interactions (Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh, 1987; Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Commitment has been identified as “an enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship” (Moorman, Zaltman, and Deshpandé, 1992, p. 316). Gundlach, Achrol, and Mentzer (1995) argue that commitment has the three following components: an instrumental component of some form of investment, an attitudinal component that may be described as affective commitment or psychological attachment, and a temporal dimension indicating that the relationship exists over time.

#### Attitude toward the Organization (Ao), Brand (Ab), and Purchase Intention (PI)

The three variables, attitude toward the advertising (Aad), attitude toward the brand (Ab), and purchase intention (PI), comprise the main outcome variables in many studies of advertising effectiveness (Heath & Gaeth, 1994; Kalwani & Silk, 1982; MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989).

#### Attitude toward the Organization (Ao)

Given the lack of attitudinal and behavioral research in public relations, it is very important to understand how consumers' association with an organization affects their attitude to the brand offered by that company and purchase intention. Several studies demonstrated that corporate image affects consumer product judgments and responses in a

positive manner (Belch & Belch, 1987; Carlson, 1963, Cohen, 1963; Keller & Aaker, 1994; Wansink, 1989). Keller and Aaker (1992) showed that corporate credibility has a positive impact on consumer product responses. Much of the early empirical research on corporate associations focuses on developing measures of various constructs, such as corporate image, rather than on developing theoretical links to other important constructs, such as consumer responses (Bolger, 1959; Clevenger, Lazier, & Clark, 1965; Cohen, 1967; Hill, 1962; Spector, 1961; Tucker, 1961). Brown and Dacin (1997) noted that when a consumer identifies a product with a company, there is an opportunity for the overall evaluation of the company to influence the evaluation of the product. This study operationalizes attitude toward the organization as consumers' overall evaluations of the organization.

#### Attitude toward the Brand (Ab)

Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) defined attitude toward the brand as a predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner to a particular brand. Attitude toward the brand (Ab) is consumers' learned tendencies to evaluate brands in a consistently favorable or unfavorable way; that is, consumers' evaluation of a particular brand on an overall basis from poor to excellent (Assael, 1995).

Mitchell and Olson (1981) defined attitude toward the brand as consumer's overall evaluation of a brand whether good or bad. Semantic differential scales measuring brand attitude have frequently appeared in the marketing and advertising literature. Many researches have shown that consumers' brand-related beliefs affect brand attitude formation (Mitchell & Olson, 1981) and change (Lutz, 1975). In this study, attitude toward the organization is used for the development of brand attitude.

Olins (2000) said "Brands are the device we use to differentiate between otherwise

almost indistinguishable competitors. Without clear branding, in some fields, we literally could not tell one product or service from another” (p. 61). Olins (2000) also suggested that people can have a relationship with a brand. He stated, “They have an immense emotional content and inspire loyalty beyond reason” (p. 63). Thus, his discussion suggests that brands could consist of the following three things: the behavior of an organization (often defined as a component of organizational identity), communications/messages to define differentiating attributes of an organization or product, or relationships with an organization as people conceptualize that organization (Van Riel, 1995).

#### Purchase Intention (PI)

Purchase intention (PI) is consumers’ tendency to purchase a product or service and this is generally measured in terms of intention to buy. Advertising managers often test the elements of the marketing mix - alternative product concepts, ads, packages, or brand names- to determine what is most likely to influence purchase behavior (Assael, 1995). In the absence of actual buying behavior, management uses the closest substitute, intention to buy, to determine the effectiveness of the components of the marketing mix. Advertising effectiveness is widely studied by both scholars and practitioners. From a public relations perspective, OPRs may provide the opportunity for attitudinal development influencing intention to buy.

One of the most commonly accepted theories proposed in marketing fields today, the Dual Mediation Hypothesis (Brown & Stayman, 1992; MacKenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986), interprets the many attitudinal-behavioral patterns and relationships in advertising. The DMH was developed as a result of research studies dealing with attitude toward the

brand and affective motivation. Results represented accurately the interrelationships among brand and ad cognitions, and purchase intention (MacKenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986). These affective-based and cognitive-based attitudes toward the brand have a direct effect on purchase intentions (Homer & Yoon, 1992). This causal sequence of attitudes leading to purchase intention may be an important measure of the attitude toward the brand.

### Hypotheses

Although there is no previous research that shows that each dimensions of the organization-public relationships directly influences attitude toward the organization, this study attempts to explore the relationships of each dimensions of the organization-public relationships on attitude toward the organization. These relationships may be especially significant in order to propose the model for measuring attitude toward the organization as an outcome variable of organization-public relationships.

Based on the previous literature and logical reasoning, it is hypothesized that

H1: OPRs are positively related to attitude toward the organization.

Goldsmith, Lafferty, and Newell (2000) assessed the impact of endorser and corporate credibility on attitude toward the advertising, attitude toward the brand, and purchase intention. They conceptualized corporate credibility as one important aspect of corporate reputation. Their findings suggest that corporate credibility plays an important role in consumers' reactions to advertisements and brands, independent of the equally important role of endorser credibility. Academic scholars of public relations typically describe the value of OPRs to an organization using similar language to what public relations professionals and business scholars use to describe the value of reputation. Attitude toward the organization

as a corporate association, such as reputation, might have an effect on attitude toward the brand. Thus, it is hypothesized that

H2: Attitude toward the organization is positively related to attitude toward the brand.

Fombrun (1996) argued that corporate credibility influences purchase intention because consumer perceptions of a company are part of the information they use to judge the quality of the company's products and therefore whether they want to buy them or not. Lafferty and Goldsmith (1999) found that corporate credibility on purchase intention, which is consistent with Winters (1998) who also noted that as the perceived credibility of a company increased, so did sales. A majority of consumers have stated that their product purchase decisions are at least in part influenced by the view of the parent company's "good citizenship" (Winters, 1998). The Dual Mediation Hypothesis (Brown & Stayman, 1992; MacKenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986) in the attitude toward the advertising literature shows a consistent pattern that attitude toward the advertising causes attitude toward the brand and attitude toward the brand causes purchase intention, both of which forms the sequence of dependent variables. This causal sequence of attitudes leading to purchase intention may be important measure of the attitude toward the brand. Thus, it is hypothesized that

H3: Attitude toward the brand is positively related to purchase intention.

#### Method

#### Sample

A survey was conducted for college students in a large university located in Florida. Although there might be occur some external validity problems, the use of this convenient sample of college students is relevant because they are potential customers of the target

product category of handheld/PDAs. This study aims not to find the generalized attitudes or purchase intention toward a specific brand, but to empirically test theoretical relationships. The use of students sample has been widely accepted in brand research (Delvecchio, 2000).

A total of 134 students participated in the survey, and after a manipulation check, the questionnaires of 18 students were eliminated. The remaining questionnaires of 116 students were used in the analyses. Students were given extra credits for their participation.

### Measures

For the survey, we chose the handheld/PDAs as the product category, Sony as the organization, and Sony's CLIE as the brand. These three elements are closely related with one another in this survey because we used the following three criteria for selection: first, college students should be familiar with the given product category, second, the category of the company should be well known among college students; furthermore, the popularity of the organization should be based not only on the given product category but on a diverse categories of products, and third, the brand should be new and not well known among college students. Sony has had very strong brand equity particularly in terms of their electronic appliances, such as their VAIO notebooks and Walkman. Popularity of PDAs has increased since their introduction to the market in the mid-1990s. Also, a pre-test showed that Sony's new brand, CLIE was not well known by students. Considering these factors, we finally chose the above elements.

The survey contained the four most important relationship measurement scales out of six relationship measurement scales (Hon & J. Grunig, 1999), multi dimensional scales

for attitude toward the organization, and brand (Holbrook & Batra, 1987), and for purchase intention (Mackenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986).

Independent Variables: Organization-Public Relationships (OPRs)

*Trust.* This study adopts Hon and J. Grunig's (1999) conceptualization and defines trust as "one party's level of confidence in and willingness to open oneself to the other party" (p. 14). To measure the extent to which students perceive trusts from Sony, students were asked to indicate the degree of trust they perceived. Responses were 7-point scales based on 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree. There were 6 items to measure trust, such as "Sony can be relied on to keep its promises" (Hon & J. Grunig, 1999).

*Control Mutuality.* This study adopts Hon and J. Grunig's (1999) conceptualization and defines control mutuality as "The degree to which parties agree on who has rightful power to influence one another" (p. 13). Control mutuality was measured with a 5-item sub-scale from Hon and J. Grunig's scale (1999). However, one reverse item was deleted because a pre-test showed that it could confuse respondents. Thus, a 4-item sub-scale was used in this study. Responses were based on 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree scale.

*Commitment.* This study adopts Hon and J. Grunig's (1999) conceptualization and defines commitment as "The extent to which one party believes and feels that the relationship is worth spending energy to maintain and promote" (p. 14). Hon and J. Grunig's 5-item commitment scale was used to measure commitment of the organization to its public. Responses were evaluated on a scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree to



7=strongly agree.

*Satisfaction.* This study adopts Hon and J. Grunig's (1999) conceptualization and defines satisfaction as "The extent to which one party feels favorably toward the other because positive expectations about the relationships are reinforced" (p. 14). A satisfaction scale was used to measure satisfaction toward the organization to its public. A 5-item sub-scale measured satisfaction (Hon & J. Grunig, 1999). Responses ranged from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree.

#### Dependent and Mediating Variables

*Attitude toward the Organization (Ao).* We operationalizes attitude toward the organization as consumers' overall evaluations of the organization. Attitude toward the organization was measured using attitude scales (Holbrook & Batra, 1987).

*Attitude toward the Brand (Ab).* This study adopts Wilkie's (1990) conceptualization and defines attitude toward the brand as consumers' overall evaluations of a brand. There are semantic differential scales measuring brand attitude. In this study, Holbrook and Batra's (1987) multi-item scales (unfavorable-favorable, bad-good, dislike-like, and negative-positive) were used for Ab measures. Their reliability coefficient alpha of these items was .98, suggesting extremely high internal consistency for brand attitude measure. In addition, their multi-item scales were the most frequently used multi-item scale for brand attitude in the 1990s Journal of Advertising (Woo, 2001). Thirteen studies used their multi-item scales and have Cronbach's Alphas ranging from .84 to .97.

*Purchase Intention (PI).* Purchase intention was measured with a 3-item scale adapted from Mackenzie, Lutz, and Belch (1986). Participants were asked to "what is the probability that you will try this brand when it becomes available in your area?"

Participants responded in each case on the following item: unlikely/likely, impossible/possible, and improbable/probable. Mackenzie, Lutz, and Belch (1986) obtained satisfactory Cronbach alpha coefficient for these items over .88.

### Analysis

Except for basic descriptive statistical methods, t-test, Pearson correlation, multiple regression analysis, and structural equation modeling (SEM) methods were adopted for analysis. A t-test was used to compare the group means of female students and male students with each other because the number of female student overwhelmed the number of male students. Correlation and regression analysis were used to measure the impacts of each dimension in OPRs on each dependent variable (attitude toward the organization, attitude toward the brand, and purchase intention). Finally, we used SEM in order to analyze the relationships among OPRs, attitude toward organization, attitude toward brand, and purchase intention from an integrated perspective. For analyses, SPSS 10.0 and LISREL 8.30 were used as statistical software.

### Results

#### Descriptive Statistics of Respondents

Respondents ranged in age from 18 to 33. 81 (69.9%), of respondents, however, were in the range of 20-21, and the average age was 20.77. Respondents were all undergraduate students. There were no first-year college students. Third-year college students accounted for the majority of participants with 50 students (43.1%), followed by 38 fourth-year students (32.8%) and then 28 second-year students (24.1%).

In the survey, the gender distribution in the sample was not even. Among the 116 respondents who were used for analysis, 86 (74.1%) were female, while 30 (25.9%) were

male. We tested whether this skewed distribution of gender affected the results by comparing the group means of all variables by female and male participants using t-tests. Regarding all examined variables, the t-statistics did not show any statistically significant difference between female and male participants.

### Manipulation Checks

The suggested model predicts that attitude toward the organization affects attitude toward brand. In order to measure this relationship with more precision, it is necessary that respondents have no previous knowledge about the Sony brand CLIÉ. If the respondents have previous knowledge about the Sony brand CLIÉ, and therefore already have attitude toward the Sony brand CLIÉ, then two problems can occur: one is that it is not certain that the attitude toward the Sony brand CLIÉ is really affected by attitude toward the organization, and the other is that theoretically we cannot eliminate the possibility of the reverse relationship from attitude toward the brand to attitude toward the organization. Worrying about these unexpected results, we asked respondents whether they had previous knowledge about the suggested Sony brand CLIÉ. Based on the responses, we excluded 18 respondents who answered that they have previous knowledge about the Sony brand CLIÉ. As a result, among the original 134 sample, 116 were used for analysis.

### Reliability Test for OPRs Items

Among the 20 items which were used to measure OPRs, 6 were trust related items, 4 were control mutuality related items, 5 were commitment related items, and 5 were satisfaction related items. For the integration of items, we averaged the value of items for each variable. As a prerequisite for the averaging, the items for each variable should have

a high internal reliability. Cronbach's alpha was used to test the internal reliability. Generally, reliability coefficients around .90 can be considered "excellent," values around .80 as "very good," and values around .70 as "adequate" (Kline, 1998). All coefficients were more than .80. Based on these results, we averaged the values of items for each observed variable.

### Hypotheses Testing

Based on previous literature, we assumed the relationships between OPR-related variables and Ao, between Ao and Ab, and between Ab and PI. These assumptions are not enough to devise an integrated model showing the relationships among the suggested constructs. First, it is necessary to confirm that the relationship order among the constructs is correct. If the order is correct, second, it is necessary to make assumptions regarding the indirect effects among the constructs. For these aims, we conducted correlation and regression analyses. As a simple way, we averaged the values of items for trust, control mutuality, commitment, satisfaction, Ao, Ab, and PI. Cronbach's alpha showed that the internal reliabilities for each of Ao, Ab, and PI are in the satisfactory level (Ao = .95, Ab = .88, PI = .90).

The results of Pearson correlation analysis showed several significant relationships among the examined variables and constructs. First, there are high correlations among OPR-related variables. This implies that the four variables of OPRs have a high possibility of being included in an OPR construct. Second, OPR-related variables are significantly related to the other variables: Ao, Ab, and PI. Especially, the degree of correlations decreased from the order of association with Ao, Ab, and PI. This finding implies that in the continuum of effects from OPR-related variables, the effect on Ao may

be the strongest, on Ab next, and on PI the least. Third, Ao, Ab, and PI are significantly correlated with one another. Also, the results show that the association between Ao and Ab is stronger than the relationship between Ao and PI.

-----  
Insert table 1 here  
-----

Results of multiple regression analyses confirm the findings and provide more information. The regression equations with OPR-related variables as independent variables significantly predicted each of Ao, Ab, and PI. Each model, however, shows different degree of R<sup>2</sup>s. In case the of the regression model with Ao as a dependent variable, R<sup>2</sup> is .31, while the regression model with Ab shows .11 of R<sup>2</sup>. The R<sup>2</sup> of the model with PI is only .06. In brief, the effects from OPR-related variables decrease continuously in the order of Ao, Ab, and PI.

-----  
Insert table 2 here  
-----

In order to examine the indirect effects of OPR-related variables and Ao on Ab and PI, we conducted two additional multiple regression analyses. In the first analysis with Ab as a dependent variable, Ao as well as OPR-related variables were put in the regression equation. The result showed that only Ao was significant among the independent variables (p = .000). This implies that if the effect of Ao is considered, the effects of OPR-related variable disappear.

-----  
Insert table 3 here  
-----



In the second analysis, we entered both Ao and Ab as well as OPR-related variables in the regression equation to predict PI. The results show that only Ab is significant among the variables. That is, the effects of Ao and OPR-related variables disappear when the effect of Ab is considered in predicting PI.

-----  
Insert table 4 here  
-----

Above results of correlation and regression analyses confirmed the suggested research hypotheses. In hypothesis 1, this study assumed that the OPR-related variables are positively related with attitude toward the organization. The regression model with OPR-related variables with independent variables significantly predicted attitude toward organization. In the level of individual variables, however, only satisfaction showed a significant p-value. Considering all the other variables were significant in Pearson correlation, this may be due to the intercorrelations among the OPR-related variables. In hypotheses 2 and 3, we predicted the positive relations between attitude toward the organization and attitude toward the brand and between attitude toward the brand and purchase intention. Both correlation and regression analyses confirmed these relations. In addition, the above analyses showed that the effects of OPR-related variables on attitude toward the brand and purchase intention are mediated by attitude toward the organization, and the effects of attitude toward the organization on purchase intention are mediated by attitude toward the brand. Based on these findings, we proposed a suggested model of relations among OPRs, attitude toward the organization, attitude toward the brand, and purchase intention as follows:

525

-----  
Insert figure 1 here  
-----

### An Integrated Model Testing

In this part, we tested the suggested model by SEM analysis. A total of 15 observed variables (4 OPR related + 4 Ao related + 4 Ab related + 3 PI related) were used.

#### Estimation

Estimation procedures are processed through the two following steps: factor loadings between each of latent variables and observed variables and path coefficients among latent variables. Figure 2 shows the results of the estimation. First, all the values of factor loadings were significant. All of trust, control mutuality, commitment, and satisfaction have significant values of factor loadings with OPRs. The other latent variables such as attitude toward the organization, attitude toward the brand, and purchase intention showed significant relationships with their observed variables.

Second, all gamma and beta values among the four latent variables showed that suggested model can be accepted. OPRs positively affect attitude toward the organization. The path coefficient showed the significant result (coefficient = .56,  $z = 5.77$ ). Also, attitude toward the organization positively affects attitude toward the brand (coefficient = .59,  $z = 5.41$ ), and attitude toward the brand positively affects purchase intention (coefficient = .40,  $z = 3.82$ ).

-----  
Insert figure 2 here  
-----

#### Model Fit

Although the path coefficients among the latent variables support the suggested

model, more procedures are needed to confirm the results. One procedure is to analyze the model fit of the suggested model.  $\chi^2$  is 119.60 (df = 87; p=.0012). In SEM low and non-significant value of  $\chi^2$  is desired. So, in terms of  $\chi^2$ , the model fit is not good. The other goodness of fit statistics such as CFI (.98), NFI (.92), NNFI (.97), and RMSEA (.056), however, pass their criteria. Based on these results, it can be said that the suggested model has appropriate model fits.

-----  
Insert table 5 here  
-----

### Competing Models

Although the suggested model shows significant relationships among latent variables and has appropriate model fits, there is a possibility that other competing models using the same latent variables can have similar results. If competing models have similar high values of model fits and show significant relationships among latent variables, then, the uniqueness of the suggested model will be weakened.

This paper devised a total of 7 competing models. In devising the models, this study assumed that the hierarchical order among OPRs, attitude toward the organization, attitude toward brand, and purchase intention are sustained. This hierarchical structure is based on strict theoretical assumptions and the results of regression analyses also support it. Instead of changing the order among the latent variables, we allowed all the possible relationships among the latent variables. This procedure produced a total of 7 competing models. Competing Model 1 assumes that PI is affected by Ao as well as Ab. Competing Model 2 suggests that PI is affected by both OPRs and Ab. Competing Model



3 assumes that PI is affected by all the other latent variables. In competing Model 4, OPRs as well as Ao are assumed to positively affect Ab. Competing Model 5 suggests two variations: Ab is affected by OPRs as well as Ao, and PI is affected by Ao as well as Ab. In competing Model 6, Ab is assumed to be affected by OPRs as well as Ao, and PI is assumed to be affected by OPRs as well as Ab. Finally, competing Model 7 assumes that Ab is affected by both OPRs and attitude toward organization, and PI is affected by all the other latent variables.

All the competing models showed similar results in terms of goodness of fit statistics. None of the competing models, however, showed a significant relationship among newly added path(s). In other words, all the other relationships, except for suggested relationships among latent variables, were not significant.

-----  
Insert figure 3 here  
-----

### Conclusion and Discussion

Through the literature review and logical reasoning, this paper suggested relations regarding the effects of OPR-related variables on Ao, Ab, and PI. Based on the model, we suggested three hypotheses. H1 assumed that OPR-related variables aggregately affect Ao. H2 assumed that Ao positively affects Ab. H3 assumed that Ab positively affects PI. A survey was administered to college students in order to test the hypotheses. For the survey, handheld/PDAs as a product category, Sony as an organization, and CLIE as a brand were chosen. The correlation and regression analyses confirmed the suggested hypotheses. In addition, the analyses showed that effects of both OPR-related variables and Ao on Ab or PI are mediated by the other variables. Based on these findings, this study suggested a target

model which is tested by SEM analysis.

In order to test the suggested model, three steps of procedures were adopted. First, through the SEM analysis, this paper produced estimated factor loadings between observed variables and latent variables, and estimated path coefficients among latent variables. All the observed variables had significant factor loading values with latent variables, and all the suggested relationships among latent variables had significant path coefficients. Second, this paper calculated goodness of fit indices regarding the suggested model. Although the  $\chi^2$  statistic did not support the suggested model, the other indices passed their criteria which are necessary for supporting the model. Finally, this paper compared the suggested target model with the other competing models. In terms of goodness of fit indices, the competing models produced similar results as that of the suggested model. The newly added path(s) among latent variables, however, did not produce any significant path coefficient. Based on these results, this paper considers that the suggested target model and hypotheses are supported by sufficient evidence.

