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Government Public Relations: A Quantitative Assessment of Government Public Relations Practitioner Roles and Public Relations Model Usage

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by

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my family, friends, coworkers, and professors. Without my friends I would have never started the program or had the support to keep going when the days were long and tiresome, I am grateful for the push. To my husband who made it a priority to help me get to class, watch our beautiful daughter, and do the housework so I could have the free time to focus on my thesis, my deepest thanks. To my beautiful daughter Aida who was an inspiration, I kept going to show you what a strong, smart woman can do. To the rest of my family who kept a watchful eye on my progress and reminded me of the reward at the end of the journey, I am grateful. To my coworkers and friends at the City of Clearwater with whom I have the pleasure of working; without their support, accomplishing this degree would not have been possible. Their financial, professional, and emotional support was a necessity.

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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to identify how public relations are practiced in local governments. Traditional literature has stated that the public information model of public relations is the model of public relations practiced in local governments. This study also attempts to determine which roles are most common for lead communicators in municipal organizations governments.

Based on Internet survey research methods, research findings indicated that while most practitioners stated they practiced a two-way communications model, they had the most expertise in the public information and press agentry models. The researcher also found that the role most often held by the highest ranking communicator was that of public relations manager, although they stated there was the most expertise in their department to do the things typical of public relations technicians.

Low total population and response rates prevent confident generalization of the results of this study to the entire local government communicator population. The research contributes to the field of public relations in local government.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

Little research has been conducted on the way public relations is practiced in public organizations. In order to further our understanding of government public relations, we must first determine what type of public relations models are used in government organizations and what role the head public relations practitioner plays.

There have historically been four models of public relations used to define the variations in the way public relations is practiced. Grunig and Hunt generally defined the four models in their 1984 book as press agentry/publicity, public information, two-way symmetrical and two-way asymmetrical (J. Grunig, 2001). J. Grunig points out that the press agentry/publicity and public information are both one-way models. Press agentry seeks attention for the organization in almost any way possible and public information practitioners are journalists in residence who disseminate accurate, but usually only favorable, information about their organization. In the two-way asymmetrical model, practitioners conduct scientific research to determine how best to persuade publics to behave in the way their organizations wish. With the two-way symmetrical model, practitioners bring about symbiotic changes in the ideas, attitude and behaviors of both their organizations and publics through research and dialogue.

In most literature, government public relations practice has typically been described as following the public information model. I hypothesize that more recently local government organizations have become more interested in the cares and concerns of those they represent and therefore, public affairs communicators are tending to practice more of a two-way communications model instead of a one-way model. Whether they are practicing the two-way symmetrical or the two-way asymmetrical, more often than not, they are moving away from the public information officer model.

Since very little research has been done in this area of public relations study, other questions were asked to determine the current state of the field. The public relations roles that are filled by the head of the communications department are also examined.

Governments were created to represent their citizens. More and more, local governments are trying to engage their publics to find out what they want and what they are thinking about. Governments need to engage in a two-way dialogue with those they represent in order to be most effective in this all-important task.

Governments engage their citizens by doing traditional market research, including surveys and focus groups. There has also been a recent trend toward using other methods to engage citizen publics, such as town hall meetings, the Internet, and planning charettes to gauge citizen feedback.

I also hypothesize that due to the legal requirements forbidding governments from spending money on "publicity," the existing stigmas of the term public relations, and the lack of understanding of the field, very few communications departments will have titles that reflect the field. Departments will have any name other than public relations.

By researching local governments, we are examining the level of government closest to the people it represents. Cities in the large category, with populations of between 100,000 and 299,999 residents were surveyed. The following research questions were asked:

RQ1 What models of public relations are practiced most often in local governments?

RQ2 What roles to public relations practitioners most often fill within local governments?

RQ3 How much importance do local governmental organizations place on the communication or public relations role?

RQ4 Does the level of activist pressure on a local government organization affect which public relations models or roles are used?

H1 Because of the stigmas associated with the term public relations, very few government communications departments will be titled in such a manner.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Public Relations Models

There have historically been four models of public relations that have been used to define the variations in the way public relations is practiced. Grunig and Hunt (1984) generally defined the four public relations models based upon whether they used one-way or two-way communication between the organization and its publics. The two-way communication models are further broken down into whether or not the relationship was symmetrical, with both the organization and its publics sharing equal amounts of the power in the relationship, or whether it is asymmetrical with the organization having and exerting more power in the relationship. These models are defined as the press agentry/publicity, public information, two-way symmetrical and two-way asymmetrical (J. Grunig, 2001). Grunig (2001) points out that the press agentry/publicity and public information are both one-way communication models. Press agentry seek attention for their organization in almost any way possible and public information practitioners are journalists in residence who disseminate accurate, but usually only favorable, information about their organization (J. Grunig, 2001). In the two-way asymmetrical model, practitioners conduct scientific research to determine how best to persuade publics to behave in the way their organizations wish. With the two-way symmetrical model, practitioners bring about symbiotic changes in the ideas, attitude and behaviors of both their organizations and publics through research and dialogue.

Grunig and Hunt researched and found that most organizations could practice each of the models under different conditions and contribute to organizational effectiveness. These researchers proposed that by alternating between the two-way symmetrical and two-way asymmetrical (called the mixed-motive model) almost always could increase the contribution of public relations to organizational effectiveness (J. Grunig, 2001).

J. Grunig also pointed out that public relations is asymmetrical by nature. Persuasion is still relevant in the symmetrical model. Public relations professionals sometimes persuade the public and other times they must persuade senior management. Leichty and Springston were among the first to point out that most organizations practice a combination of the four models (as cited in J. Grunig, 2001). Sometimes one model will be more effective than another. The knowledge of the practitioners (which models they know how to use) and shared understanding with senior management were the two strongest predictors of models practiced. Culture provided a context for excellent public relations, but without a knowledgeable senior practitioner and supportive top management, culture could not produce an excellent model of public relations. The Excellence study also found that excellent public relations departments do not seem to avoid the press agentry or public information models and the most excellent communication functions seem to practice all forms of public relations more extensively than do the less excellent functions (J. Grunig, 2001).

Plowman, Briggs, and Huang (2001) looked at the model used when organizations experienced conflict and determined that most used a mixed-motive version. Using the mixed-motive model, each side in the stakeholder relationship retains a strong sense of its own self-interests, yet each can attain some level of the resolution of the conflict. The two may be on opposite sides of the issue, but in both of their best interests, both stakeholders try to cooperate with each other. They do not necessarily trust one another or what they are communicating, but they trust one another enough to believe that each will abide by a reached agreement (Plowman, Briggs, and Huang, 2001).

Public Relations Practice

L. Grunig, J. Grunig and Dozier (2002) define 14 characteristics that make up an excellent communications department based on the characteristics used in the Excellence model of public relations. According to the researchers:

> the function must be managed strategically; there must be one single or integrated public relations department; a separate function for marketing should exist; the public relations department should have a direct reporting relationship to senior management; there should be use of the two-way symmetrical model, which involves giving messages, receiving messages and a balanced power between the two groups; there is potential for excellent public relations because there is knowledge of the symmetrical model, knowledge of the managerial role, academic training in public relations, and professionalism; the worldview for public relations in the organization reflects the two-way symmetrical model; the public relations director has power in the dominant coalition or power elite of the organization; there must be a participatory rather than authoritarian organizational culture; a symmetrical system of internal communication

> must exist for internal communication; the organizational structure should be organic rather than mechanical; and there will be a turbulent, complex environment with pressure from activist groups. (p. 13)

When excellent public relations is practiced the programs meet the communication objectives, reduces cost of regulation, pressure, and litigation and employees have a high job satisfaction (Grunig et al., 2002). In a series of studies in the late 1980s, referred to as the Excellence study, the researchers interviewed the CEOs or top leaders of more than 300 private, public and nonprofit organizations about their organizations' public relations efforts. The researchers compared scores on the overall index of excellence and the individual variables that make up the index by type of organization for the four types of organizations--corporations, government agencies, associations, and not-for-profits. Government agencies had average scores on participation in strategic management. Among the organizations that Grunig et al. (2002) researched that had excellent communication departments, the senior government public relations person was more likely to report being in a technical or media relations role than in the other types of organizations, especially when compared to corporations. They found:

> However, he or she is about average for the managerial role, participation in strategic management and being in the dominant coalition. Such a combination of roles suggests that the historical public information or public affairs definition lives on in government—of disseminating information to the general population directly or through the media. At the same time, the data suggest that

government agencies are moving toward a more managerial and strategic role. (Grunig et al., 2002, p. 86)

In the Excellence study, the researchers also found that CEOs of corporations were less likely to prefer the press agentry and public information model than were those in other types of organizations. They found that governments and corporations were more likely to have asymmetrical internal communications. Grunig et al. (2002) summarize their comparison of organizational type to the Excellence model by stating that government agencies seem to be moving toward a strategic, managerial and symmetrical role, but they are not quite there yet.

Public Relations Roles

This section of the literature examines the role the public relations practitioner plays within his or her public relations department. Research on public relations roles is one of the most frequently addressed topics in public relations research literature (Pasadeos, Renfro, & Hanily, 1999). Research on the roles of public relations practitioners has been important to the body of knowledge in public relations for several reasons (Toth, Serini, Wright, & Emig, 1998). One main reason public relations roles research is important is because research on roles made it possible to link public relations work to a broader investigation of how excellent public relations departments were structured in organizations (Dozier, L.A. Grunig, & J.E. Grunig, 1995).

Public relations roles are "abstractions of behavior patterns of individuals in organizations" when practicing public relations (Dozier, 1992). In his study Dozier argued that public relations roles set apart individuals in organizations as well as define the expectations organizations have of their employees. Dozier stated that public relations roles are the key to understanding the function of public relations. Holtzhausen, Petersen, and Tindall (2003) defined roles as repetitive actions that are performed to set forth a system of practice, or model. Individual practitioner roles would, therefore, facilitate models of public relations practice.

Research on public relations roles began in 1979 with Broom and Smith's exploratory study of clients' perceptions of practitioner job tasks. In this study, Broom and Smith proposed the existence of four public relations roles. The four roles identified were the expert prescriber, problem-solving process facilitator, communication process facilitator, and communication technician.

The expert prescriber is the role where the practitioner is responsible for describing and solving public relations problems independently. The expert prescriber acts as the authority on both public relations problems and their solutions. Broom (1982) acknowledged that practitioners often perform multiple roles, but he argued that a practitioner can be classified according to the role he or she plays more frequently. Grunig, Toth and Hon (2001) argue however, that the two major roles that have been identified are not mutually exclusive. Grunig, Toth, and Hon (2001) argued that public relations practitioners tend to carry out both managerial and technical tasks.

Research conducted by Dozier (1984) stated the communications manager served as the problem solver, decision-maker and planner. Practitioners serving as the public relations manager within an organization are expected to be knowledgeable about innovations in public relations and are expected to demonstrate leadership in new approaches to old problems (Dozier, 1984).

Public relations managers tend to participate in the organizational decision-making process. Broom and Dozier (1986) argued that participation in the organizational decision-making process is characterized as the extent to which practitioners participate in meetings with management about adopting new policies, discussing major problems, adopting new procedures, implementing new programs, and evaluating the results of programs.

The role of communication technician refers to the practitioner as a technical services provider, generating the collateral materials needed to implement a communication or public relations program planned through another communication role (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002). Dozier (1984) argued that the communication technician would be conceptualized as the 'beginning professional' expected to undertake basic research in the preparation of public relations materials. The public relations technician is the practitioner who writes the news release or designs the brochure, handling graphics and the production of materials.

Strategic management and planning are high-level organizational functions tightly linked to excellence in public relations and communication management (Dozier, Grunig & Grunig, 1995). Higgins (1979) defined strategic management as the "process of managing the pursuit of the accomplishment of organizational mission coincident with managing the relationship of the organization to its environment" (p. 49).

Public Relations and Activist Groups

Pressure from activist groups is such a part of public relations that it has been suggested that public relations practitioners gain legitimacy and increase their usefulness to their organization when activist pressure is present. J. Grunig and L. Grunig (1997) claim that “activist pressure stimulates an organization to develop excellent public relations departments” (p. 25).

Defining activist groups is not an easy task. According to Smith (1996), organized groups who have a deep-seeded interested in how an organization run are referred to as special interest groups, pressure groups, issue groups, grassroots organizations, or social movement groups (as cited in Heath, 2001). Various definitions exist, but all seem to point out that activists are organized and they strategically use communication to achieve their goals.

Smith and Ferguson (2001) point out that interacting with activist groups is something that many organizations try to resist and that activists are often viewed and treated as threats to the organization. Although there are a number of normative frameworks that suggest organizations have a variety of response options, most scholars suggest that responding to activists requires strategic planning, with consideration given to the desired outcomes and implications of a confrontation. It is also stated that several factors may influence an organization’s choice of strategy (Smith & Ferguson, 2001). Factors include the reason for activist pressure, the number and nature of constituents demanding change, the content of the requests, the means by which the pressure is being exerted, and the context in which the demands are being made.

J. Grunig and L. Grunig (1997) claimed that the expertise of the public relations practitioners determines the type of organizational response. Their viewpoint was that greater expertise was required to engage in dialogue or negotiations with activists as opposed to one-way attacks or avoidance. They also stated that the dominant coalition's commitment to corporate social responsibility is the most important indicator of an organization's response (Grunig & Grunig, 1997).

Three approaches to public relations have addressed this concern with social responsibility: rhetorical, symmetrical and humanistic. These three share an emphasis on collaboration, trust, and mutual responsibility between parties.

In summarizing their Excellence study, Grunig and Grunig (1997) advocated for the following normative response to activist groups: 1) Listening to all strategic constituencies is an important way in which to learn the consequences that an organization has on those publics. 2) Disclosing information and telling the organization's story helps to establish trust and credibility. 3) Communicating with activists should be continuous. 4) Recognizing the legitimacy of all groups, large and small is important because of the potential that even small activist groups have for engaging an organization. 5) Enacting two-way symmetrical responses requires skilled practitioners. 6) Determining long-term effectiveness is important in helping both the organization and the activists to remain patient during the extended time it takes to reach agreement. 7) Public relations practitioners who are close to the center of power in the organization are better able to shape the organizational response to the activists.

Most recently, Holtzhausen (2007) reviewed the activist literature and assessed how the Excellence model and activism are intertwined. She states that, "If public relations practitioners have the ability to scan the environment, perform a boundary-spanning function, and practice two-way communication with activist publics, top management will value public relations" (p. 361). Recent research has shown that although two-way communications was originally thought to be the most effective way to deal with activist groups, recent research results have shown either two-way symmetrical or two-way asymmetrical communications serve as indicators of excellent public relations.

Public Confidence and Trust in Local Government

Governmental organizations have a need for a good public relations campaign because they suffer from a lack of confidence from the public. Only 42% of Americans trust the government to do what is right (National Civic Review, 2003). Local government agencies enjoy the most trust and confidence when compared to state and federal levels (Illinois Municipal Review, 1992). Only 6% of the public expresses a "great deal" of trust and confidence in local government, 10 percentage points less than they had in 1987 and 54% have a "fair amount" of trust and confidence in local government (Illinois Municipal Review, 1992). In 1997, only 60% of respondents in a Gallup poll indicated they had "a great deal" or "a fair amount" of confidence in their local government to carry out their responsibilities, a 10% drop from 10 years earlier (Shaw, 2001).

Periodically since 1972, Gallup has asked, "How much trust and confidence do you have in local government in the area you live when it comes to handling local problems?" Those who have either a "fair amount" or a "great amount" has held steady over the years: 63% in 1972, 71% in 1974, 65% in 1976, 69% in 1997, 77% in 1998, 69% in 2001, and 68% in 2003. During the past few years, trust in state government has slightly fallen and is dependent upon the political party of the state leader (Jones, 2003) and trust in the federal government has significantly fallen with events like 9/11 and the war in Iraq. Trust in local government has been tied to where those surveyed live. There is less of a tendency to trust local government for those living in an urban environment (58%) than those living in a suburban area (71%) or rural area (73%) (Jones, 2003).

According to Lawton (2003), declining trust in government and a continuing downward spiral in voter turnout are two widely cited symptoms of this public trust. Electoral cynicism, which is the result of this distrust, can significantly affect the health of our democracy (Lawton, 2003). In the article "Can Communities Take Control of Campaigns?" Lawton points out that the primary purpose of campaigns is to give the citizens enough information to reasonably select their representatives. When the system varies from this role, Lawton states that the citizens have the responsibility to bring the system back on track. He states they have the power to do this through their two most powerful tools: the checkbook and the ballot.

Goodsell (2004) points out that although people continually report being untrusting of government, they repeatedly report satisfaction with level of service. Goodsell states that the bureaucracy is reported as providing the level of service that citizens demand *very often* and *most of the time*, this level of service lives up to acceptable standards of efficiency, courtesy, and fairness. But, Goodsell points out, this satisfactory treatment as the norm rather then the exception is the counter to what most of the literature on the subject states. The commonly accepted notion that government never performs as well as business is also shown to be a falsehood. Goodsell attributes this contradiction between the literature and public opinion on the unrealistic expectations that citizens tend to have for American bureaucratic performance.

Goodsell (1994) states that public administrators should plan events for citizens to have input and a dialogue with them rather wait for a citizen's group to initiate the conversation. He states, "if a policy issue is emerging in your program that is not yet defined, organize a public dialogue on the topic--without controlling the issue" (p.182). The press should not be treated with arrogance but with panache. "If a bureaucratic horror story is printed, call the reporter immediately and ask for an opportunity to come over to the paper and give your side" (p.182). If something good happens, the public administrator should invite the media in to tell the positive story. Goodsell points out that bureaucrats should overcome their fear of the media. Most recently, Goodsell (2004) puts media in the same role as activist groups. He states, "Still another watchdog is the press, ready at a moment's notice to submit a Freedom of Information request and find scandal in the results" (p. 61).

