

2005

A study in the relationships between organizational structures and public relations practitioner roles

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A Study in the Relationships Between Organizational Structures and
Public Relations Practitioner Roles

by

Allison Stokes

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
School of Mass Communications
College of Arts and Sciences
University of South Florida

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Date of Approval:
November 10, 2005

Keywords: simple, functional, hybrid, network, matrix, multi-divisional, virtual, expert
prescriber, communication facilitator, problem-solving process facilitator,
communication technician

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My sincere appreciation goes to Dr. Derina Holtzhausen, the chair of my thesis committee, for her strong guidance and support throughout this entire process.

I would also like to thank Dr. Kelly Werder for her direction and inspiration in the classroom. Dr. Randy Miller and the rest of the staff in the Mass Communications Department, thank you for everything you do for your students.

Derek kept it entertaining, Tracie helped me immensely, and Jill encouraged me along. Thanks to each of you.

Finally, thank you to my parents, my sister, and Alex for all the times they believed in me when I didn't. I could never have done this without you.

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A STUDY IN THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES AND PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTITIONER ROLES

Allison Stokes

ABSTRACT

While there exists extensive research in the area of public relations roles, as well as the arena of organizational structure, little research focuses on the relationship between organizational structure and the role of the public relations practitioner in the organization.

This study will provide a review of the different types of organizational structures, as well as a review of public relations practitioner roles. Organization theory literature supplies information on the characteristics of each structure, including levels of complexity and decentralization involved in each organizational type. Public relations literature includes research that aids in formulation of role classifications that may be assumed by the practitioner.

There exists little research on organizational structure as it relates to public relations. The importance of this study lies in its ability to expand both organizational theory and roles research in public relations by examining organizational factors that may contribute to role performance by the communications practitioner. The lack of a linkage between organizational structure and public relations practice has resulted in limited

understanding of the ways in which structure influences organizational communications practices.

The results of this study indicated that relationships do exist between organizational structures and public relations roles. Additional findings reveal relationships between the tasks commonly associated with the public relations roles of expert prescriber, communication facilitator, problem-solving process facilitator, and communication technician which differ from previous research. This study resulted in a low response rate (N = 100), which must be taken into account when examining the results of the survey.

The significance of this study lies in its ability to illustrate to public relations practitioners the importance of understanding the organizational structures in which they work, so they may better adapt their public relations practice to fill the communication needs of the organization.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Public relations research extensively covers the many roles enacted by the public relations practitioner. The effect that organizational structure may have on the role, or roles, assumed by the senior organizational communicator, however, has not received much attention in the literature.

According to L. Grunig, J. Grunig, and Dozier (2002), organizational structure and culture significantly influence the practice of public relations within the company. J. Grunig (1992) recognized that the behavior of the practitioner is essentially established according to organizational structure and the role of the public relations practitioner within that structure.

Early research on roles provided little by way of specification and description about the detailed job responsibilities a public relations practitioner may hold. The work of Canfield (1968), for example, produced the two possible roles of director and counselor. Since then, research has expanded greatly to reveal the existence of some commonly found practitioner roles. Several studies have discovered the existence of roles known as expert prescriber, communication technician, communication facilitator, and problem-solving process facilitator (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1985, 2000; Center & Jackson, 1995; J. Grunig & Hunt, 1984).

The concept of structure typically characterizes the relationships that exist between parts of a whole. In terms of organization theory, structure may refer to either the physical layout of buildings or the social relationships present between people, positions, and organizational units (Hatch, 1997). By examining the structure of an organization, much can be revealed about the culture and communication present in an organization. Through structure, a theme emerges among communication relationships within the organization, and these relationships unveil ways in which individuals become connected in the organization's social system (Johnson, 1993).

This study will provide a review of the different types of organizational structures as well as a review of public relations practitioner roles in an attempt to discover relationships that may exist between the two areas. Organization theory literature supplies information on the characteristics of each structure, including levels of complexity and decentralization involved in each organizational type. Public relations literature includes research results that aid in the formulation of public relations practitioner roles.

There exists little research on organizational structure as it relates to public relations. The importance of this study lies in its possibilities to expand both organizational theory regarding organizational structures and roles research in public relations by examining organizational factors that may affect role performance by the communications practitioner. The lack of a linkage between organizational structure and public relations practice has resulted in limited understanding of the ways in which structure influences organizational communication practices.

Through quantitative analysis, the study will hopefully contribute to theories that may explain why specific organizations contain certain types of public relations communicators.

The next chapter includes a literature review that explores existing research on this topic. Literature from organization theory will be used to analyze the different organizational structures and the role of structure in communication, while public relations theory will be utilized to discuss roles research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The first sections of the literature review will examine the basic components of organizational structure, the different types of structures, and ways that structure is associated with organizational strategy and communication.

Components of Organizational Structure

Organizations form the most efficient and rational social groupings in society; therefore, modern society is dependent upon organizations. Organizations exist as social tools in that they coordinate human actions. While combining personnel, resources, and materials, the organization is able to evaluate its performance and adjust accordingly in order to be successful in reaching its goals (Etzioni, 1964).

Hatch (1997) argued “structure refers to the relationships among the parts of an organized whole” (p. 161). In regards to organization theory, social structure specifically refers to relationships among people, positions, and organizational units, such as departments and divisions, to which they belong. The basic elements of organizational structure, first outlined by sociologist Max Weber, are hierarchy of authority, division of labor, and rules and procedures.

In an extensive overview of organizational structure and its many component parts, Robbins (1990) discussed ways many of those parts are related to one another and

therefore affect organizational structure. He maintained that organization structure defines task allocation, reporting relationships, and formal coordination mechanisms in an organization.

An organization's structure includes the three components of complexity, formalization, and centralization. Structural complexity refers to the extent to which there is differentiation, or a division of labor, in an organization. A complex structure has a greater need for communication across many departments horizontally or between many levels vertically. The more complex an organization is, the greater the need for effective communication, coordination, and control (Robbins, 1990).

The level of formalization dictates the degree to which rules and procedures guide organizational behavior. There exists a link between complexity and formalization. It has been found that, due to the skill of specialists in highly complex organizations, high complexity generally sets the tone for low formalization. A formalized structure includes many rules and procedures that dictate how organizational activities are to be carried out; therefore, formalization generally tends to reduce the amount of communication in an organization due to the discouragement of innovation (Hatch, 1997).

Centralization determines where the decision-making authority in the organization lies. Highly centralized decision-making leads the senior executive(s) to make judgments. In organizations that are less centralized, decision-making authority trickles down to lower levels. Highly complex organizations are generally more decentralized while organizations lower in job specialization require a central locus of control. Decentralized organizations require more communication and employee involvement (Robbins, 1990).

Structure encompasses three other dimensions that are present in an organization. Organizations may be mechanistic, organic, or bureaucratic, depending on their levels of complexity, centralization, and formalization. A mechanistic organization harbors a highly complex, formalized, and centralized environment where tasks are greatly specialized, workers receive little discretion through the presence of strict procedures, and decisions are made at the highest level of the organization. Organic environments, the opposite of mechanistic organizations, involve low complexity where jobs are generalized, informal settings give employees discretion in completing their tasks, and decentralized structures give employees power to make decisions. A bureaucracy, however, incorporates high levels of complexity and formalization while retaining decentralization. The bureaucratic organization is governed very closely by a set of rules and procedures, but employees at different levels are granted the ability to make decisions according to those rules.

Organizational Structures

Mintzberg (1983) distinguished five parts that are basic to any organization. Depending on which of the five maintains the highest level of control, there are five possible organizational structures. The five basic parts are operating core, strategic apex, middle line, technostructure, and support staff.

The operating core includes employees who execute the tasks that produce the organization's product or service. Members of the operating core are specialists who receive autonomy to perform their duties. When the operating core has the control, a combination of standardization and decentralization leads to the formation of a

professional bureaucracy. In this structure, the operating core holds the power because tasks call for high specialization from those providing the goods and services. However, standardization exists in the form of rules and regulations that are internalized instead of organizationally imposed. The professional bureaucracy allows an organization to operate with efficiency while giving employees their independence. This organizational form also leaves the potential for conflict among departments, and employees have a tendency to be compulsive about following the rules (Mintzberg, 1983).

Upper-level managers make up the strategic apex and are charged with responsibility for the entire organization. The strategic apex often holds the power when the organization assumes a simple structure, or a structure with low complexity and formalization (Mintzberg, 1983).

The managers who bridge the gap between the operating core and the strategic apex create the middle line. Each division of the organization becomes an autonomous unit when the middle line has control; therefore, the organization employs a divisional structure. This structure typically includes several self-sufficient units, machine bureaucracies in themselves, which are coordinated by one central headquarters. Each autonomous division allows for managers of the middle line to assume control by acting as a liaison between their respective departments and central command. These middle managers hold decision-making authority when it comes to both divisional strategy and operation. The divisional structure places an emphasis on outcomes by holding each division manager accountable for production. In doing so, the headquarters is able to focus on long-term strategic planning instead of day-to-day operation. Businesses that

operate in different markets or produce different types of product can highly benefit from the divisional structure (Mintzberg, 1983).

The technostructure includes analysts who hold responsibility for specific levels of standardization in the organization. A machine bureaucracy results when this segment of the organization has the power. In a machine bureaucracy, tasks are highly routinized with formalized rules and procedures. The strict standardization of government offices and banks normally places them in the category of machine bureaucracy. The technostructure becomes the major player in this structure because it includes the analysts who standardize job descriptions, budgeting, accounting, and other organizational functions. The machine bureaucracy is extremely efficient; however, it leaves room for conflict between functional departments. This type of organizational structure works well with large businesses whose tasks can be formally standardized (Mintzberg, 1983).