These results contain several implications in terms of theoretical and practical aspects. First, this paper shows that OPR-related items are well developed and the elements (trust, control mutuality, commitment, and satisfaction) of OPRs are based on solid theoretical reasoning. In terms of reliability coefficients, the items in each dimension were grouped successfully, and OPRs as a latent variable are significantly related with each dimension.

Second, this paper shows that OPRs can successfully explain the attitude toward the organization. As an exploratory attempt, this paper devised a new relationship

between OPRs and the attitude toward the organization. This new attempt resulted in an additional application of relationship-building theory.

Even more, this paper implies that OPR can affect the attitude toward the brand through the attitude toward the organization. Although the direct relationship between OPRs and attitude toward the brand was not supported, the indirect relationship between the two latent variables was supported with sufficient evidence. This result contains a practical implication that efforts to improve OPR can result in improvements of attitude toward individual brands related to increased possibility of purchase.

This study, however, has some limitations. First, external validity needs to be increased because the survey was conducted for only one product category (handheld/PDA), organization (Sony), and brand (CLIE). In order to increase the applicability of the suggested model, future research dealing with diverse product categories, organizations, and brands are needed. In addition, the sample was chosen from college students without randomized method. Although the use of convenient student sample can be justified in this study's focusing on the theoretical relationships of the suggested model, the use of randomized sample in the general population is needed to generalize the findings.

Second, more efforts to find moderating variables or conditions intervening in the suggested relationships are needed. In this study, OPRs or attitude toward the organization were assumed to affect attitude toward the brand or purchase intention only via the mediating variables. We, however, cannot eliminate the possibility that OPRs and attitude toward the organization affect the other variables directly in certain conditions or by the help of some moderating variables. In order to elaborate the suggested model, research which test the effects of several conditions or additional variables are needed.

Table 1. Correlation matrix of variables

Variable	M	SD	Trust	Mutu	Commit	Satis	Ao1	Ao2	Ao3	Ao4	Ab1	Ab2	Ab3	Ab4	PI1	PI2	PI3
Trust	4.76	.83	1.0														
Mutu	4.14	.83	.72	1.0													
Commit	4.51	1.04	.75	.71	1.0												
Satis	4.88	.99	.83	.67	.80	1.0											
Ao1	5.49	1.02	.52	.43	.56	.55	1.0										
Ao2	5.35	1.12	.41	.34	.46	.47	.75	1.0									
Ao3	5.42	1.11	.45	.36	.49	.50	.80	.88	1.0								
Ao4	5.56	1.10	.39	.32	.46	.49	.79	.89	.90	1.0							
Ab1	5.73	.92	.27	.28	.29	.31	.32	.22	.27	.23	1.0						
Ab2	5.74	.99	.31	.21	.31	.37	.51	.52	.51	.63	.63	1.0					
Ab3	5.79	1.07	.26	.26	.21	.29	.43	.40	.41	.44	.61	.77	1.0				
Ab4	5.76	1.08	.33	.21	.29	.33	.54	.50	.56	.54	.52	.70	.70	1.0			
PI1	3.00	1.52	.22	.18	.14	.32	.25	.15	.26	.20	.35	.37	.38	.32	1.0		
PI2	3.92	1.49	.12	.22	.14	.18	.15	.13	.22	.14	.28	.22	.27	.20	.68	1.0	
PI3	3.38	1.49	.18	.72	.75	.24	.16	.13	.23	.18	.26	.27	.34	.23	.84	.72	1.0

Table 2. Regression models with Ao, Ab, and PI

Observed variables	B	SE	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	2.679	.479		5.599	.000
Trust	3.730E-	.190	.303	.196	.845
Control Mutuality	-5.573E-	.149	-.046	-3.75	.709
Commitment	.267	.141	.272	1.896	.061
Satisfaction	.334	.167	.325	1.997	.048
Observed variables	B	SE	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	4.002	.459		8.718	.000
Trust	6.592E-	.183	.062	.361	.719
Control Mutuality	2.477E-	.143	.024	.174	.863
Commitment	9.199E-	.135	.011	.068	.946
Satisfaction	.266	.160	.301	1.659	.100
Observed variables	B	SE	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.650	.737		2.239	.027
Trust	-.316	.293	-.192	-1.077	.284
Control Mutuality	.335	.229	.204	1.461	.147
Commitment	-.180	.217	-.137	-.831	.408
Satisfaction	.557	.257	.404	2.165	.033
Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	SE of the Estimate	
Model 1	.560	.314	.289	.85869	
Model 2	.381	.145	.114	.82364	
Model 3	.310	.096	.063	1.32237	

Table 3. Regression model with Ao as a mediating variable (Ab as the dependent variable)

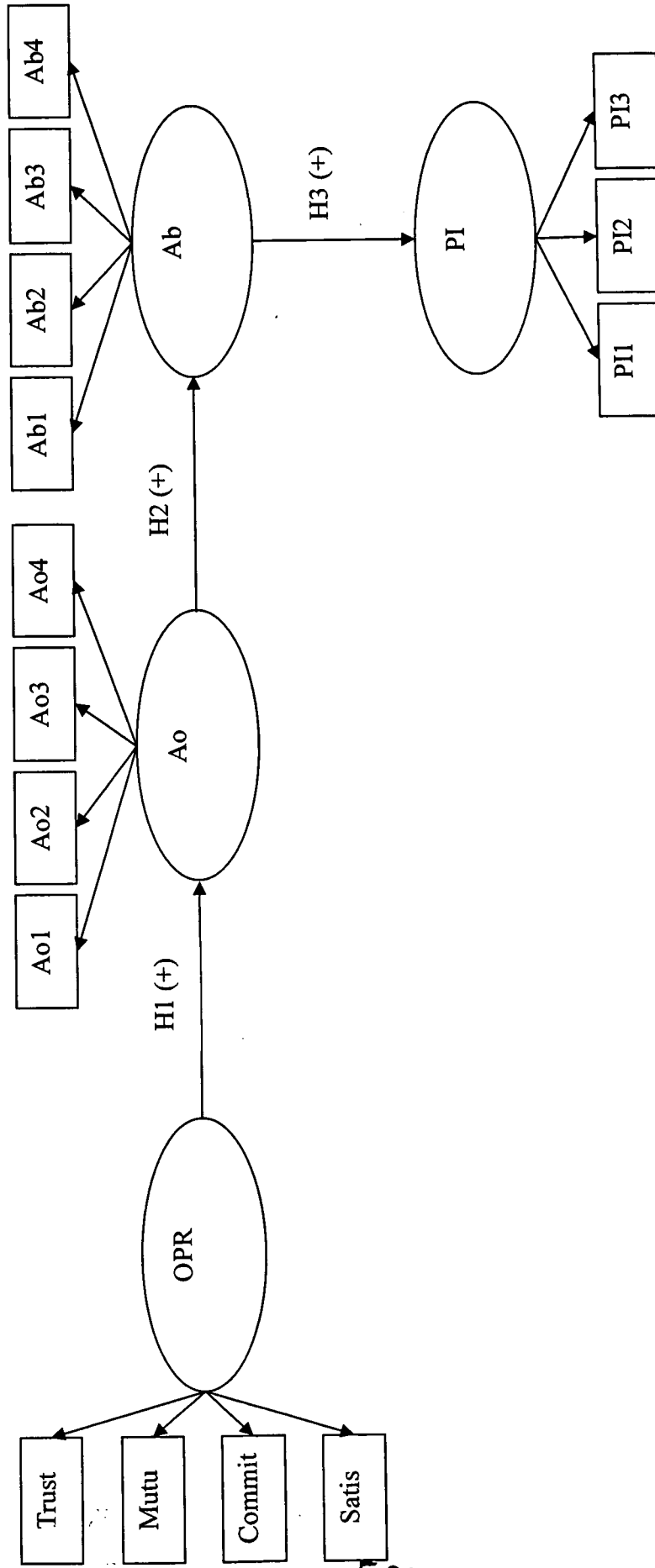
Observed variables	B	SE	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	2.880	.470		6.130	.000
Trust	.050	.165	.048	.305	.761
Control Mutuality	.048	.129	.046	.373	.710
Commitment	-.103	.124	-.122	-.827	.410
Satisfaction	.126	.147	.143	.856	.394
Ao	.419	.082	.487	5.088	.000

533

Table 4. Regression model with Ab as a mediating variable (PI as the dependent variable)

Observed variables	B	SE	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	-.259	.928		-.279	.781
Trust	-.348	.282	-.211	-1.234	.220
Control Mutuality	.319	.220	.194	1.446	.151
Commitment	-.169	.212	-.129	-.797	.427
Satisfaction	.439	.252	.319	1.741	.084
Ao	-.059	.156	-.044	-.376	.708
Ab	.516	.163	.331	3.175	.002

Figure 1. Suggested model of the relationships among OPRs, attitude toward the organization, brand, and purchase intention.



535



Figure 2. Estimation of a suggested model

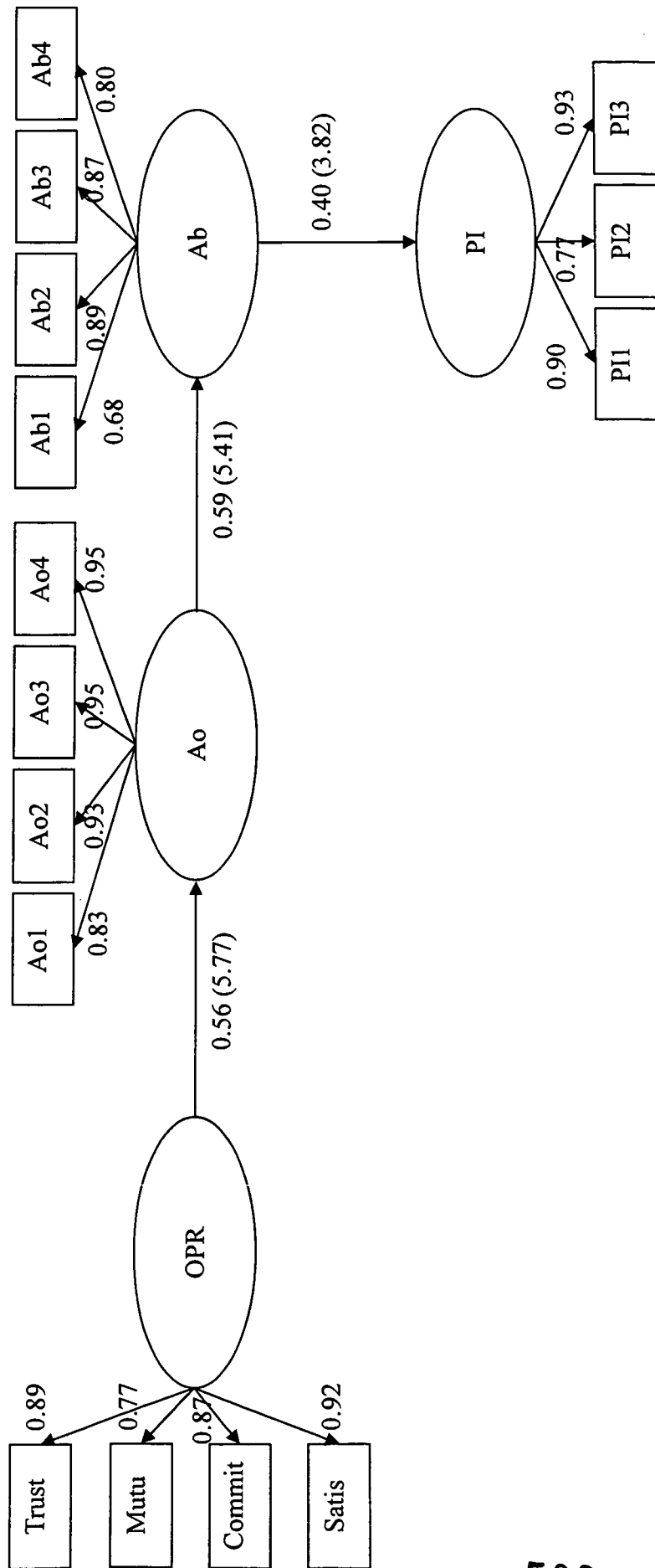


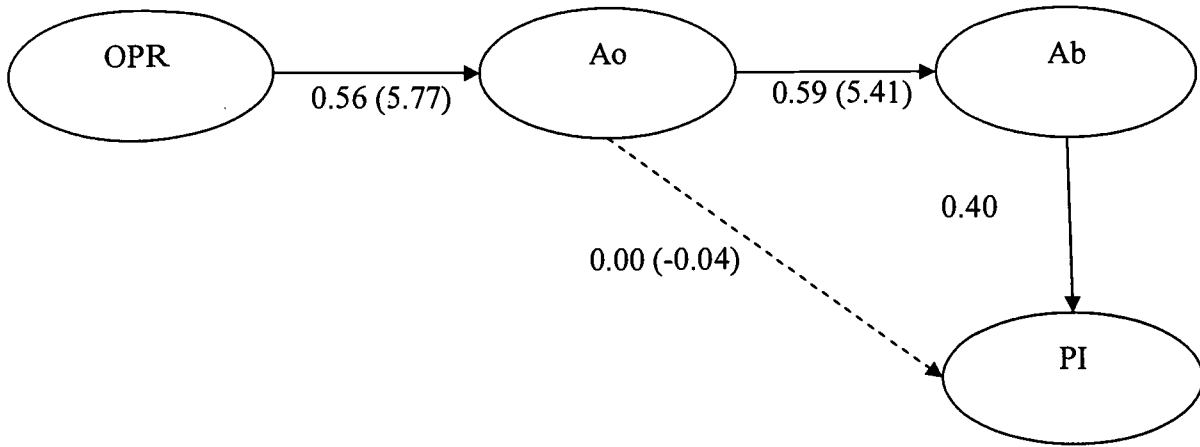
Table 5. Goodness of fit of models

Model	$\chi^2$	df	$\chi^2/df$	CFI	NFI	NNFI	RMSEA
Target	119.60	87	1.37	.98	.92	.97	.056
Competing 1	119.59	86	1.39	.98	.92	.97	.057
Competing 2	117.81	86	1.37	.98	.93	.97	.056
Competing 3	117.26	85	1.38	.98	.93	.97	.056
Competing 4	118.34	86	1.38	.98	.92	.97	.054
Competing 5	118.34	85	1.39	.98	.92	.97	.055
Competing 6	116.68	85	1.37	.98	.93	.97	.054
Competing 7	116.16	84	1.38	.98	.93	.97	.055

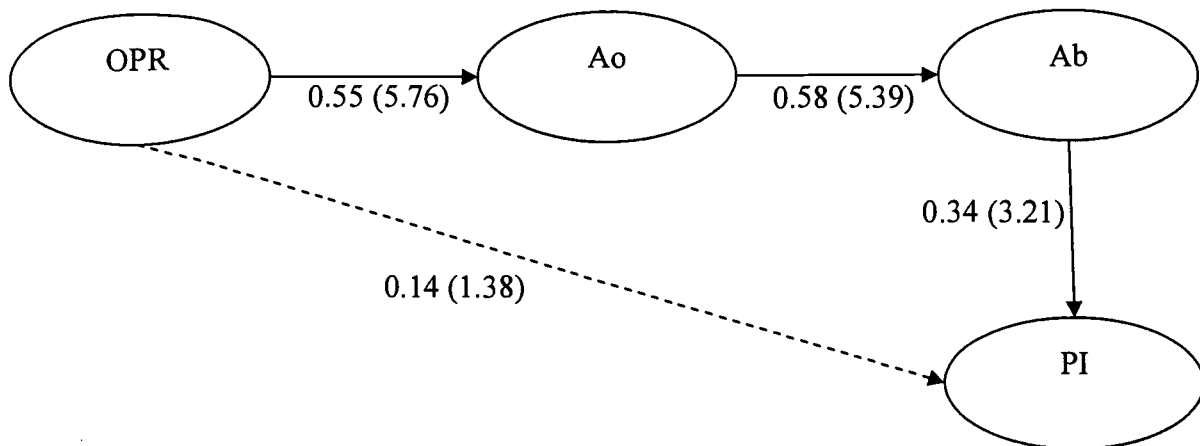
\* Recommended values:  $\chi^2/df < 3.00$ ; CFI (Comparative Fit Index)  $> .90$ ; NFI (Normalized Fit Index)  $> .90$ ; NNFI (Non-Normalized Fit Index)  $> .90$ ; RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation)  $< .08$