Although a dialogue with residents is seen as beneficial, there are hurdles to that involvement. Callahan (2002) discusses the challenges of involving citizens in the decision making process that have faced public administrators for the last 30 years. Citizen participation is seen as burdensome, costly and time consuming and there is conflict between the structure of government and the values of citizen participation. Tangible benefits of citizen participation include increasing the effectiveness of public managers and the decisions they make. Involved citizens are a part of the decision-making process and are therefore more supportive of the outcome. They are more informed, thus making them better equipped to give suggestions and insightful input. The traditional top-down hierarchical model of public administration tends to limit the role of citizens in the decision-making process.

Callahan (2002) lists the obstacles to meaningful citizen participation as lack of trust on the part of elected officials, lack of communication between governing body and advisory committee, poorly defined goals and expectations for advisory committees, lack of citizen expertise, lack of municipal resources to support advisory committee activities, desire of department heads to control their own programs, citizens who promote their own agenda rather than the committee's and desire of elected officials to control the agenda.

To improve citizen participation and alleviate these obstacles, Callahan (2002) recommended the following: improving the level and quality of communication between citizens, elected officials and administrators; encouraging greater involvement by the governing body; providing education and training on consensus building, communication and facilitation skills and citizen advisory committees; establishing clear goals and strategies for all stakeholders; ensuring a democratic appointment process; elevating advisory committees to commission or council status; providing incentives for citizens such as tax breaks, stipends, respect and public acknowledgement; and providing staff support. In summary, Callahan states, "there is no question that active and engaged citizens create 'civically engaged communities' which powerfully influence the quality of life and performance of social institutes" (p. 318).

In addition to continued positive actions from local governments, building and fostering relationships may help build better confidence in today's local municipalities. In other words, local governments can benefit from a good public relations program.

There is a growing body of literature that states that public administrators are responsible for creating an informed and active citizenry. The public employee has to go out of his or her way to educate, inform, mobilize and empower an audience that may not be an active audience otherwise. Sembor (1993) states that the education system, local government and other social institutions all play a vital role in this process. He states that the local level, for most Americans the level where government is the most real, is a logical place where the principles of democracy can be taught. Early theorists, including de Tocqueville, had these same theories. Certain conditions are necessary for the democratic process to remain stable. The level of the participation of the majority should not rise above the minimum necessary to keep the democratic method working. Low involvement has been viewed as symptomatic of a serious democratic deficiency on the part of the citizenry. It has also been seen as an indicator of a low level of confidence in the electoral process and elected leaders.

Sembor (1993) states that local officials can and should act as leaders in the process of citizenship development. He states that public administrators at the local level can take a leadership role in promoting civic responsibilities, teaching civic skills and in building civic institutions. They must infuse individual citizens with the character of citizenship and to provide the citizen with an ethical sense of purpose in the democratic system of government. Three areas where Sembor states they can get involved in this process are citizen participation in the policy making process, building local government/school partnerships and providing public places for community discussion. The areas for development include mechanisms for open lines of communication between citizens and public officials; creating new places for discussion in the tradition of the Town Meeting; and building an identity away from the "us" versus "them" attitude prevalent between the government and its citizens. Local government must attempt to empower more people by providing forums for public debate and discussion, capitalizing on the success of government in the community to increase voter confidence in the ability of government to solve society's problems.

History of Government Public Relations

Dissemination of government information was first started by the Department of Agriculture, when Congress ordered the department to diffuse agriculture knowledge (Morgan, 1986). Agriculture has long since been the pace setter for putting out information. Wartime government communication has also been important to the history of government communication efforts. World War I proved to be seminal in demonstrating the power of government persuasion when all societal resources were mobilized.

Throughout the country's history, legislation has been enacted to either control or manage governmental communication efforts. The 1913 Gillett Amendment is a U.S. federal directive forbidding any government agency to spend money for publicity without the specific approval of the U.S. Congress (DeSanto, 2001). In 1972, Congress reviewed this amendment and rewrote it into Public Law 91-351, s. 608 (a) which expressly prohibits government spending on publicity or propaganda purposes designed to support or defeat legislation pending before Congress' (ibid) (DeSanto, 2001). DeSanto points out that:

> The events of unions and public activists, the political climate of the country, and the desire of citizen groups to participate in decisions they felt strongly

> about, could not stop the communication strategy and process today known as public affairs. (p. 39)

DeSanto (2001) points out that the key reason Congress forbid publicity was that the word 'publicity' meant, and still means, 'public relations.' The intent of the Gillett Amendment was to prevent powerful incumbent politicians from using their power and position to influence pending legislation. This thought though was in direct conflict with the underlying principle that democracy relies on a relatively free communication structure, which provides information and methods of discussing issues to its citizens so they can make informed decisions.

The 1930s changed the political landscape irrevocably, and with the change came legitimated government public relations. The New Deal had to be sold to the electorate. By the time World War II came, the public relations dimension was a small but accepted part of U.S. government operations. The 1960s broke up the happy marriage that had developed between the government and media. The civil rights movement and the Vietnam War caused questioning of governmental motives from the citizenry and electorate (Morgan, 1986).

The Watergate revelations stimulated demands for protection of individual privacy. Congress enacted the Privacy Act in 1974. A year later, due to criticism that government processes at all levels continued to be inaccessible to the public, Congress passed the Sunshine Act, which mandated open meetings at the federal level. This pressure for increased openness has ultimately increased the number of PIOs employed by the government. Because of the Sunshine Act, PIOs roles changed from giving out information to giving out information about information availability (DeSanto, 2001).

Throughout our history, while the U.S. Congress forbids ‘publicity,’ government officials and agencies were busily engaged in all types of communications and public relations activities. George Creel’s World War I Committee was to advise President Woodrow Wilson about communication strategy, and to produce and place materials selectively, persuading the American people to support the war effort (DeSanto, 2001). Franklin D. Roosevelt used public information strategies and tactics to earn an unprecedented four terms in office and during that time established the Office of War Information. Many learned through the mismanagement of information during the Vietnam War, that communication was essential to earning citizen support. During Desert Storm, the legacy of Vietnam was one of the most important foundations of the US military public information policy: controlling and selectively presenting and releasing information.

The Public Affairs Council, originally called the Effective Citizens Organization, was established in 1954 to help get business people involved in, and trained to communicate effectively with government officials and legislators. DeSanto (2001) points out that:

> Over the next 40 years, the field expanded into community relations with the wake of the 1960s riots; the 1970s distrust of big business and call for heavier government regulation; and the 1980s federal cutbacks in spending for social programs. (p. 40)

During this same period, the U.S. government was under criticism from it citizens who wanted it to expand and provide social services and play more public policy roles. Many new agencies formed, like the Environmental Protection Agency, the Consumer

Product Safety Commission, and the Occupational Health and Safety Administration, and in turn the government needed to not only answer to the citizen concerns, but also to get the agency's message out (DeSanto, 2001). In the 1990s, the public information role expanded to include public policy advisors, developing communication strategies and tactics to position issues, resulting in the relatively new field of issues management.

From 1985 to 2000, nearly 15,000 federal government employees were classified as working in some public relations-related jobs and U.S. government spending in the area totaled more than $1.9 billion (DeSanto, 2001). Morgan (1986) points out that there is some dispute to the number of public information officers employed by the federal government. He also notes that the growth of public information rights and legislation such as the Freedom of Information Act have increased the number of public information officers.

The federal government has been considered one of the world's greatest disseminators of information but trying to determine the exact size of the effort, is nearly impossible. One reason for this is the lack of consensus on what constitutes public affairs activities. The General Accounting Office once estimated that $2.3 billion was spent by federal agencies each year on "public relations" activities (Wilcox et al., 2005). Within every White House staff, there are experts in communications strategy, media relations, speech writing and staging the perfect event.

A 1996 Public Affairs Council study found new major trends in the field would be fewer practitioners and executives trained in public affairs roles due to smaller management staffs; a consolidation of public affairs functions under one person; a greater emphasis on issues management which indicates a trend toward being proactive rather than being reactive; more attempts to define community relations and philanthropy opportunities so that organizations understand and support each other; and more work with Political Action Committees (DeSanto, 2001). New challenges will also include the needs of today's worldwide and continuous coverage media outlets and the pressure and tactics of ever-present activist groups.

Government Public Relations

Almost thirty years ago, Steiner (1978) began writing about the importance of communication between government and citizen and asked the fundamental question: Was this an open or closed book? He states that the feeling that government is inadequate is so wide spread that the public sector can no longer treat critics in an offhand manner "as if they were crackpots or isolated malcontents who abhor 'give-aways'." He contemplates why government is in this state and hypothesizes that it could be due to the fact that government is in a survival mode and not a service mode. He states that the survival of a public organization must be based on the following: (a) Accepting the obligations of responsiveness and responsibility; (b) developing productive mechanisms for service provisions; (c) admitting the necessity of being held accountable for failure as well as success; and (d) finding ways of integrating services into communities instead of dominating their destinies (Steiner, 1978, p. 543).

Instead of focusing on productivity, Steiner (1978) chose to focus on public sector accountability. He used two communications behavior and indicators of organizational responsiveness: (a) the level of acceptance and processing of information from the outside environment and (b) the organization's ability and willingness to transmit adequate and accurate information back into the environment.

In his research, Steiner found that not all governments researched were responsive to requests for information, and there was a different level of response dependent upon who sent the letter: a housewife or an activist group.

Steiner (1978) stated four main points. First, an overriding communication objective should be in place to ensure that every request for information is honored in as timely and complete a manner as possible. Second, a routine mechanism should be created for handling inquiries. Third, government should strongly resist the idea that it is safer to withhold information than to have a policy of full disclosure. Information should not be provided at the convenience of government, but rather in reaction to the public's right to know. Fourth, government's role should be more than responding to direct inquiries. There should be an aggressive information program that should be truthful, informative, complete, timely and not over-promising (Steiner, 1978). Steiner summarizes his research by stating:

> The role of government should not be that of a passive communicant responding only to directed inquiries. To the contrary, the best way…is through establishment of aggressive but realistic information programs. This implies that communication should be truthful, informative, complete, timely, and not over-promising. Communication openness between government and citizen should not be a question but a definitive statement. Anything less than complete openness and responsiveness represents poor organizational management and worse yet, disregard for the welfare of the public. (p. 560)

Public administration texts and research has focused little attention to this area. Heise (1985) points out that most public administration texts fail to adequately deal with the topic, and those that do only look at the topic in limited detail. Those that deal with the issue limit themselves to the role media, public opinion polls, elections, and interest groups play in the relationship between government and its citizens. Heise further points out that:

> Even those writers who acknowledge that informing the public is a vital function of democratic government, usually emphasize the information-dispensing role of government, showing little sensitivity to the fact that effective public communication is, at a minimum, a two-way process. (p. 199)

Lee (2002) focused on the duty of public reporting in public administration because of the democratic context in which government exists. Government agencies contribute to an informed citizenry by public reporting on agency activities. A lack of data on the field of government public relations exists. Federal, state and local levels have no costs of how much they spend on public relations. Heise (1985) states that the reasons for this may be is because there are so many things that can be defined as public relations or the persistent notion that government public relations is not an entirely proper or legitimate activity, that it is really just a form of propaganda.

DeSanto (2001) points out that there are a myriad of definitions for public affairs including external affairs, government relations, and corporate communications. Lesly (as cited in DeSanto, 2001) defines public affairs as the management function responsible for interpreting the corporation's non-commercial environment and managing the corporation's response to that environment. Regardless of the definition used DeSanto defines the five universal key concepts for all public affairs practice: today's practice is centered on uses that involve some type of public activity; it is not just a government occupation; it is not limited to federal government levels of practice; effective public affairs practice requires organizational executives to participate in the communication and relationship-building activities along with the communicators; interpersonal and small-group communication methods are mostly used to target opinion leaders, but communicating with large specialized groups is also necessary.

Wilcox, Cameron, Ault, and Agee (2005) included a chapter in their public relations textbook on “Politics and Government”. They state that since the time of the Egyptians 5,000 years ago, governments have always engaged in what is known today as public relations, public information, and pubic affairs. There has always been a need for government communications, if for no other reason than:

> to inform citizens of the services available and the manner in which they may be used. In a democracy, public information is crucial if citizens are to make intelligent judgments about the policies and activities of their elected representatives. Through information it is hoped that citizens will have the necessary information to participate fully in the formation of government policies. (p. 361)

William Ragan, (as cited in Wilcox et al., 2005) states that the objectives of government information efforts should be to inform the public about the public’s business; improve the effectiveness of agency operations through appropriate public information techniques; provide feedback to government administrators so that programs and policies can be modified, amended or continued; advise management on how best to communicate a decision or a program to the widest number of citizens; serve as an ombudsman by representing the public and listening to representatives; and educate administrators and bureaucrats about the role of the mass media and how to work with them.

Wilcox et al. (2005) point out that although the objectives of government communication is appropriate in almost any of the public relations fields, in government such activities are never referred to as “public relations.” Other euphemisms are used, such as public information, public affairs, press secretary, administrative aid, and government program analyst. Although most citizens would agree that the government should not use tax dollars to persuade the public, there is a thin line between merely providing information and using information as a lobbying tool (Wilcox et al., 2005).

Some campaigns are clearly teetering on that line. Government campaigns are regularly conducted to educate, instruct and appeal to citizens. Examples include campaigns to promote safety and reduce the amount of traffic accidents, inform on the dangers of sunburn and skin cancer, promote states as tourist attractions, and the availability of new products or programs from which citizens can benefit. Government informs citizens through various resources including distribution of press releases, direct mail, brochures and placement of advertisements and public service announcements in the mass media (Wilcox et al., 2005). Pennsylvania spends between $8 and $12 million annually promoting tourism and Illinois spends approximately $2 million to promote it as a good state to locate a manufacturing plant and other kinds of businesses. Cities employ information specialists to disseminate news and important information from various municipal departments. Communication campaigns conducted for municipalities all have the goal of informing citizens and helping them take full advantage of opportunities.

Cities also promote themselves for economic development reasons. Millions of dollars are spent to attract new development and businesses. Some cities operate news bureaus to inform local and national media of their success stories. Cities promote themselves in order to create tourism and they are continually looking to improve their overall image (Wilcox et al., 2005). Gary, Indiana spent $1.2 million to host the Miss U.S.A. contest in an effort to bring some prestige to the city.

Wilcox et al. (2005) state that cities have a necessity for dealing with public relations as an inherent and continuing element in the managerial process. The administrator must be aware of public relations considerations at every stage of the administrative process, from making the decision to the final point of its execution.

Although there is a general public sentiment that governments should not spend money or staff time to do public relations or marketing, one study by L. Walters and T. Walters (as cited in Wilcox et al., 2005) found that 86% of a state government's news releases were used by daily and weekly newspapers. The Department of Agriculture responds to approximately 350,000 public requests for information a year and two-thirds of those requests are responded to by sending a pre-produced publication.

Communications campaigns that are preventative in nature can usually bring savings to an agency. California usually spends about $7 billion annually to deal with the costs of teenage pregnancy. The $5.7 million spent on a successful campaign could save the state considerable amounts in reduced welfare costs (Wilcox et al., 2005).

Looking at the existing public relations models, one is primarily named for government and modeled after its one-way information-providing role—the public information model. Heise (1985) developed another model, the public communication model. There has been little research as to this model's use in the governmental entities. According to Heise, the corporate public relations model does not currently provide a framework for public relations in a governmental entity. Both the public administration and public relations fields have given the public communication model scant attention. Aspects of its fundamental theories stress that government officials:

> should make available publicly all legally reasonable information—whether they consider it positive or negative—in a accurate, timely, balanced and unequivocal manner; would not only seek to communicate to the public through the mass media, but would be equally as concerned to reach various specialized publics and individual citizens through alternative communication channels; would seek to facilitate accurate systematic and timely feedback on public policy issues from the entire community which they serve, rather than from the partial feedback from the well-organized and politically active individuals in their jurisdiction; should employ public communications channels and resources in the government policy-making, implementation, and evaluation process without being involved in the electoral politics (p. 209).

The public communication model is the responsibility of top management and not the responsibility of a centralized public relations department. Each manager and in turn each employee of various departments and leadership levels carry out the role (Heise, 1985).

To carry these out, Heise points out that there are a number of assumptions for this model. There must be participation either in decision making or in control of leaders, there must be a quick and unmanipulated release of both good and bad information, that advocacy and persuasion are facts of political administrative life, a vigorous free and independent press is vital to the process, and that it is legitimate for executive branch officials to use public communication channels to help in determination, acceptance, implementation and evaluation of public policy (Heise, 1985).

Mass media channels cannot be the only form of communication, Heise (1985) points out, because many of government's communication problems involve a multitude of small, specific publics or individual citizens. But, mass media will still continue in its historically adversarial role with the American political system.

Mass media will not be adequate for dealing with specialized audiences. Narrower, more focused communication channels will have to be used to reach such specialized audiences as community organizations or neighborhood groups, to stay in touch with leaders of all segments of the community, and to cope effectively with the flow of routine inquiries about governmental services from individual citizens (p. 212).

The public communications model calls for a senior public communication officer that is an expert communicator who is comfortable with the news media not by being the "omniscient spokesperson" but by bringing the appropriate officials face-to-face. The officer must be well informed on the day-to-day business and be well respected by the organization's leaders.