Those who offer support services in the organization create the support staff. In a situation where the support staff has the majority of control, the organization becomes an adhocracy. The adhocracy is a unique organizational design in which there is low formalization, decentralization, and large amounts of flexibility. Toffler (1977) believed the adhocracy, characterized by a task force whose members are assembled specifically to reach a certain goal, are becoming more and more popular in corporate America, especially in areas of science. Adhocracies are made up of specialists who can each perform their tasks autonomously; therefore, a hierarchy of authority is nonexistent. There are no formal rules, and problems are quickly dealt with as they arise. Power has the potential to change hands randomly and rapidly, depending on who has the expertise to manage the current situation. Specialists are typically grouped together in teams, but

each team operates informally with adjustments taking place as conditions change. With the autonomy and informal nature of the adhocracy comes the possibility of conflict due to the absence of formal positions of power.

Achrol (1997) discussed forms of business organizations that first developed out of the Industrial Revolution. Henry Ford provides a classic example of a functional organizational form, a vertically integrated organization, that was the principal structure during the late 1800s and early 1900s. This type of organization centered on standard high-volume production but with relatively low cost.

Alfred Sloan at General Motors popularized the multidivisional form after World War I. This type of organization included the ability to cater to a large variety of consumer preferences by focusing more on the market and product development.

As market preferences began to multiply and product technologies flourished, Achrol (1997) said the matrix organization materialized throughout the 1960s and '70s. In these new matrix structures, the idea was that marketing would develop a closer working relationship with science and engineering. The emphasis here was more lateral than vertical, with dual lines of authority in the organization.

The rise of Japanese global enterprise in the 1980s gave birth to the network organization. Business began to realize that the success of the global enterprise was dependent upon sources external to the firm. The network organization started to prosper further as a means of organizing the information overload and rapid technological advancements that began to take place. By specializing into subunits, the organization was more equipped to handle the changes taking place in the dynamic environment.

For the 21st century, Achrol (1997) predicted a turbulent marketing environment filled with new information such that the classic, vertical organization of the 20th century could no longer endure. All indications pointed to the emergence of a new type of organization; a network within which specialized firms operated in an exchange relationship.

Next, specific types of organizational structures will be discussed, e.g., the simple structure, functional structure, multi-divisional structure, matrix structure, hybrid structure, and network structure. Also, the virtual organization is introduced as a relatively new concept in organizational design.

Simple structure

This type of organizational design may form as soon as at least two people make up an organization. The simple structure occurs usually in very small, flexible, and dynamic organizations that have little differentiation among tasks. According to Mintzberg (1983), the simple structure results when the strategic apex, or upper-level management, forms centralized control. The members involved in a simple structure share an informal relationship in which task allocation is decided based on mutual agreement. Often, organizations operating as a simple structure may appear to have no structure at all. The simple structure frequently occurs in a newly developed organization or an organization that is permanently small. However, large corporations may also utilize the simple structure within specific units, or departments, of the company (Hatch, 1997).

Robbins (1990) claimed the simple structure, resulting when upper-level managers have the power, is low in complexity and formalization with control generally centralized to one person. The simple structure requires low cost to maintain, usually due to the small nature of the business. All members of a simple structure are clear on goals and task assignments, and it therefore becomes evident how one person's actions may affect the organization as a whole. Unfortunately, there is increased risk in assuming the simple organizational structure. With power centralized into the hands of one individual, there is increased risk of corruption and organizational breakdown if the central commander is no longer able to perform his/her duties.

Functional structure

The functional structure divides the organization based on a logical grouping of members that share common tasks or goals. In an organization that manufactures a product, some of the common functional units may be production, sales, accounting, marketing, and public relations. The idea behind the functional structure is to increase profits by specializing tasks and grouping them together for maximum productivity. The members of a functional organization can easily see the relationship between all individuals in one department. In the functional organization, the CEO, or top manager, has control over the organization and is the only organizational member who sees the whole picture of all departments working towards a common goal. This can be a disadvantage to the organization if the top manager suddenly vacates the position, leaving no other qualified individuals to effectively run the organization. Also, the top manager

may easily become overwhelmed by increased decision-making as the organization grows (Hatch, 1997).

Peters (1993) identified the functional structure, or structure based on division by specialization, as the most common organizational design. Employees are hired based on their skill of specialization, and they report internally to a department head that then represents that specific function to the highest authority in the company. The strength of the functional organization lies with its simplicity in clearly delineating task responsibility. It does have weaknesses, however, such as hostility between functional departments that generally results when objectives do not match up exactly. Another weakness involves customer interaction in that several departments may deal with one customer, where each department has no prior knowledge of what has transpired between other departments and the same customer. Typically, functional organizations communicate vertically internally, often resulting in communication breakdowns between functions.

Multi-divisional structure

Hatch (1997) claimed that when the functional structure becomes too large for one centralized decision-maker, the organization typically takes on a multi-divisional structure. In the multi-divisional structure, or M-form, the organization is divided into functional structures that all report to a staff at corporate headquarters. Within each functional structure, members are grouped according to production processes or products, customer type, or geographical region where their activity takes place. The functional structures are each responsible for making daily decisions regarding production schedules

and sales while the headquarters staff monitors overall company performance and formulates strategy. A higher level of coordination is involved with the multi-divisional structure than the functional structure. The executives at headquarters have the responsibility of financial control over all divisions and coordination of company-wide production.

When the multi-divisional company operates in different industries rather than having functional units within the same industry, a conglomerate is formed. The executives of a conglomerate concern themselves with managing the resource flow into each division in order to increase overall profits (Hatch, 1997).

Multi-divisional organizations run the risk of not being as profitable as functional organizations due to the repetition of tasks that occurs because each functional unit has its own sales, accounting, and production departments. An advantage of the multi-divisional organization lies with its size and the fact that a larger company will be able to possess greater influence and gain a larger competitive advantage in its environment (Hatch, 1997).

Matrix structure

The matrix structure exists as a combination of the functional and multi-divisional structures. The matrix organization employs both functional managers and project managers. The responsibilities of the functional managers include assigning specialists to projects and ensuring them the acquisition and maintenance of necessary skills to complete the project. These managers also monitor the progress of the task and make

sure it meets company standards. The project managers, then, supervise each project in terms of budgeting and timeline (Hatch, 1997).

The organization members involved in a matrix structure are assigned to project teams based on agreement between the functional and project managers. The teams include members that possess the functionally specialized abilities to complete the task at hand. The team members report to both the functional manager and the project manager; therefore, a disadvantage of the matrix structure lies with the conflict often created by dual lines of authority. Also, functional and project managers sometimes disagree on the assignment of certain individuals to specific project teams. The responsibility of maintaining a balance between the functional and project sides of the organization lies with the top manager, usually the CEO (Hatch, 1997).

In a matrix organization, organizational functions exist to serve both other organizational functions and customers. According to Peters (1993), the matrix organization is easier to illustrate on paper than it is to work in. In this organizational structure there are both solid lines and dotted lines of reporting, meaning that a marketing manager will directly report to the marketing director, however he or she may also work closely with other directors whose responsibilities may be relevant to the work of the marketing manager. Essentially, the marketing manager works for a marketing director while simultaneously reporting to other directors. This organizational design often leads to power struggles between the staff managers and directors caused by the dispersion of power and authority coupled with the complexity of the structural type.

An advantage of the matrix structure is its ability to easily take on new projects. In order for a new project to begin in a matrix structure, a project manager and team

members must be recruited, which is a common occurrence in this specific organizational design. The matrix structure is also at an advantage due to its ability to utilize its specialists to the full extent. Specialists in a matrix structure often work simultaneously on more than one project team, allowing for maximum use of their capabilities (Hatch, 1997).

Kolodny (1979) claimed that, although matrix organizations contrast behaviorally and structurally with traditional organizational forms, the matrix design develops out of the more traditional structures. There exists the absence of an agreed upon definition of a matrix organization, though Mee (1964) proposed one of the first definitions when he called the design a web of relationships. The difficulty in defining the matrix organization arises due to the fact that the matrix design may incorporate various structural arrangements and behaviors.

Many scholars fail to identify the matrix organization as a pure organizational type, instead adopting the position that an organization may only temporarily take on the matrix form while in transition to another structure (Kolodny, 1979).

Kolodny illustrated how an organization evolves from a functional organization to one with a matrix design. Throughout the process of evolution, the organization will pass through the phases of function, project, and product/matrix before becoming a matrix organization. The progression begins when the organization realizes that the vertical hierarchy cannot respond quickly enough to the demands needed from the horizontal coordinating mechanisms. The organization reacts to this realization by decentralizing the decision making to project managers who are coordinated around specific tasks. Eventually, the project managers recognize the need to share resources once their tasks

reach different stages of completion, therefore coordinating mechanisms are put into place and lead the organization in the direction of a matrix design.

In the product/matrix phase, the organization further develops the division of tasks and emphasis is placed on forming and maintaining new patterns of behavior. The product/matrix phase includes the formation of support systems such as dual control systems, extensive dissemination of information, role re-assessment, and comprehensive team-building and interpersonal skill development programs. The final movement to a pure matrix organization involves the development of behaviors more than structural changes. Once the organization fully transitions to a matrix design, several things emerge such as high flexibility and adaptability, resource sharing, and proactive behavior. It is important to understand, however, that the matrix form is not suitable for every organization that follows the path toward evolution to the matrix design. Some organizations will find that the product/matrix stage is appropriate for operation and will not advance to a mature matrix form (Kolodny, 1979).

Hybrid structure

The simple, functional, multi-divisional, and matrix forms of organizations represent pure types of organizational structure. Sometimes, an organization will not fit neatly into one of these categories, but would rather utilize some combination of two or more structures. Hybrid structures may exist deliberately in order to gain the maximum advantage of certain structures, or the organization may be changing and temporarily incorporate more than one structural type. Confusion often occurs in a hybrid organization because relationships change accordingly between parts of the organization.