Figure 3. Competing models

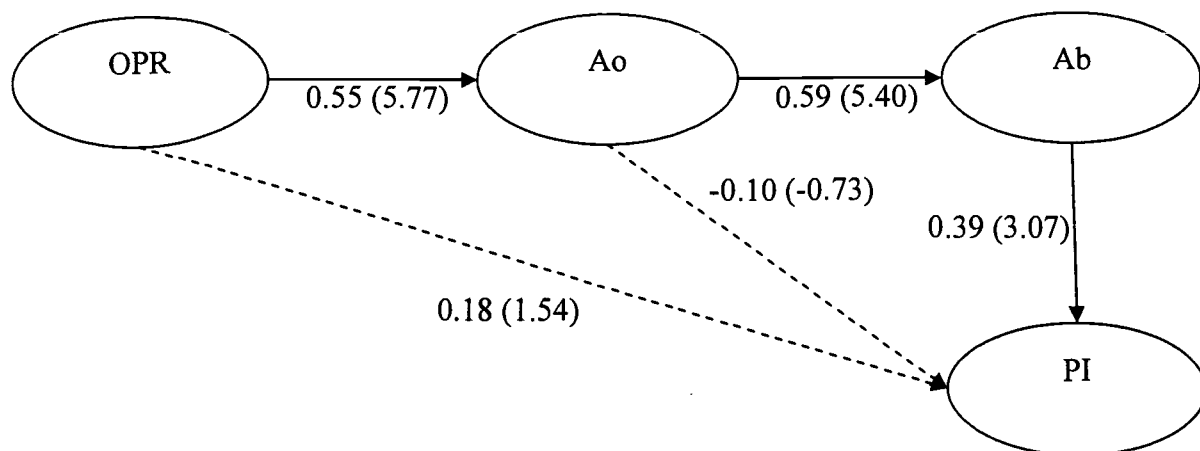
Competing model 1



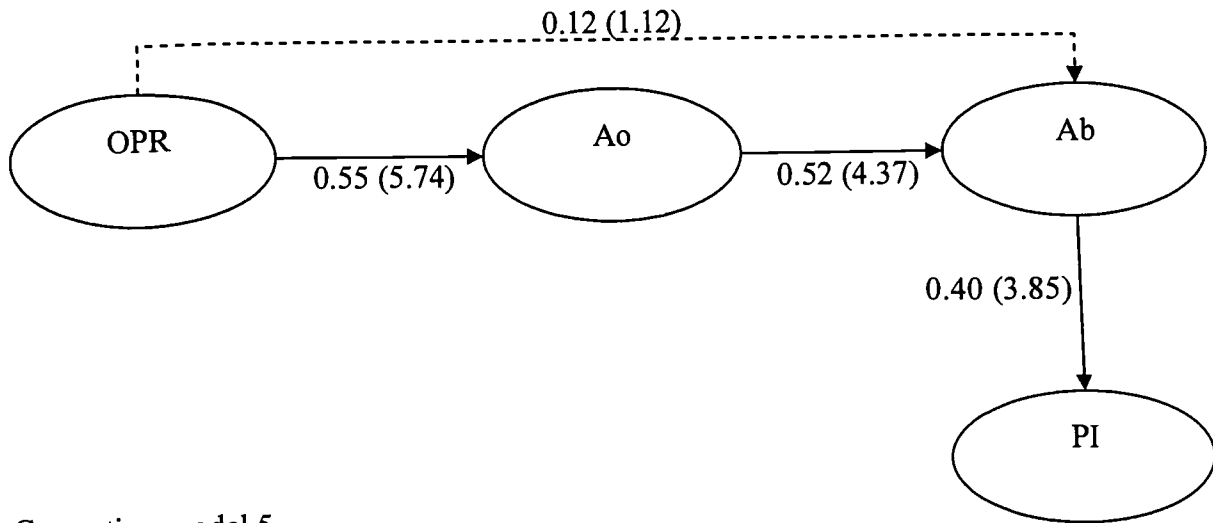
Competing model 2



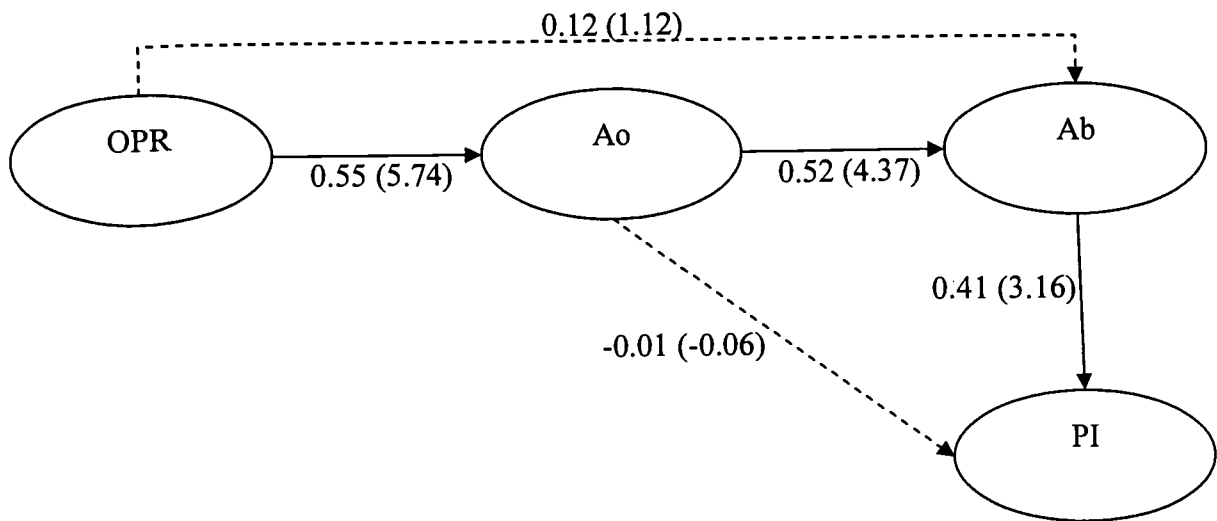
Competing model 3



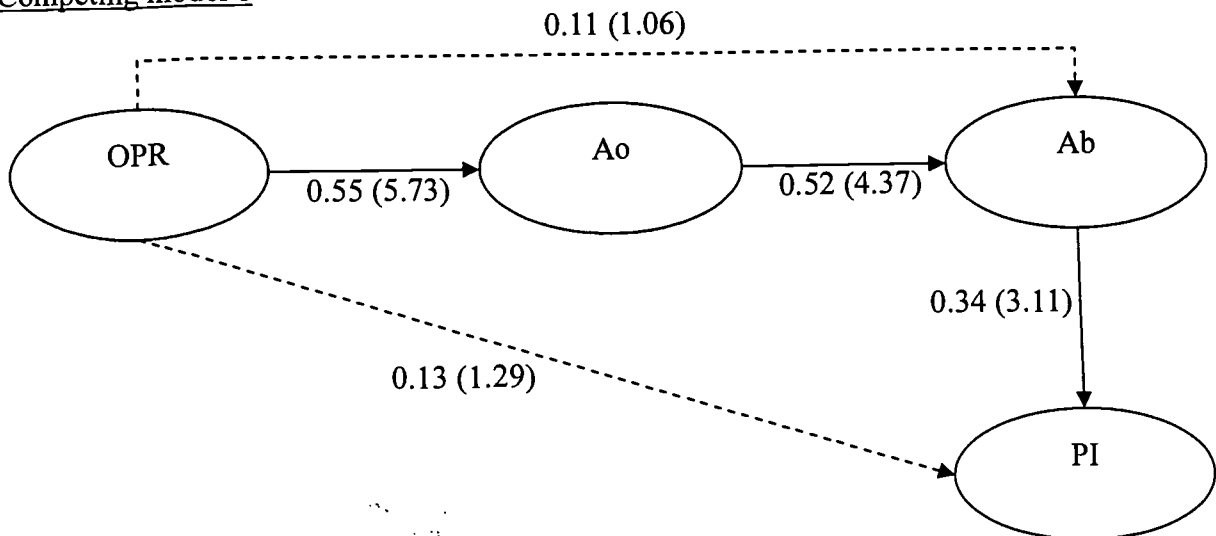
Competing model 4



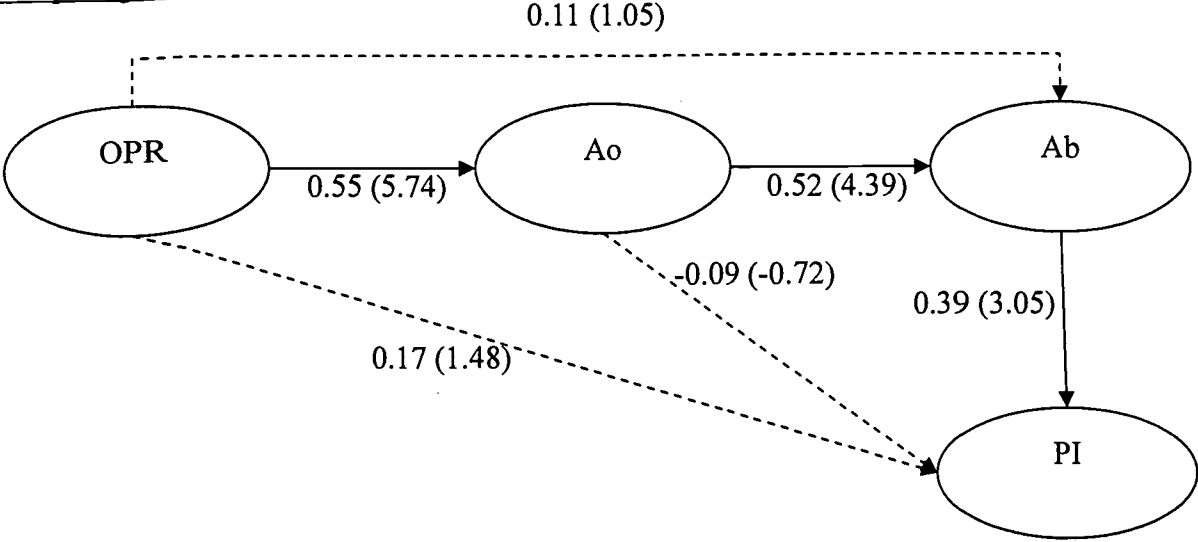
Competing model 5



Competing model 6



Competing model 7



## References

- Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. (1980). *Understanding Attitudes and predicting social behavior*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Aldrich, H.E. (1975). An organization-environment perspective on cooperation and conflict between organizations in the manpower training system. In A. R. Negandhi (Ed.), *Interorganizational theory* (pp. 49-70). Kent, OH: Kent State University Press.
- Aldrich, H.E. (1979). *Organizations and environments*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Assael, H. (1995). *Consumer behavior and marketing action* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Cincinnati, OH: South-Western College Publishing.
- Belch, G. E., & Belch, M. A. (1987). The application of an expectancy value operationalization of function theory to examine attitudes of boycotters and nonboycotters of a consumer product. in *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 14, Melanie Wallendorf and Paul F. Anderson, eds. Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research, 232-36.
- Berry, L.L. (1995). Relationship marketing of services—Growing interest, emerging perspectives, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 23, 236-245.
- Bolger, J.F., Jr. (1959). How to evaluate your company image. *Journal of Marketing*, 24, 7-10.
- Brown, T.J., & Dacin, P.A. (1997). The company and the product: Corporate associations and consumer product responses. *Journal of Marketing*, 61, 68-84.
- Broom, G.M., Casey, S., & Ritchey, J. (2000). Concept and theory of organization-public relationships. In J.A. Ledingham and S.D. Bruning (Eds.), *Public Relations as Relationship Management: A Relational Approach to Public Relations*, Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Broom, G.M., & Dozier, D.M. (1990). *Using research in public relations: Applications to program management*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Brown, M.E., & Stayman, D.M. (1992). Antecedents and consequences of attitude toward the Ad: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 19, 34-51.
- Bruning, S.D. (2002) Relationship building as a retention strategy: linking relationship attitudes and satisfaction evaluations to behavioral outcomes. *Public Relations Review*, 28, 39-48.
- Bruning, S.D., & Ledingham, J.A. (1998). Organization-public relationships and consumer satisfaction: Role of relationships in the satisfaction mix. *Communication Research*

*Reports*, 15(2), 199-209.

- Bruning, S.D., & Ledingham, J.A. (1999). Relationship between organizations and publics: Development of a multi-dimensional organization-public relationship scale. *Public Relations Review*, 25, 157-170.
- Bruning, S.D., & Ledingham, J.A. (2000). Perceptions of relationships and evaluations of satisfaction: An exploration of interaction. *Public Relations Review*, 26(1), 85-95.
- Carlson, R. O. (1963). The nature of corporate images. in *The Corporation and Its Publics*. John W. Riley, Jr., ed. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 24-47.
- Center, A.H., & Jackson, P. (1995). *Public relations practices: Managerial case studies and problems*. (5<sup>th</sup> ed.) Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Clevenger, T. Jr., Lazier G. A., & Clark M. L. (1965) Measurement of corporate images by the semantic differential. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 2 (February), 80-82.
- Cohen, R. (1963). The measurement of corporate images. in *The Corporation and Its Publics*, John W. Riley, Jr., ed. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 48-63.
- Cohen, L. (1967). The differentiation ratio in corporate image research. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 7 (September), 32-36.
- Cutlip, S. M., Center, A. H., & Broom, G. M. (1994). *Effective public relations*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Delvecchio, D.S. (2000). Moving beyond fit: The role of brand portfolio characteristics in consumer evaluation of brand reliability. *Journal of product and brand management*, 9(7), 457-471.
- Dwyer, F.R., Schurr, P.H. S, and Oh, S. (1987), Developing Buyer-Seller Relationships, *Journal of Marketing*, 56, 6-21.
- Ehling, W.P. (1992). "Estimating the value of public relations and communication to an organization." In J.E. Grunig, D.M. Dozier, W.P. Ehling, L.A. Grunig, F.C. Repper, and J. White (Eds.), *Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 617-638.
- Ferguson, M.A. (1984, August). *Building theory in public relations: Interorganizational relationships*. Paper presented to the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Gainesville, FL.
- Fombrun, C.J. (1996). *Reputation*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Garbarino, E. & Johnson M.S. (1999).

- Goldsmith, R.E., Lafferty, B.A., & Newell, S. J. (2000). The impact of corporate credibility and celebrity credibility on consumer reaction to advertisements and brands. *Journal of Advertising*, 29(3), 43-54.
- Grunig, J.E. (1992). Communication, public relations, and effective organizations: An overview of the book. In J.E. Grunig, D.M. Dozier, W.P. Ehling, L.A. Grunig, F.C. Repper, & J. White (Eds.), *Excellence in public relations and communication management* (pp. 1-28). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Grunig, J.E. (2001). Two-way symmetrical public relations: Past, present, and future. In R.L. Heath (Ed.), *Handbook of public relations* (pp.11-30). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Grunig, L.A., Grunig, J.E., & Ehling, W.P. (1992). What is an effective organization? In J.E. Grunig (Ed.) *Excellence in public relations and communication management*. p. 65-90. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Grunig, J.E., & Huang, Y. (2000). From organizational effectiveness to relationship indicators: Antecedents of relationships, public relations strategies and relationship outcomes. In J.A. Ledingham and S.D. Bruning, (Eds.), *Public relations as relationship management: A relational approach to public relations* (pp. 23-53). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Gundlach, G.T., Achrol, R.S., & Mentzer, J.T. (1995). The Structure of Commitment in Exchange, *Journal of Marketing*, 59, 78-92.
- Heath, T.B., & Gaeth, G.J. (1994). Theory and method in the study of Ad and brand attitudes: Toward a systemic model. In E. M. Clark, T. C. Brock, & D. W. Stewart (Eds.), *Attention, attitude, and affect in response to advertising* (pp. 125-148). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Hill, E. W. (1962). Corporate images are not stereotypes. *Journal of Marketing*, 26 (January), 72-75.
- Holbrook, M.B., & Batra, R. (1987). Assessing the role of emotions as mediators of consumer responses to advertising. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 14, 404-420.
- Homer, P.M., & Yoon, S. (1992). Message framing and the interrelationships among ad-based feelings, affect, and cognition. *Journal of Advertising*, 21(1), 19-34.
- Hon, L.C., & Grunig, J.E. (1999). *Guidelines for Measuring Relationships in Public Relations*. Gainesville, FL: The Institute for Public Relations.
- Huang, Y. (1997). *Public relations, organization-public relationships, and conflict management*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Maryland, College Park.



- Huang, Y. (2001). Values of public relations: Effects on organization-public relationships mediating conflict resolution. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 13(4), 265-301.
- Hutton, J.G. (1999). The definition, dimensions, and domain of public relations, *Public Relations Review*, 25(2), 199-214.
- Kalwani, M.U., & Silk, A. (1982). On the reliability and predictive validity of purchase intention measures. *Marketing Science*, 1, 243-286.
- Keller, K. L. & Aaker, D. A. (1992) The effects of sequential introduction of brand extensions. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 29 (February), 35-50.
- Keller, K. L. & Aaker, D. A. (1994). *Managing the corporate brand: The effects of corporate images and corporate brand extensions*. Research Paper No. 1216, Stanford University Graduate School of Business.
- Kline, R.B. (1998). *Principles and practice of structural equation modeling*. NY: The Guilford Press.
- Lafferty, B.A. & Goldsmith, R.E. (1999). Corporate credibility's role in consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions when a high versus a low credibility endorse is used in the ad. *Journal of Business Research*, 44, 109-116.
- Ledingham, J.A. (2001). Government-community relationships: Extending the relational perspective of public relations. *Public Relations Review*, 27(3), 285-295.
- Ledingham, J.A., & Bruning, S.D. (1997). *Interpersonal dimensions in an organizational-public relationship*. Paper presented at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Chicago, IL.
- Ledingham, J.A., & Bruning, S.D. (1998). Relationship management in public relations; Dimensions of an organization-public relationship. *Public Relations Review*, 24(1), 55-65.
- Ledingham, J.A., & Bruning, S.D. (2000). A longitudinal study of organization-public relationship dimensions: Defining the role of communication in the practice of relationship management in *Public Relations as Relationship Management: A Relational Approach to the Study and Practice of Public Relations*, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. 55-69.
- Ledingham, J.A., Bruning, S.D., Thomlison, T.D., & Lesko, C. (1997). The applicability of interpersonal of an organization-public relationship. *Public Relations Review*, 24, 55-65.
- Ledingham, J.A., Bruning, S.D., & Wilson, L.J. (1999). Time as an indicator of the perceptions and behavior of members of a key public: Monitoring and predicting

organization-public relationships. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 11(2), 167-183.

Lindenmann, W.K. (1999). Overview. In L.C Hon & James E. Grunig, *Guidelines for Measuring Relationships in Public Relations*. Gainesville, FL: The Institute for Public Relations.

Lindenmann, W.K. (2002). *Guidelines for measuring the effectiveness of PR programs and activities*. Gainesville, FL: The Institute for Public Relations.

Lutz, R.J. (1975). Changing brand attitudes through modification of cognitive structure. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 4, 49-59.

MacKenzie, S.B., & Lutz, R.J. (1989). An empirical examination of the structural antecedents of attitude toward the Ad in an advertising pretesting context. *Journal of Marketing*, 53, 48-65.

MacKenzie, S.B., & Lutz, R.J., & Belch, G.E. (1986). The role of attitude toward the Ad as a mediator of advertising effectiveness: A test of competing explanations. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 23, 130-143.

Marken, G. A. (2001). Online public relations, *Public Relations Quarterly*, 46(4), 31-33.

Mitchell, A.A. & Olson, J.C. (1981). Are product attribute beliefs the only mediator of advertising effects on brand attitude? *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18, 318-332.

Moorman, Deshpandé, R., & Zaltman, G. (1993). Factors Affecting Trust in Marketing Relationships, *Journal of Marketing*, 57, 81-101.

Moorman, Zaltman, G. & Deshpandé, R. (1992). Relationships between providers and users of marketing research: The dynamics of trust within and between organizations, *Journal of Marketing Research*, 29, 314-329.

Morgan, R.M., & Hunt, S.D. (1994). The commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 58, 20-38.

Olins, W. (2000). How brands are taking over the corporation. In M. Schultz, M. J. Hatch, & M. H. Larsen (Eds.), *The expressive organization: Liking identity, reputation, and the corporate brand* (pp. 51-65). Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

Ries, A. & Ries, L. (2002). *The fall of advertising and the rise of PR*, New York, NY: HarperBusiness.

Spector, A. J. (1961). Basic dimensions of the corporate image. *Journal of Marketing*, 25 (October), 47-51.

- Stafford, L. & Canary, D.J. (1991). Maintenance strategies and romantic relationship type, gender and relational characteristics. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 8, 217-242.
- Tucker, W. T. (1961). How much of the corporate image is stereotype? *Journal of Marketing*, 25 (January), 61-65.
- Van Riel, C.B.M. (1995). *Principles of corporate communication*. London: Prentice-Hall.
- Wansink, B. (1989). The impact of source reputation on inferences about unadvertised attributes. in *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 16, Thomas K. Srull. ed. Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research, 399-406.
- Wilkie, W.L. (1990). *Consumer behavior*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Winters, L.C. (1988). Does it pay to advertise to hostile audiences with corporate advertising?, *Journal of Advertising Research*, 28, 11-18.
- Woo, C. (2001). Optimal Aad-Ab-PI measures in the journal of advertising: 1991 through 2000. Master's Thesis—University of Florida.
- Wulf, K.D., Odekerken-Schröder, G & Lacobucci, D. (2001). Investments in consumer relationships: A cross-country and cross-industry exploration, *Journal of Marketing*, 65, 33-50.

**Congressional Press Secretaries: A Survey of their  
Relationships with Reporters and Views on Media Coverage**

**Ethnie Groves**, graduate student  
[ethnieg@hotmail.com](mailto:ethnieg@hotmail.com)

**Jennifer Greer**, assistant professor  
University of Nevada-Reno, Reynolds School of Journalism  
[jdgreer@unr.edu](mailto:jdgreer@unr.edu)

Mail Stop 310  
University of Nevada-Reno  
Reno, NV 89557

Office: (775) 784-4191

Submitted to the Public Relations division of the Association for Education in Journalism  
and Mass Communication for the 2003 annual conference, Kansas City, MO.

## Abstract

### **Congressional Press Secretaries: A Survey of their Relationships with Reporters and Views on Media Coverage**

This survey of congressional press secretaries examined who they are, what they think of reporters and how they view congressional news coverage. The 173 responses indicated that press secretary demographics haven't changed much since the 1980s, their relationships with reporters are positive, and they don't give high marks to coverage of Congress. Relationships and views of media coverage were partially related, and significant demographic differences emerged on how press secretaries relate to the press.

Since the 1960s, the congressional press secretary has evolved from an extravagance to a necessity for members of Congress as a result of the “presence of the news media in the contemporary political world” (Cook, 1989, p. 72). In 1960, 31 senators employed press secretaries; that number increased to 98 in 1984 (Hess, 1991). In the House, 58 members had a press secretary in 1970; in 1984, 252 members did (Cook, 1988). Today, congressional staff directories show that 100% of congressional members employ press officers.

Congressional press secretaries serve as the link between the media and politicians. “The most important and the least understood role of the press officer . . . is that of being a connecting link between reporters and the bureaucracy (Hess, 1991, p. 35). After that, four roles comprise the office of press secretary: “information conduit, constituent representation, administration, and communications planning” (Kumar, 2001, p. 296). The job description varies from office to office, but as one press aide put it, duties include the “care and feeding of the media” (Cook, 1989, p. 75).

Understanding the relationship between press secretaries and the news media is important because politicians increasingly consider the media angle of their actions and press secretaries serve as the media expert on congressional staffs. “In their role as proxy for individual members of Congress, the press secretaries act as gatekeepers, determining what information to share with, and to hold from, the media” (Downes, 1998). The congressional news that the American public digests every day is in some way affected by press secretaries in the House and Senate. Press secretaries and the activities they organize are key sources of information for congressional journalists. Most of the information congressional reporters gather comes from members’ press releases, interviews, and congressional documents (Shaw, 1997). One content analysis found that political reporters at *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* drew most of their information from interviews (24.7%), followed closely by press conferences (24.5%) and press releases (17.5%) (cited in Bennett, 2001).

As congressional press secretaries play a more pivotal role in shaping congressional coverage and in linking their member of Congress to the media, it is vital to understand who fills these positions and how they view congressional coverage. This study describes who today's congressional press secretaries are, how they view their relationships with reporters, and what they think of media coverage of Congress. Finally, this study examines how their relationship with reporters relates to their views of media coverage.

Although press secretaries play an important role on congressional staffs, only three published studies have focused on congressional press secretaries (Cook 1989; Downes 1998; Hess, 1991). Cook (1989) and Hess (1991) examined congressional reporters and press secretaries, providing a broad overview of the relationship between press secretaries and reporters, the role of press secretaries, and their demographics. Downes (1998) focused on the relationship between press secretaries and reporters but mainly compared congressional press secretaries to other public relations practitioners. No research on this key subset of public relations professionals has been conducted and published in the past five years. In addition, this study is the first to look at congressional press secretaries in both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

### **Literature review**

Literature reviewed is broken into the following areas, which correspond to the three areas of investigation focused on in this paper: demographics of congressional press secretaries, the relationship between press secretaries and the press, and press secretaries' views on media coverage of Congress and their congressional members.

#### **Demographics**

The limited available literature on the demographics of congressional press secretaries comes mainly from the three published studies on press secretaries. To supplement that information, some current information on congressional staffs is included.