The public communication model assumes that to communicate with the public means more than to disseminate information. Both ‘public information’ and ‘public affairs’ have connotations of only disseminating information, only conducting a one-way process. Especially at the local level, this has been the type of public relations with little effort on measuring effectiveness or of receiving feedback (Heise, 1985).

Kruckeberg and Stark (as cited in Ledingham, 2001) state that when people are aware of and interested in common ends and regulate their activity in view of those ends, then community is achieved. They further state that public relations is best defined and practiced as the active attempt to restore and maintain a sense of community. The researcher’s community perspective is summarized best by the notion that public relations can function as a vehicle for accommodating different perspectives and reducing conflict.

Ledingham (2001) researched this theory and tested the thesis that when public relations is viewed as the management function of organization-public relationships, the effectiveness of that management can be measured in terms of relationship building and that, further, ratings of those relationships can act as a predictor of public behavior. Ledingham tested this theory in relation to the context of the government-citizen relationship.

Scholars have found that public members not only expect organization-public exchange to be mutually beneficial, they also expect that mutuality to extend for the life of the relationship. It has also been suggested that organizations that attempt to manipulate publics solely for their own benefit cannot expect to develop long-term organization-public relationships (Ledingham, 2001).

Ledingham found that overall his research supported the notion of relationship management as a paradigm for public relations and that the organizational-public relationships can serve as a predictor of public choice behavior. Lastly, Ledingham found that "loyalty" to a municipality, as measured by deciding to stay in a city, can be determined by citizen ratings of the organizational-public relationship (Ledingham, 2001).

Lee (2001) researched the image portrayed by public relations professionals in public administration in current pop culture. Of the 20 films featuring government public relations professionals, several attributes were consistent in most of the movies. The characters were mostly men, they worked for the federal government and especially in the military, and they primarily did media relations. This presence in movies was more prominent in the 1990s than in earlier decades. The character was portrayed as a serious character in half the movies and as a comedic characters in the other half. The majority, 18 of 20, of the government public relations characters had minor roles, appearing in only one or two scenes. Lee concluded that popular culture perpetuates the negative images of both public relations and government bureaucrats. Lee points out that popular media often portrays that the bureaucracy is out of control and gives a negative portrayal of the people who staff it. Reporters often refer to public relations professionals as "flacks."

Hess (1984) points out that journalists use a certain tone in their writing about government communicators and criticize what they view as the persistent incompetence of government press officers. Journalists have written about the "government 'flacks' who try to control the press, of government's 'instinct' to manage and manipulate information, or of a 'shadowy' government public relations machine that specializes in misinformation" (Hess, 1984).

Public relations is the means by which an administrator interacts with the citizenry and is held accountable (Lee, 1999). Public reporting, which entails post hoc reporting from the agency to the general public, is one aspect of this responsibility. Lee points out that public reporting is different from administrative efforts to increase citizen participation in the decision-making process and is different from improving service to the client-customer.

Lee (1999) points out that early theorists focused on the public reporting duty, especially through direct reporting, primarily through municipal annual reports. These theorists have documented the changes in how these reports are distributed and their usefulness for accountability to the public. A decline of the emphasis on direct public reporting was replaced with a focus on press relations as the main public relations tool for administrative accountability in a democracy. The most critical observer of public administration is the press and the most important channel of communication between any public administrator and his clientele is the press. Lee states, "A public agency has a duty to maintain a public information operation whose mission is media relations" (p. 453). In turn, policy makers believe that the most obvious responsibility of the press is to inform the public about events and activities of the government.

Lee (1999) examines what the public administrator is to do if the news media fails to function as an instrument of democracy. A content analysis of local TV news in eight markets found that coverage of government affairs, now occupies less than 15 percent of the news during an average program. A 1998 study of 102 local television stations documented that government news amounted to almost 10% of all stories, as compared to 39% dedicated to crime and disaster.

The tone of media coverage of the government has shifted from the traditional adversarial model to one of cynicism. Skepticism has been replaced by negativity. Reporters rely on exposing government incompetence or government waste in series often titled, “It’s your Money” or “Government Waste,” or “Uncaring Bureaucracy”. Lee (1999) points out that television seeks victims and heavies who can convert a public policy story into “little guy fights city hall.” Bureaucrats are usually in the losing position in these stories. Other stories feature the bureaucrats as creating “more bureaucracy” in order to fix a problem and insinuate bureaucratic incompetence.

Lee (1999) offers public relations strategies for dealing with these types of stories, which often portray the government manager as the “bad guy.” Public administrators need to approach their communications needs, both internal and external from a strategic point of view. The responses need to focus on three areas: enhancing the policy entrepreneurship role of the public administrator, updating the media skills of public managers to adapt to continually changing media realities, and reviving direct reporting. Policy entrepreneurship is defined as the ability to promote one’s policy agenda in the public realm. Government managers need to go outside their domain to obtain public recognition for the issues and responses for which they are advocating according to Lee. Researchers in the 1980s suggested that efforts by government public information officers have minimal impact on influencing the agenda of salient issues within the realm of the public policy debate. Luke (as cited in Lee, 1999) suggests that current practitioners need to be more proactive as policy entrepreneurs by using the media. He states, “As catalyst, effective public leaders do not necessarily promote solutions; they promote problems. Thus they are advocated for issue emergence.”

Public managers need to become more sophisticated by being prepared and trained with skills to deal with the current coverage of public administration and the bureaucracy (Lee, 1999). Practitioners suggest public managers should: have a condensed message of 10 words or less; give public policy stories a human face; make the story easy to understand and cover; communicate in multiple ways by using a variety of media; learn how to deal with the emergence of public journalism; and enhance the stature of the agency’s PIO. Hess (1986) suggested enhancing the stature of the agency’s PIO by assuring the PIO access to the top levels of the agency, enhancing the PIO’s credibility, providing professional training for PIOs and being as responsive as possible to media inquiries.

Lee (1999) also points out that the current focus on accountability in government has tended to ignore direct public reporting. Lee suggests that public administrators should reformat government accounting reports so they are more comprehensible to lay people. They should also explain to the public in general, not just their key stakeholders, what they are attempting to accomplish, why they are attempting to do so, and what they have actually achieved. Public reporting, Lee points out, can be done directly with the public and shouldn’t depend on the media as an intermediary. Local governments should produce documents like annual reports and deliver them directly to the citizens.

In Graber’s 2003 book *The Power of Communication,* she focuses an entire chapter on the topic of refocusing on serving the public. She states that contacts between citizens and public agencies are the “human side” of public administration. A well-functioning modern democracy requires that bureaucracies listen sympathetically and respectfully to citizens and vise versa. Contacts between them are the most frequent form of citizen participation. During these interactions, bureaucrats learn about the impact of policies on individual citizens, inequities in service and the adequacy of government routines. Citizens benefit from the opportunity to learn about government services, to question officials, and to form impressions about how well their government functions. Graber states that the most important part of these encounters is that they are a way to keep bureaucrats, who are appointed rather than elected, moderately accountable and responsive to the publics they serve.

As part of refocusing on serving the public, Graber (2003) looks at the information transmission difficulties. When trying to communicate to large numbers of diverse people, the communication message is highly complex, and routine problems tend to happen. Language barriers and translation problems increase these problems.

Graber states that public administrators need reliable and adequate channels of communication. Mass media, which can serve as a major channel, cannot be the only tool used to reach residents. Direct channels that reach most members of the relevant citizen group are almost nonexistent. Graber states that the effective use of Web sites is easing the problem substantially (Graber, 2003). Graber points out that when direct channels do exist, they are often not user friendly enough for citizens and are the responsibility of poorly trained staff.

Graber (2003) states that the most intractable communication problems faced by public agencies is expressing complex rules and procedures in simple language that average people can understand. Putting complicated messages in plain English may not always be possible. Graber states that there are vast differences in the type of citizen communication used. Graber hypothesizes that when citizens have no choice in the services they receive, less effort is given to catering to citizens. When citizens have a choice in services they receive, in recreation services for example, citizens are seen as clients and more attention is focused on catering to their communication needs. A person not speaking the same language is also a problem. Even if documents are translated into various needed languages, there can be translation problems, which make communication difficult. Citizen's language skill deficiencies can also have an effect on communication.

Graber points out that there has been an increased attention to public satisfaction with public agencies, partly because of the work of agencies dealing with welfare rights and civil rights. Client's demands for participation in public agency decision making have become more strident, and political forces supporting these demands have become more organized. New political norms have emerged that emphasize the public's right to receive more respectful treatment, to be consulted about services, and to be kept informed about agency performance (Graber, 2003).

Graber (2003) points out the importance of external relationships and public information campaigns by stating that the ability to generate support from key external constituents is crucial to public administration's success. External communications is the key to gaining this external support. Transmitting information across organizational boundaries is crucial Graber states. This boundary-spanning communication is essential to avoid undue overlap and policy incoherence. Among the most difficult tasks facing public relations staff, Graber states "is the need to explain oversights, misdeeds, and other untoward events without destroying confidence in the agency" (p. 227).

Two public relations strategies Graber (2003) describes are wielding political rhetoric and external message paths. Wielding political rhetoric involves using positive language about programs and positive message framing while staying honest and ethical. External communication is a two-way street for both internal and external communication.

There is little agreement for how public relations departments in public agencies should be structured (Graber, 2003). Preference depends on the goals for the department. Sometimes agencies will be structured based on internal versus external communications responsibilities, geographical responsibilities, or communication tool expertise. Large organizations may have different branch offices when they cover a large territory and other offices may have different people responsible for each communication tool.

Tools used for image building include withholding information, the formal release of information, staging special events, and using various marketing techniques (Graber, 2003). The tools used for message dissemination are varied. Public agencies are increasingly using social science research tools such as surveys, focus groups, interviews, and ethnographic observations to target audiences they want to receive their messages.

Graber (2003) points out that although public relations activities have been and are routinely criticized, when public relations image building practices are put into place, public administrators become responsive instead of manipulative. Public relations professionals should be primarily concerned with keeping the public informed and serving the public effectively, efficiently and responsively. Graber states that unfortunately this ideal is not practiced often enough and that leads to citizen's mistrust of government messages.

Graber states that although there is disdain for outright propaganda, public administrations have partaken in all types of public information campaigns since wartime. Some campaigns are for controversial issues such as affirmative action, abortion rights and foreign aid. Others support conservative issues such as preventing forest fires (Graber, 2003). The term "social marketing" is often used for campaigns designed to foster the public's welfare. Graber states that although much more is known about persuasion and there is more sophisticated technology available, success rates remain limited because efforts to change people's attitudes and behaviors face multiple obstacles. They range from the inability to attract the target audience, to the audience's inability to decipher the message, to the inability to produce or maintain the desire to change the attitude or behaviors.

Graber (2003) points out that there is little agreement on how the public relations office in a government office should be structured but that it tends to reflect how to best maximize the department's goal. The variety of channels used to communicate with the desired audience vary in governmental agencies including personal contacts, mass-media channels, videocassettes, government-operated television stations, direct mail, email, conferences, public exhibits, speeches before key organizations, and public meeting presentations.

Government agencies decide the information for their target audiences by socials science research tools such as surveys, focus groups, interviews and ethnographic observations. In her earlier work, Graber (1992) states that:

> Public relations professionals should research what their various clients want prompted chiefly by the kind of concern with public opinion that democracy prizes. Then they should advise their agency to strive to implement these goals so that the image—the beliefs, ideas, and impressions conveyed by the agency—matches the reality. When that happens, public relations activities become an exercise in responsiveness rather than manipulation. Unfortunately, this ideal in not practiced often enough. (p. 257)

Graber (2003) states that public information and public relations activities are essential to American government's success and that the disdain in which they are often held is totally unwarranted and harmful. This disdain promotes hypocrisy and subterfuges when public relations activities are undertaken. The time is ripe to mount concerted efforts to put proper public relations activities into proper perspective.

J. Grunig (1992) relates his research on public relations and the Excellence Model to the role of government communicators. First, Grunig points out that the confusion between public relations and marketing is an important difference for governments and nonprofit agencies. Austin and Pinkelton (2001) point out that the difference between public relations and marketing has to do with their differing goals. Advertising and marketing focus on selling a product to consumers through controlled placement of paid media messages. The marketing role focuses on consumers rather than on all the key publics of an organization. They point out that public relations, on the other hand, strives to help organizations develop and preserve the variety of relationships that ensure long-term success. Public relations has a broader role than that of marketing or advertising. Public relations techniques are sometimes used by marketers, but only with the narrow focus of increasing sales. Hutton (2001) points out that there is an attitudinal difference between those practicing marketing and public relations. Marketing tend to demand a more aggressive, competitive, selling mind-set, whereas public relations often demands more of a diplomatic, peacemaking approach.

Because the person receiving the communication has no choice from which governmental agency they receive information, they cannot be seen as "customers." Because audiences are most likely segmented into publics, J. Grunig (1992) states that government's communication function is more likely to be public relations than marketing communication. The concept of "public" is more important for governments because citizens in a democracy are supposed to involve themselves in the process. The concept of a "public" describes well the symmetrical relationship between government agencies and citizen publics assumed in democracies. Grunig points out that if either the public or the government agencies uses too much power to achieve their personal interests and is unable to bargain to come up with a balance of interests, then they are not practicing symmetrical public relations, which is ideal in a democracy. A benefit from these types of relationships is that a government agency that responds well to pressures from its constituents will be more likely to gain support from those publics as it competes for public funding (Grunig, 1997).

Government needs personnel skilled in media relations. Morgan (1986) points out that some have questioned whether government communicators can be both loyal to their organization and disseminators of unbiased information. He states that elitist of various kinds believe that government's terms are terms dictated by others, they have no problem carrying out the wishes of those they represent. Pluralists, however, are deeply concerned that in a political universe of groups of various strengths, there is the potential for misuse of government's power to persuade.

Most recently, Pandey and Garnett (2006) developed and tested an exploratory model of public sector communication performance that is synthesized from the literature on public-private differences and organizational communication. Their study looks at the effects of red tape, goal ambiguity, organizational culture and organizational size on interpersonal, external and internal communications.

Although Pandey and Garnett (2006) state that various researchers and theorists have defined red tape, the definition they prefer is that it is the, "impression on the part of managers that formalization in the form of burdensome rules and regulations is detrimental to the organization." They state that red tape can affect organizational communication in two ways, by restricting the number and capacity of communication channels and by negatively influencing individual motivation to seek or provide needed information.

Goal ambiguity is defined by Rainey as having multiple goals, conflict among the goals and vagueness of organizational goals (as cited in Pandy & Garnett, 2006). They stated that goal clarity, the opposite of goal ambiguity, can provide compounded benefits for other aspects of the communication process such as information sharing, influencing attitudes, promoting understanding, and persuading people to act in a certain manner.

In their research, Pandy and Garnett (2006) found that culture was a significant predictor of external communications and that goal clarity facilitated external communications. They state that, "goal clarity and supportive organizational culture can reduce the perception of threats and challenges, thereby facilitating external communication performance" (Pandy & Garnett, 2006).

Their findings have two implications for public managers. First, the constraints of red tape on communication performance can be overcome if key performance-enhancing conditions, goal clarity and a culture that supports communication, exist. Second, they note that of the three types of communications, external communications poses more challenges and may require additional effort. In discussing the limitations of their study, Pandy and Garnett (2006) state that communications performance is understudies and poorly understood. Stating that it is, "destined to be forever a bridesmaid and never the bride," they stress the need for more in depth studying. Pandey and Garnett (2006) also state that:

> "Because of the greater complexity and uncertainty involved in communication with multiple stakeholders in increasingly turbulent environments, external communications appears to require other conditions and even greater effort on the part of public officials, executives, and managers. This extraordinary effort with external communications in an era of inter-organizational networks, service-delivery sets, and hyper-interest advocacy are crucial to overcome the tendency of administrators to focus more on internal communication than external (p.45).

Private vs. Public Organizations

Lee (1999) points out that public managers are inherently different from business administrators because of the context of democratic and representative government within which they operate. One major difference is the accountability of government officials to elected institutions and to the ultimate source of power in a democracy, the citizens. Although there is this difference, Lee points out that most research focuses on the interaction between the media and the elected side of government. Less attention is paid to the public administration side and how its representatives interact with the media and perform public relations activities. Lee states, "…the effects of media coverage on the non-elected side of government has not received sufficient parallel attention" (p.452).

Graber (2003) generalizes this lack of focus on public relations to include a lack of focus on government communication, despite the fact that public organizations have a large impact on Americans' lives. Heise also states that there should be a focus on government communication because of the vast differences between public and private organizations (Graber, 2003). Graber organizes these differences into environmental factors including the degree of market exposure, the legal and formal constraints, and political influences.

Public organizations is defined by Graber as primarily, but not exclusively, administrative departments and agencies, such as the Department of Defense and the Environmental Protection Agency at the federal level, the insurance department or the auto license division at the state level or the police department or the clerk's office at the local level (Graber, 2003). She tends not to focus on the federal level but does address some of their issues in her books. Graber states that researchers, despite the tremendous impact on every American, have largely ignored communication in public sector agencies. She states that this oversight is troubling because the communication problems of public bodies differ from the private sector in many important ways. The similarities she states are that they both live in the same political universe and share the same problems of large organizations. Graber points out that the magnitude of the shared problems varies so dramatically that the resemblances fade. According to Graber, "a toy poodle and a St. Bernard are both dogs, but feeding and grooming them are hardly comparable chores."

Graber points out that some researchers make a distinction between political communication and administrative communication but she thinks this distinction is artificial because the political aspects and administrative performance aspects of communication are so intertwined that the clear separations are impossible (Graber, 2003).