However, the hybrid structure can be beneficial in that it provides the organization with the ability to embrace the structure that best fits its needs (Hatch, 1997).

Lentz (1996) saw the hybrid structure as a balance between customer focus and the use of economies of scale, which leads to increased profits. The hybrid structure incorporates the best aspects of both centralized and decentralized organizations. In the hybrid structure, the organization is divided into business units, each dealing with a specific operation of the company. Decision-making is decentralized to each business unit while the corporate headquarters remains the centralized authority on issues of overall strategy. Lentz argued, “Hybrid organizations simultaneously allow operating units to become more responsive to customers while allowing corporate staffs to maximize economies of scale and to integrate operating units into one corporate identity” (p. 454).

Lentz (1996) identified three characteristics common in the literature on hybrid structures. First, the strategic focus of the hybrid organization is such that the customer and economies of scale simultaneously are top priorities. Each business unit is responsible for taking care of the customer while the outsourcing of non-strategic activities allows the corporation to remain focused on economies of scale as well.

The second characteristic of hybrid organizations involves the sharing of power between the main corporation and the business units. The decision-making authority flows back and forth between the two as necessary, with the business units making marketing and product decisions while the corporation decides the overall strategic objectives.

The third and final characteristic of hybrid organizations is that work flows around product development. The hybrid structure still employs specialists, however, concentration is placed on the development of core competencies, or skills that are relevant to all aspects of the corporation.

Network structure

The network structure is a relatively new organizational type that replaces most vertical relationships with horizontal ones. Instead of the organization operating from formal vertical relationships, a partnership is formed among several organizations. The entire network, then, produces goods or provides services, so that one single organization does not provide a product or service. This coordination of activities eradicates the need for the traditional vertical hierarchy, which lowers administrative costs. While lessening overall costs, networks also increase efficiency and profitability that enable the organization to remain competitive (Hatch, 1997).

Networks often form when organizations find themselves faced with technological change, short product lifecycles, or highly specialized markets. Frequently, small firms come together to outsource activities to one another and form a network that can compete in a market where the individual firms could not.

An advantage of network organizations is that they inspire innovation and encourage sharing of information among network members. Prompt information exchange between members allows network organizations to quickly take advantage of opportunities that other organizations might not yet be aware of. The stability and success of the network is dependent upon teamwork between network members.

Employees of the different network segments must work together in order to be innovative, solve problems, and coordinate activities of the network. The network structure requires a certain level of relationship management for the information web to be maintained. This relationship management is crucial for the network to remain intact in the event that either a network partner attempts to undermine the network by pursuing self-interests or a network member is reluctant to cooperate (Hatch, 1997).

A network can describe anything from a national economic system to a social dating service and everything in between that involves entities building relationships. Achrol (1997) realized that all organizations are networks through their department differentiation or external relationships for the purpose of acquiring resources. However, the quality of relationships held and shared values that regulate them characterize network organizations. Therefore, a network organization may be differentiated from a network of organizational linkages by the nonhierarchical, mutually committed nature of the network that shares values and encompasses a system of role and responsibility definitions. In other words, an actual network organization encompasses several organizations which share values and feelings of commitment to one another in order for all entities in the network to be successful.

The rise in the number of network structures is a result of increased competition and the tumultuous nature of the business world, which require organizations to become more flexible and adaptive (Walker, 1997). These networks, or “clusters of firms or specialized units coordinated by market mechanisms or relational norms rather than by a hierarchical chain of command,” (p. 75) will continue to flourish in the 21st century as the business environment does not relent in its level of competition.

Walker (1997) concerned himself mainly with the adaptability of network organizations to their given environments. Network organizations inherently differ in structure, coordination, and governance from the traditional functional organizations of the past. In order to adapt quickly to changes in the environment, organizations have begun to focus more on task specialization. The shift to a network structure allows for increased knowledge gain in fewer specialized areas due to the fact that each firm, or part of the network, is able to focus narrowly on one assignment. What is happening, then, is that many organizations are downsizing and forming alliances so that administrative costs are lowered while the level of expertise is raised through the sharing of tasks and information through the network.

Issues of coordination logically follow the structure change intrinsic to network organizations. Higher levels of specialization require higher levels of coordination so that information is summarized and distributed accordingly. Also, coordination must dictate that each member of the network has set objectives and has access to resources that enable completion of the task. An organization of efforts among the network's parts is needed, and when revenue is produced, that must be distributed as well. Often times, organizations find it difficult to utilize effective means of coordination that can withstand organizational and environmental changes (Walker, 1997).

Networks, unlike traditional organizational forms, must deal more regularly with relationship issues such as trust and commitment. Walker (1997) cited mutual adjustments among members of the network based on common relational norms as an essential building block to maintenance of a healthy network. It is also important to note

that all affiliates in the network must retain equal levels of trust towards one another for the network as a whole to operate efficiently.

Snow (1997) dubbed this the age of the network but simultaneously lamented the lack of an empirically validated typology of network organizations. The author pointed out the important characteristics presumed by network organizations, such as single firm versus multifirm, single industry versus multi-industry, and stable versus temporary. While Achrol (1997) is celebrated for having built a foundation for examining network typologies, Snow (1997) expressed the need for an empirically formulated typology so that research on network organizations may proceed and prosper.

Virtual structure

A virtual organization exists when all the task activities of the company are outsourced (Hatch, 1997). The virtual organization is typified by the virtual product, or a product that is instantly produced according to the specific desires of the customer. The characteristics of the virtual organization include work teams, flexible manufacturing, individual worker autonomy, and computer design and customization (Davidow & Malone, 1992).

Rahman and Bhattachryya (2002) discussed the emergence of the virtual organization as a specific type of networked organization. There are two definitions that may represent the virtual organization. An organization may be virtual in that it is a temporary network of generally independent entities that are linked through technology to provide skills, costs, and accessibility to different markets. An organization may also be virtual in that it simply does not have a physical building from which it operates. In

this context, that definition might imply that the organization is geographically distributed and therefore operates through electronic communication devices.

Virtual organizations have five common characteristics as identified by Rahman and Bhattachryya (2002). First, virtual organizations have a shared vision and goal, and sometimes the organizations also have a universal protocol of cooperation. Second, the organizations group activities around certain core capabilities. Virtual organizations also operate in core competence teams in order to implement their tasks in a unifying approach throughout the entire network. In addition, these organizations both process and disseminate information in real time, allowing them to quickly make decisions and formulate actions. Finally, virtual organizations often delegate tasks and responsibilities from the bottom up when new conditions are introduced or a certain capability is required for the group goal to be accomplished.

The virtual organization is a beneficial organizational design for specialist or individual supply operations that may make themselves available through a phone call, fax, or E-mail to anyone who may wish to utilize the services offered. The technology available for use in the virtual organization is allowing businesses to become international at the click of a mouse. Rahman and Bhattachryya (2002) stated that the virtual operation provides small entrepreneurs with the flexibility and responsiveness that some larger corporations strive to attain.

The virtual organization does not exist without certain social and legal implications (Rahman & Bhattachryya, 2002). As an entity that provides services in cyberspace, there have already emerged issues regarding taxation. Any of the participants in the virtual organization may create a holding area for most of the

company's profits anywhere in the world where the tax system is most favorable. Also, the quickening rate at which virtual organizations are able to provide goods and services often does not keep pace with the decision makers of companies receiving those services. Therefore, legal contracts sometimes are still in the approval stages while the virtual organization is ready to begin production. Many virtual organizations, such as chip manufacturer LSI Logic, operate from verbal agreements that require large amounts of trust in relationships with clients.

Most virtual organizations have proven successful because of a firm vision and well-founded strategy. However, four additional characteristics lead virtual organizations to success. The organization must formulate an understanding among all internal players of the actual capabilities of the organization as well as those that must be achieved in order to generate a learning and developmental environment. The virtual organization must also supply an infrastructure that promotes the sharing of knowledge, communication, and project work among teams that are dispersed locally. A successful organization will not focus solely on its business performance, but it will concentrate as well on monitoring the qualitative business elements relating to services and people. Finally, many virtual organizations have achieved success by abandoning a time-based compensation system and adopting a system where individuals and teams are rewarded through various avenues, such as part financial ownership of the company (Rahman & Bhattachryya, 2002).

Kotorov (2001) credited developments in computer networks with the increase in virtual organizations. The creation of the virtual organization is changing the firm as a societal institution. Specifically, discussion centers on the way future firms will differ

from present firms, especially in terms of decentralization. Traditionally, organizations have commonly been centralized in regards to both control and location of facilities. The virtual organization, however, faces banishment of both formal and spatial boundaries.

Teece (1996) described virtual organizations as possessing shallow hierarchies and substantial local autonomy. Virtual firms avoid specialization by function as well as issues of seniority that accompany a hierarchical structure.

Mowshowitz (2002) acknowledged that the term “virtual organization” was first introduced early in the 1980s and has since been developing. To Mowshowitz (2002), the term “virtual organization” does not conclude the existence of a certain type of organization. Often, the term refers to one of the major aspects of organizational design. Virtual organization encompasses a configuration irregular to the typical corporation while remaining highly dependent upon technology that is computer-based. The irregular configuration consists of fewer constraints in terms of spatial boundaries, leading to the distribution of information and services in cyberspace. In the future, economic and social aspects of business will likely force virtual organization to become the dominant paradigm of organizational design. This type of organization is unique to the extent that it is both efficient and cost-effective in achieving goals.

Organizational Structure and Strategy

Organizational structure exists as an important foundation for organizational effectiveness. Due to the complex nature of organizational effectiveness and the many ways it can be characterized, Robbins (1990) defined organizational effectiveness as “the degree to which an organization attains its short- (ends) and long-term (means) goals, the

selection of which reflects strategic constituencies, the self-interest of the evaluator, and the life stage of the organization” (p. 77).