**Age.** A 1984 survey found that the average age for House Democrat press secretaries was 31, (Cook, 1989). However, a 1984 survey of Senate press secretaries found them to be slightly older (34 the average age for females and 38 for males) (Hess, 1991). A 1988 survey of 87 House press secretaries found that one-third were 27 or younger, and the oldest press secretary was 62 (Hess, 1991). More recently, the 1999 Senate Staff Employment Study placed the average age of communications directors at 34 (Congressional Management Foundation, 2001). Another source found that Republican staffers were slightly younger than Democrat staffers (Bartscht, 1999).

**Gender.** Historically, few women have served as press secretaries. In 1984, 36% of House Democrat press secretaries were female (Cook, 1989), as were 19.5% of Senate press secretaries (Hess, 1991). When Hess updated his data on gender in 1989, he found that a third of senators employed female press secretaries (Hess, 1991). In a separate 1988 study of 87 House press secretaries, 25% were female (Hess, 1991). However, the 2001 Senate Staff Employment Study found gender levels fairly equal among all congressional staffers (CMF, 2001).

**Ethnicity.** Past studies did not investigate ethnicity. This is probably because most, if not all, press secretaries were white – even in the 1980s. In 1984, all Senate press secretaries were white (Hess, 1991). However, when Hess updated his findings in 1989, he noted that two Senate press secretaries were black (Hess, 1991). Although still very low, minority representation on congressional staffs in general is increasing. By 2001, minorities represented 14.5% of Senate staff and 15.5% of House staff (CMF, 2001).

**Geographic connections.** Press secretaries in both the Senate and House usually grow up in the congressional member's state or go to a college in that state. A 1984 survey of House Democrat press secretaries found that 59% came from the same state as their member and 35% came from the same district (Cook, 1989). Half of House press secretaries surveyed in 1988 had a connection with their congressional member's state (Hess, 1991).



**Education.** In the past, a majority of congressional press secretaries were graduates of journalism or political science programs. In 1984, 97% of House Democrat press secretaries had graduated from college (41% of them majoring in journalism) and 42% had done some graduate work (Cook, 1989). Of the 87 House press secretaries surveyed in 1988, one-third majored in journalism, another third majored in political science, and only one in five had their master's degree (Hess, 1991).

**Work experience.** Cook (1989) found that most press secretaries had journalistic experience before working on Capitol Hill in newspapers or magazines (48%), broadcasting (27%), or public relations or advertising (32%). Only 26% hadn't worked in journalism previously (Cook, 1989). In 1988, Hess (1991) found that half of House press secretaries had journalism experience and an additional third had public relations experience.

**Tenure.** Press secretaries normally work for their members in Washington, D. C., for about four years (Hess, 1991). In fact, their peers consider it negatively if press secretaries remain on staff much longer. "I assume they couldn't do better," said a press secretary who came from a public relations background (Hess, 1991, p. 65). Press secretaries view their positions as stepping stones to other positions (Hess, 1991). In 1988, two-thirds of House press secretaries surveyed had held their position for two years or less; the longest tenure was 22 years (Hess, 1991).

**Salary.** Overall, earlier studies found that Senate press secretaries made more than House press secretaries. In 1984, the average House Democrat press secretary made \$26,000 (Cook, 1989). In 1989, the average Senate press secretary salary was \$48,296; Senate Democrats paid their press secretaries on average \$3,500 more than Republican Senators did (Hess, 1991). However, the higher salary for Senate press secretaries might be influenced by their slightly older average age. The 1990 Congressional Management Foundation study of 212 House offices found the average press secretary salary was \$34,455 (as cited in Hess, 1991). More recent figures on

congressional staffs in general show that Senate staffers are paid more than House staffers and female staffers are paid less than their male counterparts (CMF, 2001).

### **The Relationship between Press Secretaries and the Press**

This section is organized by three (albeit somewhat overlapping) characteristics of a successful relationship between press secretaries and the press that emerged in the literature: credibility, cooperation, and adversarial but amicable.

**Credibility.** Credibility encompasses expertise, truth-telling, and trust. In fact, the level of respect reporters have for the press secretary even affects credibility. If reporters respect the press secretary, they are more willing to trust what the press secretary tells them. The level of respect reporters give to the press secretary is a direct reflection of the “knowledge, credibility, and organization” of the press secretary (Towle, 1997, p. 298). Respecting and responding to the needs of reporters ranks high on the list of press secretaries’ daily tasks (Cook, 1998, p. 136). For credibility and trust to be established, “a legislator must claim to be an authoritative source on the issue at hand” (Cook, 1989, p. 79). By putting the member in the presence of others and publicizing, through press releases or other means, their knowledge of a topic, press secretaries establish their congressional members as credible sources (Cook, 1989).

**Cooperation.** The relationship between press secretaries and reporters is based on cooperation as they both look for and distribute information (Kumar, 2001). As they cooperate, press secretaries and the press exhibit mutual “hand-washing” (Downes, 1999, p. 8). Both press secretaries and reporters need each other to do their jobs and, ultimately, to survive (Downes, 1999). The “symbiosis is not a deliberate agreement to trade favors” but the need of both to create news stories (Cook, 1989, p. 76). To the congressional member, the reporter represents a chance at much sought after publicity (Loomis, 1988). The reporter needs to generate news, and the press secretary needs to generate publicity (Cook, 1989). Press secretaries will call reporters and give

them a tip or a good story idea, and reporters will call press secretaries to let them know if a bad story is about to break (Downes, 1999).

**Adversarial but amicable.** The relationship between congressional members and the media is both “adversarial and symbiotic” (Loomis, 1988, p. 80-81). Press secretaries are constantly fostering positive relationships with the news media and feeding them information about members. These two duties cause the press secretary to “walk a fine line” between pleasing the media and pleasing the member (Cook, 1989, p. 76). In fact, press secretaries have even been called “advocates” for both reporters and congressional members (Hess, 1984). Press secretaries’ desire to control the coverage of their members and the journalists’ desire to reveal the whole story causes tension in their relationship (Downes, 1998). Both the reporter and press secretary must work to maintain their mutual relationship because they are often faced with temptations to “jeopardize” the partnership (Cook, 1989, p. 76).

### **Media Coverage of Congress**

Today, more than 300 press organizations and about 2,000 reporters worldwide are members of both the House and Senate media galleries (Telephone interview, February 26, 2003). Those covering Congress must keep up with Congress’ 535 members, about 150 committees, and almost 24-hour debate. Not surprisingly, much of what Congress does is uncovered (Broder, 1987). For example, during one week in 1985, the House and Senate held 115 committee meetings and four full days of floor sessions. *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* ran only 39 Congress stories that week, about four stories per day (Broder, 1987).

While no studies have investigated how press secretaries or members of Congress rate press coverage, studies that describe the tone of coverage, the focus of coverage, and the emphasis on local vs. national coverage, provide background for setting up such questions.

**Tone of coverage.** Lichter and Amundson (1994) found in their study of television network news from 1972 to 1992 that congressional coverage has become increasingly negative. Three of four stories on Congress in 1972 were negative, seven of eight in 1982 were negative, and nine of 10 were negative in 1992. The negative coverage was not partisan, and both Republicans and Democrats were criticized equally. Broder, in noting the negative coverage, said although television journalists are excellent, many who cover Congress are “frustrated.” “The television Congress is a highly confrontational body” (Broder, 1987, p. 226). Rozell’s (1994) content analysis of three leading daily newspapers and three leading newsweeklies also found that the tone of Congressional coverage has become increasingly harsh. Additionally, he found that when Congress is behaving just as the framers of the Constitution intended, by debating new laws, media coverage becomes negative. In part, this is because the press misunderstands Congress’ role and thinks Congress should be getting things done (Rozell, 1994). As a result of increasingly negative coverage, public opinion of Congress as an institution has decreased (Lichter & Amundson, 1994; Rozell, 1994; Shaw, 1997). In 1965, 64% of Americans approved of Congress as an institution; by 1992, that number had dropped to 19% (Shaw, 1997).

**Focus of coverage.** Rozell (2000) found that coverage of Congress typically does not focus on the legislative process or the policies being debated but on dramatic events. In addition, congressional coverage is usually centered on how Congress relates to the president. Lichter and Amundson’s (1994) longitudinal study on television coverage of Congress found that most stories (41%) reported on some facet of domestic policy with another 26% focusing on foreign policy. Coverage of policy issues fluxuated over time but the only area of congressional coverage to increase was scandal. Coverage of ethics matters increased from 4% of all congressional news in 1972 to 17% in 1992 (Lichter & Amundson, 1994).

**Local versus national coverage.** Local and national media coverage of specific members of Congress differs according to many factors. Because most congressional publicity is focused on the goal of re-election from local (or statewide) constituencies, congressional members say local coverage is the most valuable. However, national media attention also is desirable for members who want to set a national agenda or increase their stature (Cook, 1998; Hess, 1991; Cook, 1989). The national spotlight falls on “leaders, committee chairs, and others who are understood to be pivotal players” (Cook, 1998, p. 151). In addition, national media attention focuses on senators (Mayhew, 1974; Broder, 1987; Hess, 1991). In an average year, 89% of the Senate is mentioned on the national news but only 37% of the House is (Baker, 1989).

### **Research Questions**

Based on the review of the three areas above, the following research questions are posed:

**RQ1:** What are the demographics of today’s congressional press secretaries?

**RQ2:** How do congressional press secretaries characterize their relationship with the press? How do the demographics of congressional press secretaries and their congressional members influence their characterization of this relationship?

**RQ3:** How do congressional press secretaries rate media coverage of Congress and their member? How do the demographics of congressional press secretaries and their congressional members influence their views on media coverage?

**RQ 4:** How do press secretaries’ relationships with reporters relate to their views on media coverage?

### **Method**

While their responses are not a substitute for members’ responses, press secretaries, “constitute the appropriate subjects for interviews about the nature of media-Congress

relationships, the understandings that exist, and the techniques that are employed in exchanging information” (Miller, 1976, p. 8-9). A mass survey was used to gather opinions, attitudes, and demographics of all congressional press secretaries. According to Dillman (1978), several things can increase mass survey response rate: including a self-addressed, stamped return envelope; including a cover letter that explains the usefulness of the study, the importance of their response, and an assurance of confidentiality; offering an executive summary of the results; using university letterhead for the cover letter; sending a reminder postcard; and sending a second mailing after the postcard (Dillman, 1978). The researchers followed each suggestion in implementing the survey.

### **Population**

The population for the survey was 539 congressional press secretaries, one for each of the 535 congressional offices and four delegates’ press secretaries. The researcher addressed the survey to the primary press secretary or the equivalent head press officer, personalized by name, as determined by a search of the congressional staff listings online. The researchers verified all of the press secretaries’ names, titles, and contact information through multiple sources. The first copy of the survey was hand delivered to all offices the week of June 3, 2002. Roughly two weeks later, a reminder postcard was again delivered to the entire population, followed by a second full packet, delivered the week of July 19, 2002. Responses were collected through November 2002, when the final survey was received in the mail.

### **The questionnaire**

The survey instrument was broken into three sections: demographics, relationship with the press, views on media coverage of members and Congress as an institution.

**Demographic items.** Three areas of demographic inquiry were investigated – personal demographic characteristics, professional demographic characteristics, and characteristics of the congressional member they work for. Personal demographic characteristics measured were: age,

gender, ethnicity, political party, major, and education level. Professional demographic characteristics measured were: length of time working for Congress, if the press secretary was from the same state as their member, how many hours they worked per week, their major in college, work experience prior to Capitol Hill, length of time in current position, how many more years they would like to work on Capitol Hill, and annual salary. Upon receipt of the survey and before the results were reviewed, the researcher used a tracking number on the return envelope to code the office, gender, and party of the congressional member for whom the press secretary worked. The envelopes and list of tracking numbers were then thrown away, ensuring confidentiality. In addition, press secretaries were asked in the survey to describe their member's political ideals (e.g. conservative, liberal).

**Relationship items.** In the relationship with the press section, 10 questions were asked, all using a five-point Likert-type response format in which one equaled strongly disagree and five equaled strongly agree. The researcher used eight questions from Downes' (1998) relationship with the press scale and added two additional questions to test press secretaries' relationships with local and national media. All of Downes' (1998) items used measured some form of cooperation, trust, or the adversarial but amicable relationship themes found in the literature. Finally, press secretaries were asked to agree or disagree on whether they have positive relationships with the local and national press.

**Media coverage items.** Three groups of questions were used to test media coverage of individual congressional members and Congress as an institution. First, the researchers created five items, each measured on a five-point Likert-type response format, measured press secretaries' views on media coverage of the member of Congress they work for. Second, two items, also using a five-point Likert-type response formats, measured overall views on media coverage. These were modified from a 1997 Pew Research Center survey. Third, Meyer's five-point

semantic differential news credibility scale (1988) was used to measure views on media coverage of Congress and of their Congressional member. The scale tested fairness, bias, whether the media tell the whole story, accuracy, and trustworthiness.

### **Findings**

As of November 2002, 173 responses were received, for a response rate of 32.1%. While this rate is lower than some published surveys, it must be noted that the researchers studied the entire population, not a sample. This rate also is comparable with previous studies surveying similar populations (Cook, 1984; Downes 1998).

The population for congressional member demographics was 171 congressional press secretaries. Two congressional press secretaries did not use the return envelope provided; therefore, the envelope had no identifying marks and congressional member demographics could not be identified. Of the responding congressional offices, 46.2% (N = 80) of congressional members were Republican, 52.0% (N = 90) were Democrat, and 0.6% (N = 1) were Independent. As expected, given the breakdown of the population, the majority of respondents worked on the House side with 84.4% (N = 146) and 14.5% (N = 25) of respondents from the Senate. Also as expected, given the gender representation in Congress, most respondents (85.5%, N = 148) worked for a male congressional member; 13.3% (N = 23) worked for a female. Of 169 responses to the question on congressional member's political ideology, 15.6% (N = 27) said their member was strongly conservative, 31.2% (N = 54) said conservative, 20.2% (N = 35) said neutral, 22.5% (N = 39) said liberal, and 8.1% (N = 14) said strongly liberal.

### **Scale Analyses**

The 10 items borrowed from Downes (1998) investigated several aspects of media relations including the adversarial but amicable relationship, respect, cooperation, and trust. These



were not expected to work as one consistent scale, and this was confirmed by factor analyses after data collection. Therefore, these 10 items were analyzed independently.

The same was true for the five items that asked general questions about coverage of congressional members. The two items that investigated media's role in society were consistent and produced a reliable measure at  $\alpha = .75$ . Therefore, responses for these two items were averaged for data analysis. Finally, the use of Myers' credibility scales for credibility of coverage of Congress and of their member worked as coherent, reliable scales ( $\alpha = .84$  and  $\alpha = .80$ , respectively). Therefore, for each scale, a credibility score was created by averaging the responses to the five items.

### **Research Question 1**

The first research question gathered descriptive data on people working as press secretaries in Congress. Respondents ranged in age from 22 to 61 years old with the mean age of 31.98 (Median = 30). Of 168 press secretaries who responded to the gender question, 60.1% (N = 104) were male and 37.0% (N = 64) were female. For the question on ethnicity, respondents could check all ethnicities that applied. Of the 169 responses for that question, 3.6% (N = 6) chose more than one ethnicity. The majority of respondents (89.6%, N = 155) were at least part Caucasian. Other ethnicities were as follows: Hispanic 4.7% (N = 8), African American 1.7% (N = 3), Asian American 2.9% (N = 5), Native American 0.6% (N = 1), and other 0.6% (N = 1). Of 170 responses, 48.0% (N = 83) identified themselves as Republican, 45.7% (N = 79) reported being Democrat, 4.0% (N = 7) said they were Independent, and 0.6% (N = 1) marked other. About half of responding press secretaries (50.3%, N = 87) were from the same state as the member of Congress they work for, 46.8% (N = 81) were not.

Overall, congressional press secretaries are well educated. Only one respondent (0.6%) did not have a college degree, and a majority (63.0%, N = 109) had a bachelor's degree. Another

23 respondents (13.3%) had started graduate coursework and 37 (21.4%) had a graduate degree. The most common major was political science (24.3%, N = 42), followed by journalism (18.5%, N = 32), communications (15.0%, N = 26), other (13.9%, N = 24), history (7.5%, N = 13), government (5.8%, N = 10), international relations (5.2%, N = 9), and English (4.6%, N = 8).

Respondents could check all categories of prior work experience that applied. Many respondents had worked previously in journalism: 20.2% (N = 35) had worked in broadcasting, 28.9% (N = 50) in newspapers or magazines, 22.0% (N = 38) in public relations or advertising, 27.2% (N = 47) in other communication positions, and 31.2% (N = 54) in other positions.

The amount of time respondents had their current position ranged from up to one year (27.2%, N = 47) to nine or more years (9.2%, N = 16). The median time was one to two years, with 37.6% (N = 65) of respondents choosing that option. Of the remaining categories, 6.8% (N = 29) chose three to four years, 5.2% (N = 9) chose five to six years, and 2.9% (N = 5) chose seven to eight years. The amount of time respondents had worked for Congress ranged from up to one year (14.5%, N = 25) to nine or more years (17.3%, N = 30). The median time working for Congress three to four years, with 28.3% (N = 49) choosing that category. The remaining categories were as follows: one to two years (22.0%, N = 38), five to six years (8.7%, N = 15), and seven to eight years (7.5%, N = 13).

The amount of time respondents would like to remain on Capitol Hill ranged from up to one year (12.1%, N = 21) to nine or more years (10.4%, N = 18). The median response was three to four years, with 25.4% (N = 44) of respondents choosing that category. The other categories were as follows: one to two years (29.5%, N = 51), five to six years (14.5%, N = 25), and seven to eight years (2.3%, N = 4).

On average, respondents reported working 53.28 hours per week. Hours worked per week ranged from 30 hours (0.6%, N = 1) to 85 hours (0.6%, N = 1). The average salary reported

corresponded to the fifth category of salary data, between \$50,000 and \$59,999. Independent samples t-tests investigating patterns between House and Senate press secretaries revealed several significant differences. Senate press secretaries were older ( $M = 35.0$  years) than House press secretaries ( $M = 31.5$  years,  $t = 1.98$ ,  $df = 166$ ,  $p < .05$ ), had held their positions longer ( $M = 3.58$  to  $M = 2.35$ ,  $t = 2.27$ ,  $df = 167$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and had been working for Congress longer ( $M = 4.08$  to  $M = 3.10$ ,  $t = 2.75$ ,  $df = 166$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Senate press secretaries also made more ( $M = 7.29$ , corresponding to \$70,000 to \$79,999) than House press secretaries ( $M = 5.04$ , corresponding to \$50,000 to \$59,999,  $t = 5.254$ ,  $df = 163$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

Analyses also were run by gender of press secretary. Female press secretaries have significantly higher levels of education: 56.3% had a bachelor's degree, 9.4% had done graduate work, and 34.4% had a graduate degree. Male press secretaries were more likely to have stopped at a bachelor's degree (69.3%); 16.3% had done graduate work and only 14.4% had a graduate degree ( $X^2 = 10.08$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p < .05$ ). No other significant differences were found by gender.

## Research Question 2

The second research question investigated how press secretaries characterized their relationships with members of the news media. The 10 items were analyzed by their means, with higher means indicating more agreement with the statement (See Table 1). Press secretaries expressed moderate to strong agreement with all but one statement (Reporters view me as a "hack," "flack," or "spin doctor"). Press secretaries agreed most strongly that they had a positive relationship with local media and that they get along with reporters through mutual recognition of their roles. Overall, the responses indicate that press secretaries are positive about their relationships with members of the news media.

*Table 1 about here*

The second part of this research question investigated whether demographics were linked to views on the relationship items. Regression analyses were conducted to allow for simultaneous analyses of multiple independent variables. Before running regression analyses, correlations were run on logical groupings of the demographic items to find out which items were significantly correlated. The principles of regression analysis require that each independent variable entered into a regression equation be independent or uncorrelated with the other independent variables in the equation (Salkind, 2000). The correlation analysis produced four distinct groups of independent variables used for the regression analyses. They were: Congressional member demographics (office – House or Senate – and political ideology); Primary demographics of press secretary (age, gender, and ethnicity); Secondary demographics of press secretary (party, education, previous work in journalism, and if they were from the same state as their member); Job conditions/satisfaction (hours worked per week, salary, and length of time they would like to remain on Capitol Hill). Two final demographic items, length of time in position and working for Congress, were correlated with most other independent variables and with each other. Therefore, they were analyzed separately. Congressional member gender was not used in the regression analysis because very few press secretaries who work for female members replied to the survey.

For simplicity, instead of reporting out full regression models in multiple tables, variables that emerged in significant regression models as significant predictors are identified by variable, Beta, t, and significance level next to the item means that they were related to (see Table 1).

Using the four groupings, regression analyses were run on the 10 relationship items. Press secretaries working for strongly conservative members were more likely to report a positive relationship with local media. Additionally, they agreed strongly that they would restrict office access to reporters who repeatedly ignored their side of a story. Younger press secretaries agreed more strongly that they would avoid unpopular topics with reporters. Republican press secretaries

reported a more positive relationship with the local media and that they would restrict office access to uncooperative reporters. Press secretaries with previous work in journalism agreed more strongly than those with no journalism experience that they have a positive relationship with the local media. Press secretaries not from the same state as their member agreed more strongly that they have a positive relationship with the national media.