Much literature has been dedicated to the differences in communication needs between the public sector organizations and private. Graber (2003) divided the differences between public and private organizations into three categories—environmental, organization-environment and internal structures and processes. Public agencies are more focused on immediate success, which may lead to neglect of long-range programs. Public agencies are far more vulnerable to having unwanted communications tasks thrust upon them, often prescribed by outside government or political entities. The absence of a widely accepted yardstick for gauging and publicizing an agency's success is another major difference between private and public agencies that has an effect on communications. The fact that public organizations operate in an atmosphere of openness also changes the communications dynamics. Internal and external communications of public agencies, unlike private agencies, are almost always subject to public scrutiny. Graber points out that in order to avoid the risks of potentially dangerous adverse publicity, public managers tend to adopt cautious, conservative operating styles. There may also be a dual decision-making process with the formal decisions made out in the open and the informal decisions taking place behind closed doors. Public managers have far less control over their organizations than do private organization leaders due to the checks and balances of the institutions. Superior-subordinate relations are vastly more complex in the public agencies, and top personnel do not have the strong control over organizational communication flows enjoyed by their private sector counterparts.

Graber (2003) states that the inability to shield the organization from damaging information increases the public organization's need to engage in effective public relations activities. Graber also states that external communication should be a "two-way street with messages emanating from the environment reaching the agency and vice versa." In this external communication, Graber states that messages should be designated to a variety of nongovernmental agencies, but warns that constructing persuasive messages to gain support for controversial governmental programs can be extraordinarily difficult. A tactic that may make this type of communication easier is by making a transmission of difficult messages to opinion leaders within the community. It is theorized that the general public will turn to these leaders for advice and opinions, and thus the message will be more persuasive.

Another difference between corporate and government public relations is the nature of the relationship with the media. The role model favored by the American media casts them as the government watchdogs. Hence, there are strong pressures for the media to produce negative coverage (Graber, 2003).

In stating the differences between corporate public affairs and governmental public affairs, Knox and Najera (as cited in Lee, 2002) identified three activities that are unique to governmental public affairs: legislative liaison, the assumption that documents are open for public inspection and legal restrictions on certain public affairs activities. Lee states that this obligation of accountability is the source for qualitative difference between public affairs in public administration and business. Non-governmental organizations only have to be marginally responsible to the citizenry. Their customers and stakeholders are well defined and there are no mandatory open documentation rules.

Governments, on the other hand, have to be responsive and open to the citizens, media, public institutions, regulatory agencies, other levels of government, and community values and standards. Public reporting is not only necessary for positive but also for negative information. As early as 1919, Crooke stated the purpose of public reporting in government agencies was defined as intended to "stimulate public interest and discussion and lead to a more intelligent public opinion about matters in which the people were interested and for which public funds were expended" (as cited in Lee, 2002).

Government officials must comply with all public reporting and open records laws and requests and do not have the discretion of the non-governmental agencies to censor the information that is released. There are two types of public reporting, direct and indirect. Lee points out that the news media plays an important role in the indirect reporting responsibilities but that that role has been diminishing in democratic societies (Lee, 2002). Thus, public affairs practitioners need to increase their reliance on direct reporting. As early as 1928, public administration theory pointed out this fundamental principle. Direct public reporting is varied. Lee points out that in addition to increasing the visual attractiveness and readability of print reports, there have been many new techniques for direct public reporting that have been created by advances in technology. These additional tools for direct reporting include slides, movies, tapes, Web sites, public access channels, government-produced interactive television, radio, and e-mail, information kiosks, speakers bureaus, annual reports on video cassettes, broad distribution of computer disks, video streamer, electronic chat rooms, performance evaluation information, and quarterly or year-end reports. Many governments have increased their proactive information distribution. New technology has increased the attractiveness and speed with which information delivery can happen.

Heise (1985) points out that the corporate public relations model should not be transferred to the public setting, where there typically is no competition, a tight centralized public relations function, and senior officials who do not feel obligated to inform the public. When this happens, he states that major problems are likely to occur in the communication process between the agency and its publics.

Public Administration Communication's Future

Graber (2003) states that although there have been advances in communication technology and the information gathering and transmission methods, the major features of information management in the public sector is likely to remain on a steadfast course. The reason is this:

> The main communication challenges facing the public sector are bound to continue in the future. Human frailties, cultural barriers and the inherent weakness of all organizational designs will continue into the future. (p. 261)

When looking to the future, Graber states that public agencies should prioritize communication with their publics over intraorganizational communication issues. She states that an integrative model will require identifying which aspects of each agency's work that (a) benefit most from close interaction with clients and (b) those where openness and responsiveness are most likely to impair operational control and cost-effectiveness.

Graber points out that there will be some benefit from these increases in technology, but because of many things, including human behavior characteristics, institutional characteristics, and cultural legacies, there will be minimal change (Graber, 2003). Characteristics of human behavior that shape organizational reality in the public sector are ingrained. These behaviors include reluctance to change, and the various psychological barriers to altering established behaviors that hamper information use and produce poor decisions. The pressure to cling to standard operating procedures and the lack of incentive for developing and applying new approaches to communication are also barriers to change. Change, Graber states, is most likely to occur when new claimants enter the public arena such as public interest groups who have been able to enter the political arena now that the Internet is so prevalent.

Institutional characteristics of public organizations such as the balance of power and checks and balances lead to fragmented governmental authority. This fragmented authority forces public agencies to spend considerable time and effort in communicating with diverse institutional levels and integrating conflicting policies and procedures, rather than carrying out mission-related activities. Politicians are also continually going to have to balance the need for professionalism and the necessity for political adaptation. Graber (2003) states, “they must say things they do not mean and disguise what they mean to pass political muster” (p. 264).

Effective management of public agency departments is continually hampered by prescribed structures, limited control over personnel, incessant demands for public reports on their activities, and the inability to plan for long-range projects because of lack of future funding information. Graber points out that some of these challenges are present in the public sector, but that the magnitude of the problems and their effect on organizational communication and operations is considerably less. Private sector has the laws of basic economics, which easily trumps political concerns. The large size of the public sector, the vast array of its activities and the intertwining of these activities make long range planning on all fronts nearly impossible.

Also, things ingrained in the public agencies’ culture make change a difficult task (Graber, 2003). The requirement for open communication, which constitutes a mixed bag of benefits and disadvantages, is an example of this permanent cultural constraint. Top officials feel they are living in a fish bowl and are hounded by reporters. Openness tends to stifle innovation because of the fear of criticism and tends to increase the number of public interest groups monitoring the agency.

For moving into the future, Graber (2003) states that public agencies need to loosen structural rigidity, harness new technology, adapt climate and culture, overcome negative image burdens and establish goals and priorities. Graber points out that research needs to be advanced for this communication area. Graber points out that public agency communication issues and problems are very rarely researched and examined although we are in the "communication age." She states that public agency external communication, image formation, and public relations should be a research priority. This will assist public agencies in conveying a more accurate image of their strengths and weaknesses while retaining the loyalty and support of their employees and clients.

New research findings by cognitive psychologists and communication scholars need to be added to the public manager's tool kit. The impact of new communication technologies on various aspects of organizational communication needs to be researched more fully than has happened to date (Graber, 2003). American public agencies need to be compared to those in other societies and agency comparisons need to happen between high- and low-technology organizations, state and local organizations, and large and small organizations. Graber's hope is that public sector communication studies and experiments will be a research priority for social scientists.

Lee (1999) states that administrators should use new on-line technologies for things like virtual town hall meetings, electronic newsletters, citizen chat rooms, and email. Lee points out that overall there has been an increase in the proactive dissemination of information to the public. Lee (1999) concludes by stating:

> In a democracy there is no change in the public relations obligation of the public administrator to keep the public informed. Public administration practitioners and practice-oriented academics have begun to identify public relations counter-strategies that permit managers to adapt to these media developments and to continue pursuing their democratic responsibilities. (p. 42)

Because of the noticed changes in the field, this research attempts to determine the current public relations efforts being made at the local government level.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

The International Association of Business Communicators Excellence study looked at the relationship of excellent public relations to the strategic management function and showed that government agencies were somewhat more likely to integrate public relations and strategic management than were corporations. The researchers found that integration of the two functions made both functions more effective (Grunig, 1997).

In the Excellence study, Grunig et al. (2002) surveyed public relations professionals, CEOs, and members of the public relations departments about the 14 characteristics that create an "Excellent" public relations department. This research looks to find out what public relations models are being practiced most often in local governments, if senior communications professionals are part of the dominant coalition, the level of importance the organization puts on public relations or communications and if public relations titles exist in government communications departments. Since very little research has been done in this field, a descriptive look will be taken at the field to look at various areas of interest. Use of research for strategic planning and the level of involvement with activist groups will also be examined. The primary research questions posed are:

RQ1 What models of public relations are practiced most often in local governments?

RQ2 What roles do public relations practitioners most often fill within local governments?

RQ3 How much importance do local governmental organizations place on the communication or public relations role?

RQ4 Does the level of activist pressure on a local government organization affect which public relations models or roles are used?

H1 Because of the stigmas associated with the term public relations, very few government communications departments will be titled in such a manner.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Various researchers (Heise 1985, Lee, 1999, and Graber, 2003) point out that public administration texts and research has focused little attention to the area of government communications or public relations. Most researchers also note that this field is starting to change based on the increased need for external public information campaigns, government accountability and customer satisfaction.

This research attempts to answer some basic questions about the field and to identify: (1) what roles today's government communicators fill; (2) which public relations models are most often used; (3) the level of importance local governmental organizations place on the public relations function; (4) if the level of activist pressure affects the public relations models or roles used (5) the departmental expertise of public relations models and roles.

Local Government Assessment

To examine how public relations is currently practiced by local governments, the researcher examined cities with populations with between 100,000 and 299,999 citizens based on the 2000 U.S. Census. This "larger cities" category was chosen because they would more than likely have a communications department or an individual responsible for this role. This provides a larger sample for comparison to determine if there were significant differences in the public relations models and roles practiced in each city. Those U.S. cities with a population greater than 299,999, of which there are 57, are consistently considered "largest cities" and are not compared to cities with populations between 100,000 and 299,999 by professional communications or public administration organizations. They have significantly different organizational structures, larger budgets, different communication issues, and their populations are often very different from the target group. Because of these significant differences, cities with populations greater than 299,999 were not include in this study.

The researcher was able to confirm that there are 183 cities whose populations are between 100,000 and 299,999 residents. One city was a city-county merger. The list of cities, which can be found in Appendix A, was obtained from the International City/County Management Association web site (ICMA Web site, November, 2005) and was cross referenced for accuracy with the information found on the 2000 Census Web site (www.census.gov). ICMA is the premier local government leadership and management organization.

The sampling population for this study included the highest-ranked communicator at each of the 183 cities. Contact information for the communicator, including email address, was located through a variety of resources. Information was found through the City County Communications and Marketing Association (3CMA) membership list, the Florida Government Communicator's (FGCA) membership list, by researching the municipality's Web site, and by calling individual municipalities.

Data Collection Process

The target audience was surveyed using an online mode of administration. In order to ensure anonymity and confidentiality, online survey responses were not linked to e-mail addresses in any way. This was done in order to avoid ethical issues related to collecting information from unknown respondents.

The researcher designed the online survey with a survey service called SurveyMonkey. According to Stacks (2002), Internet surveys have both advantages and disadvantages similar to other types of survey methods. Depending on the population being surveyed, Internet surveys can make data collection faster and easier. However, there are concerns all researchers must address when using Internet survey methods.

One concern with Internet surveys is a lack of confidentiality. Stacks (2002) stated that it is very important for researchers to hire a reliable company to create the Internet survey's website because there is no guarantee of anonymity or confidentiality that can be provided to survey respondents. Stacks stated "it is important to note that most MIS departments have the capability of tracing e-mails and site visitors" (p. 183). An additional disadvantage stems from the sophistication it takes to answer an Internet survey. Although there are additional concerns that not all members of the population have access to a computer, this researcher noted that this population would have access to computers. Stacks also stated that as people become more adept with technology and using the computer, several disadvantages of the methodology would disappear. This researcher noted that this population is more adept with technology and has a higher level of education than the general public.

Although there are disadvantages, Internet surveys do offer certain advantages to the researcher. Advantages lie in the speed in which surveys are returned and that they allow the researcher to automatically import survey responses into statistical analysis software. Precautions were taken by the researcher to reduce sources of error when surveying the population. Dillman, Tortora, and Bowker (1998) suggest that researchers strive to design respondent-friendly Internet surveys. The authors define respondent-friendly design as the construction of Web questionnaires in a manner that increases the likelihood that sampled individuals will respond to the survey request, and that they will do so accurately, i.e., by answering each question in the manner intended by the surveyor. Design features that are difficult to understand, take excessive time for people to figure out, embarrass people, and are uninteresting to complete, are expected to decrease people's likelihood of responding to Internet questionnaires.

Practitioners were contacted three times. The words "Government Public Relations Survey" were contained in the subject line of each subsequent e-mail message. An initial questionnaire invitation was e-mailed (March 31, 2006) and a follow-up email was sent (April 13) to remind those who hadn't already participated to fill out and return their surveys. After learning of spam filtering software, which prevented the delivery of some emails, an email was sent from the researchers offering an alternative means of participation. The details of the emails are included in Appendix B.

Each survey recipient received a "blind copy" email that did not disclose the identity of the other respondents to ensure some level of privacy. The survey service also tracked who responded and did not send them the subsequent invitation emails.

The first Web page of the survey served as an introduction page. The text of the entire questionnaire can be found in Appendix C. The top of the page featured a headline that read "Government Public Relations Survey." This was followed by an explanation of the purpose of the survey, a statement of appreciation for participating, a statement of confidentiality, and contact information for the researcher. A "next" button was clearly labeled to lead participants to start the questionnaire.

Instrumentation

The 97-item survey was created by using sections of questions asked by L. Grunig, J. Grunig, and Dozier (2002) in their IABC Excellence Study. The extensive quantitative survey instrument allowed for an analysis of public relations practice of local governments. The language used in the survey was slightly adjusted to address the nuances of government organizations. Where the term "public relations" was used in the Grunig et al. survey, it was often replaced by the term "communications" to address the target audience's negative connotations and limitations of the term "public relations."

The main goal of the questionnaire was to determine public relations model usage, public relations practitioner roles in local government, and to examine role and model expertise. A secondary goal was to ask basic research questions about public relations practice in the organization including reporting relationship, involvement with strategic planning, and the use of research for strategic planning. In addition, membership in the dominant coalition was examined and the dominant coalition's perception of the communications function was evaluated. Finally, the level of involvement with and reaction to activist groups was examined.

Public Relations Models Items

The questionnaire tested the four models of public relations with 16 questions, all of which were replicated from previous studies of the four historical models of public relations practice (i.e. press agentry, public information, two-way symmetrical, two-way asymmetrical). Respondents were asked to, "Describe how public relations is conducted in your organization as a whole."

Each of the 16 public relations model questions used a 5-point Likert scale to better discriminate among responses, where 1 meant "strongly disagree" and 5 represented "strongly agree." Four opinion questions made a construct for each public relations model, with no overlap occurring. (See questions 19-34 in Appendix C)

Public Relations Roles Items

The questionnaire tested the four traditional public relations practitioner roles with 15 questions, all of which were developed by Broom (Broom, 1982; Broom & Smith, 1979) to measured different role activities of public relations practitioners (i.e. technician, media relations, communications liaison, and manager). Respondents were asked to answer the questions based upon, "your role in the communications department and the kind of expertise your department has, rate how often you do each of the following items. Do not score items highly if others in the department do them, but you do not."

Each of the 15 public relations roles questions used a 5-point Likert scale to better discriminate among responses, where 1 meant "never" and 5 represented "almost always." Three or four opinion questions made a construct for each public relations role, with no overlap occurring. (See questions 35-49 in Appendix C)

Public Relations Models and Roles Expertise Items

Next, the questionnaire tested the department's expertise of the four models of public relations and the traditional roles. Respondents were asked to rank their department's expertise of various functions with 31 questions, all of which were replicated from previous studies of the four historical models of public relations practice (i.e. press agentry, public information, two-way symmetrical, and two-way asymmetrical) and the traditional public relations roles (i.e. technician, media relations, communications liaison, and manager). Each of the 31 public relations model and role questions used a 5-point Likert scale to better discriminate among responses, where 1 meant "no experience" and 5 represented "highly experienced." Respondents were asked to rate from an organizational standpoint, "The level of expertise your department has in each of the following areas." When sub-divided, the questions made constructs for each of the public relations models and roles. (See questions 50-79 in Appendix C)

Demographics

In addition to the primary variables of interest, the study also examined demographic variables of the government communicators sampled. Respondents were asked six demographic questions measuring both categorical and continuous variables. Categorical items included departmental title, position title, gender and education. Continuous variables included number of people in department and age. (See questions 92-97 in Appendix C)

Response Rate Evaluation

Prior to data analysis response statistics were calculated to determine the gereralizability of the results to the larger population. Of the total sample of 183 practitioners for the online survey, 25 had invalid e-mail addresses by the final wave of survey administration. This resulted in a valid sample of 158 practitioners. Of these, 57 substantially completed the questionnaire, yielding a response rate of 36%. Seven practitioners refused to participate in the study, resulting in a refusal rate of 4%. The survey response statistics for this study are provided in Table 1.