Over time, many scholars have claimed that goals and strategies are the biggest determinants of organizational structure. Strategy, defined largely as the long-term goals of an organization coupled with the actions that will produce those goals, has since been classified as only one of many elements that determine structure. Several studies have attempted to reveal a conclusive relationship between strategy and structure. In the end, no definite conclusions can be made as to how one affects the other. What was introduced, however, was the fact that the industrial environment of the organization influences strategy and therefore, structure.

Peters (1993) did not claim the existence of a good or bad structure, but one that is appropriate to strategy, markets, internal policy, customers, culture, and people. He maintained that the purpose of examining organizational structure is to develop ways that structure may be better suited to strategy. He proposed ways to think about the organization so that changes may be made to structure in order to enhance strategy. By thinking about what the organization does, the ways the customer is exposed to the organization, the activities necessary to achieving organizational goals, and how communication flows between these activities, one may determine which organizational design is best suited to the organization. After making the necessary changes in organizational structure, constant evaluation will reveal whether or not that particular structure fits with the organizational strategy.

Organizational Structure and Communication

Johnson (1993) discussed organizational structure in terms of the connection between structure and communication. He defined organizational communication structure as “the relatively stable configuration of communication relationships between entities within an organizational context” (p. 11). Through structure, an individual realizes a theme among communication relationships within the organization. In turn, these relationships entrench the individual in the organization’s social system.

Organizational structure in regards to communication is generally studied using the network analysis approach. This approach looks almost solely at the role of relationships, between both organizational members and entities, in communication structure (Johnson, 1993).

Johnson (1993) identified several ways in which structure impacts organizations. Communication structure can reveal the normative behavior of the organization’s members, encompassing informal communication relationships that shape the culture of the organization. Communication structure also enables action within the organization by providing a predictable pattern of relationships. Structure allows an organization to process larger amounts of information due to a filtering process facilitated by single-unit processing. In this way, structure limits information overload and helps the organization become as efficient as possible. Through predictability in communication relationships, structure reduces uncertainty in the organization and instills confidence in the individual members.

Communication structure also exists in organizations at a more personal level, providing social support that allows individuals to grow and advance in the workplace. Through formal communication structures, organizational members and units are integrated into one cohesive team.

Finally, structure has the ability to negatively affect an organization through the relationship that often exists between structure and power. Those in power generally control the formal aspects of structure and therefore, the information that passes through the organization (Johnson, 1993).

Jablin (1987) focused on the structural dimensions of configuration, complexity, formalization, and centralization and their relationships to organizational communication. The structural dimension of organizational configuration includes the five characteristics of span of control, hierarchical level, organizational size, sub-unit size, and administrative intensity. Span of control refers to the number of individuals that report directly to a supervisor. While this aspect of configuration is one of the oldest elements of organizational theory, it has been the subject of little empirical research regarding its relationship with communication. Through the little research that has been conducted, studies have shown that span of control, while affecting frequency of communication, has little influence on mode and quality of communication.

Organizational Structure and Public Relations

Little research currently exists that examines the impact of organizational structure on public relations. This section of the literature review examines previous

research on the existing connection concerning organizational structure and public relations.

The structure and culture of an organization have a significant impact on the practice of public relations within the company (L. Grunig, J. Grunig, & Dozier, 2002). As noted by J. Grunig (1992), the structure of the organization and the role of the public relations practitioner within that structure largely determine the behavior of the practitioner. The structural dimensions of centralization, formalization, and complexity are a good place to start when discussing structure and public relations because these variables allow for comparison between organizational types depending on the levels of each in the specific structure being analyzed.

In research on the effects of organizational structure on internal communication, Holtzhausen (2002) found that decentralization of internal communication led to communication changes in the organization as a whole as well as to changes in the ethical nature of internal communication. The researcher recognized the importance of further research in the area of public relations and organizational structure. Future research could focus on public relations practice in matrix and network organizations specifically, as decentralization of the public relations function in these types of organizations will enhance communication and guarantee communication issues receive the necessary attention.

Through analysis of the interview results associated with the Excellence Project, findings indicated that the matrix structure lends itself to the most open communication system (L. Grunig, 1997). The non-hierarchical nature of the matrix leads to the ability of employees to share problems and conclusions in order to develop the best

communication plan. Excellence findings also led to the general conclusion that organizations with an organic structure, participative culture, and symmetrical system of internal communication facilitate the practice of excellent public relations (L. Grunig, J. Grunig, & Dozier, 2002).

The association between structure and public relations is often discussed in terms of the public relations structure practiced in the organization. J. Grunig and Hunt (1984) contended that effective public relations managers decide on the characteristics of the public relations department, including structural elements such as vertical and horizontal relationships and practitioner roles, relative to the dynamic and complex nature of the environment within which the organization operates.

Public Relations Roles

Because this study focuses in particular on the relationship between organizational structure and public relations roles, a review of literature on public relations roles would be appropriate.

Research on public relations roles reveals many changes in the profession throughout recent years. The following review of literature on practitioner roles illustrates how the field has expanded the research in order to distinguish several roles that may be performed by the public relations practitioner.

Brody (1988) cited organizational evolution as the catalyst for changes in the public relations practitioner role. Practitioners once only functioned as technicians, but in order to keep up with the rapidly changing profession, practitioners now act as counselors

to management. Brody reported that among senior practitioners communication was becoming a secondary function.

Communication must follow suitable organizational behavior, therefore public relations practitioners must work to ensure that the organization commits to responsible behavior. In addition to playing the role of communicator, many practitioners must also be social analysts and the consciences of their organizations. The practitioner of today has a hand in developing policy and procedure, as opposed to the practitioner of old that merely accepted what was provided as fact (Brody, 1998).

Katz and Kahn (1978) identified roles according to the repetitive behaviors of an individual during daily work. The authors distinguished between the ideas of role sending, role expectations, and role receiving. Role sending occurs when those included in management positions, including the dominant coalition, stipulate the behaviors that are to be included in the role of any given staff member. Perceptions of the role held by others in the organization, based partly on an individual's abilities, constitute role expectations. Role receiving refers specifically to the role of the senior communicator as perceived from messages sent by the dominant coalition coupled with the formal education and work experience of the senior communicator.

The organization of the public relations department typically depends on overall organizational size, number of key publics, available budget, and public relations objectives. Every public relations department typically employs a manager-type who oversees the activity of the department. Canfield (1968) specifically discussed the roles of public relations director and public relations counselor. He argued that the public relations director might perform many different tasks depending on the size of the

organization, but typical duties may include public speaking, writing and editing newsletters, articles, and other publications, handling community, employee, and media relations, and organizing special events. A public relations director or manager also must be able to evaluate attitudes and trends, as well as provide counseling to organizational management on the influence of policy and procedure on public opinion. The manager must use research to plan a public relations program and then possess the ability to implement and evaluate that plan. A good public relations manager must be able to convince other department heads of the value of public relations to their specific functions. Also, top management must be persuaded to consider public opinion when policies are altered or adopted and to act in the best interest of the public.

Harlan and Scott (1955) examined public relations personnel in terms of the relationship between public relations and organizational policy. The director, or public relations department head, must occupy a position that allows him or her to take part in strategic management meetings, policy meetings, and meetings with the board of directors. Inclusion in these groups is vital to the director's ability to effectively supervise the public relations department and its program efforts.

Newsom, Turk, and Kruckeberg (1996, 2004) identified staff member, agency employee, and independent public relations practitioner as the three main roles a practitioner may assume. Public relations practitioners may be staff members of corporate or nonprofit organizations as well as governmental agencies. A staff member's specific job description is usually determined by the needs of the organization.

Typically, staff public relations members in small organizations, such as a nonprofit, will work with external publics including volunteers or suppliers who provide

donations. Other staff positions in a commercial or nonprofit organization may include middle management of public relations activity. According to Newsome, Turk, and Kruckeberg (1996, 2004), advancement in computer technology could lead to a decrease in lower level public relations positions and an increase in positions of middle management.

Each public relations firm has its own type of organizational structure, but typically the president shares the responsibility of managing accounts with the sales professionals. Other agency employee positions present in a firm may be an accountant, secretary, publicity writer, artist, and advertising specialist. The development of computer software that includes type and graphics opened the door for the public relations practitioner to become both writer and producer of publications (Newsom, Turk, & Kruckeberg, 1996, 2004).

The third role of the practitioner as set forth by Newsom, Turk, and Kruckeberg (1996, 2004) is the independent practitioner, who often works as a public relations counselor. Normally, the independent practitioner is hired in order to complete a specific task. As a counselor, the practitioner conducts research and formulates communications strategies, which are then presented to the client. Most counselors excel in one area of public relations, providing expert advice on crisis management, community relations, or internal communications.

Common roles found in public relations

Public relations practitioners assume the role they practice by adopting certain behaviors and strategies that allow them to cope with the situations they face on a daily

basis (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1985, 2000; Newsom, Turk, & Kruckeberg, 1996, 2004; Center & Jackson, 1995). The role of the public relations practitioner varies from one organization to the next, but the authors concur with previous research, including J. Grunig and Hunt (1984), who recognized communication technician, expert prescriber, communication facilitator, and problem-solving process facilitator as the four main public relations roles.

These authors acknowledged that all practitioners take on some or all of the roles of expert prescriber, communication technician, communication facilitator, and problem-solving process facilitator. Newsom, Turk, and Kruckeberg (1996, 2004) also recognized the role of acceptant legitimizer, or a practitioner that acts as “yes” person. However, practitioners do embrace a role that emerges as dominant while performing daily tasks and working with others.