Press secretaries who worked fewer hours per week agreed more strongly that they share a mutual recognition with reporters of each others' jobs and that they respect the reporters they work with. Press secretaries with lower salaries agreed more strongly they would avoid unpopular topics with reporters. Press secretaries who would like to remain on Capitol Hill longer agreed more strongly that they would "shut off" biased reporters.

### **Research Question 3**

The third research question investigated how press secretaries characterized coverage of their congressional member and media's role in society. After scale analysis, the eight media coverage measures produced by scale analyses above were analyzed by their means, with higher means indicating stronger agreement (See Table 2). Overall, press secretaries were most positive about the local media coverage their congressional member receives. Press secretaries agreed least that media play a positive role in society and coverage of Congress is credible.

#### *Table 2 about here*

The second part of research question three looked at how the demographic groupings described above were related to views of media coverage (See Table 2). Press secretaries working for House members agreed more strongly than their Senate counterparts that local coverage is more valuable than national coverage. Press secretaries working for strongly liberal members of Congress agreed more strongly that media coverage of Congress is credible. Older press

secretaries agreed more strongly that media play a positive role in society and that media coverage of Congress is credible.

Press secretaries with previous work in journalism agreed more strongly that media coverage of their member has improved in recent years and that national media coverage their congressional member receives is positive. Democrat press secretaries agreed more strongly that media coverage of Congress is credible. Press secretaries not from the same state as their congressional member agreed more strongly that the national media coverage their congressional member receives is positive.

Press secretaries who would like to remain on Capitol Hill longer agreed more strongly that media coverage of their congressional member has improved in recent years and that media play a positive role in society. Press secretaries who worked fewer hours per week also agreed more strongly that media play a positive role in society. Press secretaries who had been in their current position longer agreed more strongly that media play a positive role in society. Press secretaries who had been working for Congress longer agreed more strongly that coverage of their congressional member is better than coverage of Congress as a whole and that media play a positive role in society.

#### **Research Question 4**

For the fourth research question, which tested how press secretaries' relationships with reporters were related to their views on media coverage, the 10 relationship items were regressed on the eight media coverage items. The significant regression models that emerged suggested that views on press relations are correlated to views of media coverage (see Table 2).

Of the 10 relationship items, the item dealing with the level of respect press secretaries have for the reporters they work with was most predictive of variation in responses. Other items

that were predictive were: relationship with the local media, relationship with the national media, and level of cooperation with the reporters.

Press secretaries who reported high levels of respect for reporters were more likely to agree that media play a positive role in society and that media coverage of their congressional member is credible. Conversely, and quite surprisingly, press secretaries who said they have lower levels of respect for the reporters they work for agreed more strongly that media coverage of their congressional member had improved since they began working in Washington.

Press secretaries who said they have positive relationships with the local media agreed more strongly that the local coverage their member receives is positive and that media coverage of their member had improved recently. Press secretaries who said they have positive relationships with the national media agreed more strongly that the national coverage their member receives is positive. Conversely, they were more likely to agree that local coverage is less valuable than national coverage. Press secretaries who said they would give a reporter a story and, in return, the reporter would help them out agreed more strongly that the local media coverage their congressional member receives is positive.

### **Summary of Results**

In general, the average congressional press secretary is a 32-year-old Caucasian male who holds a bachelor's degree in political science. He's most likely from the same state as his member. He works about 53 hours per week and is paid between \$50,000 and \$60,000 a year. He probably worked in journalism or other communications positions before joining a congressional staff. He has worked in his current position for one to two years and for Congress for three to four years. He would like to remain in Congress another three to four years.

Although the number of congressional press secretaries has increased since the Cook and Hess studies, the characteristics of congressional press secretaries have barely changed. Today,

there are slightly more female press secretaries in the Senate, more minority representation overall, and, most likely because of inflation, annual salary has increased. Generally though, they are very similar to the press secretaries described in both mid 1980s studies. This might be because by the 1980s, the congressional press secretary had become such a regular part of congressional staffs that the type of person who regularly sought out the job and who was hired for the job was already established. Since the 1980s, congressional members have been hiring very similar people to be their press secretary; thus, the lack of any major changes in the demographics of congressional press secretaries.

For the most part, press secretaries report having a positive relationship with the press. Press secretaries rated their relationship with local media slightly more positive than the national media. In addition, press secretaries reported a high level of respect for reporters. Press secretaries were neutral about shutting off communications with a reporter and seemed willing to go out of their way to cultivate a cooperative relationship.

In rating media coverage, press secretaries were more positive about the local coverage their congressional member receives than they were about national coverage. They also thought local coverage was more valuable than national coverage. Overall, they ranked coverage of their congressional member as more positive and credible than coverage of Congress as a whole. In general, press secretaries don't think that media play a positive role in society.

Press secretaries who report high levels of respect for reporters were much more positive about media coverage and credibility. In addition, press secretaries who reported a positive relationship with the local press were more positive about local coverage while press secretaries who reported a positive relationship with the national press were more positive about the national coverage. Surprisingly, press secretaries who reported a low level of respect for the reporters they



work with reported agreed more strongly that media coverage of their congressional member had improved.

### **Implications**

The most interesting implications are detailed in this section and are arranged under four subheadings: how demographics relate to press secretary views, effects of ideology, national versus local media, and duality of feelings.

#### **How demographics relate to press secretary views**

**Age, education, and salary:** Younger press secretaries and those who make less money were most likely to avoid unpopular topics with reporters. These press secretaries may not trust their abilities yet because of a lack of experience. Press secretaries commented on the age issue in responses to an open-ended question on the survey. One 51-year old House press secretary said, “I have to say I’ve been disappointed by the lack of media experience and youth of most press secretaries I’ve met. They lack experience and judgment.” Another House press secretary, age 43, pointed out the inexperience of both press secretaries and the political press, “The great untold story of American politics and journalism is that people under 25 (generally) are explaining the stories/writing the stories most Americans read – so there’s no real context nor understanding and the same stories cycle in and out every year.” If today’s congressional press secretaries lack experience and avoid topics with reporters, it may hurt the quality of their relationship with the press and, as a long-term consequence, it may harm overall political coverage.

**Hours per week, and length of time remaining on Capitol Hill:** Press secretaries who work fewer hours per week and who would like to stay on Capitol Hill longer seemed to be more positive about the media and happier with the jobs that media do. In contrast, press secretaries who reported working many hours per week and who would like to remain on Capitol Hill for a shorter amount of time seemed more jaded by their job and the system and were more negative.

This “jaded” group was disagreed that media play a positive role in society. Correlation analyses demonstrated that the length of time press secretaries plan to stay on Capitol Hill and hours worked per week were not significantly related, suggesting that these two items measured different characteristics of press secretaries’ jobs. However, both look at the amount of energy press secretaries devote or plan to devote to their jobs. Press secretaries who are jaded about their jobs, Congress, and the media might have poor relationships with the reporters they work with. This might lead to a decreased level of quality in reporting and, in addition, could negatively affect how congressional members communicate with many of their constituents. Without strong media relations, congressional members cannot get their messages out to voters.

### **Effects of ideology**

Press secretaries who work for members with a strongly conservative political ideology view their relationship with the press and the coverage of their member very similarly, if not exactly the same as, press secretaries who identify themselves as Republican. The same holds true for press secretaries who work for members with a strongly liberal political ideology and press secretaries who identify themselves as Democrat. These related views are not surprising, because as a Chi-square analysis demonstrated, these respondents were basically the same group. Only two of the 81 press secretaries who identified themselves as Republican worked for strongly liberal or liberal congressional members. Conversely, only seven of the 77 press secretaries who identified themselves as Democrat reported working for strongly conservative or conservative members. Press secretaries who work for strongly conservative members and Republican press secretaries are more volatile in their relationship with the press. They are positive about the media but are more willing to “shut off” a biased reporter or restrict access to their office. Press secretaries who work for strongly liberal members and Democrat press secretaries were more willing to agree that media coverage of Congress is credible.

This finding could suggest that media coverage or treatment of Republicans and Democrats might differ or that press secretaries who identify as Republicans or who work for strongly conservative members perceive differences in media coverage. Another explanation of this finding could be that Democrat press secretaries focus more on their relationship with reporters and, as a result, they feel the information in reporters' stories is credible. Yet another explanation could be that because the Republicans held the majority in the House at the time of the survey and, because media are perceived to attack the majority party, Republican press secretaries or those press secretaries working for strongly conservative members may have seen coverage as less credible than Democrat press secretaries or those working for strongly liberal members.

#### **National versus local media**

The results are consistent with the literature on the differences between the importance of local and national coverage to senators and representatives. Press secretaries working for senators deal with the national media more than press secretaries for representatives. House members are elected more often and re-election is a constant concern; therefore, press secretaries working for House members are more concerned with their local media relationship (Cook 1989; Hess, 1991; Cook, 1998). In addition, the national media are more interested in members of the Senate and are less likely to seek out a House member (Hess, 1991; Cook, 1998). Responding to the open-ended question on the survey, one female, House press secretary said:

My concern is not with the quality of the media coverage my boss receives in the local media. It is usually quite good. Rather, it is that the major papers regularly report on issues he has done a great deal of work on and don't mention him, or worse yet, give sole credit to one of the senators.

This quote highlights the distinction House press secretaries might make between the local and national media and, the distinction the national media might make between House and Senate members. Republicans also reported better connections with the local media. One explanation for this finding might be that Republican press secretaries may perceive the national media to have a

liberal slant and their local media to be more objective. One Republican, House press secretary commented, “I do believe the media suffers from an unfortunate and debilitating liberal bias.”

Press secretaries who work for senators, those from the same state as their member, and those who would like to remain on Capitol Hill longer were all highly positive about their relationship with the national press. Press secretaries who work for strongly conservative members were highly positive about their relationship with the local press. Overall, Republican press secretaries were more positive about their relationship with both the local and national press. Press secretaries who work for members of the House and those who identified themselves as minorities felt overall that local media coverage is more valuable. Press secretaries who would like to remain on Capitol Hill longer typically felt that local coverage of their congressional member is positive. Press secretaries without previous work in journalism typically felt that the national coverage their congressional member receives is positive.

### **Duality of feelings**

The results point to a duality of feelings about overall media coverage of congressional members as individuals and Congress as an institution. As the literature shows, congressional members have a tendency to distance themselves from the institution of Congress and stress their individual roles (Rozell, 2000; Durr, 1997; Shaw, 1997). Press secretaries expressed similar feelings about their congressional member and Congress as an institution as Americans who say they love their congressional member but hate politicians. Press secretaries gave high marks to coverage of their individual congressional members and lower marks toward coverage of Congress as an institution.

The longer a press secretary has been working on Capitol Hill, the more imbedded this duality of feelings becomes. The attitude was very strong for press secretaries who had been in their current position longer and who had been working for Congress longer. One male, House

press secretary highlighted the duality of coverage when he said, “Overall coverage of my member has been fair, but journalistic cheap shots at Congress as an institution breed cynicism and undermine democracy.”

The results point to a similar duality in press secretaries’ feelings toward individual reporters versus the media. Overall, press secretaries like the individual reporters they work with, but dislike media coverage. Press secretaries were positive overall about their relationship with the press and reported a high level of respect for reporters. A male, House press secretary said, “I have a good relationship with most journalists – even if they often have their story written before talking to me. Good press secretaries and journalists respect one another’s position.” The level of respect press secretaries feel for reporters is not surprising because most press secretaries have had previous work in journalism and, as a result, respect the work reporters do. However, press secretaries generally disagreed that media play a positive role in society and that media coverage of both their congressional member and Congress as an institution is credible. These results, paired with the overall positive feelings press secretaries exhibited toward reporters, indicate that press secretaries view reporters as individuals separate from media as an institution.

Over time, these negative views toward media as an institution might erode the relationship between press secretaries and reporters. In addition, if press secretaries do not see media as credible or as playing a positive role, press secretaries might not see the worth of their job as the link between the congressional member and media. Press secretaries might become further jaded, which could lead to higher turnover.

### **Conclusion**

With all investigative research, not all factors were accounted for in this study. Unmeasured factors that could have been key in this study were whether press secretaries only dealt with local media, if they just started in their position, or if they had personal conflicts with

specific reporters. Further, the congressional members' leadership roles might have been more predictive of variance in response than some of the demographic information collected. For example, press secretaries who work for a party leader or a committee chair might spend more time working with the national media. A simple repetition of this study could include these items and allow for clear comparisons to be drawn over time. In addition, data was collected for this study fairly close to the November elections; future research might look at congressional press secretaries earlier in their congressional members' two-year terms. And although this study looked at the previous work experience of congressional press secretaries and asked them to speculate on their future careers, the study paves the way for a longer-term analysis of career patterns of this vital position. A longitudinal study tracking press secretaries over time would provide a more complete picture of the congressional press secretary.

Overall, this study found that press secretaries have a fairly positive relationship with reporters, but that their views of media coverage were not as positive. It also found that press secretaries' relationships with reporters are strongly connected with their views of coverage of both their congressional member and Congress as an institution. This finding has far reaching effects. If press secretaries begin to lose respect for the reporters they work with because of what they see as poor coverage of their congressional member, it could cause their relationship to become increasingly negative. This could adversely affect political publicity and coverage. A deteriorating relationship between press secretaries and the press could affect the type and amount of publicity reporters receive, which in turn could affect the media, politicians, political staffs, and the U.S. public.

## REFERENCES

- Alreck, P. L., & Settle, R. B. (1995). The survey research handbook. Burr Ridge, IL: Irwin Professional Publishing.
- Baker, R. K. (1989). House and Senate. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Bartscht, J. (1999). Hill people: The essentials. National Journal, 31(25), 1640.
- Bennett, W. L. (2001). News: The politics of illusion. New York: Longman.
- Broder, D. (1987). Behind the front page. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Congressional Management Foundation Report (2001). Senate staff employment study. Washington, DC: Congressional Management Foundation.
- Cook, T. E. (1998). Governing with the news: The news media as a political institution. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Cook, T. E. (1989). Making laws and making news: Media strategies in the U. S. House of Representatives. Washington, D. C.: The Brookings Institution.
- Cook, T. E. (1988). Press secretaries and media strategies in the House of Representatives: Deciding whom to pursue. American Journal of Political Science, 42(4), 1047-1069.
- Dillman, D. A. (1978). Mail and telephone surveys: The total design method. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.
- Downes, E. J. (1998). Hacks, flacks, and spin doctors meet the media: An examination of the congressional press secretary as (potential) public relations professional. Journal of Public Relations Research, 10(4), 263-286.
- Durr, R. H., Gilmour, J. B., & Wolbrecht, C. (1997). Explaining congressional approval. American Journal of Political Science, 41(1), 175-207.
- Hernandez, D. G. (1996, April 27). Anatomy of a press secretary. Editor and Publisher 129, 22.

- Hess, S. (1991). Live from Capitol Hill: Studies of Congress and the media. Washington, D. C.: The Brookings Institute.
- Hibbing, J. R., & Theiss-Morse, E. (1995). Congress as Public Enemy: Public Attitudes toward American Political Institutions. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Kumar, M. J. (2001). The office of the press secretary. Presidential Studies Quarterly, 31(2), 296-322.
- Lichter, S. R., & Amundson, D. R. (1994). Less news is worse news: Television news coverage of Congress, 1972-1992. In T. E. Mann & N. J. Ornstein (Eds.) Congress, the Press and the Public (pp. 131-140). Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute and The Brookings Institution.
- Loomis, B. (1988). The new American politician: Ambition, entrepreneurship, and the changing face of political life. New York, NY: Basic Books, Inc.
- Mayhew, D. R. (1974). Congress: The electoral connection. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Miller, S. H. (1978, January). Reporters and congressmen: Living in symbiosis. Journalism Monographs, 53
- Meyer, P. (1988). Defining and measuring credibility of newspapers: Developing an index. Journalism Quarterly, 65, 567-574.
- Priest, S. H. (1996). Doing media research. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Rozell, M. J. (1994). Press coverage of Congress: 1946-1992. In T. E. Mann & N. J. Ornstein (Eds.) Congress, the Press and the Public (pp. 59-130). Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute and The Brookings Institution.
- Salant, P., & Dillman, D. A. (1994). How to conduct your own survey. New York: John Wiley & Sons.



- Shaw, M. (1997). The United States: Congress under stress. Parliamentary Affairs, 30(3), 453-467.
- Towle, M. J. (1997). On behalf of the President: Four factors affecting the success of the presidential press secretary. Presidential Studies Quarterly 27 (2), 297-319.
- Weinberg, S. (1981). Trade secrets of Washington journalists. Washington, D.C.: Acropolis Books Ltd.
- Wimmer, R. D., & Dominick, J. R. (2000). Mass media research. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- 1999 Senate staff employment study sample data (1999). Congressional Management Foundation. Retrieved on Feb. 8, 2003, from <http://www.cmfweb.org/templ/display.cmf?id=243>

<b>Table 1: Relationship items</b>	<b>Overall mean</b>	<b>Significant differences based on demographics</b>
I have a positive relationship with the local news media.	4.47	B = -.243, t = -3.21, p < .01 (press secretary party) B = .227, t = 2.99, p < .01 (previous work in journalism) B = -.317, t = -4.25, p < .01 (member political ideology)
The media know I have a job to do. I know they have a job to do. With that mutual recognition, we get along.	4.40	B = -.206, t = -2.48, p < .01 (hours per week)
In general, I respect the reporters with whom I work.	3.99	B = -.239, t = -2.90, p < .01 (hours per week)
I have a positive relationship with the national news media.	3.91	B = -.257, t = -3.32, p < .01 (from same state as member)
If my congressional member takes a stand on something unpopular in the district, I'll avoid bringing it up with a reporter.	3.81	B = -.162, t = -2.09, p < .04 (age of press secretary) B = -.227, t = -2.73, p < .01 (salary of press secretary)
Sometimes, I'll give a reporter a story and, at a later time, that reporter will help me out.	3.68	
If a reporter were – over a year – to completely ignore my side of the story he/she could lose access to our office.	3.54	B = -.170, t = -2.132, p < .04 (press secretary party) B = -.177, t = -2.28, p < .02 (member political ideology)
If a good story's coming up, I'll make a call to a reporter or two and inform them – even if that story doesn't directly involve my congressional member.	3.51	
I've "shut off" my communications with a reporter who was consistently and blatantly biased or antagonistic.	3.13	B = .252, t = 3.07, p < .01 (length remain on Capitol Hill)
Reporters, view me as a "hack," "flack," or "spin doctor."	2.57	

<b>Table 2: Media coverage</b>	<b>Overall mean</b>	<b>Significant differences based on demographics and relationship items</b>
Local coverage is more valuable than national coverage	4.30	B = -.181, t = -2.34, p < .05 (member office) B = -.278, t = 3.28, p < .001 (positive national)
The local media coverage my congressional member receives is positive.	4.18	B = .181, t = .34, p < .02 (I'll give a reporter a story) B = .241, t = .290, p < .01 (positive local)
Coverage of my congressional member is better than coverage of Congress as a whole.	3.96	B = .165, t = 2.16, p < .05 (length working for Congress)
Media coverage of my congressional member has improved since I started working with him or her in Washington.	3.95	B = .264, t = 3.37, p < .01 (previous work in journalism) B = .185, t = 2.21, p < .05 (length remain on Capitol Hill) B = 1.93, t = 2.29, p < .03 (positive local) B = -.225, t = 2.58, p < .02 (respect reporters)
The national media coverage my congressional member receives is positive.	3.88	B = -.187, t = -2.39, p < .05 (previous journalism work) B = -.213, t = -2.74, p < .01 (from same state as member) B = .498, t = 6.48, p < .001 (positive national)
Media coverage of my congressional member is credible.	3.36	B = 3.19, t = .369, p < .001 (respect reporters)
Media play a positive role in society.	2.74	B = .236, t = 3.09, p < .01 (age of press secretary) B = -.313, t = -3.95, p < .01 (hours per week) B = .158, t = 1.99, p < .05 (length remain on Capitol Hill) B = .191, t = 2.52, p < .01 (length in current position) B = .168, t = 2.21, p < .05 (length working for Congress) B = .339, t = 3.85, p < .001 (respect reporters)
Media coverage of Congress as an institution is credible.	2.65	B = .236, t = 3.06, p < .01 (political ideology of member) B = .180, t = 2.31, p < .05 (age of press secretary) B = .296, t = 3.94, p < .01 (party of press secretary)

PR

**Is media relations all there is to public relations?**

**Differences in perceptions between public relations and journalism educators**

**Authors:**

Thomasena Shaw, Ph.D.  
Lecturer  
330 Communications Building  
College of Communication and Information Science  
University of Tennessee  
Knoxville  
TN 37996  
Telephone: (865) 974  
E-mail: tshaw3@utk.edu

Candace White, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor  
330 Communications Building  
College of Communication and Information Science  
University of Tennessee  
Knoxville  
TN 37996  
Telephone: (865) 974-5112  
E-mail: white@utk.edu

**Running head:** Perceptions of media relations

**Address inquiries to:** First author

## ABSTRACT

This study explores whether journalism and public relations programs belong in the same academic department, and if academic programs may be in part responsible for perpetuating myths and stereotypes and contributing to negative perceptions of the public relations profession. A web-based survey was sent to 768 journalism and public relations educators. The study found that journalism educators do not differ as substantially and negatively in their opinions of public relations as the literature may suggest.