The survey was conducted in three waves. Each successive wave reduced the number of undeliverable surveys because of exhaustive efforts to get accurate contact information for the undeliverable surveys. The researcher was able to reduce undeliverable surveys from 40 at Survey Wave I to 25 at Survey Wave III. Those who refused to participate in the study and those who responded to the survey were eliminated from receiving the questionnaire in subsequent waves of the survey distribution, thus explaining why the valid sample decreases in each subsequent wave as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Survey Response Statistics

Variable	Survey Wave I	Survey Wave II	Survey Wave III	Total
Total Population	183			183
Undeliverable	-40	-30	-25	-25
Valid Sample	143	122	110	158
Refusals	-2	-3	-2	-7
Non-responses	-112	-105	-85	-85
Responses	23	14	26	63
Auto Replies	23	14	23	60
Other Replies	0	0	3	3
Spoiled Surveys	-6	0	0	-6
Total Responses (N)	17	14	26	57

The total N was 57 at the beginning of the survey and 46 at the end of the survey. Some respondents (six) dropped out very early in the study (question 5 of 97) and were considered "spoiled." These six respondents were eliminated from the data analysis. Other respondents dropped out throughout the survey but were not eliminated from the data analysis, which explains why the N changes throughout the Results. Survey fatigue will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Analytical Method

SPSS for Windows Release 15 (January 2007) was used to analyze the 57 completed questionnaires. Data analysis began with obtaining descriptive statistics for the data set. After analyzing the descriptive statistics, the researcher tested for Cronbach's alpha. To ensure the reliability of the measures designed, Cronbach's alpha was used to determine how the variables under study formed constructs among themselves, and whether or not, or to what extent the variables belong together. A Cronbach's alpha of .70 is considered very reliable (Stacks, 2002) and .625 and above was accepted by this researcher. When a Cronbach's alpha did not meet the threshold of .625, either the variable that tested the lowest was eliminated to increase the alpha or the items were tested individually without folding the questions into a construct. All but 2 of the 14 constructs met the higher-level Cronbach's alpha test. The reliability statistics are presented in the frequency tables in the Results section.

Finally, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine differences among groups related to reaction to activist groups. Some grouping indexes were created to assist in this evaluation. A significance of .05 was determined to be acceptable.

The next chapter discusses the results of this study.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the public relations literature as it relates to local governments, which is significantly lacking. The research contributes by identifying: (1) the roles filled by today's lead government communicators; (2) the public relations models used by today's lead government communicators; (3) the level of importance local governmental organizations place on the public relations function; and (4) the title of today's government communications departments. To meet this objective, the following research questions were asked and hypothesis was tested:

RQ1 What models of public relations are practiced most often in local governments?

RQ2 What roles do public relations practitioners most often fill within local governments?

RQ3 How much importance do local governmental organizations place on the communication or public relations role?

RQ4 Does the level of activist pressure on a local government organization affect which public relations models or roles are used?

H1 Because of the stigmas associated with the term public relations, very few government communications departments will be titled in such a manner.

Additional questions were asked to find our about this specialized area of public relations practice. Questions focused on the organizational reporting relationship, involvement with strategic planning, and the use of research in strategic planning. In addition, membership in the dominant coalition was examined and the dominant coalition's perception of the communications function was evaluated. The level of involvement with and reaction to activist groups was also examined. Finally, demographics were obtained.

Reporting Relationship

A significant majority of respondents (75.4%, n=43) answered the question, "Does the highest ranking person in your department reported directly to the most senior manager in the organization?" with a "yes." Among those who did not report directly to the most senior manager in the organization (n=15), all (100%) of them said that, "an indirect reporting relationship exist…in which the department reports directly on some matters but not on all." Additionally, almost all of those who didn't report to the most senior manager (92.9%) said they reported to, "A senior manager who in turn reports to the most senior manager." Only one respondent stated they reported to, "a more junior level of management."

Strategic Planning and Decision Making

Respondents were next asked about their department's level of involvement with strategic planning and decision making. The descriptive statistics for department contribution to strategic planning and decision making are presented in Table 2. All five strategic planning questions ranked above a rating of 4.0. Respondents stated they were most involved in, "crises communication planning and response" (m=4.67), "routine operations" (m=4.56), and "response to major social issues" (m=4.30). Although they still ranked above a 4.0 on a 1 to 5 scale, respondents were least involved in "strategic planning" (m=4.02) and "major initiatives" (m=4.18). A significant majority (86%, n=49) said their department made a "contribution to strategic planning and decision making."

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Departmental Contribution to Strategic Planning and Decision Making

Departmental Contribution	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Strategic planning	57	4.02	1.094
Response to major social issue	57	4.30	.886
Major initiatives	57	4.18	.848
Routine operations	57	4.56	.567
Crises communications planning and response	57	4.67	.564

Information Gathering and Research

Those who reported they contributed at some level to strategic planning, where then asked additional questions about their departmental contribution to strategic planning and decision making through various types of research. The descriptive statistics for the level of involvement with various types of research are presented in Table 3.

When asked about the types of research performed, a slight majority (52.1%) stated they were only "sometimes involved" in conducting routine research. When asked about "conducting specific research to find specific answers to specific questions," approximately one third of respondents (31.3%) said they were, "sometimes involved" and another third (33.3%) said they were, "mostly involved." When asked about, "formal information gathering for decision making purposes," a majority (60.4%) stated they were either "mostly involved" or "always involved." Respondents were less involved in, "informal information gathering. While one third (33.3%) said they were "mostly involved," another 43.8% said they were only "sometimes involved" in informal research. When asked about, "making contact with opinion leaders outside the organization," slightly more than one third (39.6%) stated they were only "sometimes involved" and another third (33.3%) stated they were, "mostly involved." The type of research the respondents had the most involvement with was, "conducting formal information gathering for use in decision making other than research" (m=3.60), and the type of research they had the least amount of involvement with was, "conducting routine research" (m=3.23).

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Departmental Contribution to Strategic Planning through Various Types of Research

Involvement in Research	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Conducting routine research	48	3.23	1.036
Conducting specific research to answer specific questions	48	3.46	1.148
Conducting formal information gathering for use in decision making other than research	48	3.60	.939
Conducting informal information gathering	48	3.46	.898
Making contact with opinion leaders outside the organization	48	3.54	.944

Organizational Support

A significant majority of respondents (91.7%) said they either "strongly agree" or "somewhat agree" with the statement, "My organization gives us all the support needed for our department to be successful." The mean for this statement was 4.23. A significant majority (80.2%) also stated they either "strongly agree" or "somewhat agree" with the statement, "In my opinion, my department is among the most valuable departments in our organization." The mean for this statement was 4.38. Most (77.1%) also either "strongly agree" or "somewhat agree" with the statement, "My organization's "dominant coalition" thinks my department is among the most valuable departments in our organization." The mean for this statement was 4.02.

Public Relations Models

The descriptive statistics for the public relations models are presented in Table 4. The highest mean score (m=3.38) for the press agentry (PA) model was obtained by PA4, "we determine how successful our communication campaign is by the number of people who attend an event or use a new service." The lowest mean score (m=3.00) was for PA2, "the purpose of public relations is to get publicity for our organization." The average mean for the press agentry items was m=3.22. After condensing three of the four press agentry items into a single item, the average mean was m=3.16.

The highest mean score (m=2.94) for the public information (PI) model was obtained by PI2, "in public relations, we disseminate accurate information but we do not volunteer unfavorable information" and PI4, "in our workplace, nearly everyone is so busy writing news stories or producing publications that there is no time to do research." The lowest mean score (m=2.08) was for "Keeping a news clipping is about the only way we have to determine the success of our programs." The average mean for the public information items was m=2.67. Because of low reliability testing (α=.250) the four public information items could not be condensed into a single item.

The highest mean score (m=4.15) for the two-way symmetrical (2S) model was obtained by 2S4, "The purpose of public relations is to develop mutual understanding between our management and the publics they affect." The lowest mean score (m=2.65) was for "before starting a public relations program, we look at attitude surveys to make sure we describe our organization and our policies in ways our publics are most likely to accept." The average mean for the two-way symmetrical items was m=3.28. Because of low reliability testing (α=.446) the four two-way symmetrical items could

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics for Public Relations Models (Press Agentry (PA), Public Information (PI), 2-Way Symmetrical (2S), 2-way Asymmetrical (2A))

Model Item	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Press Agentry Items α=.625	**48**	**3.16**	**.899**
PA1: In our organization, public relations and publicity mean essentially the same thing	48	3.27	1.25
PA2: The purpose of public relations is to get publicity for our organization	48	3.00	1.203
PA3: In public relations, we mostly attempt to get favorable publicity into the mass media and to keep unfavorable publicity out	48	3.21	1.11
PA4: We determine how successful our communication campaign is by the number of people who attend an event or use a new service**	48	3.38	1.064
Public Information Items α=.250*			
PI1: In our work, public relations is more of a neutral disseminator of information than an advocate for the organization	48	2.71	1.184
PI2: In public relations, we disseminate accurate information but we do not volunteer unfavorable information	48	2.94	1.08
PI3: Keeping a news clipping is about the only way we have to determine the success of our programs	48	2.08	1.028
PI4: In our workplace, nearly everyone is so busy writing news stories or producing publications that there is no time to do research	48	2.94	1.137
2-way Symmetrical Items α=.446*			
2S1: Before starting a public relations program, we look at attitude surveys to make sure we describe our organization and our policies in ways our publics are most likely to accept	48	2.65	1.00
2S2: In our work, public relations provides mediation to help our managers and their publics negotiate conflicts	48	3.13	1.024
2S3: The purpose of public relations is to change the attitudes and behaviors of our management as much as it is to change the attitudes of the publics they affect	48	3.17	1.136
2S4: The purpose of public relations is to develop mutual understanding between our management and the publics they affect	48	4.15	.825
2-way Asymmetrical Items α=.819	**48**	**2.67**	**.867**
2A1: Before beginning a public relations program, we conduct research to determine public attitude toward our organization and how those attitudes might be changed	48	2.75	1.062
2A2: After completing a public relations program, we conduct research to determine how effective the program has been in changing people's attitudes	48	2.85	1.052
2A3: Before starting a public relations program, we conduct surveys or informal research to find out how much our management and their publics understand each other	48	2.40	.917
2A4: In public relations, our broad goal is to persuade publics to behave as our organization wants them to behave**	48	2.27	.869

* Did not meet the Cronbach's Alpha test of "high" reliability. Construct could not be built.
** Did not meet the reliability test and was eliminated from further analysis.

not be condensed into a single item.

The highest mean score (m=2.85) for the two-way asymmetrical (2A) model was obtained by 2A2, “after completing a public relations program, we conduct research to determine how effective the program has been in changing people’s attitudes.” The lowest mean score (m=2.27) was for “in public relations, our broad goal is to persuade publics to behave as our organization wants them to behave.” The average mean for the two-way asymmetrical items was m=2.57. After condensing three of the four two-way asymmetrical items into a single item, the average mean was m=2.67.

Cronbach’s alpha was calculated for each model construct to determine the instrument’s reliability for measuring relationships. The research supported two of the models and organizational expertise portions of the instrument created by J.E. Grunig and Hon (1999), as the reliability alphas are high. The alphas for the two models that showed low reliability will be discussed in detail in the Results section.

Descriptive statistics on the condensed model items are presented in Table 4. The two-way asymmetrical model alpha increased from α=.673 to α=.819 after eliminating TA4 from the construct. The press agentry model alpha increased from α=.487 to α=.625 after eliminating PA4 from the construct. Constructs were only able to be built for the two-way asymmetrical model and the press agentry models. The remainder of the model questions was analyzed individually.

Public Relations Roles

The descriptive statistics for the public relations roles are presented in Table 5. The highest mean score (m=3.73) for the technician (T) role was obtained by T4 “I edit or review grammar and spelling in materials written by other departments." The lowest mean score (m=2.98) was for "I do photography and graphics for communications materials." The average mean for the technician items was m=3.47. After condensing the four technician items into a single item, the average mean was m=3.47.

The highest mean score (m=4.25) for the communications liaison (CL) role was obtained by CL3 "I am a senior counsel to top decision makers when communication or public relations issues are involved." The lowest mean score (m=3.69) was for "I create opportunities for management to hear the views of internal and external publics." The average mean for the communications liaison items was m=4.03. After condensing the four communications liaison items into a single item, the average mean was m=4.03.

The highest mean score (m=4.27) for the manager (M) role was obtained by M4 "Because of my experience and training, others consider me the organization's expert in solving communication or public relations problems." The lowest mean score (m=3.90) was for "I make communication policy decisions for my organization." The average mean for the manager items was m=4.11. After condensing the four manager items into a single item, the average mean was m=4.11.

The highest mean score (m=4.31) for the media relations (MR) role was obtained by MR4 "I use my journalistic skills to figure out what the media will consider newsworthy about our organization." The lowest mean score (m=3.83) was for "I am responsible for placing news releases." The average mean for the media relations items was m=4.02. After condensing the four media relations items into a single item, the average mean was m=4.02.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics for Public Relations Roles (Technician (T), Communications Liaison (CL), Manager (M), and Media Relations (MR))

Roles Item	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Technician Items α=.851	**48**	**3.47**	**1.02**
T1: I produce brochures, pamphlets and other publications	48	3.52	1.238
T2: I am the person who writes communication materials	48	3.65	1.00
T3: I do photography and graphics for communications materials	48	2.98	1.480
T4: I edit or review grammar and spelling in materials written by other departments.	48	3.73	1.125
Communications Liaison Items α=.723	**48**	**4.03**	**.76**
CL1: I create opportunities for management to hear the views of internal and external publics	48	3.69	.993
CL 2: Although I don't make communication policy decisions, I provide decision makers with suggestions, recommendation, and plans	48	4.15	.825
CL3: I am a senior counsel to top decision makers when communication or public relations issues are involved	48	4.25	1.021
Manager Items α=.804	**48**	**4.11**	**.68**
M1: I take responsibility for the success or failure of my organization's communication or public relations programs	48	4.15	.799
M2: I make communication policy decisions for my organization	48	3.90	1.016
M3: I observe that others in the organization hold me accountable for the success or failure of communication or public relations programs	48	4.13	.761
M4: Because of my experience and training, others consider me the organization's expert in solving communication or public relations problems	48	4.27	.818
Media Relations Items α=.814	**48**	**4.02**	**.92**
MR1: I maintain media contacts for my organization	48	3.98	1.263
MR2: I keep others in the organization informed of what the media reports about our city and important industry issues	48	3.94	1.060
MR3: I am responsible for placing news releases	48	3.83	1.243
MR4: I use my journalistic skills to figure out what the media will consider newsworthy about our organization	48	4.31	1.014

Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each role construct to determine the instrument's reliability for measuring relationships. The research supported the roles portions of the instrument created by Grunig, Grunig and Dozier (1999), as the reliability alphas are high. Descriptive statistics on the condensed role items are presented in Table 5. Because reliability statistics for all four roles presented alphas of more than .70, constructs were built for all four roles.

Departmental Expertise

The descriptive statistics for the departmental expertise of public relations roles and models are presented in Table 6. The highest mean score (m=4.62) for the technician (T) role was obtained by T1 "producing publications" And T6 "writing news releases and feature articles." The lowest mean score (m=3.53) was for "creating and managing a speaker's bureau." The average mean for the technician items was m=4.24. After condensing the seven technician items into a single item, the average mean was m=4.24.

The highest mean score (m=4.46) for the manager (M) role was obtained by M6 "developing strategies for solving public relations and communication problems." The lowest mean score (m=2.46) was for "performing environmental scanning." The average mean for the manager items was m=3.72. After condensing the eight manager items into a single item, the average mean was m=3.72.

The highest mean score (m=4.61) for the press agentry (PA) model was obtained by PA2 "getting your organization's name into the media." The lowest mean score (m=3.65) was for "keeping bad publicity from a staged event." The average mean for the press agentry items was m=4.20. After condensing the four press agentry items into a single item, the average mean was m=4.20.

The highest mean score (m=4.52) for the public information (PI) model was obtained by PI2 "understanding the news values of journalism." The lowest mean score

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics for Departmental Expertise (Technician Role (T), Manager Role (M), Press Agentry (PA), Public Information (PI), 2-Way Symmetrical (2S), 2-way Asymmetrical (2A))

Roles and Model Expertise Items	**N**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
Technician Expertise Items α=.820	**45**	**4.24**	**.69**
T1: Producing publications	45	4.62	.684
T2: Writing an advertisement	45	4.13	1.036
T3: Taking photography	45	4.09	1.062
T4: Writing speeches	45	4.33	.929
T5: Producing audio/visuals	45	4.36	1.004
T6: Writing news releases and feature articles	45	4.62	.936
T7: Creating and managing a speaker's bureau	45	3.53	1.254
Manager Expertise Items α=.764	**46**	**3.72**	**.59**
M1 Managing people	46	3.78	.814
M2: Conducting evaluation research	46	3.24	1.037
M3: Developing goals and objectives for your department	46	4.26	.828
M4: Preparing a departmental budget	46	4.33	.871
M5: Performing environmental scanning	46	2.46	1.187
M6: Developing strategies for solving public relations and communication problems	46	4.46	.721
M7: Using research to segment publics	46	2.83	1.270
M8: Managing the organization's response to issues	46	4.41	.884
Press Agentry Expertise Items α=.770	**46**	**4.20**	**.78**
PA1: Convincing a reporter to publicize your organization	46	4.41	.858
PA2: Getting your organization's name into the media	46	4.61	.745
PA3: Keeping bad publicity from a staged event	46	3.65	1.140
PA4: Getting maximum publicity from a staged event	46	4.13	1.222
Public Information Expertise Items α=.879	**46**	**4.39**	**.79**
PI1: Providing objective information about your organization	46	4.17	.973
PI2: Understanding the news values of journalism	46	4.52	.913
PI3: Preparing news stories that reporters will use	46	4.48	.863
PI4: Performing as journalists inside your organization	46	4.39	.930
2-Way Symmetrical Expertise Items α=.712	**45**	**3.51**	**.71**
2S1: Determining how publics react to the organization	46	3.87	.919
2S2: Negotiating with activist groups	46	2.98	.941
2S3: Using theories of conflict resolution in dealing with publics	46	3.24	1.004
2S4: Helping management to understand the opinion of particular publics	46	3.93	1.009
2-Way Asymmetrical Expertise Items α=.688	**46**	**3.07**	**.76**
2A1: Getting publics to behave as your organization wants	46	3.35	1.059
2A2: Using attitude theory in a campaign	46	2.70	1.245
2A3: Manipulating publics scientifically	46	2.15	1.115
2A4: Persuading a public that your organization is right on an issue**	46	4.09	.939

** Did not meet the reliability test and was eliminated from further analysis.

(m=4.17) was for "providing objective information about your organization." The average mean for the public information items was m=4.39. After condensing the four public information items into a single item, the average mean was m=4.39.