Cutlip, Center, and Broom (1985, 2000) provided detailed descriptions of each role, including expert prescriber, communication technician, communication facilitator, and problem-solving process facilitator. The expert prescriber is seen as an authority on all public relations matters. The practitioner in this role distinguishes the problem, develops a relevant communications program, and takes responsibility for implementation of the program. Many practitioners relish the role of expert prescriber because they are seen as the specialist with all the answers. Sometimes, the long-term existence of an expert prescriber may limit the flow of public relations thinking throughout the organization because all of the public relations duties are placed on the shoulders of the one practitioner. Generally, the expert prescriber role is needed during crisis situations and for other specific purposes throughout a communications campaign.

The role of communication technician is often an entry-level position that is not managerial and sometimes does not receive information as to the motivation for communication tactics or the intended results. The technician primarily writes newsletters, news releases, and feature stories. The effectiveness of the communication technician depends on the ability of the public relations manager to define the problem, select a strategy, and relate the necessary tactics to the technician for development (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1985, 2000).

The communication facilitator, both a sensitive listener and information broker, focuses on the use of two-way communication in order to act as a liaison, interpreter, and mediator between the organization and its key publics. The aim of the communication facilitator is to provide both the organization and the public with the necessary information so that the two parties may interact effectively. While serving as the information source between the organization and its publics, the communication facilitator strives to keep open lines of communication by summarizing the views of both sides, developing agendas for discussion, and aiding in the identification and correction of problems that may be prohibiting effective communication. The communication facilitator is solely concerned with matters of communication and not issues of organizational policy or procedure (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1985, 2000).

The problem-solving process facilitator is a member of the management team who works with other organizational managers in an attempt to identify and rectify problems. Using the same step-by-step progression that is used to diagnose and solve other organizational quandaries, this practitioner attempts to solve public relations problems. The problem-solving practitioner works especially closely with line managers

to enact a public relations problem-solving process. Line managers are vital to the success of the problem-solving session due to the fact that they hold the power to make changes and are most familiar with organizational policies and procedures. Through the collaboration of the public relations problem-solving facilitator and line managers, upper level managers are more likely to understand and support the public relations function of the organization (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1985, 2000).

In a study aimed at comparing the roles of male and female practitioners, Broom (1982) found that all practitioners surveyed assumed the roles of expert prescriber, communication technician, communication facilitator, and problem-solving process facilitator at different times. Both men and women indicated that they most often played the role of expert prescriber, but the other roles varied in frequency between genders. Women reported that they most often played the roles of communication technician, problem-solving process facilitator, and communication facilitator in that order while men were problem-solving process facilitators second, then communication facilitators and communication technicians.

In the same study (Broom, 1982), respondents that reported high levels of communication technician functions, reported low performance levels of functions that characterize the other three roles. Findings indicated that the roles of expert prescriber, communication facilitator, and problem-solving process facilitator tended to be played by the same practitioners, as these three roles correlated highly with one another.

Cutlip, Center, and Broom (1985) found in a survey conducted of members in the Public Relations Society of America that most practitioners see themselves in the expert prescriber role, with communication technician following as the most commonly reported

role. The survey data corresponded with previous findings that indicated practitioners who rated themselves highly in the role of communication technician did not have a tendency to rate highly in regards to the other three roles. However, practitioners who rated themselves highly on any one of the roles of expert prescriber, communication facilitator, or problem-solving process facilitator, tended to rate highly in terms of all three roles. These findings suggest that public relations roles may be collapsed to the two overarching roles of manager and technician.

Scholars recognize the ability to narrow these four roles down to the two main functions of manager and technician (Newsom, Turk, & Kruckeberg, 1996; J. Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1985, 2000). The manager acts as a supervisor for the technical staff and uses research findings to serve as a counselor to management in regards to planning and policy making. The technician uses his or her skills to perform the public relations tasks needed by the organization. Most public relations practitioners agree that the two roles of manager and technician do exist, however, since public relations work involves a large variety of activities, many practitioners assume both roles simultaneously. It might then be better to describe the role of the individual practitioner by investigating which role the practitioner takes on the majority of the time. The most important characteristic of public relations and its practitioners, however, is the ability to help the organization adjust to the environment in which it operates.

Roles and excellence

In 1984, a team of researchers began a study that aimed to determine how public relations contributes to organizational effectiveness. Through the surveying of

approximately 5,000 public relations practitioners as well as some in-depth interviews, the researchers reasoned that only excellent public relations departments contribute significantly to organizational effectiveness. Therefore, the research came to be known as the Excellence Project. The study resulted in a set of about 12 characteristics that may be found in excellent public relations departments (L. Grunig, 1997).

One of the characteristics found to contribute to effective public relations involves the role of the senior practitioner. The data produced by the excellence study maintained that senior managers who receive support from skilled technicians lead excellent public relations departments. The excellence data also proved the existence of two types of managers, including a departmental supervisor and a senior adviser. The supervisor oversees the public relations department and its activity. The senior adviser, however, serves at the executive level of the organization and is often a member of the dominant coalition who has access to those with extreme power. Senior advisers are in a position to affect company policy through their connections to the dominant coalition.

The work of Dozier is credited with the identification of two roles that exist outside the boundaries of communication technician and communication manager (J. Grunig & Hunt, 1984). The communication liaison role and the media relations role are mid-level management roles in public relations practice. The excellence study found that CEOs most often prefer for the senior public relations practitioner to be a manager or communication liaison, while the role of media relations expert also received positive responses (L. Grunig, 1997).

The communication liaison is a practitioner who facilitates communication and advises the organization on communication issues. The communication liaison assists the

upper-level public relations managers by acting as an organizational representative at events and meetings; however, this position holds no power to actually manage the communication function. The liaison also works to create possibilities for management to communicate with both internal and external publics.

The media relations practitioner develops a two-way relationship with the media, maintaining media contact and producing materials for dissemination to media members. The practitioner in this role also keeps other members of the organization informed about relevant occurrences in the media (J. Grunig & Hunt, 1984).

In the most recent text on communications excellence, L. Grunig, J. Grunig, and Dozier (2002) viewed roles as ways of classifying the various behaviors an individual may enact in an organization. Organizations could possibly be defined as systems of roles, and the excellence project succeeded in expanding the field of roles research. One way in which the excellence study differed from previous roles research is that questionnaire items asked communicators what role expectations the dominant coalition has expressed to them in addition to asking what roles they actually enact. The excellence project also surveyed CEOs to determine the expectations held of top communicators, including the role the senior practitioner should hold. Results indicated that CEOs expect the senior communicator to be a manager who is an expert in media relations. Also, it was revealed that CEOs often hire a senior communicator due to his or her technical skills but realize technical skills alone are insufficient in dealing with a crisis or other major situation that requires strategic communication skills.

Dozier (1992) reviewed roles research in the first installment of texts that chronicled the excellence project. Throughout the review, Dozier proposed 15 statements

that summarized roles research at that time. The first proposition claimed that practitioner activities may parsimoniously be divided into the basic roles of manager and technician. Dozier's other 14 propositions specifically referred to ways that the managerial role is associated with characteristics of excellence, such as two-way symmetrical and asymmetrical models of communication, environmental scanning, public relations program planning and evaluation, and strategic decision-making involvement.

L. Grunig, J. Grunig, and Dozier (2002) later integrated those 14 propositions into the one proposition that the managerial role will be associated with other characteristics of excellent communications departments. Divisions of the managerial and technical roles for the senior communicator did, in fact, prove to distinguish which communications departments were excellent. The excellence study found that the availability of knowledge to hold a managerial role sets excellent departments apart from less excellent ones. Higher levels of technical expertise were also found in excellent communications departments; however, the accompaniment of managerial expertise maximized the value of technical skills.

International public relations roles

Petersen, Holtzhausen, and Tindall (2002) studied public relations practitioner roles in South Africa in an effort to expand roles research to an international scope. The researchers defined public relations roles as actions that are repeatedly performed in order to establish a system of practice. The authors surveyed practitioners in South Africa to determine how they perceived their roles as professional communicators. The

questionnaire tested four roles, one that had previously been identified in earlier studies and three that were conceptualized from issues relating to public relations practice in the environment of South Africa.

The researchers studied the roles of liaison, media relations, cultural interpreter, and personal influence because they anticipated that the political, social, and cultural environment in South Africa would predict these roles. The liaison role, based on previous descriptions of the communication facilitator and expert prescriber, acts as a communication facilitator between an organization and its publics. It was included in the study because indications were that if the media relations role were language specific, practitioners who were not English speaking would, instead, perform the traditional liaison role as conceptualized in the communication facilitator role (Petersen, Holtzhausen, & Tindall, 2002).

The role of cultural interpreter is characterized by belonging to a senior practitioner who acts as a consultant on policy issues that focus on relationship-building with cultural publics who have previously been neglected. In the role of personal influence, the practitioner builds personal relationships with strategic constituents on personal time. This role often includes the giving of gifts in order to maintain relationships.

Statistical analysis of the survey data revealed that all practitioners performed each of the roles, revealing the homogenization of roles in the field. The role that reportedly accounted for most of the practitioners' time was the role of liaison. By acting as boundary-spanners in this role, communicators aided in the survival of their organizations in a complex South African environment. The role of media relations

emerged as the second most performed while cultural interpreter and personal influence followed in that order. Contrary to most of the roles research reported in the United States, the four roles in South African public relations could not be divided into managerial and technical functions (Petersen, Holtzhausen, & Tindall, 2002).

Research Questions

As is apparent, most of the roles research in public relations focuses on role typology and does not to any large extent explore the link between roles and other organizational dimensions. As such, previous research suggests that there is more to discover regarding the relationship between organizational structure and public relations practice. Out of this extensive literature review, there emerge questions about the ways in which organizational structure and the role of the public relations practitioner are connected. By surveying public relations practitioners on the tasks performed at work, those tasks may be related to specific roles. The survey will also attempt to determine the organizational structures in which the practitioners work, therefore determining the relationships between roles and organizational structure. The present study aims specifically to further research in the areas of organization theory and public relations roles by answering the following research questions:

RQ1: Are simple, functional, multi-divisional, hybrid, matrix, network, or virtual organizational structures related to the public relations roles of expert prescriber, communication technician, communication facilitator, and problem-solving process facilitator?