## **Is media relations all there is to public relations?**

### **Differences in perceptions between public relations and journalism educators**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This study looks at an unfortunate phenomenon, the less than harmonious relationship between journalists and public relations practitioners. It asks the hard question: do journalism and public relations programs belong in the same academic department? It also considers that academic programs may be in part responsible for perpetuating myths and stereotypes and contributing to negative perceptions of the public relations profession.

The thesis of the study is that much of the misunderstanding that journalists and journalism professors exhibit toward public relations is based primarily on media relations. Media relations is like the tip of an iceberg – the most visible part, but certainly not all there is. Public relations educators and practitioners understand that while media relations is an important function of public relations, it is only on tactical function, a small part of strategic public relations.

A widely-accepted definition of public relations as a strategic communication function is “...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 and Broom, 1994). However, the effective public relations efforts that result in maintaining good relationships with all constituents are not always visible to people outside the organization. They often do not rely at all on media relations, don’t make the newspaper, and therefore are not incorporated into popular perceptions and definitions of public relations.

Despite its strategic management role, public relations is still considered by many, particularly journalists, as just another name for publicity. Part of the reason for the misperception is that public relations as a strategic business function has evolved rapidly, particularly in the last decade, and perception almost always lags behind reality. Another reason is that the public relations profession evolved from publicity where publicists' task was to build name recognition and attract media attention (Cutlip, Center and Broom, 1994; Kitchen, 1997). But the fact remains that since media relations is often the *only* public relations function with which a journalist has any personal contact, it is logical that to most journalists, media relations *is* public relations.

Journalists' perception of how media relations is handled defines their perception of the entire profession. Many of the public relations practitioners with whom journalists have contact are in technician roles; many may be former journalists with no true public relations training or education. Thus, a common stereotype is that *all* public relations practitioners are for-hire communication technicians whose aim is to get media coverage for their organizations at any cost.

Despite practitioners' efforts to improve their industry and the quality of material they release, some journalists continue to harbor suspicions about them. A number of researchers claim that this supports the view that prejudice against public relations is not simply due to negative personal experiences with practitioners themselves, but rather it is rooted in journalism culture. In light of this claim and given that public relations curricula often operate in conjunction with journalism schools, this study explores public relations and journalism educators' attitudes towards public relations in more detail.

The purpose of this study is to test these assumptions using a survey of journalism and public relations educators, and make recommendations that may improve future relationships in the academy and in the profession.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of the literature indicates that an antagonistic and symbiotic relationship has traditionally existed between journalists and public relations practitioners. Not surprisingly, most of the research about journalists/public relations interaction focuses on media relations. Of all of the tactics available to the public relations practitioner, the news release remains the bedrock of public relations efforts (Minnis and Pratt, 1995; Sachsman 1976), and media relations continues to form a significant proportion of most public relations programs (Sheldon Greene, 1994; Wragg, 1992; and Grabowski, 1992). Schleuse estimated that in 1988, American practitioners distributed up to 2.4 million releases every week.

### *The role of media relations.*

Many agree that media relations is central to the practice of effective public relations and a key part of many public relations programs (Grunig and Hunt, 1987). Good media coverage can improve stakeholders' confidence based on the power of objective third party endorsement. Indeed, creating publicity and the use of news releases remain popular tactics used to achieve public relations objectives. Perhaps this is why publicity and public relations are perceived as being synonymous.

Moore (1996) indicated that positive relationships with journalists can improve publication chances, and that not being open with this group only serves to court hostility and suspicion and is ultimately futile because the press will get the story anyway. Blohowiak (1987) argues that journalism is a tough job, and given the scarcity of economic and other resources



available, practitioners should be willing to provide efficient and practical assistance to the media whenever possible.

*The nature of the journalist/public relations practitioner relationship.*

Fedler and DeLorme (2002) documented the historical roots of journalists' hostility toward public relations by examining biographical materials and articles written by and about journalists during the first half of the twentieth century. Their analysis found an attitude of contempt. Journalists believed that public relations practitioners faked stunts to get free publicity, made it difficult for journalist to report legitimate stories, and violated the basic rules of news writing. All of these are components of media relations. Interestingly, a significant number of these anecdotal findings were reinforced in subsequent empirical studies, which would support Ryan and Martinson's (1984) observation that an antagonistic relationship between journalists and practitioners has existed almost as long as both professions have.

Aronoff (1975) found that while many journalists saw public relations as an important part of the process of getting news to the public, they also associated it with unacceptable practices. He found that Texas journalists' attitudes towards the profession differed substantially and negatively from the attitudes held by practitioners towards themselves. His survey indicated that journalists viewed public relations practitioners as low in source credibility, attributed news values to practitioners that were directly opposite to those of journalists, and held practitioners in low occupational esteem.

Jeffers (1977) borrowed themes from Aronoff's work and attempted to determine attitudes and expectations of journalists and public relations practitioners toward one another. He found that journalists did not have great respect for public relations practitioners, viewing them as "obstructionists" who prevent journalists from obtaining the truth. Pomerantz (1989) also

argued that some public relations practitioners regularly hinder media access to clients, often propose inappropriate story ideas that reflect their ignorance of editorial content, and generally harass journalists with unnecessary phone calls.

Journalists also considered themselves superior to practitioners in status, ethical, and skill terms. However, Jeffers (1977) also noted that the relationship could be considered a “co-operative” one, although public relations practitioners believed this to a greater extent than journalists. Interestingly, many journalists viewed practitioners they had regular contact with as status equals.

Kopenhaver, Martinson and Ryan (1984) concluded that a sample of Florida editors viewed public relations much more negatively than a sample of practitioners did. However, the two groups were in agreement about news values. Beltz, Talbott and Stark (1984) found that both groups perceived journalists in fairly traditional terms. However, journalists and practitioners differed sharply over their patterns of perception of the public relations role, and practitioners believed their relationships with journalists to be more positive than those relationships actually were.

This leads to the first research question: Is there a difference between how journalism and public relations educators view media relations?

*The role of ethics and perceptions of professionalism.*

An important theme that emerges in the literature is that the tension is, to some degree, rooted in concerns over the ethics and professionalism of public relations practitioners. Journalists perceived the role of public relations as involving tendencies in the areas of ethical compromise, hidden agendas, aggressiveness, advocacy and withholding information. They also differed on issues of accuracy, honesty, objectivity, fairness and the inviolability of one's own

conscience (Beltz, Talbott and Stark, 1984). Ryan and Martinson (1985) found that practitioners are criticized for their failure to act in the public interest. This view is further reinforced by anecdotal evidence that suggests that practitioners should manipulate the media in order to accomplish objectives (Evans, 1987).

While journalism as a discipline and practice focuses on the concept of objectivity, public relations practitioners are advocates, which may explain why their relationship has tended to be an adversarial one. This does not mean that practitioners are not as ethical as journalists, it is just that their functions are very different. Hunt and Tripok (1993) summarized the ideological gulf that exists between the two.

While journalists lay out information for the public and let the individual decide what the information means, public relations practitioners must take on an amount of advocacy for the organization that will have an effect, either positive or negative, on that organization's societal image. When this practice confronts the journalistic ethical ideals, a clash of beliefs occurs. Practitioners must, therefore, adopt a different standard for public relations than journalism.

In recent years, both professional organizations and college curricula have increasingly focused on ethics as a cornerstone of professionalism. Leeper (1996) noted that while professional organizations help define ethical public relations and help define practitioners' responsibility to act in the public interest, those outside the profession, including the general public and journalists, may not be aware of what standards for professional conduct exist. The second research question is: Is there a difference between the two samples regarding perceptions of the public relations profession?

*The nature of the relationship in an educational context.*

The literature also presents evidence that some antagonism as well as cooperation exists between the two professions in an educational setting as well as in the workplace. Although

probably a more extreme perspective, Falb (1991) provided an interesting quotation from an article by Howard Ziff, a journalism administrator, who said that he perceived public relations people as

The natural enemies of journalists, the Lorelei luring them onto the rocks. ...I still believed journalists to be superior beings...that I was offering public relations students an incomparable opportunity to improve themselves by rubbing shoulders with their betters.

Another example of how journalism educators perceive public relations is presented by Cline (1982) who argued that at least some of the negative attitudes toward public relations stem from the educational process and in particular, the undergraduate textbooks they have read. Her analysis of introductory mass communication texts found that most were biased against the public relations profession, and ignorant of its history and major issues. For example, one textbook defined public relations as “dangerous” and claimed that, while publicists don’t lie, often

telling half the truth is an integral part of their business, and stretching the truth is not uncommon. Moreover, they do it in secret; their work does not carry the unspoken *caveat emptor* of paid advertising (Sandman, Rubin and Sachsman, 1976).

Another textbook maintained,

The very term 'public relations counselor' suggests the status-seeking that led undertakers to call themselves morticians, janitors to call themselves maintenance engineers, and garbage collectors to call themselves sanitary hauliers (Brown, Brown and Rivers, 1978).

Such textbooks, argues Cline, can only serve to perpetuate any antagonism that exists between the two professions. Indeed, if practitioners continue to allow this propaganda to go unchecked “we must resign ourselves to another generation which views public relations as less than ethical, less professional but better paying than journalism.” The next research question is: Has

journalists' mistrust of public relations been influenced by what was learned about the occupation in the academy?

*Where does public relations belong in the academy?*

The debate regarding whether journalism and other media-related sub-fields like public relations belong in the same department or school is not recent. Dickson (2000) believed the growth of advertising and public relations with journalism education "occurred somewhat by happenstance." In the 1950s and 1960s the paradigm for communication study led to the establishment of several university-based academic units of study. In most cases the new paradigm was grafted onto pre-existing speech or journalism departments: schools of journalism became schools of journalism and mass communication (Rogers, 1999).

According to Stacks, Botan and Turk (1999), the 1990s have seen exceptional growth and change in public relations practice and education, but while public relations programs are increasingly located in other disciplines and schools, many are still located in journalism schools. Gibson (1987) noted that the founding fathers of public relations were themselves graduates of journalism departments and that is why these two fields have traditionally been affiliated with one another, even though the union of journalism and mass communication, and more specifically public relations, has not always been a happy one.

Many public relations sequences find themselves in a "Mother, may I?" environment where curriculum and other decisions are made by a predominantly news-oriented faculty, who fail to see public relations beyond its media relations function (Walker, 1989). Dickson (2000) argues that despite progress, public relations as a discipline has traditionally felt unwelcome in journalism schools, made to feel like "orphans or outcasts." However, according to Bovet

(1992), most journalism schools have not parted company with public relations because its students have become “cash cows” for the programs that house them.

Griffiths (1996) argued that fretting about the blurring of distinctions between journalism and public relations is a waste of time. He argues that educators should welcome the chance to influence future public relations practitioners, “without whom it would be difficult if not impossible for our up-and-coming reporters to penetrate public and private bureaucracies.”

The Commission on Public Relations Education issued a report in October 1999, entitled *Public Relations Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Port of Entry*, claiming that “public relations has come of age, and with that has come a critical need for broad-based education that is relevant and connected to the practice.” The Report conceded that since the last Commission Report was published in 1987, changes in public relations practice have been “numerous and profound,” and Commission members argued that for a profession to gain its identity it must make the university its port of entry.

Kruckeberg (1998) claims that public relations education can no longer afford to be relegated as a subset of journalism and mass communication. Furthermore, it should not be categorized as “mass media,” a subset of speech/communication, co-opted by the social and behavioral sciences, or subsumed into business. Rather, the discipline should be examined from its own perspective in a professional school dedicated to public relations.

These studies lead to the final set of research questions: How are academic programs in journalism perceived by both samples? How are academic programs in public relations perceived by both samples? Do journalism and public relations programs belong in the same academic department?

## METHODOLOGY

Data used for this study were part of a larger study (Shaw, 2002), and were collected using a Web-based, self-administered survey, circulated to two groups of respondents – journalism and public relations educators. The value of Internet surveys for both academic and applied research has become more widely acknowledged and assessed (Sheehan and Hoy, 1999). The technique has been lauded for offering the researcher the possibility of more rapid surveying than traditional techniques, and is more inexpensive since postage, printing, and/or interviewing costs are virtually eliminated (Schaefer and Dillman, 1998).

Since there were more journalism educators available for investigation, a systematic random sample of journalism educators was selected from the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication's (AEJMC) Newspaper Division and Radio/Television Division and the Society of Professional Journalists' (SPJ) Student Chapters. A census of public relations educators from the Public Relations Division of AEJMC and the Public Relations Society of America's (PRSA) Educators Academy was used for the sample. Graduate students and duplicates (members appearing on more than one list) were removed. This yielded 768 educators, 384 in from the public relations lists (260 from AEJMC and 124 from PRSA) and 384 from the journalism educators lists (284 from AEJMC and 100 from SPJ).

The survey was pre-tested with a small sample of faculty and graduate students to verify the categorical representation, and assess validity and comprehension. Since personalization is considered to be an important element in increasing the response rate in mail surveys (Dillman 1978, 1991), persons in the sample were sent a "solicitation e-mail" one week in advance of the survey to ask their permission to participate. If they indicated that they do not want to participate,

their name was removed from the sample and replaced with another name. A total of 129 emails were undeliverable (76 from the journalism educator group and 53 from the public relations educator group), so the final sample size was 308 journalism educators and 331 public relations educators.

A five-point Likert Scale was used to measure items in the survey (1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree). Some of the statements replicated or were similar to those used in previous studies that explored the nature of the journalist/public relations practitioner relationship in the workplace (Aronoff, 1975; Jeffers, 1977; Kopenhaver, Martinson and Ryan, 1984). Data were analyzed using SPSS.

## RESULTS

The first question on the survey asked respondents to indicate whether they were a public relations or journalism educator. Responses to this question were used to divide the sample into the two groups used for subsequent analysis. The response rate for journalism educators was 30.5 percent (n = 94) and 28.1 percent for public relations educators (n = 93). Of the 187 respondents, 40 percent were female and 60 percent were male. Forty-three percent were 30-48 years of age, 41 percent were 49-57, and 16 percent were 58-57 years of age. Seventy-seven percent held doctoral degrees, almost 21 percent held masters degrees, and 2.6 per cent held a bachelor's degree. Three quarters of the total sample reported that public relations is located in the same unit as journalism in their institution. A chi-square test run on each of the items in the demographics section found significant values for one variable - gender ( $p < .001$ ). However, post hoc analysis revealed the variable did not have any significant bearing on the survey's findings.



Interestingly, almost 27 percent reported having 6-10 years professional experience outside an academic setting; 25 percent have 11-20 years; almost 24 percent have 0-5 years; almost 20 percent have 21-30 years; while over 2 percent have more than 30 years. Only 2 percent (n = 4) had no professional experience outside an academic setting. Neither sample was found to have significantly more or less professional experience than its counterpart. This allows the researchers to assume that the attitudes and perceptions measured in the survey would reasonably apply to perceptions of practitioners as well as educators since the majority of the sample had considerable professional experience.

### Analysis

Since we were concerned with differences between two samples (journalism and public relations educators), multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to analyze the research questions that were measured by a group of questionnaire items (detailed in the tables below). MANOVA can be used to assess differences between two samples across multiple dependent variables simultaneously to see if significant differences are found across all dimensions of the research question. Wilks' lambda was the criterion used to determine significant differences between the two groups. Based on the criterion statistic, in some cases one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was applied to individual variables (questionnaire items) to further tease out differences between the two groups. Independent sample t-tests were used to answer the research questions that only contained one variable.

### Research Questions

***RQ 1. Is there a difference between how the two samples (journalism and public relations educators) view media relations?***

Table 1 shows the group of questionnaire items, grounded in the literature, that were used to measure RQ 1. Questionnaire items and means for each sample are reported in the table. Journalism and public relations educators view media relations differently. The Wilks' lambda showed a significant overall difference between the two samples ( $F = 9.3$ ,  $df = 7 (166)$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Looking at each questionnaire item separately using ANOVA, all items were significant  $p < .001$ , except "The press depends on information provided by public relations practitioners because of inadequate staffing levels in most newspapers," and "Public relations practitioners are typically obstructionists, keeping journalists from the people they need to see."

**Table 1 RQ 1 means**

Questionnaire item	PR Educators	Journalism Educators
Public relations practitioners and the press are partners in the dissemination of information.*	1.9	2.8
In covering the organization they represent, public relations practitioners extend journalists' newsgathering potential.*	4.2	3.4
The abundance of free and easily available information provided by public relations practitioners has, on balance, improved the quality of reporting.*	3.7	3.0
In general public relations threatens the legitimacy of an independent press.*	1.6	2.2
The press depends on information provided by public relations practitioners because of inadequate staffing levels in most newspapers.	4.1	3.9
Public relations practitioners are typically obstructionists, keeping journalists from the people they need to see.	1.8	2.7
The journalist/public relations practitioner relationship is generally an adversarial one.*	2.8	3.0

\*  $p < .001$

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

***RQ 2. Is there a difference between the two samples regarding perceptions of the public relations profession?***

Journalism and public relations educators also have different perceptions of the profession of public relations. There was a significant overall difference between the two samples ( $F=13.769$ ,  $df = 6$  (166)  $p<.001$ ). Interestingly, the only questionnaire item that showed no significant difference using an ANOVA was “Public relations practitioners are typically people of good sense, good will, and good moral character.” Table 2 shows the means for both samples.

**Table 2 RQ 2 means**

<b>Questionnaire item</b>	<b>PR Educators</b>	<b>Journalism Educators</b>
Generally speaking, public relations practitioners are not as trustworthy as journalists.*	1.8	2.9
Public relations practitioners are typically people of good sense, good will and good moral character.	3.9	3.7
Public relations practitioners’ sole objective is to persuade and control publics.*	1.9	2.6
Public relations practitioners typically adhere to an established code of ethics.*	3.4	2.9
Public relations is generally recognized as providing a unique and essential service to the general public.*	3.0	2.5
Typically public relations practitioners’ primary obligation is to the client/employer rather than the public interest.*	3.0	4.1

\* $p < .001$

***RQ 3. Has journalists’ mistrust of public relations been influenced by what was learned about the occupation in the academy?***

This question was measured with one questionnaire item, “Journalists’ mistrust of public relations has been influenced more by what was learned about the occupation in the academy, rather than by negative experiences with individual practitioners.” An independent sample t-test

found a difference between the two samples ( $t = 3.11$ ,  $df = 174$ ,  $p < .002$ ). Even though both samples tended to disagree with the statement, journalism educators disagreed more. The mean for journalism educators was 2.34 and for public relations educators,  $m = 2.83$ .

***RQ 4. How are academic programs in journalism perceived by both samples? Is there a difference between the two samples?***

Table 3 shows the items used to measure these questions. The MANOVA showed a significant difference between the two samples ( $F = 15.628$ ,  $df = 3$  (178),  $p < .001$ ). Not surprisingly, journalism educators agreed with the positive statements more than did public relations educators, but neither group strongly agreed with the statements. The ANOVA showed no significant difference for the third questionnaire item shown in table 3.

**Table 3 RQ 4 means**

<b>Questionnaire item</b>	<b>PR Educators</b>	<b>Journalism Educators</b>
Journalism programs generally attract students with a more critical intellect than public relations programs do.*	2.1	2.8
Journalism students have a keener moral compass than their public relations counterparts.*	1.8	2.9
Journalism education programs are generally more respected in the academy than public relations education programs.	3.2	3.5

\*  $p < .001$

***RQ 5. How are academic programs in public relations perceived by both samples? Is there a difference between the two samples?***

Table 4 shows the expected results: public relations educators agree more strongly with the statements about public relations education *except* the item, “Public relations education is predominantly concerned with media relations.” While Wilks’ lambda showed overall

significance between the two samples ( $F = 14.725$ ,  $df = 5 (175)$ ,  $p < .001$ ), there was no significant difference between the two questionnaire items, “Public relations education has a strong body of knowledge and skills, based on theory and research, and “Public relations programs teach students how to become strategic communication managers.”

**Table 4** RQ 5 means

Questionnaire item	PR Educator	Journalism Educator
Public relations education has a strong body of knowledge and skills, based on theory and research in the field of public relations.	3.7	3.5
Public relations programs teach students how to become strategic communication managers.	4.0	3.7
Public relations educators emphasize the importance of ethics and professionalism to their students.*	4.3	3.7
Public relations education is predominantly concerned with media relations.*	1.8	2.8
Generally speaking, public relations educators stress the importance of critical thinking skills and social responsibility to their students.*	4.1	3.3

\*  $p < .001$

***RQ 6. Do journalism and public relations programs belong in the same academic department?***

Although the responses for both samples were in the neutral range, both public relations and journalism educators believe the two programs belong in the same department. The means for both groups were nearly identical (journalism educators,  $m = 2.61$ , and public relations educators,  $m = 2.60$ ), so obviously there was no significant difference between the two groups ( $t = -.044$ ,  $df = 184$ ,  $p < .977$ ).

The questionnaire item read: “Journalism and public relations do *not* belong in the same department.” Since on the Likert scale, 1 was strongly disagree, working through the double

negative, there is agreement that they do belong in the same department. Recall that about three quarters of the total sample ( $n = 130$ ) reported that public relations is located in the same unit as journalism in their institution.