The highest mean score (m=3.93) for the two-way symmetrical (2S) model was obtained by 2S4 "helping management to understand the opinion of particular publics." The lowest mean score (m=2.98) was for "negotiating with activist groups." The average mean for the two-way symmetrical items was m=3.51. After condensing the four two-way symmetrical items into a single item, the average mean was m=3.51.

The highest mean score (m=4.09) for the two-way asymmetrical (2A) model was obtained by 2A4 "persuading a public that your organization is right on an issue." The lowest mean score (m=2.15) was for "manipulating publics scientifically." The average mean for the two-way asymmetrical items was m=3.07. After condensing three of the four two-way asymmetrical items into a single item, the average mean was m=3.07.

Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each role and model expertise construct to determine the instrument's reliability for measuring relationships. The research supported the roles and model expertise portions of the instrument created by Grunig, Grunig and Dozier (2002), as the reliability alphas were high

All the items had high reliability (α>.70) except for the two-way asymmetrical index. Chronbach's alpha was α=.634 with all four of the two-way asymmetrical questions included. Question 2A4 was deleted from the reliability testing and Chronbach's alpha increased to α=.688. Question 2A4 was deleted from further data analysis. Descriptive statistics on the condensed models and roles expertise are presented in Table 6.

Activist Groups

The next set of questions asked about involvement and response to activist groups. The descriptive statistics for these questions are presented in Table 7. When asked about involvement with activist groups, 68.9% of participants (n=45) said that they either "agree" (53.3%) or "strongly agree" (15.6%) with the statement, "My organization has experienced tremendous pressure from outside activist groups." No one strongly disagreed with the statement and only 28.9% disagreed with the statement. The mean for the question was m=3.56.

When asked who was successful at reaching their goal, a significant majority, 90.9%, of respondents said the organization was successful at reaching its goal. While most said their organization was successful, a majority (65.9%) also agreed that the activist group was successful at reaching their goal. Overall more respondents said the organization was successful, m=3.89, than those that said the activist group was successful, m=3.30.

When asked about organizational involvement with activist groups, 79.6% of participants (n=44) said that they either "agree" (61.4%) or "strongly agree" (18.2%) with the statement, "the entire organization, including senior management and other employees, was involved in the response to the activist group." Only 20.5% disagreed with the statement. The mean for the question was m=3.75.

A majority, 70.4%, stated that they researched the activist group in order to prepare a response to them. A majority, 65.9%, also stated they developed a special program to respond to the activist group. A majority, 59.1%, also stated that the activist group did not have involvement in the organization's response to them.

When asked if the organization always evaluates its response to activist groups, results were mixed. While 52.2% said they agreed with the statement, 44.4% said they disagreed with the statement.

When asked about where communications professionals tend to find out about activist pressure on their organization, results were varied. The most common response (n=39) was, "the activist group itself." The second most common response (n=30) was through, "media coverage." The answer, "others in the organization," was given 24 times and four people wrote in "electronic media, email or internet search." Respondents were allowed to give more than one answer.

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics for Activist Group Involvement

Activist Group Items	**N**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
My organization has received tremendous pressure from outside activist groups	45	3.56	1.078
The activist group was successful at reaching their goal	44	3.30	1.091
My organization was successful at reaching its goal	44	3.89	.579
The entire organization was involved in the response to the activist group	44	3.75	1.037
My organization researched the activist group in our response to their pressure	44	3.52	1.151
A special program was developed to respond to the activist group	44	3.45	1.190
The activist group had direct involvement in planning our organization's response to them	44	2.73	1.169
My organization always evaluates its response to activist groups	44	3.05	1.160

Almost all the respondents, 95.5%, said their organization does not have a standing committee to deal with activist groups. Only one respondent stated they had a special committee to deal with activist groups. When asked who most frequently is responsible for dealing with them, the most common answer (n=22) was "the city manager/chief appointed officer." The next most common response (n=9) was the "mayor/chief elected official." Only three respondents stated that the "head of public relations, public affairs or communications" responded to the activist group. No one stated that the attorneys were responsible. Six people wrote in the open-ended response, "depends on the issue." Respondents were allowed to give more than one answer.

When asked about involving the activist group, the most common answer (n=38) was through, "informal conversation." Forty percent (n=23) stated they involved the activist in the organization by having them be, "part of a special committee." Nine respondents stated they involved activists by, "inclusion on a board." Four people wrote in the open-ended response, "outreach or community meetings." Respondents were allowed to give more than one answer.

Demographics

The frequencies for the nominal demographic were also obtained. Frequencies for gender are reported in Table 8. Of the respondents who answered the demographic questions, n=45, 68.7% were women (n=35), and 31.1% were men (n=14). Next, the age and education level of practitioners was examined. The majority of respondents (70.5%) were over 40. Less than 10% were under 30. A total of 66.7% (n=30) of practitioners reported they had obtained bachelor's degree, 26.7% (n=12) of

Table 8. Gender Frequencies

Gender	Respondents	Percent
Male	14	31.1
Female	35	68.7

practitioners reported they had obtained a master's degree, making a significant majority, 94.3%, having a bachelor's degree or higher.

Finally respondents were asked to report the number of staff members within the communications department. The majority of respondents (68.2%) who answered this question (n=44) stated they had between one and ten employees with most of those having one to five employees (43.2%). Only eight respondents (18.1%) said they had more than 16 employees.

Naming Names

The title of the department and the title of the highest-ranking communicator were also asked. The list of responses varied for both questions. Because these were open-ended questions, answers were grouped into the following categories: 1) Media, Communications, Public Affairs, Public Information or Community Relations; 2) Management Services, City Manager's Office, or Chief Elected Official's Office; 3) Marketing; and 4) Other. A significant majority (75.6%) were the head of a department whose title was in the first category and was considered a communications function. Almost all the remaining (17.8%) respondents were included in the city manager's office or chief elected official's office. No one had a title that included the words, "public relations," supporting H1.

Transforming Data

Transforming data from one scale to another is considered an acceptable application when the expectation of the research is to find scientific "value." Determining that value means that one must understand that scales are not, at least in common statistical packages, fixed at one level. Velleman and Wilkinson (1993) point out that the notion that scales are fixed is flawed.

> "The point of these examples, of course, is that the assertion, common to many traditional statistics texts, that "data values are nominal, ordinal, interval, or ratio" simplifies the matter so far as to be false. Scale type, as defined by Stevens, is not an attribute of the data, but rather depends upon the questions we intend to ask of the data and upon any additional information we may have. It may change due to transformation of the data, it may change with the addition of new information that helps us to interpret the data differently, or it may change simply because of the questions we choose to ask." (Velleman and Wilkinson, p. 69)

Tukey (1961, p. 247) also noted that scales are imprecise and may need to be evaluated saying: "An oversimplified and overpurified view of what measurements are like can not be allowed to dictate how data is to be analyzed."

For these reasons, this study transforms what were interval data items (when they represented a single scale) into nominal data indices which allow us to examine the data from our small sample in a richer analytical approach.

Analysis of Variance

ANOVAs were conducted to evaluate the relationship between respondent use of public relations models and roles and involvement with activist groups. A one-way ANOVA test was conducted on the role and model expertise items (those presented in Table 6) since they had the highest level of reliability. Using the public relations role and models expertise items as independent variables and interaction with activist groups as dependent variables, some of the results proved to be significant.

The ANOVA was used to test for significant difference between the variable "two-way symmetrical expertise" and the interaction with activist items. The items that were significant in this ANOVA, which can be found in Table 9, is "organization

Table 9. Analysis of Variance for 2-way Symmetrical Model Expertise Index as Independent Variable

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
tremendous pressure from activist groups	Between Groups	13.864	11	1.260	1.092	.398
	Within Groups	36.932	32	1.154		
	Total	50.795	43			
activist group's success	Between Groups	5.000	11	.455	.315	.977
	Within Groups	46.159	32	1.442		
	Total	51.159	43			
my org reached its goal	Between Groups	11.598	11	1.054	11.909	.000
	Within Groups	2.833	32	.089		
	Total	14.432	43			
entire org involved in response	Between Groups	18.197	11	1.654	1.887	.080
	Within Groups	28.053	32	.877		
	Total	46.250	43			
researched the activist group	Between Groups	15.735	11	1.430	1.110	.386
	Within Groups	41.242	32	1.289		
	Total	56.977	43			
special program developed	Between Groups	26.030	11	2.366	2.171	.043
	Within Groups	34.879	32	1.090		
	Total	60.909	43			
activist group had involvement in planning	Between Groups	29.250	11	2.659	2.887	.009
	Within Groups	29.477	32	.921		
	Total	58.727	43			
org evaluates response to activist group	Between Groups	15.273	11	1.388	1.042	.435
	Within Groups	42.636	32	1.332		
	Total	57.909	43			

reached its goal" (F = 11.909, p < .001), "special program developed" (F = 2.171, p = .043) and "activist group had involvement in planning" (F = 2.887, p = .009).

The ANOVA was used to test for significant difference between the variable "2-way asymmetrical expertise" and the interaction with activist items. The items that were significant in this ANOVA, which can be found in Table 10, is "pressure from

Table 10. Analysis of Variance for 2-way Asymmetrical Model Expertise Index as Independent Variable

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
tremendous pressure from activist groups	Between Groups	32.744	12	2.729	4.754	.000
	Within Groups	18.367	32	.574		
	Total	51.111	44			
activist group's success	Between Groups	7.359	12	.613	.434	.937
	Within Groups	43.800	31	1.413		
	Total	51.159	43			
my org reached its goal	Between Groups	6.915	12	.576	2.377	.026
	Within Groups	7.517	31	.242		
	Total	14.432	43			
entire org involved in response	Between Groups	17.567	12	1.464	1.582	.149
	Within Groups	28.683	31	.925		
	Total	46.250	43			
researched the activist group	Between Groups	26.744	12	2.229	2.285	.032
	Within Groups	30.233	31	.975		
	Total	56.977	43			
special program developed	Between Groups	25.342	12	2.112	1.841	.085
	Within Groups	35.567	31	1.147		
	Total	60.909	43			
activist group had involvement in planning	Between Groups	16.844	12	1.404	1.039	.440
	Within Groups	41.883	31	1.351		
	Total	58.727	43			
org evaluates response to activist group	Between Groups	16.459	12	1.372	1.026	.451
	Within Groups	41.450	31	1.337		
	Total	57.909	43			

activist groups" (F = 4.754, p < .001), "organization reached its goal" (F = 2.377, p = .026) and "researched the activist group" (F = 2.285, p = .032).

The ANOVA was used to test for significant difference between the variable "technician role" and the interaction with activist items. The only item that was significant in this ANOVA, which can be found in Table 11, is "my organization reached its goal" (F = 2.582, p = .016).

Table 11. Analysis of Variance for Technician Role Expertise Index as Independent Variable

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
tremendous pressure from activist groups	Between Groups	15.203	13	1.169	1.049	.435
	Within Groups	33.433	30	1.114		
	Total	48.636	43			
activist group's success	Between Groups	11.253	13	.866	.630	.809
	Within Groups	39.817	29	1.373		
	Total	51.070	42			
my org reached its goal	Between Groups	7.311	13	.562	2.582	.016
	Within Groups	6.317	29	.218		
	Total	13.628	42			
entire org involved in response	Between Groups	17.619	13	1.355	1.376	.230
	Within Groups	28.567	29	.985		
	Total	46.186	42			
researched the activist group	Between Groups	23.598	13	1.815	1.590	.145
	Within Groups	33.100	29	1.141		
	Total	56.698	42			
special program developed	Between Groups	25.828	13	1.987	1.750	.103
	Within Groups	32.917	29	1.135		
	Total	58.744	42			
activist group had involvement in planning	Between Groups	21.603	13	1.662	1.317	.259
	Within Groups	36.583	29	1.261		
	Total	58.186	42			
org evaluates response to activist group	Between Groups	14.490	13	1.115	.745	.707
	Within Groups	43.417	29	1.497		
	Total	57.907	42			

The ANOVA was used to test for significant difference between the variable "manager role" and the interaction with activist items. The two items that were significant in this ANOVA, which can be found in Table 12, are the "tremendous pressure from activist groups ($F = 2.025$, $p = .050$) and "researched the activist group" ($F = 2.129$, $p = .041$).

Table 12. Analysis of Variance for Manager Role Expertise as Independent Variable

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
tremendous pressure from activist groups	Between Groups	26.144	15	1.743	2.025	.050
	Within Groups	24.967	29	.861		
	Total	51.111	44			
activist group's success	Between Groups	16.951	15	1.130	.925	.549
	Within Groups	34.208	28	1.222		
	Total	51.159	43			
my org reached its goal	Between Groups	5.723	15	.382	1.227	.310
	Within Groups	8.708	28	.311		
	Total	14.432	43			
entire org involved in response	Between Groups	21.825	15	1.455	1.668	.118
	Within Groups	24.425	28	.872		
	Total	46.250	43			
researched the activist group	Between Groups	30.361	15	2.024	2.129	.041
	Within Groups	26.617	28	.951		
	Total	56.977	43			
special program developed	Between Groups	26.117	15	1.741	1.401	.214
	Within Groups	34.792	28	1.243		
	Total	60.909	43			
activist group had involvement in planning	Between Groups	24.386	15	1.626	1.325	.252
	Within Groups	34.342	28	1.226		
	Total	58.727	43			
org evaluates response to activist group	Between Groups	14.034	15	.936	.597	.852
	Within Groups	43.875	28	1.567		
	Total	57.909	43			

The ANOVA was used to test for significant difference between the variable "press agentry model" and the interaction with activist items. The two items that were significant in this ANOVA, which can be found in Table 13, is the "tremendous pressure from activist group" (F = 3.228, p = .005) and "organization reached its goal" (F = 3.194, p = .006).

Table 13. Analysis of Variance for the Press Agentry Model Expertise as Independent Variable

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
tremendous pressure from activist groups	Between Groups	24.891	10	2.489	3.228	.005
	Within Groups	26.220	34	.771		
	Total	51.111	44			
activist group's success	Between Groups	10.897	10	1.090	.893	.549
	Within Groups	40.262	33	1.220		
	Total	51.159	43			
my org reached its goal	Between Groups	7.098	10	.710	3.194	.006
	Within Groups	7.333	33	.222		
	Total	14.432	43			
entire org involved in response	Between Groups	14.685	10	1.468	1.535	.171
	Within Groups	31.565	33	.957		
	Total	46.250	43			
researched the activist group	Between Groups	15.555	10	1.555	1.239	.304
	Within Groups	41.423	33	1.255		
	Total	56.977	43			
special program developed	Between Groups	23.344	10	2.334	2.051	.059
	Within Groups	37.565	33	1.138		
	Total	60.909	43			
activist group had involvement in planning	Between Groups	15.138	10	1.514	1.146	.360
	Within Groups	43.589	33	1.321		
	Total	58.727	43			
org evaluates response to activist group	Between Groups	13.302	10	1.330	.984	.476
	Within Groups	44.607	33	1.352		
	Total	57.909	43			

The ANOVA was used to test for significant difference between the variable "public information model" and the interaction with activist items. Three of the items were significant in this ANOVA, which can be found in Table 14. The items are "entire organization involved in response" ($F = 2.721$, $p = .017$), "researched the activist group" ($F = 2.263$, $p = .041$) and "activist group had involvement in planning our response" ($F = 2.214$, $p = .046$).

Table 14. Analysis of Variance for the Public Information Model Expertise as Independent Variable

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
tremendous pressure from activist groups	Between Groups	16.263	9	1.807	1.815	.100
	Within Groups	34.848	35	.996		
	Total	51.111	44			
activist group's success	Between Groups	8.611	9	.957	.765	.649
	Within Groups	42.548	34	1.251		
	Total	51.159	43			
my org reached its goal	Between Groups	5.075	9	.564	2.049	.064
	Within Groups	9.357	34	.275		
	Total	14.432	43			
entire org involved in response	Between Groups	19.365	9	2.152	2.721	.017
	Within Groups	26.885	34	.791		
	Total	46.250	43			
researched the activist group	Between Groups	21.342	9	2.371	2.263	.041
	Within Groups	35.635	34	1.048		
	Total	56.977	43			
special program developed	Between Groups	21.064	9	2.340	1.997	.071
	Within Groups	39.845	34	1.172		
	Total	60.909	43			
activist group had involvement in planning	Between Groups	21.699	9	2.411	2.214	.046
	Within Groups	37.028	34	1.089		
	Total	58.727	43			
org evaluates response to activist group	Between Groups	14.715	9	1.635	1.287	.280
	Within Groups	43.194	34	1.270		
	Total	57.909	43			

The purpose of this study was to learn more about how public relations are practiced in local governments. This was achieved by surveying top communicators and researching public relations duties performed, reporting relationships that exist, use of research in strategic planning, and public relations practice.