RQ2: Are certain tasks related to the public relations roles of expert prescriber, communication technician, communication facilitator, and problem-solving process facilitator? Are those tasks also related to the simple, functional, multi-divisional, hybrid, matrix, network, or virtual organizational structures?

RQ3: What is the relationship between organizational structure and public relations roles in the organization?

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

In order to examine the correlation between organizational structure and the role of the public relations practitioner, a quantitative analysis was conducted based on a survey of Public Relations Society of America members. The survey questionnaire included items that measured the communicators' roles in their public relations departments, as well as the type of organizational structure in which each communicator worked.

Instrumentation

The questionnaire was used to measure organizational structure and the role of the public relations practitioner. Specifically, the questions measured the type of organizational structures the respondents worked in, as well as the role, or roles, each respondent played as an organizational communicator.

In order to test organizational structure, respondents were provided with a set of statements that defined each organizational structure reviewed in the literature, including simple, functional, multi-divisional, matrix, network, and virtual organizations. Due to the fact that the hybrid structure includes a mixture of the six other structural types, it was determined that the survey instrument would not test specifically for the hybrid structure.

The measurement scale for the items relating to organizational structure employed a 7-point Likert-type design. A Likert-type scale, or summated rating scale, uses a continuum of predesignated responses to gauge reactions to statements. The scale responses must be intervals, and the continuum must have polar opposite ends and a neutral midpoint (Stacks, 2002). The scale was used to determine which organizational type best represented the environment in which each respondent worked. Respondents were asked to indicate on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*), the extent to which they agreed that each definition described the structure of the organization in which they worked.

Based on the previous literature review, attributes of each organizational structure were identified. The following statements appeared on the questionnaire in order to measure the organizational structure of each respondents' workplace:

The following items were used to operationalize simple structure:

1. In my workplace, organizational control is centralized to one person (Mintzberg, 1983; Robbins, 1990).
2. In my organization, task allocation is informal and based on mutual agreement (Hatch, 1997).
3. The organization in which I work does not appear to have a formal organizational structure (Hatch, 1997).
4. My work environment is flexible and dynamic, so the tasks I perform often change according to what is needed (Hatch, 1997).

The following items were used to operationalize functional structure:

5. The organization in which I work is divided into groups of people that share common tasks and goals (Hatch, 1997).
6. My organization increases profits and productivity by grouping together people who perform specialized tasks (Hatch, 1997).

7. In my organization, the CEO, or top manager, has control over the managers of other business units (Hatch, 1997).
8. The head of my department represents my department to the highest authority in the company (Peters, 1993).

The following items were used to operationalize multi-divisional structure:

9. My organization is divided into divisions that are geographically dispersed but all report to a staff at corporate headquarters (Hatch, 1997).
10. My organization is grouped into divisions according to products, customer type or geographical region (Hatch, 1997).
11. Each division in my organization is responsible for making daily decisions, while the headquarters staff monitors overall company performance and formulates strategy (Hatch, 1997).
12. My organization has a headquarters that coordinates company-wide production and is responsible for financial control of all company divisions (Hatch, 1997).

The following items were used to measure matrix structure:

13. My organization uses project teams consisting of employees from various departments to execute special projects (Hatch, 1997).
14. In my workplace, employees often report to their direct supervisor as well as a supervisor who is leading a special project for the company (Hatch, 1997).
15. Members of my organization are assigned to project teams based on their specialized abilities to complete the task at hand (Hatch, 1997).
16. The top executive in my organization is responsible for the overall management of both organizational functions and special projects (Hatch, 1997).

The following items were used to measure network structure:

17. My organization depends on partnerships with several other organizations to produce its product or perform its service (Hatch, 1997).
18. My organization is part of an interdependent network that produces goods or provides services (Hatch, 1997).
19. Employees of my organization regularly work with employees of partner organizations in order to be innovative, solve problems and coordinate activities (Hatch, 1997).

20. In my workplace, information is promptly exchanged with partner organizations so that we can quickly take advantage of business opportunities (Hatch, 1997). (i.e., a production company and a marketing firm join together to quickly launch a new product)

The following items were used to measure virtual structure:

21. My organization has employees who work off-site and use technology to perform company tasks (Hatch, 1997; Davidow & Malone, 1992). (i.e., employees who perform technology-based tasks from home)
22. Employees of my organization work autonomously in different locations using computer technology (Davidow & Malone, 1992).
23. My organization uses independent workers who are linked through technology to provide skills and services (Davidow & Malone, 1992).
24. My organization does not have a physical building from which it operates (Rahman & Bhattachryya, 2002).

The instrument also included items that measured the role(s) played by the public relations practitioner. These items tested what roles each respondent felt he or she assumed in the position of public relations practitioner. Previous literature supports the common existence of the roles of expert prescriber, communication facilitator, problem-solving process facilitator, and communication technician (Center & Jackson, 1995; Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1985; Broom, 1982).

Roles research has previously revealed that the roles of expert prescriber, communication facilitator, and problem-solving process facilitator may be collapsed into the overarching role of communication manager (J. Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1985; Broom, 1982). For this reason, the instrument was not tested for the specific role of communication manager. The questionnaire tested for the roles of expert

prescriber, communication facilitator, problem-solving process facilitator, and communication technician.

Some items used in three previous studies in 1979, 1981, and 1982 to measure the role of manager and the role of technician were replicated in this study (Dozier, 1992). Items previously used to measure the public relations manager role were divided according to role responsibility as outlined by Cutlip, Center, and Bloom (1985) to measure the three roles of expert prescriber, communication facilitator, and problem-solving process facilitator. Items used to measure the communication technician role were replicated from previous studies (Dozier, 1992).

A Likert-type scale was also used to measure the level of agreement of each respondent with the statements regarding role enactment. The instrument provided the four statements of function for each role and asked the respondent to indicate on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) the extent to which he or she agreed that the specific task was part of their duties as a public relations practitioner.

The expert prescriber is seen as an authority on all public relations matters. The practitioner in this role distinguishes the problem, develops a relevant communications program, and takes responsibility for implementation of the program (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1985).

The following items were used to measure the expert prescriber role:

25. I am viewed as a specialist in the field of public relations.
26. Part of my responsibility is to develop a public relations program for my organization/client.
27. Implementation of a public relations program for my organization/client is primarily my responsibility.

28. The success or failure of my client's or my organization's public relations program is my responsibility.

The communication facilitator focuses on the use of two-way communication in order to act as a liaison, interpreter, and mediator between the organization and its key publics. The aim of the communication facilitator is to provide both the organization and the public with the necessary information so that the two parties may interact effectively. While serving as the information source between the organization and its publics, the communication facilitator strives to keep open lines of communication by summarizing the views of both sides, developing agendas for discussion, and aiding in the identification and correction of problems that may be prohibiting effective communication (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1985).

The following items were used to measure the communication facilitator role:

29. I act as a mediator between my organization/client and key publics in order to facilitate communication.
30. It is my responsibility to identify problems that may prohibit effective communication between my organization/client and key publics.
31. I create forums for discussion where my organization /client and key publics may communicate about relevant issues.
32. It is my responsibility to ensure that my organization/client and key publics have the necessary information to effectively interact with one another.

The problem-solving process facilitator is a member of the management team that works with other organizational managers in an attempt to identify and rectify public relations problems. The problem-solving practitioner works especially closely with lower- and mid-level managers to enact a public relations problem-solving process.

Through the collaboration of the public relations problem-solving facilitator and these managers, upper level managers are more likely to understand and support the public relations function of the organization (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1985).

The following items were used to measure the problem-solving process facilitator role:

33. I work closely with managers in my organization or my client's organization in order to identify public relations problems.
34. Through collaboration with managers in my organization or my client's organization, we work to solve communication problems.
35. When there is a public relations problem in my organization or my client's organization, it is my responsibility to create a plan to solve it.
36. I am a member of the management team of my organization.

Items to measure the communication technician role were found in Dozier (1992).

These items were previously used in three studies that measured the roles of communication manager and communication technician.

The following items were used to measure the communication technician role:

37. I produce brochures, pamphlets, and other publications for my organization or my client's organization.
38. I edit any materials written by others in my organization or my client's organization.
39. I handle the technical aspects of producing public relations materials, such as designing and writing copy.
40. I write public relations materials, including press releases and other publications, that present information on issues important to my organization or my client's organization.

The questionnaire included an additional item that was used to measure task allocation. Respondents were asked to use a scale of 100% to indicate how much time

they spent performing the activities of writing/editing, management, media relations, liaison with publics, event organization, research, speaking, counseling, production, and training.

The questionnaire concluded with demographic items that asked respondents to report their highest degree earned, years of experience working in public relations, current job title, gender, and annual salary. By measuring the demographic characteristics of respondents, the researcher gained insight into the sample of practitioners who responded to the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was pretested in a graduate level public relations management class at the University of South Florida. The course consisted mostly of public relations practitioners. From the pretest, changes were made to the wording of some questions, and it was determined that the average respondent should complete the questionnaire in 10-15 minutes.

Sampling Procedures

To measure practitioner roles and the organizational structure within which they work, members of the Public Relations Society of America were selected as the survey population. PRSA, the world's largest organization for public relations practitioners, has approximately 20,000 members. Goals of the professional organization focus on advancing the profession, strengthening the society, and establishing global leadership (PRSA Web site, April, 2004).

PRSA is divided into 10 districts throughout the United States, and those districts encompass 116 chapters in total. Due to the fact that PRSA member information is not

readily available, the sample was chosen in groups, a process known as cluster sampling (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003).