## DISCUSSION

The study found that there are differences between how journalism and public relations educators view media relations, and the results appear to reinforce previous findings (Jeffers, 1977; Gieber and Johnson, 1961; Minnis and Pratt, 1995; Pomerantz, 1989), on the surface at least. However, the means between the two groups, while statistically significant, were not greatly different, and tended to be in the same direction.

In some cases, there was agreement between the two groups. Both groups disagreed that the journalist/public relations practitioner relationship is generally adversarial. In addition, journalists and public relations educators both acknowledged that journalists depend on public relations originated material due to “inadequate staffing levels in most newspapers.” These two findings also reinforce previous studies that found that despite their differences, journalists and public relations practitioners share a symbiotic relationship.

However, what is perhaps most noteworthy is not how the findings in the present study are similar to previous studies (Aronoff, 1975; Beltz, Talbott and Stark, 1984; Kopenhaver Martinson and Ryan, 1984), rather, how journalism educators’ views on media relations do not appear to differ *as* “substantially and negatively” from public relations educators’ attitudes as previous literature may have indicated. Indeed, a broader acknowledgement of the symbiosis that exists between these two samples seems evident. This is noteworthy because the *perception* that a wider gulf exists could be in part responsible for the tenor of the journalism and public relations relationship, both in the workplace and in the academy. Indeed, misperceptions and

misunderstanding regarding the degree of negativity or difference of opinion may result in missed opportunities for collaboration and integration, and/or the possibility of a more cooperative relationship in the future.

Findings also indicate differences exist between the two samples regarding the perception of the public relations profession. Differences were found to exist in relation to a number of questionnaire items including whether public relations practitioners are not as trustworthy as journalists, and whether public relations sole objective is to persuade and control publics. Again it is interesting to note that journalism educators did disagree with the statements, just not to the extent that public relations educators disagreed, which is contrary to some previous studies that found that journalists did not rate their counterparts as equals in ethical or status terms (Jeffers, 1977; Beltz, Talbott and Stark, 1987), and engaged primarily in press agency/publicity (Fedler and DeLorme, 2002).

However, these findings should not be interpreted to mean that journalists acknowledge the strides toward professionalism made by the public relations industry. Indeed, journalism and public relations educators differed in their attitudes as to whether public relations practitioners adhere to an established code of ethics, and whether public relations provides a unique and essential service to the general public. Once again, what is noteworthy about this finding isn't just that they differ, but the fact that journalism educators disagreed with the statements and public relations educators responded neutrally.

Given that two of the key tenets of a profession is that it provides a unique and essential service to the public and adheres to an established code of ethics, it can be assumed that journalism educators do not perceive public relations to be a profession and/or its practitioners to be professional. This would seem to reinforce previous findings, which indicated that their

respective attitudes toward ethics are just one of the many sticking points between these two groups. Indeed, Hunt and Tripok (1993) argued that ethics are inextricably bound with credibility, and other empirical evidence suggests that practitioners who base their decision-making and recommendations on ethical principles and social responsibility are more likely to enjoy positive relationships with various publics. This may ultimately affect the degree of credibility attached to public relations in a professional and educational context. In addition, the fact that public relations educators responded neutrally is noteworthy, but ultimately makes it difficult to speculate on the true extent of the relationship between ethics and professionalism for these two samples.

The study found that the extent to which journalists' mistrust of public relations was influenced by what they learned about the occupation in the academy, rather than by negative experiences with individual practitioners was significantly different between the two samples, but both disagreed with the statement. In a previous study Cline (1982) argued that some of the negative attitudes toward public relations stem from the educational process, and that many mass communication textbooks were very hostile to public relations. The study did not directly ask how much textbooks influenced perceptions, so the researchers cannot assert that journalists and journalism educators have been influenced by texts and literature that portray public relations in a negative light. However, it is possible that their worldview is based more on what they read, rather than what they really know about public relations. Further examination of this topic in the future is obviously necessary. Cline's study was based on older textbooks, and it may be that later additions of journalism textbooks treat public relations more fairly and focus on aspects of public relations other than media relations.



The study also examined how academic programs in journalism and public relations are perceived, and whether public relations and journalism belong in the same department. While there was not a significant difference between the two groups in relation to whether journalism programs are more respected in the academy than public relations programs and whether public relations programs have a strong body of knowledge and skills, based on theory and research, both samples responded rather neutrally, which makes these findings difficult to interpret.

However, there was a difference between the two samples in relation to whether journalism programs attract students with a more critical intellect than public relations programs, and that journalism students have a keener moral compass than their public relations counterparts. While both samples disagreed with the statements, public relations educators disagreed more so. Once again it is interesting to note that journalism educators disagreed with the statements, which may indicate that they confer some level of respect on public relations programs.

However, journalism educators' largely neutral responses to the following statements would seem to undermine this assertion to some extent. When both samples were asked about their perceptions of how public relations programs are perceived in the academy, their views differed on whether public relations educators stress the importance of critical thinking skills and social responsibility to their students and emphasize the importance of ethics and professionalism. Not surprisingly, public relations educators agreed with these statements. While journalism educators' responses were neutral in relation to the first statement, they were in more agreement with the latter. Pratt (1991) and Hunt and Tripok (1993) argued that acknowledgements of professionalism and ethics signify that a degree of "social respect" and credibility may therefore exist. Interestingly, as shown in the results of the second research

question, journalism educators responded negatively to statements that explored this issue in a professional context. Perhaps they think more highly of the ethics and professionalism of public relations educators than those of practitioners in general. This would seem to parallel Jeffers' (1977) results to some extent, which found that journalists ranked public relations practitioners with whom they had personal contact as more ethical than practitioners in general. Again, this is an issue that public relations practitioners should be made aware of, as an important building block on which to build positive relations in the future.

It is also interesting to note that both samples disagreed that public relations is largely concerned with media relations, and agreed that public relations programs teach students how to become strategic communication managers. These findings would seem contrary to previous literature that indicated that some public relations educators feel that they operate in what Walker (1987) called a "Mother, may I?" environment where curriculum and other decisions are made by a predominantly news-oriented faculty who fail to see public relations beyond its media relations function. Journalism educators' responses indicate an acknowledgement, to some degree at least, that the public relations function is not simply confined to media relations.

The last research question asked whether public relations and journalism belong in the same department. There was not a significant difference in responses; both groups of educators agreed with the statement. Again, this would seem to contradict previous research (Walker, 1989; Dickson, 2000) that implied that many public relations sequences are made to feel like "orphans or outcasts" in the academy. It should be noted that respondents were not asked *why* the two programs belong in the same department. Some might argue that public relations sequences are valued for the large number of students they attract. Further research could explore this in more depth.

## CONCLUSIONS

The study found that journalism educators displayed more agreement with positive statements about public relations than the literature or anecdotal evidence would suggest. It may be that having read so many previous studies that highlight their antagonistic relationship, public relations educators' may perceive that journalism educators' views are very different to theirs, or, assume that journalism educators hold the same views as their 'professional' journalist counterparts. The results of this study indicate that journalism educators do not differ as substantially and negatively in their opinions of public relations as the latter may believe. These 'misunderstandings' could be jeopardizing opportunities for a more cooperative relationship between the two. Perhaps an acknowledgement of what the two disciplines have in common could ultimately result in what Carter (1995) and Dickson (2000) describe as a more interdisciplinary approach to journalism education, which would ultimately benefit both disciplines.

The study also indicates that the nature and focus of future communication between the two groups obviously needs to be re-addressed. Since the public relations profession rests on the assumption that positive attitudes contribute to favorable behavior towards individuals, products or organizations, public relations educators may be best advised to engage in some self-reflection. They must identify and address why misperceptions, exist and how they can build on any agreement that does exist between them.

## REFERENCES

- Aronoff, C. (1975). Newspapers and practitioners differ widely on PR role. *Public Relations Journal*, 31, 25.
- Beltz, A., Talbott, A. D., & Starck, K. (1984). Cross perceptions: journalists and public relations practitioners go eyeball to eyeball. *Public Relations Review*, 10, 44-45.
- Blohowski, D. (1987). *No Comment: An Executive's Essential Guide to the News Media*. NY: Praeger.
- Bovet, S. L. (1992, September). Educators need to communicate better on and off campus. *Public Relations Journal*, 48, 14-17.
- Carter, R. E. (1995). The essential contributions of mass communication programs. *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator*, 49(4), 4-8.
- Cline, C. (1982). The image of public relations in mass communications texts. *Public Relations Review*, 58(8), 63-78.
- Commission on Public Relations Education. (1999). *Public Relations Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Port of Entry*. NY: Public Relations Society of America.
- Cutlip, S. M., Center, A. H., & Broom, G. M. (1994). *Effective Public Relations* (7 ed.). NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Dickson, T. (2000). *Mass Media Education in Transition*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, Lawrence Associates, Incorporated.
- Dillman, D. A. (1978). *Mail and Telephone Surveys: The Total Design Method*. NY: Wiley-Interscience.

- Dillman, D. A. (1991). The design and administration of mail surveys. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 39, 744-756.
- Evans, F. J. (1987). *Managing the Media: A Proactive Strategy for Better Business-Press Relations*. NJ: Quorum Business Press.
- Falb, R. A. (1991/2). Proposal: Join PR and advertising - away from journalism or business. *Public Relations Quarterly*, 36(4), 42-45.
- Fedler, F. & DeLorme, D.E. (2002). *Journalists' Hostility Toward Public Relations: An Historical Analysis*. Annual Meeting of the AEJMC Public Relations Division, August 7-10, Miami Beach.
- Garbowski, G. (1994). The seven deadly sins of media relations. *Public Relations Quarterly*, 39(3), 12-14.
- Gibson, D. C. (1987). Public relations education in a time of change. *Public Relations Quarterly*, 32(3), 25-31.
- Gieber, W., & Johnson, W. (1961). The city hall beat: A study of reporter and sources roles. *Journalism Quarterly*, 38(2), 289-297.
- Griffiths, D. (1996). Teaching journalism skills courses to new public relations majors. *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator*, 51(1), 82-85.
- Grunig, J. E., & Hunt, T. (1984). *Managing Public Relations*. NY: Holt Rhinehart and Wilson.
- Hunt, T., & Tripok, A. (1993). Universal ethics code: An idea whose time has come. *Public Relations Review*, 19(1), 1-11.
- Jeffers, D. W. (1977). Performance expectations as a measure of relative status of news and PR people. *Journalism Quarterly*, 54(2), 299-307.

- Kitchen, P. (1997). Introduction. In P. Kitchen (Ed.), *Public Relations: Principles and Practice*. London: ITP and Warnaby.
- Kopenhaver, L. L., Martinson, D. L., & Ryan, R. (1984). How public relations practitioners and editors in Florida view each other. *Journalism Quarterly*, 61(4), 860-865,884.
- Kruckeberg, D. (1998). The future of PR education: Some recommendations. *Public Relations Review*, 24(2), 235-248.
- Leeper, K. A. (1996). Public relations ethics and communitarianism: A preliminary investigation. *Public Relations Review*, 22(1).
- Minnis, J. H., & Pratt, C. B. (1995). Let's revisit the newsroom: What does a weekly newspaper print? *Public Relations Quarterly*, 40(3), 13-18.
- Moore, S. (1996). *An Invitation to Public Relations*. London: Cassell.
- Pomerantz, J. (1989). "The media and public relations: pride and prejudice." *Public Relations Quarterly* 34(4): 13-16.
- Rogers, E. M. (1999). Anatomy of the two subdisciplines of communication study. *Human Communication Research*, 25(4), 618-631.
- Pratt, C. B. (1991). PRSA members' perceptions of public relations ethics. *Public Relations Review*, 17(2), 145-159.
- Ryan, M., & Martinson, D. L. (1984). Ethical values, the flow of journalistic information and public relations persons. *Journalism Quarterly*, 61(1), 28.
- Sachsman, D. B. (1976). Public relations influence on coverage of environment in San Francisco. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 53, 54-60.
- Schaefer, D. R., & Dillman, D. A. (1998). Development of a standard e-mail methodology. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 62(3), 378-397.

- Shaw, T.F. (2002). *Factors That Affect The Level Of Coorientation That Exists Between Public Relations And Journalism Educators*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Tennessee – Knoxville, College of Communications.
- Sheehan, K. B., & Hoy, M. G. (1999). *Using E-mail to Survey Internet Users in the United States*. *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication* (4(3)). Available: [www.ascusc.org/jcmc/vol4/issue3/sheehan.html](http://www.ascusc.org/jcmc/vol4/issue3/sheehan.html) [2002, 6/24].
- Sheldon-Green, P. (1994). *Winning PR Tactics*. London: Pitman Publishing.
- Stacks, D. W., Botan, C. H., & VanSlyke Turk, J. (1999). Perceptions of public relations education. *Public Relations Review*, 25(1).
- Walker, A. (1989). Where to anchor public relations education? The problem persists. *Public Relations Quarterly*, 34(3), 22-25.

**Examining the PRSA Code of Ethics: Toward Ethical Advocacy**

Hyo-Sook Kim  
Doctoral Student  
Department of Communication, College of Arts & Humanities  
University of Maryland at College Park  
6907 40<sup>th</sup> Ave.  
Hyattsville, MD 20782  
khs728@hotmail.com  
301.779.3565

One of Top Student Papers  
Presented at the Public Relations Division of  
the AEJMC 2003 Convention, July 30 - Aug. 2, 2003 in Kansas City, MO.



**Abstract**

This paper aimed to examine the PRSA Code of Ethics and to suggest necessary change that would help public relations achieve one of its goals: ethical profession. In particular, the primary interest is in specifying more clearly public relations as ethical advocacy. For this purpose, the grounds for discussion were set by exploring the following questions: What is a profession? Is public relations recognized as a profession? After examining the new code, I proposed to add one more provision: advocacy with disclosure of intent.

## **Examining the PRSA Code of Ethics: Toward Ethical Advocacy**

### ***Purpose***

In 2000, the PRSA (Public Relations Society of America) changed its landmark code of ethics and adopted a simplified 6-point code and eliminated enforcement. Two primary factors influenced PRSA's decision to write a new code of ethics: recognition that the existing standards were no longer sufficient for addressing contemporary issues and practices and the need to address growing concerns related to code enforcement (Fitzpatrick, 2002). This paper aims to examine the code and to suggest necessary change that I believe would help public relations achieve one of its goals: ethical profession. The extant PRSA code of ethics is examined from the perspective of its usefulness in accomplishing public relations field's status as a profession.

The teleological approach (usefulness) was used to assess a deontological entity, the PRSA Code of Ethics. This is not a contradictory approach because from time to time public relations practitioners choose to be ethical not because they want to be ethical, but because they have to be ethical (Huang, 2001). I think rational human beings can be ethical as long as they know they must be ethical. People often behave ethically even when they have a utilitarian purpose. It is only necessary to reveal their purpose clearly and try not to achieve it unethically.

For this purpose, I, first, set the grounds for discussion by posing the following questions: What is a profession? Is public relations recognized as a profession? In order to answer these questions, I will review relevant literature and develop a framework for examining the PRSA codes of ethics. Second, I will provide a brief introduction of the

PRSA code. Lastly, an additional provision is proposed to further the practice of public relations as ethical advocacy.

### ***Building the Framework***

***What is a profession?*** According to Bernays (1989), the word “profession” has been defined by law – in a decision laid down by the Appellate Division of the New York State Supreme Court in 1974:

A profession is not a business. It is distinguished by the requirement of extensive formal training and learning, admission to practice by a qualifying licensure, a code of ethics imposing standards... a system for discipline of its members for violation of the code of ethics, a duty to subordinate financial reward to social responsibility... (p. 31)

Although the definition has changed with the passage of time, its main concepts have remained constant. Wylie (1994) found all professions have four basic requirements: (1) a well-defined body of scholarly knowledge, (2) completion of a generally standardized and prescribed course of graduate study, (3) examination and certification by a state, and (4) oversight by a state agency that has disciplinary powers over the practitioner’s behavior.

More recently, L’Etang (1999) compiled a comprehensive set of traits of professional occupations through a review of the literature on professionalism. The traits are: (1) the articulation of a domain of expertise, (2) the establishment of monopoly in the market for a service based on that expertise, (3) the ability to limit entry to the field through the strategy known as social closure, (4) the attainment of social status, (5) an

independent and fiduciary relationship with a client, (6) a code of ethics, and (7) a way of testing competence, regulating standards, and maintaining discipline.

Although each trait seems to have the same weight and be of equal importance, in fact, they have widely different significances. Some traits come to exist only after other traits pave the way for them to follow. Enforcement of a code of ethics, which is the basis for self-regulation, is the last to come. It is only possible after a profession attains the fundamental traits: the articulation of expertise, the establishment of a monopoly, and the capability to control entry.

*Is public relations a profession?* Public relations people, both practitioners and scholars, often claim we practice or teach a “profession.” Some scholars have compared public relations practitioners to attorneys and physicians. Often, many texts and scholars find evidence of professionalism in the public relations body of knowledge. A mark of professionalism often cited by those who want public relations to be perceived as a profession is the existence of a code of ethics (Gabaldon, 1998).

However, other scholars have stated that public relations is still not a profession. Unlike legal service, public relations service is still conceived to have fewer and minimal consequences on citizens’ lives and property, although the importance of it in democratic societies keeps growing. Bernays (1989) said, “To use the word profession in regard to public relations is in error” (p. 31). He suggested leaders in public relations who write and act about public relations as if it were a profession to learn from the past how it can become a true profession. Today’s public relations field is in a situation comparable to that of vocations in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Between the Middle Ages and the late 1770s, a number of new and important vocations developed. They were concerned about

imposters, those that tried profiting by taking on the name of the same vocation they were discrediting. Afraid that the public might suffer too, many organized into associations, and went to Parliament, asking that future members of their vocations be licensed and registered, with legal sanctions for misbehavior, relative to a code of ethics signed upon the acceptance of qualified individuals into the profession. The vocations that made applications to Parliament included doctors, lawyers, engineers, architects, and accountants. In this way, professions gained good standing with the public and have maintained professional status for themselves, their profession, and the public interest. Bernays thought public relations is in the starting point of professionalism.

According to Parkinson (2001), the single most significant requirement for professional status is a system for public recognition or licensing. Members of an organization cannot define themselves as a profession, only the public, government or other regulatory body can do so. Attorneys must be admitted to the bar before they can practice law. Physicians must be board certified before they can practice medicine. Ministers and priests must be ordained before they can practice religion. From his point of view, public relations is not a profession because it lacks publicly recognized system for licensing its practitioners.

Parkinson (2001) said a profession requires:

- (1) a clear definition of what acts are prohibited to those without a license,
- (2) a unique set of skills and knowledge
- (3) a recognition or identification of the obligations a member of the profession must meet.

Focusing on the third requirement, Parkinson (2001) argued that for a person to be a public relations professional, the person must have professional obligations that supercede those ethical obligations imposed on persons or publics outside the profession. Therefore, to be a profession, public relations must have a codified code of ethics *unique to the profession of public relations*. Parkinson regarded advocacy as one of the unique characteristics of public relations and stated “we must find some way to comfortably accept our role as advocates” (p. 29).

Huang (2001) noted that public relations has not yet become a mature profession. She believed that a code of ethics is part of the standards that must be fulfilled for an “occupation” to be a “profession,” especially for public relations. She said public relations has long suffered its negative image and has a reputation of lacking credibility as a profession. To resolve this problem, she asserted, a code of ethics is essential.

From the above literature review, I conclude public relations has not yet become a profession and should “take the orderly, established steps to become an acknowledged profession” (Wylie, 1994, p. 3). Through this review, I also conclude there are several prerequisites for a profession, but only one, which appears to be the most fundamental prerequisite, is of interest in this paper: the articulation of public relations’ expertise. I will especially focus on public relations’ expertise as an advocate for client. Some people, however, may state advocacy is a barrier to the position of profession because it hinders the prerequisite of public service. I would argue that advocacy can serve public interest if conducted ethically. Furthermore, we cannot deny that advocacy is perhaps the main reason why clients hire a person with public relations expertise and advocacy business makes public relations exist.

The base of all professions is the *articulation of expertise* in L'Etang (1999)'s words. After making the base concrete, we can go closer to the issues like enforcement of code of ethics or self-regulation.

### ***The PRSA Code of Ethics***

The PRSA change of its code of ethics in October 2000 has received a mixed reaction of welcome and disappointment by both practitioners and scholars. Titled "Member Code of Ethics 2000," the new code reduced the number of provisions specifying principles of conduct from 17 to six, while dropping provisions for enforcing the code ("Member Code of Ethics 2000," 2001).

The new code regrouped principles of conduct into six provisions: 1) free flow of information, 2) competition, 3) disclosure of information, 4) safeguarding confidences, 5) conflicts of interest, and 6) enhancing the profession. Then, the code provided the a) core principle of, b) intent of, and c) guidelines for each provision as well as some examples of improper conduct.

The new code excluded the three following articles concerning enforcement in the old code that was last revised in 1988 ("PRSA Changes Code," 2000).