The study posited that government communicators would most likely be shifting toward practicing two-way communications as opposed to the public information model historically referred to in government organizations. It also posited that communications departments would rarely be called public relations departments due to connotations and government restrictions. This study also examined if there were any links between activist pressure and involvement with activist groups and the public relations models used and the roles the lead communicators fill.

The survey population, consisting of lead communications professionals for local governments, was asked to respond to a set of questions on a 5-point scale to indicate the extent to which they believed that the indicators in the four indices described their role in the organization and the way public relations is practiced in it.

The next chapter provides a discussion of the results presented in this chapter. It draws the conclusions, discusses the limitations, and examines the significance of this research. In addition, it proposes avenues for future research in the governmental area of public relations inquiry.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Conclusions

Public Relations Models

RQ1 asked what models of public relations are practiced most often in local governments. The two highest scores for the models were for the two-way symmetrical and the press agentry models. When asked about departmental knowledge or expertise in the model area, the respondents said they were most experienced in the public information model and the press agentry model. This leads the researcher to believe that they have the expertise to do all the steps necessary for the press agentry and the public information models, but they have more of a two-way philosophy of conducting their day-to-day business for their city.

It could also mean that more of their formal training was in public information and in press agentry. From observations in the field, various agencies, including local and federal, offer training for public information officers. Many of these trainings revolve around crises response. Local government communications heads are either required to or encouraged to attend. Various public relations organizations continually offer sessions on how to get publicity for your organization. Attendance at these functions is usually more voluntarily. Rarely do these types of similar seminars or training opportunities exist for two-way communications functions.

These findings also support the recent theoretical thinking that practitioners are professionals that make professional decisions at the time of negotiations. They do not enter a discussion or negotiation with one way of thinking. They are similar to a medical professional who has a medical bag full of various tools. Each situation may need a different tool, and this research shows that the professionals are practicing public relations and they are gaining the tools to do so. Recent theory discussions have also focused on the fact that either model of two-way symmetrical communications supports the Excellence theory. Whether the communications is symmetrical or asymmetrical tends to have little effect on the overall public relations efforts. The importance is that the communication is two way in nature.

Public Relations Roles

RQ2 asked about the roles that lead public relations practitioners fill most often within local governments. When asked about what roles the lead communicator filled, the manager items ranked highest. This is to be expected since this person would most likely be managing a staff, creating communications policies and solving public relations problems.

When asked about departmental expertise, the technician role ranked the highest. The lower-level technician tasks such as producing brochures, writing press release, and creating graphics are all part of formal public relations training. Managing employees, strategic thinking, environmental scanning and conducting formal research are all tasks that require higher levels of training and expertise. In government communications departments, there may be one or two employees with that level of training, but the majority of people will posses only the training and experience to do the lower-level technician tasks.

This research also tells us that while the top communicators may be held accountable for successful communications campaigns, strategic planning, research and environmental scanning, they may not have the proper training. Just over a quarter of respondents had a Master's Degree, which is where more of these higher-level management tasks would be taught.

Recent public relations roles research and theoretical work has focused on the fact that public relations practitioners fill neither role exclusively. Practitioners don't walk into the office or approach a task with a technician or manager hat on per se. They are mostly able to do both roles and the manager can step in and fill the technician role when needed, and hopefully the technician has the training to step up to manager type tasks when needed. Although manager-type tasks require a higher level of training, the recent research shows that most practitioners are able to switch between the roles when needed and this research supports those same findings.

Organizational Importance

RQ3 asked about the importance that local governmental organizations place on the communication or public relations role. Based on the information given, it is clear that local government organizations value the public relations roles and involve them in strategic planning. With the majority of respondents stating they report to the head public administrator and were involved in strategic planning, one can deduct that organizational support for the communications function is high. The Excellence study states that there should be this support and that the lead communicator should be part of the dominant coalition and report to the CEO or highest ranking official. Most local governments seem to follow this same philosophy.

Not only does the lead communicator feel they are supported, but they also feel they are “among the most valuable within the organization”, which is to be expected. Respondents tend to rank themselves more important than others in the organization would rank them. Others in the organization would have to be surveyed or the communications head would have to be observed in order to find out how they are truly supported.

Another way to investigate the level of importance an organization puts on the communications function is to determine their level of involvement with strategic planning. Being part of the dominant coalition means the communicator is usually involved with the strategic planning and decision making for the organization. Those who are included in those executive-level decisions ask their opinions, are influential in the process and as a result, are held in higher regard by others in the organization. Respondents ranked the various types of strategic planning activities highly. As to be expected, being involved with crises communications planning and response ranked the highest. While public information officers are most associated with this type of strategic planning, it is the responsibility of all communications professionals when disasters strike. Government organizations are often dealing with crises, whether they are man-made, acts of nature, human error or other, the government communicators are always called upon during these times.

Research, whether formal or informal, can be used to help create communications plans and to evaluate efforts of a campaign. Ratings for use of research were much lower than involvement with strategic planning. Formal and informal research should be part of strategic planning. Since public relations is sometimes viewed as a non-scientific or quantifiable field, it is very important to supplement the daily efforts of the technicians and the strategists with quantifiable supporting data.

With increasing budget cuts in local governments, the funds may not be available to do research. Customer satisfaction or communications surveys, which may have previously been conducted yearly, may be cut to every two to three years or could be cut entirely. Scientifically valid surveys can run from $15,000 to $30,000 per survey. When budget times come and departments are faced with cutting a part-time employee who can produce steady output in one year or a survey which can have limited benefit, the choice is easy for the person doing the budget.

Activist Pressure

RQ4 asked if the level of activist pressure on a local government organization affects which public relations models or roles are used. Grunig and Grunig (1997) claim that “activist pressure stimulates an organization to develop excellent public relations departments” (p. 25).

The majority of respondents stated they have to deal with tremendous activist pressure and a significant majority stated that their organization was successful while less, but still a majority stated the activist group was also successful which would indicate there was some level of negotiation or symmetrical communications.

Because a majority also stated that there was involvement from the entire organization, it leads one to believe that there is an organizational approach to the communication. While it was encouraging that they stated they developed a special program, it was expected that they would have also involved the activist group in the response. Involving the group would have indicated a two-way model of communication. Involving both the entire organization and the activist group are steps toward a normative model of communications and that is a move in the right direction.

Although standing committees do not exist, many indicated they had a special team based on the topic. Formation of response teams is more than likely due to the nature of the interaction with the activist groups. Because the activist group will try to have contact and get reactions from various members of the organization, a unified and coordinated response is necessary. While trying to defeat a referendum, an activist group may interact with the legal department, city clerk, city manager, elected officials and the communications department. When this occurs, a unified response is necessary.

While it was encouraging to find that attorneys were not used in the response to activist groups, it was discouraging to find that so few stated the head of public relations was responsible. The most common response, "city manager or highest elected official," is probably due to the fact that those people are usually on the receiving end of most of the complaints. If a citizen wants something taken care of, they usually start with city hall.

When the organization had an expertise in the two-way symmetrical model there was a significant relationship with things associated with symmetry. As to be expected, those things that were significant were organizational success, special program development and involving the activist group. All these things would be associated with a public relations program that was developed to deal with activist group pressure.

Similarly, those who had the most expertise with the two-way asymmetrical model also had a significant relationship with the organization reaching its goal. Where the two groups of respondents differed was in the amount of pressure from the activist group and the strategic step of researching the activist group in order to create a response. Since the goal of this group is to have two-way communications in order to better reach their own goal, one would expect that they would research the activist group in order to learn how to respond to them. Then, the organization would be more successful at researching its goal. There was also much more of a significance with the level of pressure from the activist group. That could be because this group of respondents is only involving them so they can reach their goal easier. The goal of the negotiations with the activist group and the organization is not to find some common ground.

With those who have the greatest expertise in the press agentry model, the two items that were significant were tremendous pressure and organization reached its goal. This was the opposite of what was significant for the public information model expertise. The items the latter of the groups had significance with were organizational involvement, research, and activist group involvement. These things were not expected for these two groups.

As expected very little was significant with the activist activities and those who had the greatest expertise in the technician role. Only the organization's level of success was significant with the technician role. With the manager role, it was expected that more things that require a manager level of expertise would have been significant. Only the tremendous level of activist pressure and researching the activist group were significant. Research, involving the activist group and the organization's level of success were expected. Neither role expertise seemed to make much difference on the activist group interaction.

Demographics

The gender statistics follow those in the rest of the public relations field with the majority of professionals being women and having at least a Bachelor's degree. The majority was also in the middle of their career and was over 40.

Departmental Title

Lastly, H1 hypothesized that because of the stigmas associated with the term public relations, very few government communications departments will be titled in such a manner. This hypothesis proved to be true. While departments were named things that were all across the board, they were able to be categorized into similar titles. Some titles reflected function and some titles defined location in an organizational chart. Whatever the departmental title, what functions they perform and the way they interact with their publics is of utmost importance. Department title has no impact on the relationship shared between the public relations practitioner and the organization he or she represents.

In linking theory to practice it is important for local governments to have communications departments with trained professional communicators in order to build and maintain better relationships with their publics and especially with publics whose relationships are antagonistic in nature. Public relations practitioners should investigate the public relations roles and models they implement and look for ways for communications to be more symmetrical in nature.

By involving both the public relations manager and technician in the strategic decision-making process and in interactions with activist groups, using a two-way communication model, it may be predicted that the organization will have more success with activist groups and their key publics. This is necessary in order to try and build better relationships with the public relations practitioner.

Limitations

Small Total Population

One limitation of this study was the small total population (N=183) and small number of responses. Because the total population was 183, a low number of responses was inevitable. With the 25 non-deliverable surveys removed from the total population, the valid sample was only 158. At the beginning of the survey, the total number of respondents was 57, which decreased to 44 by the end of the survey instrument. The response rate goes from 36% at the beginning of the survey, to 27.8% at the end. Because of the small N, it is not advisable to generalize these results to the entire government communicator population.

Survey Fatigue

Survey fatigue was also present which is why the number of respondents decreased throughout the survey. Experts in e-survey administration state that online surveys should be no more than 10 to 15 minutes in length because screen fatigue will happen. They also suggest having a toolbar that shows respondents their progress within the survey instrument. Because of the survey design, respondents were not able to jump ahead to determine how many questions were remaining. Future research with this population should focus on shorter surveys and including a means by which respondents can monitor their progress. Additionally, more research-based questions should be included toward the end of the survey since six respondents dropped out when they were asked about strategic planning and the use of research. Since respondents were not able to skip questions, they had to voluntarily withdraw from the survey.

Online Survey Administration

A third limitation of the study was technical problems with online survey administration. Technical problems resulted when the survey recipients were not able to receive emails from the online survey company due to the presence of email or spam filters. As a result, non-participants were individually contacted in order to determine if the survey had been received, which may have affected the non-response rate.

Self Reporting

Respondents were asked to rate themselves and the communications departments based on a series of questions. Because no direct observation contributed to this research, there is room for bias. Respondents may have known what the correct answers were and tried to answer consistently based on what they were supposed to have answered. These types of concerns are always present with self-reporting research and are minimized by building constructs within the research design. By building constructs, you are testing to see if respondents are consistently answering questions and if the data can be collapsed into one variable. Although self-reporter statistics could affect the validity of survey results, they should not discount the results in this initial descriptive research.

Interpretations

Terms that are heavily used in the academic and professional world were intertwined throughout this survey, and there was no means for defining certain terms, which could have easily been misinterpreted. The term "research" could have meant simply a phone call to a few people, or it could have been a statistically valid telephone pole to a representative sample. The phrase "developed a special program to deal with the activist group" could have also meant different things to different people. Even the term "activist group" could have been better defined because it means different things to different people.

Reliability Statistics

Note that Cronbach's alpha increases as the number of items in the scale increases, even controlling for the same level of average inter-correlation of items. This assumes, of course, that the added items are not bad items compared to the existing set. Increasing the number of items can be a way to push alpha to an acceptable level. This reflects the assumption that scales and instruments with a greater number of items are more reliable. It also means that comparison of alpha levels between scales with differing numbers of items is not appropriate.

A Cronbach's alpha of .70 is considered very reliable (Stacks, 2002), and .625 and above was accepted by this researcher. When a Cronbach's alpha did not meet the threshold of .625, either the variable that tested the lowest was eliminated to increase the alpha or the items were tested individually without folding the questions into a construct. All but two of the 14 constructs met the higher-level Cronbach's alpha test. As these measures have been tested previously and were proven reliable numerous times, there may be a problem in the study's methodology. There may have been an internal conflict within the target population. When asked about their departmental expertise, respondents consistently answered the questions, and the reliability statistics were at acceptable levels. When asked about how public relations is practiced within the organization, reliability statistics were below acceptable levels, which may be because respondents did not know how to answer the questions.

Although limitations existed, the significance of this study lies in its ability to contribute to public relations theory and practice. This research will enrich our understanding of the importance of building strong relationships between organizations and their publics in the public sector context. This study also builds on previous public relations studies of public relations roles and models within government organizations in order to further public relations theory development.

Future Research

Future research should focus on how the form of government affects the public relations model and role usage and expertise. Strong Mayor forms of government may differ from a City Manager-City Council form of government, and this research did not ask about forms of government. Another area that could be explored is if the size of the population has an affect on public relations model usage and role implementation. This research did not investigate that area. Cities with less than 100,000 or with greater than 300,000 residents may have different results than the ones presented here. Building on the research presented here, research could be conducted to compare the size of the communications department and budget to the size of the city. Departmental budget can sometimes be an indicator of departmental importance. This research could be further developed by looking at either of those areas in relation to government public relations.

There were a number of cities who when contacted stated they had no communications department or the person who used to fill that role was not being replaced. This is something that should be captured in future research, as it was only captured anecdotally in this research. Cities with greater than 100,000 residents should be involved in resident communications and may even have to content with activist groups. If no such communications department exists, this is worth researching.

Future research should look at the type of involvement public relations practitioners have with activist groups. Some practitioners stated that they developed a special program. What type of program was developed should be analyzed. Another thing that could be further evaluated is how respondents rated level of success. A majority of respondents stated their organization was successful, but they also stated the activist group was successful. Since there was no construct built for successful, we have no way of knowing exactly what that meant. Since there was also no definition used for activist group, more research needs to be conducted to determine what type of activist groups communications professionals have and to what extent those communications are successful.

Qualitative research should be conducted to add richness and texture to the quantitative data provided here. The involvement with activist groups is an area where it would be beneficial to have more explanatory in-depth data to add to the numbers provided in this research.

It is also important for future research to evaluate how other variables such as gender and salary impact the quality of the relationship shared between the public relations practitioner and his or her organization. There is also a great deal of research within the public relations literature on how dominant coalitions view public relations and affect its practice within organizations. Now that the current conditions of public relations in local government has been established, one could compare that with the viewpoint of the organization's lead public administrator. The worldview of the public administrator and the social corporate responsibility philosophy of the organization may have an effect on the public relations models and roles used within these organizations. Technological advances and access to technology will probably also affect the amount of proactive, two-way communication that governments have with their publics. This is an additional area where one could research.

The significance of this study lies in its ability to contribute to public relations theory and practice. This study will also build on previous public relations studies of relationship measurement in order to further public relations theory development.