In order to gain a representative sample, one chapter from each of the ten districts was randomly selected for inclusion in the sample. The chapter names, by district, were placed into a bowl, and one chapter was selected from each district. In order to ensure a response rate that will prove to be statistically significant, it was determined that each chapter selected would have to include at least 100 members in order for that chapter to participate in the study. Chapters that were chosen and had less than 100 members were thrown out, and another chapter from that district was randomly selected.

The chapters chosen to be included in the study were Bluegrass in the East Central district, Maryland in the Mid-Atlantic district, Minnesota in the Midwest district, Rochester in the Northeast district, California Capital in the North Pacific district, Memphis in the Southeast district, Houston in the Southwest district, Palm Beach in the Sunshine district, New Jersey in the Tri-State district, and Colorado in the Western district. Membership contact information is attainable through the Web site by a current PRSA member or through the PRSA *Blue Book*. Due to the fact that the PRSA Web site specifically states that member contact information is not to be used for research purposes, the presidents of each PRSA chapter chosen for the survey were contacted in order to ask permission to survey chapter members for purposes of this research study.

The researcher's advising professor initially contacted the president of each PRSA chapter to request his or her permission for chapter members to participate in the survey (see Appendix B). Once the initial contact was made, the researcher took over

communication with the chapter president to arrange facilitation of the questionnaire to chapter members.

Initially, the presidents of the Bluegrass, Maryland, Rochester, New Jersey, and Colorado chapters responded that their chapters were able to participate in the survey. Each of these chapter presidents wanted to email their members themselves, instead of allowing the researcher access to email chapter members directly. When chapter presidents from the other five districts did not respond after a considerable amount of time, emails were sent to presidents of three additional chapters in each of the five districts. Presidents of the Chicago, Greater Kansas City, and St. Louis chapters in the Midwest district; the Silicon Valley, San Francisco Bay Area, and Greater Salt Lake chapters in the North Pacific district; the South Carolina, Nashville, and Georgia chapters in the Southeast district; the Greater Fort Worth, New Orleans, and Oklahoma City chapters in the Southwest district; and the Tampa Bay, North Florida, and Orlando Regional chapters in the Sunshine district were contacted.

From these 15 additional emails to chapter presidents, only two responded that their chapters would be able to participate in the survey. Presidents of the Georgia chapter in the Southeast district and the St. Louis chapter in the Midwest district gave permission for their chapters to participate, and both presidents also requested that they contact chapter members directly instead of the researcher.

Out of the 10 PRSA districts, only seven were represented in the final survey sample. By adding the number of PRSA members in each of the seven chapters, the study included a possible sample size of 1,554 respondents if membership numbers are current.

Data Collection Procedures

The survey was conducted via Web-based questionnaire that was emailed to PRSA chapter presidents who then passed the email on to their members.

Couper (2000) recognized the fact that the increasing popularity of Web surveys could lead this research method to soon replace more traditional methods of data collection. There are advantages and disadvantages associated with conducting a Web-based survey. Advantages include cost effectiveness, and the convenience associated with both sending the questionnaires and receiving the data in a timely manner. The main disadvantage of Internet surveys lies with the fact that there is no way to determine who actually filled out a questionnaire on the Internet. In other words, there is no way to ensure that the data received from an Internet survey all originated with the intended sample (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003).

Public relations practitioners are no longer “laggards” in the use of new technology. Recent research found that practitioners are increasingly using the Internet in order to strategically practice public relations (Porter & Sallot, 2003). A study of the differences in respondents to email and mail surveys revealed that “respondents to e-mail surveys tend to possess more understanding of the technological aspects of the Internet and e-mail operation” (Ranchhod & Zhou, 2001, p. 259). Assuming that public relations practitioners are knowledgeable about and comfortable using technology, a Web-based survey of practitioners has the potential to be successful.

A member of the University of South Florida Information Technology department who has the expertise to construct a Web-based survey developed the questionnaire, and the questionnaire, along with the results, was housed on the USF server. The

questionnaire was distributed via a link embedded in emails sent to the PRSA presidents whose chapters were included in the sample. Results were placed directly into a spreadsheet upon completion of each questionnaire in order to facilitate the organization of data so that statistical analysis could be run when the time frame for survey completion passed.

Research has shown that for mail and email surveys, multiple contacts with respondents are the most effective ways to increase the rate of response (Dillman, 2000). In this case, the respondents received a prenotification email informing them about the study and asking them to respond when they receive the link to the questionnaire in the near future (see Appendix C). After approximately four days, respondents received an email asking them to participate in the study, and the email included a link to the questionnaire (see Appendix D). One week later, respondents received an email reminder about the importance of the survey, and the email again included the link to the questionnaire (see Appendix E). After one more week, respondents received yet another reminder with the questionnaire link included (see Appendix F). Finally, after an acceptable number of responses were received and the study drew to a close, respondents received a final email thanking them for their participation in the study (see Appendix G). In the instance of each communication with PRSA members, the emails were first sent to their chapter president, and the president was then asked to forward the email to the entire chapter.

Statistical Analysis

Once the survey period closed, SPSS 12.0 for Windows was used to analyze the data. Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the reliability of the items intended to measure the different constructs included in organizational structure and practitioner roles, respectively. Depending on the outcome of the reliability analysis, factor analysis was run to determine if the items used to measure both organizational structure and practitioner roles may be collapsed into single constructs for each structure and each role.

Finally, Pearson's correlation analysis was used to determine what relationships emerged between organizational structures and public relations practitioner roles, between tasks and practitioner roles, and between structures and public relations tasks.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

From the random sample of PRSA members, 100 individuals completed or partially completed the online questionnaire. Since the researcher considered this an exploratory study, questionnaires that were partially completed were used during data analysis.

Research Participants

A maximum of 100 individuals responded to the demographic portion of the questionnaire, and an accurate reflection of the data may be found by examining the valid percent of those reporting.

Of the respondents, 71.3 percent (n=57) were female, while 28.8 percent (n=23) were male. All respondents held some type of degree: High School (n=2, 2.5%), Associate (n=2, 2.5%), Bachelor's (n=51, 63.8%), Master's (n=23, 28.8%), Doctorate (n=1, 1.3%), and Certificate in Public Relations (n=1, 1.3%).

The questionnaire was most often completed by those with between one and 10 years of experience in public relations (n=47, 47.0%). There was an equal percentage of respondents with 11-20 years of experience (n=20, 20.0%) and over 40 years experience (n=20, 20.0%). The smallest percentage of respondents held 31-40 years of experience (n=4, 4.0%), followed by those with 21-30 years experience (n=9, 9.0%).

Respondents were asked to identify themselves as either a Practitioner/Specialist (n=31, 38.8%), a member of Middle Management (n=27, 33.8%), or a member of Senior Management (n=22, 27.5%). Salaries of respondents fell in the middle range with responses to the \$50,000-\$59,000 and \$60,000-\$69,000 categories yielding the same response (n=14, 17.7%). Responses for \$70,000-\$79,000 (n=10, 12.7%) were the next highest, while the remaining responses were spread out among the rest of the salary ranges. Table 1 provides demographic data for the respondents.

Table 1: Participant Demographics

	N	Valid Percent
<u>Gender</u>		
Female	57	71.3
Male	23	28.8
Total	80	100.0
<u>Highest Degree Earned</u>		
High School	2	2.5
Associate	2	2.5
Bachelor's	51	63.8
Master's	23	28.8
Doctorate	1	1.3
Certificate in Public Relations	1	1.3
Total	80	100.0
<u>Years Experience in PR</u>		
1-10	47	47.0
11-20	20	20.0
21-30	9	9.0
31-40	4	4.0
over 40	20	20.0
Total	100	100.0
<u>Current Job Title</u>		
Senior Management	22	27.5
Middle Management	27	33.8
Practitioner/Specialist	31	38.8
Total	80	100.0
<u>Annual Salary</u>		
Under \$20,000	1	1.3
\$20,000-\$29,000	4	5.1
\$30,000-\$39,000	8	10.1
\$40,000-\$49,000	5	6.3
\$50,000-\$59,000	14	17.7
\$60,000-\$69,000	14	17.7
\$70,000-\$79,000	10	12.7
\$80,000-\$89,000	6	7.6
\$90,000-\$99,000	5	6.3
\$100,000-\$149,000	8	10.1
\$200,000 or more	1	1.3
No answer	3	3.8
Total	100	100.0

Analysis of Organizational Structure Variables

Before examining the data further, it is important to evaluate the reliability of the survey instrument. According to Stacks (2002), a measure is reliable when it is capable of measuring the same thing throughout time, i.e. a reliable measure is stable.

The primary interest of this study was to determine what, if any, relationships exist between organizational structures and public relations practitioner roles. The first half of this study employed 24 items to measure organizational structure. Table 2 represents those measures, arranged by the six organizational structures discussed in the literature review, showing the number of responses, means, standard deviations, and Cronbach's alphas.

Using Cronbach's alpha, reliability statistics were computed for those variables measuring each organizational structure construct (see Table 2). Alphas were acceptable at the .70 level or higher, since those coefficients are generally considered estimates of good reliability (Stacks, 2002). None of the structural constructs had alphas above .70. The multi-divisional ($\alpha = .67$), network ($\alpha = .65$), and virtual ($\alpha = .63$) structures each came close to passing the test for reliability, while simple ($\alpha = .35$), functional ($\alpha = .43$), and matrix structures ($\alpha = .46$) did not.