Article 15: If a member has evidence that another member has been guilty of unethical, illegal, or unfair practices, including those in violation of the Code, the member is obliged to present the information promptly to the proper authorities of the Society for action in accordance with the procedure set forth in Article of the Bylaws

Article 16: A member called as a witness in a proceeding for enforcement of this Code is obliged to appear, unless excused for sufficient reason by the

judicial panel

Article 17: A member shall, as soon as possible, sever relations with any organization or individual if such relationship requires conduct contrary to the articles of this Code

The most commonly mentioned reason for the dropping of enforcement provisions is that disciplinary procedures are too costly and ineffective, given a lack of sanction power in the hands of the Society. Bob Frause, the head of the PRSA Board of Ethics and Professional Standards (BEPS) in charge of disciplinary action, said, “attempts to enforce the old code were met with threats of expensive lawsuits” (“PRSA’s New Ethics code,” 2000). When a suit was filed, the BEPS had to deal with inches-thick responses from lawyers for the accused, which required similar costly response from the PRSA (“PRSA Changes Code,” 2000). Another reason for deleting all enforcement provisions was that the practitioners accused of unethical conduct could continue practicing public relations even if his membership in PRSA were revoked. The new code rightfully emphasized the mission of the BEPS, which now focuses primarily on education and training, on collaboration with similar efforts in other major professional societies (“Member Code of Ethics 2000,” 2001).

I think the reduction of the number of provisions from 17 to six, especially exclusion of enforcement provisions, was an outstanding decision even though these decisions exacerbated extant criticisms on ambiguity of the code of ethics. Although most criticism of previous codes of ethics was focused on “ambiguity,” it is true that ambiguity sometimes is seen as a necessary qualification (Bukro, 1989, as cited in Hunt & Tirpok, 1993) that is “valuable for protecting options in the future” (McCaskey, 1988).



All of six provisions seem suitable and indispensable for the PRSA code. Thus, I suggest the addition of a provision that I believe is essential if public relations is to become a genuine profession. This provision would specify advocacy as a major role of public relations - **ADVOCACY WITH DISCLOSURE OF INTENT**.

As Parkinson (2001) suggested, to be recognized by the public as a profession, public relations should follow an ethical obligation that is unique to the field of public relations. I think one of the biggest unique roles public relations practitioners take, which is neglected by the code, is that of advocacy. Bivins also noted (1987) the codes of professional public relations societies do not provide sufficient guidance to resolve the ethical problems of the advocacy role. Although 16 years has passed since Bivins noted this dilemma, there appears to have been no substantial change. That is why I suggest including an advocacy provision in the code. Even though the term of advocacy is written in the PRSA Member Statement of Professional Values, the ethical advocacy role should be also specified in the PRSA Code Provisions. Doing so will enable practitioners to be comfortable about the half reality of public relations (advocacy).

***One More Provision the PRSA Code of Ethics Need: Advocacy With Disclosure of Intent***

***Three premises on advocacy.*** Edgett (2002) defined advocacy as the act of publicly representing an individual, organization, or idea with the object of persuading targeted audiences to look favorably on or accept the point of view of individual, the organization, or the idea. Three premises, taken from Edgett, are presented below to facilitate discussion of advocacy in public relations: first, advocacy is one of the fundamental functions of public relations; second, public relations practitioners are

uncomfortable with their role as advocates, because apparently objectivity is assumed to be superior to persuasion; third, persuasiveness in communication is not inherently wrong and that rhetoric has a long tradition as a vital contributor to free debate in democratic society.

The first premise is that advocacy is one of the fundamental functions of public relations (Barney & Black, 1994; Bivins, 1987; Bernays, 1971; Cutlip, 1994; Gordon, 1997; German, 1995). Three of four public relations models (press agency, public information, and two-way asymmetrical model) are basically one-way models in which primary efforts are made to change strategic publics, but not necessarily to change the organization (Barney & Black, 1994). These models have as their primary function the formulating and distribution of persuasive information designed to affect target groups in favor of the communicating organization. When J. Grunig and Hunt (1984, p. 2) formulated the four models of public relations they speculated about the extent to which organizations practice each of the models and about the kinds of organizations most likely to practice them (as cited in J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1992). They estimated that 50% of organizations practice public information, 20% two-way asymmetrical public relations, and 15% each press agency and two-way symmetrical public relations.

The results of the Excellence study conducted under a grant from the IABC (International Association of Business Communicators) Research Foundation also showed that organizations with the most excellent and effective public relations departments practiced a combination of both the two-way symmetrical and two-way asymmetrical models – both in general and for seven specific kinds of communication programs (J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1996).

J. Grunig's (2001) revised model of "two-way public relations" depicts either end of the continuum as asymmetrical. A public relations strategy at either end would favor the interests of either the organization or the public to the exclusion of the other. The middle of the continuum contains a symmetrical win-win zone where organizations and publics can engage in mixed- motive communication. Although two-way symmetrical communication is still the most ethically desirable form of public relations, practical public relations continues to rely on persuasion – at least to some extent. If persuasion and advocacy are an integral part of public relations, they must be open and publicly embraced by the practitioners.

The second premise is that public relations practitioners are uncomfortable with their role as advocates, because apparently objectivity is assumed to be superior to persuasion (Barney & Black, 1994; Fitzpatrick & Gauthier, 2001; Kruckeberg & Starck, 1988). Fitzpatrick and Gauthier (2001) noted that public relations has not fully extricated itself from its journalistic roots. Still many believe because public relations evolved from journalism – and is still taught primarily in schools and colleges of journalism and communication – public relations practitioners should share their journalistic counterpart's passion for objectivity. However, McBride (1989) argued that the primary function of public relations is essentially different from journalism's primary function. Although journalism traditionally focuses on the idea of objectivity, McBride added, public relations often takes the form of an advocacy appeal which is inherently opposed to objectivity.

McBride (1989) asserted that until public relations practitioners learn how to be comfortable with their roles as advocates, they can never hope to be considered

professionals. She blamed an over emphasis on journalistic principles in public relations education programs. Wrigley (1998) agreed, “Some would argue that until public relations admits – and embraces – its persuasions and advocacy role, it will always be apologizing for not being objective” (p. 10).

A third premise explored is that persuasiveness in communication is not inherently wrong and that rhetoric has a long tradition as a vital contributor to free debate in democratic society (Edgett, 2002). The occupation of advocacy and the art of persuasion are nearly as old as history itself.

In a review of the connections between scholarship in rhetoric and scholarship in public relations, Toth (1996) suggested that rhetoric is an inherent property of public relations. She examined definitions of rhetoric that suggest the rhetor may be either the individual responsible for public relations in an organization, or the organization itself. In both cases, the term “rhetor” is symbolic and represents an entity advancing a point of view in a public forum. In Toth’s analysis, there is nothing about the practice of rhetoric and the craft of the public relations practitioner that suggest attempts to persuade others are inherently unethical or little deserving of professional respect.

In expounding on the work of Heath (1992), Toth (1996) demonstrated that this academic’s definition of rhetoric is not antithetical to the model of two-way communication as a symmetrical process. Heath asserted rhetoric – thus, public relations as rhetoric – is essential to the free exchange of ideas in society. However, he added that public relations as rhetoric may be at its best when it is part of dialogue, when it is used as a means to search for truth or to critically examine social convention.

*Developing an ethically desirable advocacy.* By showing three premises, up to this point, I suggested that advocacy can be a legitimate function of the public relations practice and that it may well be possible for practitioners to take on the advocate's role without sacrificing the moral good. If advocacy cannot be avoided in the practice of public relations, and is thus, an indispensable factor of the profession, the best strategy would be to acknowledge the role and practice it openly and ethically. The question then becomes, how can public relations people practice ethical advocacy?

I argue public relations people can find a way by trying to answer to a question posed by Bivins (1993): "How can a practitioner advocating a discrete point of view serve the interest of the greater public?" (p. 120). He suggested three possible paradigms: First, if every individual practicing public relations acts in the best interest of his or her client, then the public interest will be served; Second, if, in addition to serving individual interests, an individual practicing public relations serves public interest causes, the public interest will be served; Third, if a professional or professionals assure that every individual in need of or desiring its/their services receives its/their services, then the public interest will be served.

Noting that none of three approaches provides the definitive answer, Bivins (1993) concluded that public relations has the opportunity both to engage in and to encourage public debate. By doing so, public relations also has the opportunity, and the obligation, to lessen the obfuscation often surrounding the mere provision of information. He also argued public relations must develop clear guidelines and formal mechanisms by which issues important to society are clarified and presented to the public for open, democratic debate.

Bivins' (1993) focus on the value of ethical communication to open public debate captures the essence of public relations' social role. By providing voices for special interests, public relations contributes to the harmonization of diverse points of view, thereby promoting "mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence among individuals and institution" (Seib & Fitzpatrick, 1995, p. 1).

Bivins (1987) also posited it is ethical to communicate asymmetrical messages as long as the advocate reveals his or her reasons for selective secrecy. He said that it is the intent behind a message that is immoral rather than the message itself: "The key moral issue here is covert versus overt intent" (p. 199). Thus, it might be ethical to produce a video news release for a new product as long as the release made clear that the release was intended to get people to buy the product. Or one could lobby Congress against a provision that would limit the sale or price of a pharmaceutical product as long as the intent to preserve sales is clear and the message is not couched only as being in the interest of users of the drug.

According to J. Grunig and L. Grunig (1996), asymmetrical public relations practitioners (advocates) can be ethical if they act with integrity and good will so that they do not intentionally injure the interest of publics; if they reveal the motives, reasons, and perspectives behind the messages they communicate; if they do not use deceptive methods of communication. They regarded Bok's (1983) concept of publicity, which they called *disclosure*, as a powerful ethical rule for public relations that works with both symmetrical and asymmetrical public relations. Organizations that disclose their identities, their interests, and their persuasive intent are on firm ethical ground even when they selectively communicate information with the intent to persuade.

Based on the above arguments on ethical advocacy, I would add one provision to the PRSA code of ethics:

**Advocacy with disclosure of intent**

**Core Principle: Acknowledging public relations role as advocates for clients and disclosing the organization's intent behind an ethically questionable practice is essential to effective and ethical management of communication.**

***Conclusion***

In this paper, I examined the PRSA code of ethics and suggested a change relative to the goal of public relations to become an ethical profession, using a teleological approach. Among the prerequisites to public relations becoming a profession, I focused on the articulation of expertise, especially the advocacy role of public relations. Since advocacy is one of the central functions of public relations, I suggested a way for public relations practitioners to conduct ethical advocacy by adding a provision to the PRSA code of ethics: Advocacy with disclosure of intent.

Day (1991) argued that written ethical codes still are the best way to encourage practitioners not to rely on subjective judgments. Kruckeberg (1989) also argued that ethical codes provide guidelines for practitioners, set expectations for the performance of practitioners, and provide grounds for charges of wrongdoing and defenses. Thus, developing an ethical code is the first step toward becoming an ethical profession.

Developing a code of ethics should follow a dialectical process. Now I put forth my thesis (addition of one new provision), which is the first stage in the dialectic process. This thesis requires an antithesis, which is to facilitate a synthesis as a more applicable

code of ethics as a result. Therefore, I hope my thesis will be challenged by practitioners and scholars through open and symmetrical debate.

As Wylie (1994) put it, public relations will not achieve professionalism through “self-anointment, or self-proclamation.” A dialectical process to develop a better and genuinely professional code of ethics will help public relations to become an acknowledged profession.



## References

- Barneys, R. D., & Black, J. (1994). Ethics and professional persuasive communication. *Public Relations Review, 20*, 233-248.
- Bernays, E. L. (1971). Emergence of the public relations counsel: Principles and recollections. *Business History Review, 45*, 296-316.
- Bernays, E. L. (1989). Viewpoint: Why we are not a profession. *Public Relations Quarterly, 33*(4), 31.
- Bivins, T. H. (1987). Applying ethical theory to public relations. *Journal of Business Ethics, 6*, 195-200.
- Bivins, T. H. (1993). Public relations, professionalism, and the public interest. *Journal of Business Ethics, 12*, 117-126.
- Cutlip, S. M. (1994). *The unseen power: Public relations. A history*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Day, L. (1991). *Ethics in mass communications: Cases and controversies*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Edgett, R. (2002). Toward an ethical framework for advocacy in public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 14*, 1-26.
- Fitzpatrick, K. (2002). From enforcement to education: The development of PRSA's member code of ethics 2000. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics, 17*, 111-135.
- Fitzpatrick, K., & Gauthier, C. (2001). Toward a professional responsibility theory of public relations ethics. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics, 16*, 193-212.
- Gabalton, T. (1998). *Professional responsibility*. Larchmont, NY: Emanuel Publishers.
- German, K. M. (1995). Critical theory in public relations inquiry: Future directions for

- analysis in a public relations context. In W. N. Elwood (Ed.), *Public relations inquiry as rhetorical criticism: Case studies of corporate discourse and social influence*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Gordon, J. C. (1997). Interpreting definitions of public relations: Self assessment and a symbolic interactionism-based alternative. *Public Relations Review*, 23, 57-66.
- Grunig, J. E., & Grunig, L. A. (1992). Models of public relations and communication. In J. E. Grunig (Ed.), *Excellence in public relations and communication management* (pp. 285-326). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Earlbaum Associates.
- Grunig, J. E., & Grunig, L. A. (1996, May). *Implications of symmetry for a theory of ethics and social responsibility in public relations*. Paper presented to the Public Relations Interest Group, International Communication Association, Chicago.
- Grunig, J. E. & Hunt, T. (1984). *Managing public relations*. Orlando, Fl: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College.
- Heath, R. L. (1992). The wrangle in the marketplace: A rhetorical perspective of public a relations. In E. L. Toth & R. L. Heath (Eds.), *Rhetorical and critical approaches to public relations*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Earlbaum Associates.
- Huang, Y. (2001). Should a public relations code of ethics be enforced? *Journal of Business Ethics*, 31, 259-270.
- Hunt, T., & Tirpok, A. (1993). Universal ethics code: an idea whose time has come. *Public Relations Review*, 19, 1-11.
- Kruckeberg, D. (1989). The need for an international code of ethics. *Public Relations Review*, 15(2), 6-18.
- Kruckeberg, D., & Starck, K. (1988). *Public relations and community. A reconstructed*

- theory*. New York: Praeger.
- L'Etang, J. (1999). Public relations education in Britain: An historical review in the context of professionalisation. *Public Relations Review*, 25, 261-289.
- McBride, G. (1989). Ethical thought in public relations history: Seeking a relevant perspective. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 4(1), 5-20.
- N.A.. N.D.. Member code of ethics 2000. <http://www.prsa.org/codeofethics.html>. 2001, March 19.
- N.A.. N.D.. PRSA's new ethics code. [http://www.odwyerpr.com/hot\\_topics/1101PRSAethics.htm](http://www.odwyerpr.com/hot_topics/1101PRSAethics.htm). 2001, February
- Parkinson, M. (2001). The PRSA code of professional standards and member code of ethics: Why they are neither professional nor ethical. *Public Relations Quarterly*, 46(3), 27-32.
- PRSA changes code. (2000, October 30). *PR Reporter*, 38 (Suppl. 14).
- Seib, P., & Fitzpatrick, K. (1995). *Public relations ethics*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace.
- Wrigley, B. J. (1998, November). *Whose ethics? Whose standards?: A Q methodology study examining four constituencies' approaches to ethical decision making*. Paper presented at the International Society for the Scientific Study of Subjectivity, 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, Seoul, Korea.
- Wylie, F. W. (1994). Commentary: Public relations is not yet a profession. *Public Relations Review*, 20, 1-3.

## Appendix

# Member Code of Ethics 2000

Approved by the PRSA Assembly  
October, 2000

## PRSA Code Provisions

### FREE FLOW OF INFORMATION

#### *Core Principle*

Protecting and advancing the free flow of accurate and truthful information is essential to serving the public interest and contributing to informed decision making in a democratic society.

#### *Intent*

- To maintain the integrity of relationships with the media, government officials, and the public.
- To aid informed decision-making.

#### *Guidelines*

#### *A member shall:*

- Preserve the integrity of the process of communication.
- Be honest and accurate in all communications.
- Act promptly to correct erroneous communications for which the practitioner is responsible.
- Preserve the free flow of unprejudiced information when giving or receiving gifts by ensuring that gifts are nominal, legal, and infrequent.

#### *Examples of Improper Conduct Under this Provision:*

- A member representing a ski manufacturer gives a pair of expensive racing skis to a sports magazine columnist, to influence the columnist to write favorable articles about the product.
- A member entertains a government official beyond legal limits and/or in violation of government reporting requirements.

## **COMPETITION**

### *Core Principle*

Promoting healthy and fair competition among professionals preserves an ethical climate while fostering a robust business environment.

### *Intent*

- To promote respect and fair competition among public relations professionals.
- To serve the public interest by providing the widest choice of practitioner options.

### *Guidelines*

A member shall:

- Follow ethical hiring practices designed to respect free and open competition without deliberately undermining a competitor.
- Preserve intellectual property rights in the marketplace.

### *Examples of Improper Conduct Under This Provision:*

- A member employed by a "client organization" shares helpful information with a counseling firm that is competing with others for the organization's business.
- A member spreads malicious and unfounded rumors about a competitor in order to alienate the competitor's clients and employees in a ploy to recruit people and business.

## **DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION**

### *Core Principle*

Open communication fosters informed decision making in a democratic society.

### *Intent*

- To build trust with the public by revealing all information needed for responsible decision making.

### *Guidelines*

A member shall:

- Be honest and accurate in all communications.

- Act promptly to correct erroneous communications for which the member is responsible.
- Investigate the truthfulness and accuracy of information released on behalf of those represented.
- Reveal the sponsors for causes and interests represented.
- Disclose financial interest (such as stock ownership) in a client's organization.
- Avoid deceptive practices.

**Examples of Improper Conduct Under this Provision:**

- **Front groups:** A member implements "grass roots" campaigns or letter-writing campaigns to legislators on behalf of undisclosed interest groups.
- **Lying by omission:** A practitioner for a corporation knowingly fails to release financial information, giving a misleading impression of the corporation's performance.
- A member discovers inaccurate information disseminated via a Web site or media kit and does not correct the information.
- A member deceives the public by employing people to pose as volunteers to speak at public hearings and participate in "grass roots" campaigns.

## **SAFEGUARDING CONFIDENCES**

### *Core Principle*

Client trust requires appropriate protection of confidential and private information.

### *Intent*

- To protect the privacy rights of clients, organizations, and individuals by safeguarding confidential information.

### *Guidelines*

A member shall:

- Safeguard the confidences and privacy rights of present, former, and prospective clients and employees.
- Protect privileged, confidential, or insider information gained from a client or organization.
- Immediately advise an appropriate authority if a member discovers that confidential information is being divulged by an employee of a client company or organization.

### *Examples of Improper Conduct Under This Provision:*

- A member changes jobs, takes confidential information, and uses that information in the new position to the detriment of the former employer.
- A member intentionally leaks proprietary information to the detriment of some other party.

## **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

### *Core Principle*

Avoiding real, potential or perceived conflicts of interest builds the trust of clients, employers, and the publics.

### *Intent*

- To earn trust and mutual respect with clients or employers.
- To build trust with the public by avoiding or ending situations that put one's personal or professional interests in conflict with society's interests.

### *Guidelines*

A member shall:

- Act in the best interests of the client or employer, even subordinating the member's personal interests.
- Avoid actions and circumstances that may appear to compromise good business judgment or create a conflict between personal and professional interests.
- Disclose promptly any existing or potential conflict of interest to affected clients or organizations.
- Encourage clients and customers to determine if a conflict exists after notifying all affected parties.

### *Examples of Improper Conduct Under This Provision*

- The member fails to disclose that he or she has a strong financial interest in a client's chief competitor.
- The member represents a "competitor company" or a "conflicting interest" without informing a prospective client.

## **ENHANCING THE PROFESSION**

### *Core Principle*

Public relations professionals work constantly to strengthen the public's trust in the profession.

### *Intent*

- To build respect and credibility with the public for the profession of public relations.
- To improve, adapt and expand professional practices.

### *Guidelines*

A member shall:

- Acknowledge that there is an obligation to protect and enhance the profession.
- Keep informed and educated about practices in the profession to ensure ethical conduct.
- Actively pursue personal professional development.
- Decline representation of clients or organizations that urge or require actions contrary to this Code.
- Accurately define what public relations activities can accomplish.
- Counsel subordinates in proper ethical decision making.
- Require that subordinates adhere to the ethical requirements of the Code.
- Report ethical violations, whether committed by PRSA members or not, to the appropriate authority.

### *Examples of Improper Conduct Under This Provision:*

- A PRSA member declares publicly that a product the client sells is safe, without disclosing evidence to the contrary.
- A member initially assigns some questionable client work to a non-member practitioner to avoid the ethical obligation of PRSA membership.





*U.S. Department of Education  
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)  
National Library of Education (NLE)  
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)*



## **NOTICE**

### **Reproduction Basis**

- This document is covered by a signed "Reproduction Release (Blanket)" form (on file within the ERIC system), encompassing all or classes of documents from its source organization and, therefore, does not require a "Specific Document" Release form.
- This document is Federally-funded, or carries its own permission to reproduce, or is otherwise in the public domain and, therefore, may be reproduced by ERIC without a signed Reproduction Release form (either "Specific Document" or "Blanket").