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Appendix A: Cities in the Target Population

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Mobile	Alabama		198,915
Birmingham	Alabama		242,820
Huntsville	Alabama		158,216
Montgomery	Alabama		201,568
Anchorage	Alaska		260,283
Chandler	Arizona		176,581
Glendale	Arizona		218,812
Tempe	Arizona		158,625
Gilbert	Arizona		109,697
Peoria	Arizona		108,364
Scottsdale	Arizona		200,705
Little Rock	Arkansas		183,133
Bakersfield	California		247,057
Berkeley	California		102,743
Burbank	California		100,316
Chula Vista	California		164,914
Concord	California		121,780
Corona	California		124,966
Costa Mesa	California		108,724
Daly City	California	stated no one handles communication in this city	103,621
Downey	California		107,323
Escindido	California		133,559
Elmonte	California		115,965
Fontana	California		128,929
Fremont	California		203,413
Fullerton	California		126,003
Garden Grove	California		165,196
Glendale	California		185,086
Hayward	California	PIO office no longer operating--no plans to replace person who retired	140,030
Huntington Beach	California		189,594
Inglewood	California		112,580
Irvine	California		143,072
Lancaster	California		118,718
Moreno Valley	California		142,381
Modesto	California		188,856
Norwalk	California		103,298
Oceanside	California		161,029
Ontario	California		158,007
Orange	California		128,821
Oxnard	California		170,358
Palmdale	California		116,670
Pasadena	California		133,936
Pomona	California		149,473
Rancho Cucamonga	California	no one handles communication in this city	127,743
Riverside	California		255,166
Salinas	California	no one handles communication in this city	151,060
San Bernardino	California		185,401
San Buenaventura	California		100,916
Santa Rosa	California		147,595

Santa Clarita	California		151,088
Simi Valley	California		111,351
Stockton	California	position is open and may not be replaced	243,771
Sunnyvale	California		131,760
Thousand Oaks	California		117,005
Torrance	California		137,946
West Covina	California		105,080
Vallejo	California		116,760
Arvada	Colorado		102,153
Fort Collins	Colorado		118,652
Lakewood	Colorado		144,126
Pueblo	Colorado		102,121
Westminster	Colorado		100,940
Aurora	Colorado		276,393
Bridgeport	Connecticut		139,529
Hartford	Connecticut		121,578
Stamford	Connecticut		117,083
New Haven	Connecticut		123,626
Waterbury	Connecticut		107,271
Cape Coral	Florida		102,286
Clearwater	Florida		108,787
Coral Springs	Florida		117,549
Fort Lauderdale	Florida		152,397
Hialeah	Florida		226,419
Hollywood	Florida		139,357
Orlando	Florida		185,951
Pembroke Pines	Florida		137,427
St. Petersburg	Florida		248,232
Tallahassee	Florida		150,624
Athens-Clarke	Georgia		100,266
Augusta	Georgia		199,775
Columbus	Georgia		186,291
Savannah	Georgia		131,510
Lexington-Fayette	Kentucky		260,512
Louisville	Kentucky		256,231
Kansas City	Kansas		146,866
Overland Park	Kansas		155,600
Topeka	Kansas		122,377
Baton Rouge	Louisiana		227,818
Lafayette	Louisiana		110,257
Shreveport	Louisiana		200,145
Boise City	Idaho		185,787
Cedar Rapids	Iowa		120,758
Des Moines	Iowa		198,682
Evansville	Indiana		121,582
Fort Wayne	Indiana		202,904
Gary	Indiana		102,746
South Bend	Indiana		107,789
Aurora	Illinois		142,990
Joliet	Illinois		106,221
Naperville	Illinois		128,358

Appendix A (Continued)

Peoria	Illinois		112,936
Rockford	Illinois		150,115
Cambridge	Massachusetts		101,355
Lowell	Massachusetts		105,167
Springfield	Massachusetts		152,082
Worchester	Massachusetts		172,648
Ann Arbor	Michigan		114,024
Dearborn	Michigan		97,775
Flint	Michigan	no communications office, mayor's secretary does it if needed	124,943
Grand Rapids	Michigan		197,800
Lansing	Michigan	no communication department, handled through Mayor's office	119,128
Livonia	Michigan		100,545
Sterling Heights	Michigan		124,471
Warren	Michigan		138,247
St. Paul	Minnesota		287,151
Jackson	Mississippi		184,256
Independence	Missouri		113,288
Springfield	Missouri		151,580
Lincoln	Nebraska		225,581
Henderson	Nevada		175,381
Reno	Nevada		180,481
North Las Vegas	Nevada		115,488
Manchester	New Hampshire		107,006
Elizabeth	New Jersey		120,568
Newark	New Jersey		273,546
Jersey City	New Jersey		240,055
Paterson	New Jersey		149,222
Buffalo	New York		292,648
Rochester	New York		219,773
Syracuse	New York		146,435
Yonkers	New York		196,086
Greensboro	North Carolina		223,891
Raleigh	North Carolina		276,093
Durham	North Carolina		187,035
Fayetteville	North Carolina		121,015
Town of Cary	North Carolina		
Winston-Salem	North Carolina		185,776
Eugene	Oregon		137,893
Salem	Oregon		113,240
Akron	Ohio		217,074
Dayton	Ohio		166,179
Allentown	Pennsylvania		106,632
Erie	Pennsylvania		103,717
Providence	Rhode Island		173,618
Columbia	South Carolina		116,278
Sioux Falls	South Dakota		123,975
Chattanooga	Tennessee		155,554
Clarksville	Tennessee		103,455
Knoxville	Tennessee		173,890
Abilene	Texas		115,930

Appendix A (Continued)

Amarillo	Texas	173,627
Beaumont	Texas	113,866
Brownsville	Texas	139,722
Carrollton	Texas	109,576
Corpus Christi	Texas	277,454
Garland	Texas	215,768
Grand Prairie	Texas	127,427
Irving	Texas	191,615
Laredo	Texas	176,576
Lubbock	Texas	199,564
McAllen	Texas	106,414
Mesquite	Texas	124,523
Pasadena	Texas	141,674
Plano	Texas	222,030
Waco	Texas	113,726
Wichita Falls	Texas	104,197
Provo	Utah	105,166
Salt Lake City	Utah	181,743
West Valley City	Utah	108,896
Alexandria	Virginia	128,283
Chesapeake	Virginia	199,184
Newport News	Virginia	180,150
Richmond	Virginia	197,790
Arlington County	Virginia	189,453
Hampton	Virginia	146,437
Norfolk	Virginia	234,403
Portsmouth	Virginia	100,565
Bellevue	Washington	109,569
Spokane	Washington	195,629
Tacoma	Washington	193,556
Vancouver	Washington	143,560
Green Bay	Wisconsin	102,313
Madison	Wisconsin	208,054

Appendix B: Participant Emails

Appendix B: Participant Emails

Invitation Email Text

Email Title: Government Public Relations Survey (Sent March 31, 2006)

Dear Government Communicator,

We are conducting a survey, and your response would be appreciated.

Here is a link to the survey: [HTML Survey Link]

Thanks for your participation,

Joelle Castelli, University of South Florida, Master's Student

Please note: If you do not wish to receive further emails from us, please click the link below, and you will be automatically removed from our mailing list.
[HTML Remove Link]

Reminder Email Text

Email Title**:** Last Request--Please Help (Sent August 31, 2006)

Dear Government Communicator,

We are conducting a survey on local government and public relations. Your response would be appreciated.

Here is a link to the survey: [HTML Survey Link]

Thanks for your participation,

Joelle Castelli, University of South Florida, Master's Student

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Appendix B (Continued)

Spam Blocker/Alternative Means Email

Email Title**:** Government Public Relations Survey (Sent September 12, 2006)

Greetings fellow government communicators:

I am the Assistant Director of Public Communications for the City of Clearwater. I am also a Masters student at the University of South Florida. I am completing my thesis and am surveying directors of communications departments for cities with populations between 100,000 to 299,999 residents. I have previously sent you a survey via a research company called surveymonkey.com. I understand that many municipalities have spam blockers that do not allow for emails from this company. They are a reputable survey company and your privacy is guaranteed.

If you have not received any invitations to take my survey and you would be willing to take it, I appreciate your time. You can fill out the attached survey by 1) filling in the blanks and emailing it back, 2) printing the attached word file and faxing it back to me at 727-562-4696 or 3) I can resend you an invitation to take the survey electronically (please let me know if you want this invitation again).

[Attached Microsoft Word file: Government PR Survey 2005.doc]
Of the 180 survey requests I have sent, I have had 50 people complete the survey. I have some interesting results that I would be happy to share when I am complete. Thanks for your time and consideration.

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Appendix C: Questionnaire

Appendix C: Questionnaire

Joelle Castelli, a University of South Florida School of Mass Communication's Masters student, is conducting this study as part of her thesis on Government Public Relations. You are being asked to participate because you are in charge of public relations or communications for a municipality with between 100,000 and 299,999 residents. Your comments are important and your participation is voluntary. You will not be paid for participating in this study. This survey should take approximately 20 minutes to complete. By taking part in this research study, you may increase our overall knowledge of how public relations is practiced in local governments.

We will not ask you for your name or any personal information other than minor facts (i.e. age and gender). Your privacy and research records will be kept confidential to the extent of the law. Authorized research personnel, employees of the Department of Health and Human Services, and the USF Institutional Review Board may inspect the records from this research project. Because this is a public study there are no risks to you.

Please take a few minutes and fill out the questionnaire and return it to me via email. If you would prefer to return the document by mail, that too is possible. If you have specific questions about the study that you would like us to answer before (or after) completing the questionnaire, please feel free to contact me at: jwiley3@mail.usf.edu or (813) 238-8689. If you have questions about your rights as a person taking part in a research study, you may contact the Division of Research Compliance of the University of South Florida at (813) 974-5638.

The first set of questions asks about your relationship, as the head of a communications or public relations department, to senior management.

1. Does the highest ranking person in your department report directly to the most senior manager in the organization? Yes_____(go to Q4) No_____ (Go to Q2)

2. (If your answer to Q1 was no) Does an indirect reporting relationship exist, then, from the communications department to the most senior manager (for example, in which the department reports directly on some matters but not all)
Yes_____(go to Q4) No_____ (Go to Q3)

(If your answer to Q2 was no) Does the department then report to:
3. A senior manager who in turn reports to the most senior manager? Yes_____ No_____
4. A more junior level of management? Yes_____ No_____

Appendix C (Continued)

Rate your department's contribution to each of the following functions in your organization:

	Always Involved	Mostly Involved	Sometimes Involved	Rarely Involved	Never Involved
5. Strategic planning.	5	4	3	2	1
6. Response to major social issues.	5	4	3	2	1
7. Major initiatives (e.g. new developments, services, and programs).	5	4	3	2	1
8. Routine operations (e.g. development and maintenance of employee communication, community relations, or media relations programs).	5	4	3	2	1
9. Crisis communication planning and response.	5	4	3	2	1

10. Does your department makes any contribution to strategic planning and decision making?
___yes ____no (If no, go to Q 15.)

Rate how often you feel your department contributes to strategic planning and decision making through each of the following activities:

	Always Involved	Mostly Involved	Sometimes Involved	Rarely Involved	Never Involved
11. Conducting routine research.	5	4	3	2	1
12. Conducting specific research to answer specific questions.	5	4	3	2	1
13. Conducting formal information gathering for use in decision making other than research.	5	4	3	2	1
14. Conducting informal information gathering.	5	4	3	2	1
15. Making contact with opinion leaders outside the organization.	5	4	3	2	1

Rate how you feel your organization's most senior executives support the public relations or communication function. These executives, who make most of the policy decisions, are sometimes referred to as the "dominant coalition."

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
16. My organization gives us all the support needed for our department to be successful.	5	4	3	2	1
17. In my opinion, my department is among the most valuable departments in our organization.	5	4	3	2	1
18. My organization's "dominant coalition" thinks my department is among the most valuable departments in our organization.	5	4	3	2	1

Give your opinion on how the following statements describe how public relations is conducted in your organization as a whole:

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
19. In our organization, public relations and publicity mean essentially the same thing. **PA**	5	4	3	2	1
20. In our work, public relations is more of a neutral disseminator of information than an advocate for the organization. **PI**	5	4	3	2	1
21. Before starting a public relations program, we look at attitude surveys to make sure we describe our organization and our policies in ways our publics are most likely to accept. **2S**	5	4	3	2	1
22. In our work, public relations provides mediation to help our managers and their publics negotiate conflicts. **2S**	5	4	3	2	1

Appendix C (Continued)

23. The purpose of public relations is to get publicity for our organization. **PA**	5	4	3	2	1
24. In public relations, we disseminate accurate information but we do not volunteer unfavorable information. **PI**	5	4	3	2	1
25. Before beginning a public relations program, we conduct research to determine public attitude toward our organization and how those attitudes might be changed. **2A**	5	4	3	2	1
26. The purpose of public relations is to change the attitudes and behaviors of our management as much as it is to change the attitudes of the publics they affect. **2S**	5	4	3	2	1
27. In public relations, we mostly attempt to get favorable publicity into the mass media and to keep unfavorable publicity out. **PA**	5	4	3	2	1
28. Keeping a news clipping is about the only way we have to determine the success of our programs. **PI**	5	4	3	2	1
29. After completing a public relations program, we conduct research to determine how effective the program has been in changing people's attitudes. **2A**	5	4	3	2	1
30. Before starting a public relations program, we conduct surveys or informal research to find out how much our management and their publics understand each other. **2A**	5	4	3	2	1
31. We determine how successful our communication campaign is by the number of people who attend an event or use a new service**. PA**	5	4	3	2	1
32. In our workplace, nearly everyone is so busy writing news stories or producing publications that there is no time to do research. **PI**	5	4	3	2	1
33. In public relations, our broad goal is to persuade publics to behave as our organization wants them to behave. **2A**	5	4	3	2	1
34. The purpose of public relations is to develop mutual understanding between our management and the publics they affect. **2S**	5	4	3	2	1

The next series of questions ask about your role in the communications department and the kind of expertise your department has. Rate how often you do each of the following items. Do not score items highly if others in the department do them, but you do not. Please give your best possible answer to each question.

	Almost Always	Most of the Time	Sometime	Rarely	Never
35. I produce brochures, pamphlets and other publications. **T**	5	4	3	2	1
36. I create opportunities for management to hear the views of internal and external publics. **CL**	5	4	3	2	1
37. I take responsibility for the success or failure of my organization's communication or public relations programs. **M**	5	4	3	2	1
38. I am the person who writes communication materials. **T**	5	4	3	2	1
39. I maintain media contacts for my organization. **MR**	5	4	3	2	1
40. I make communication policy decisions for my organization. **M**	5	4	3	2	1
41. I observe that others in the organization hold me accountable for the success or failure of communication or public relations programs. **M**	5	4	3	2	1

42. I keep others in the organization informed of what the media reports about our city and important industry issues. **MR**	5	4	3	2	1
43. Although I don't make communication policy decisions, I provide decision makers with suggestions, recommendation, and plans. **CL**	5	4	3	2	1
44. I do photography and graphics for communications materials. **T**	5	4	3	2	1
45. I am responsible for placing news releases. **MR**	5	4	3	2	1
46. I edit or review grammar and spelling in materials written by other departments. **T**	5	4	3	2	1
47. Because of my experience and training, others consider me the organization's expert in solving communication or public relations problems. **M**	5	4	3	2	1
48. I am a senior counsel to top decision makers when communication or public relations issues are involved. **CL**	5	4	3	2	1
49. I use my journalistic skills to figure out what the media will consider newsworthy about our organization. **MR**	5	4	3	2	1

From an organizational standpoint, rate the level of expertise your department has in each of the following areas:

	Highly Experienced	Experienced	Some Experience	Little Experience	No Experience
50. Determining how publics react to the organization. **2S**	5	4	3	2	1
51. Negotiating with activist groups. **2S**	5	4	3	2	1
52. Managing people. **M ROLE**	5	4	3	2	1
53. Conducting evaluation research. **M ROLE**	5	4	3	2	1
54. Providing objective information about your organization. **PI MODEL**	5	4	3	2	1
55. Producing publications. **T ROLE**	5	4	3	2	1
56. Convincing a reporter to publicize your organization. **PA**	5	4	3	2	1
57. Using theories of conflict resolution in dealing with publics. **2S**	5	4	3	2	1
58. Writing an advertisement. **T ROLE**	5	4	3	2	1
59. Taking photography. **T ROLE**	5	4	3	2	1
60. Understanding the news values of journalism. **PI**	5	4	3	2	1
61. Getting your organization's name into the media. **PA**	5	4	3	2	1
62. Writing speeches. **T ROLE**	5	4	3	2	1
63. Keeping bad publicity from a staged event. **PA**	5	4	3	2	1
64. Developing goals and objectives for your department. **M ROLE**	5	4	3	2	1
65. Producing audio/visuals (graphics, slides shows, videos, radio spots). **T ROLE**	5	4	3	2	1
66. Preparing a departmental budget. **M ROLE**	5	4	3	2	1
67. Using attitude theory in a campaign. **2A**	5	4	3	2	1
68. Manipulating publics scientifically. **2A**	5	4	3	2	1
69. Getting maximum publicity from a staged event. **PA**	5	4	3	2	1

Appendix C (Continued)

70. Performing environmental scanning. **M ROLE**	5	4	3	2	1
71. Writing news releases and feature articles. **T ROLE**	5	4	3	2	1
72. Developing strategies for solving public relations and communication problems. **M ROLE**	5	4	3	2	1
73. Preparing news stories that reporters will use. **PI**	5	4	3	2	1
74. Creating and managing a speaker's bureau**. T ROLE**	5	4	3	2	1
75. Helping management to understand the opinion of particular publics. **2S**	5	4	3	2	1
76. Using research to segment publics. **M ROLE**	5	4	3	2	1
77. Managing the organization's response to issues. **M ROLE**	5	4	3	2	1
78. Performing as journalists inside your organization. **PI**	5	4	3	2	1
79. Persuading a public that your organization is right on an issue. **2A**	5	4	3	2	1

Rate the following statements as they related to your organization's experience with activist groups:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
80. My organization has received tremendous pressure from outside activist groups.	5	4	3	2	1

Think of a recent or typical case when an activist group pressured your organization. Rate how the following statements describe that situation:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
81. The activist group was successful at reaching their goal.	5	4	3	2	1
82. My organization was successful at reaching its goal.	5	4	3	2	1
83. The entire organization, including senior management and other employees, was involved in the response to the activist group.	5	4	3	2	1
84. My organization researched the activist group in our response to their pressure.	5	4	3	2	1
85. A special program was developed to respond to the activist group.	5	4	3	2	1
86. The activist group had direct involvement in planning our organization's response to them.	5	4	3	2	1
87. My organization always evaluates its response to activist groups.	5	4	3	2	1

88. Where do you tend to find out about activist pressure on your organization? (check all that apply)
_____ The activist group itself.
_____ Media coverage.
_____ Others in your organization.
_____ Other source ___________________
_____ Other source ___________________
_____ Other source ___________________

89. Does your organization have a standing committee to deal with issues created by activist groups?
_____ Yes _____ No

Appendix C (Continued)

90. Who within the organization is responsible for dealing with activist groups? (check all that apply)

_____ The City Manager/ Chief Appointed Officer.
_____ The Mayor/Elected Official.
_____ The head of public relations, public affairs or communication.
_____ Attorneys.
_____ A special department or committee dedicated to activist affairs.
_____ Other __________________

91. How does your organization typically involve the activist group? (check all that apply)

_____ Informal conversation.
_____ Part of a special committee.
_____ Inclusion on a Board.
_____ Other ____________
_____ Other ____________

Please take a moment to answer the remaining demographic questions.

92. How many people are in your department/division?________________________________

93. What is the title of your department/division?_____________________________________

94. What is the title of your position? ____

95. What is the highest level of education you have attained?

High School_____
Some college or technical school classes_____
Associate's Degree_____
Bachelor's Degree_____
Master's Degree_____

96. Gender: Male _____ Female _____

97. Age: _____

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this important study.