Table 2: Means and Standard Deviations for Organizational Structure Variables

Item	N	M	SD	α
Simple Structure				.35
8. My work environment is flexible and dynamic, so the tasks I perform often change according to what is needed.	98	5.86	1.36	
12. In my workplace, organizational control is centralized to one person.	98	3.27	2.06	
18. In my organization, task allocation is informal and based on mutual agreement.	98	3.89	1.72	
21. The organization in which I work does not appear to have a formal organizational structure.	98	2.09	1.57	
Functional Structure				.43
1. The organization in which I work is divided into groups of people that share common tasks and goals.	99	5.71	1.49	
4. The head of my department represents my department to the highest authority in the company.	99	5.45	1.85	
6. My organization increases profits and productivity by grouping together people who perform specialized tasks.	99	5.05	1.55	
14. In my organization, the CEO, or top manager, has control over the managers of other business units.	99	5.28	1.72	
Multi-Divisional Structure				.67
2. My organization is divided into divisions that are geographically dispersed but all report to a staff at corporate headquarters.	100	3.94	2.11	
5. My organization has a headquarters that coordinates company-wide production and is responsible for financial control of all company divisions.	100	5.40	1.81	
10. My organization is grouped into divisions according to products, customer type or geographical region.	100	4.85	1.86	
19. Each division in my organization is responsible for making daily decisions, while the headquarters staff monitors overall company performance and formulates strategy.	100	5.03	1.59	
Matrix Structure				.46
7. In my workplace, employees often report to their direct supervisor as well as a supervisor who is leading a special project for the company.	99	4.79	1.76	
13. My organization uses project teams consisting of employees from various departments to execute special projects.	99	5.46	1.34	
16. The top executive in my organization is responsible for the overall management of both organizational functions and special projects.	99	4.76	1.74	
23. Members of my organization are assigned to project teams based on their specialized abilities to complete the task at hand.	99	5.01	1.32	
Network Structure				.65
9. In my workplace, information is promptly exchanged with partner organizations so that we can quickly take advantage of business opportunities.	99	4.11	1.70	
17. My organization depends on partnerships with several other organizations to produce its product or perform its service.	99	4.75	1.97	
20. My organization is part of an interdependent network that produces goods or provides services.	99	4.29	2.06	
24. Employees of my organization regularly work with employees of partner organizations in order to be innovative, solve problems and coordinate activities.	99	4.72	1.69	
Virtual Structure				.63
3. My organization has employees who work off-site and use technology to perform company tasks.	98	4.89	1.86	
11. My organization does not have a physical building from which it operates.	98	1.45	1.26	
15. My organization uses independent workers who are linked through technology to provide skills and services.	98	4.29	1.98	
22. Employees of my organization work autonomously in different locations using computer technology.	98	3.66	1.90	

Factor analysis

Due to the fact that the reliability analyses were not acceptable, the variables were then subjected to an exploratory factor analysis. According to Stacks (2002), there should exist at least a 10:1 ratio of respondents to items in the questionnaire before factor analysis is performed. “Many factor analyses are run on fewer, but it is best to never drop below a 6:1 respondent-to-item ratio” (p. 234).

In this study, there were 24 items that measured organizational structure and 100 survey respondents. Despite the fact that this represents only a 4:1 ratio of respondents to items, the researcher decided to continue with an exploratory factor analysis.

In order to determine factor loadings, generally a measurement dimension is required to include at least two items with each loading on one factor at greater than $\pm .60$ and not greater than $\pm .40$ on any other factor (Stacks, 2002). For the purposes of this exploratory factor analysis, loadings of $\pm .50$ were accepted when the dimension did not load on any other factor equal to or greater than $\pm .40$.

A factor analysis using varimax rotation was conducted on the 24 items that represented the six types of organizational structure. The analysis yielded seven factors which were then subjected to Cronbach’s analysis in order to test for reliability (see Table 3). The multi-divisional structure formed Factor 1, which included three items that resulted in an alpha of .66. Factor 2 included three items from the network structure and had an alpha of .66. Three items from the matrix structure formed Factor 3, and it was reliable with an alpha of .73. Factor 4, virtual structure, also included three factors that were reliable with a .71 alpha. Following the reliability test, Factors 5, 6 and 7 were

rejected. Each of these factors included only two items, and the Pearson's correlations for each proved too weak to be theoretically substantiated. Table 3 presents each of the four accepted factors, including factor names, loadings and Cronbach's alphas.

Table 3: Factor Analysis of Measures of Organizational Structure

	Factor Loadings	α
Factor 1 – Multi-divisional Structure		
5. My organization has a headquarters that coordinates company-wide production and is responsible for financial control of all company divisions.	.708	.66
10. My organization is grouped into divisions according to products, customer type or geographical region.	.583	
19. Each division in my organization is responsible for making daily decisions, while the headquarters staff monitors overall company performance and formulates strategy.	.751	
Factor 2 – Network Structure		
17. My organization depends on partnerships with several other organizations to produce its product or perform its service.	.818	.66
18. In my organization, task allocation is informal and based on mutual agreement.	.547	
24. Employees of my organization regularly work with employees of partner organizations in order to be innovative, solve problems and coordinate activities.	.781	
Factor 3 - Matrix Structure		
8. My work environment is flexible and dynamic, so the tasks I perform often change according to what is needed.	.676	.73
13. My organization uses project teams consisting of employees from various departments to execute special projects.	.839	
23. Members of my organization are assigned to project teams based on their specialized abilities to complete the task at hand.	.759	
Factor 4 – Virtual Structure		
3. My organization has employees who work off-site and use technology to perform company tasks.	.822	.71
15. My organization uses independent workers who are linked through technology to provide skills and services.	.704	
22. Employees of my organization work autonomously in different locations using computer technology.	.734	

After the factor analysis was conducted, it was apparent that for each variable of structure, one of the original survey items was not included in the final constructs.

Because of the exploratory nature of the factor analysis, an alpha of $\pm .66$ was accepted.

The four factors that emerged from the factor analysis were then collapsed into four single variables. Those four variables were the divisional structure construct, the

network structure construct, the matrix structure construct, and the virtual structure construct.

Table 4 shows the descriptive statistics for these four new variables.

Table 4: Organizational Structure Factor N, Means and Standard Deviations

FACTOR	N	M	SD
Factor 1 – Multi-divisional Structure Construct	100	5.09	1.36
Factor 2 – Network Structure Construct	99	4.73	1.67
Factor 3 – Matrix Structure Construct	100	5.45	1.09
Factor 4 – Virtual Structure Construct	98	4.28	1.52

Analysis of Public Relations Roles Variables

The survey instrument included 16 items that measured the four public relations roles of expert prescriber, communication technician, communication facilitator, and problem-solving process facilitator.

Reliability measures were computed on the questions for each of the variables by calculating the Cronbach’s alpha for each. Each of the four roles constructs was found to be reliable, as the roles of expert prescriber ($\alpha = .83$), communication facilitator ($\alpha = .78$), problem-solving process facilitator ($\alpha = .78$), and communication technician ($\alpha = .66$) each yielded an acceptable alpha. The items used to measure roles have been tested in the past, and the results were consistent with previous research (Dozier, 1992). Therefore, the alpha for communication technician was accepted at the .66 level. Table 5 shows the number of responses, means, standard deviations, and Cronbach’s alphas for each of the variables.

Table 5: Means and Standard Deviations for Public Relations Roles Variables

Item	N	M	SD	α
Expert Prescriber				.83
25.I am viewed as a specialist in the field of public relations.	80	5.69	1.40	
28.The success or failure of my client’s or my organization’s public relations program is my responsibility.	80	5.14	1.75	
33.Part of my responsibility is to develop a public relations program for my organization/client.	80	5.63	1.48	
37.Implementation of a public relations program for my organization/client is primarily my responsibility.	80	5.30	1.68	
Communication Facilitator				.78
29.I act as a mediator between my organization/client and key publics in order to facilitate communication.	80	5.78	1.23	
32.It is my responsibility to ensure that my organization/client and key publics have the necessary information to effectively interact with one another.	80	5.55	1.22	
36.I create forums for discussion where my organization/client and key publics may communicate about relevant issues.	80	4.85	1.77	
39.It is my responsibility to identify problems that may prohibit effective communication between my organization/client and key publics.	80	5.66	1.20	
Problem-Solving Process Facilitator				.78
26.I work closely with managers in my organization or my client’s organization in order to identify public relations problems.	81	5.74	1.26	
31.I am a member of the management team of my organization.	81	4.40	2.27	
34.Through collaboration with managers in my organization or my client’s organization, we work to solve communication problems.	81	5.98	1.04	
40.When there is a public relations problem in my organization or my client’s organization, it is my responsibility to create a plan to solve it.	81	5.30	1.54	
Communication Technician				.66
27.I produce brochures, pamphlets, and other publications for my organization or my client’s organization.	81	5.53	1.75	
30.I handle the technical aspects of producing public relations materials, such as designing and writing copy.	81	5.77	1.50	
35.I write public relations materials, including press releases and other publications, that present information on issues important to my organization or my client’s organization.	81	6.15	1.34	
38.I edit any materials written by others in my organization or my client’s organization.	81	5.72	1.38	

Due to the fact that the Cronbach’s alpha levels were sufficient for the roles constructs, a factor analysis was not performed. It is important to note that when collapsing the variables of public relations roles into four individual constructs, one question was deleted from the set of items that measured communication technician. The

alpha for communication technician ($\alpha = .66$) improved to an acceptable level ($\alpha = .71$) when item 38, “I edit any materials written by others in my organization or my client’s organization,” was deleted.

Table 6 represents the descriptive statistics for the four constructs of public relations roles.

Table 6: Public Relations Roles Factor N, Means and Standard Deviations

FACTOR	N	M	SD
Factor 1 – Expert Prescriber Construct	80	5.44	1.28
Factor 2 – Communication Facilitator Construct	80	5.46	1.07
Factor 3 – Problem-Solving Process Facilitator Construct	81	5.35	1.24
Factor 4 – Communication Technician Construct	81	5.81	1.22

Correlation Analyses

Correlation analyses were conducted to determine what relationships, if any, existed between organizational structures and public relations practitioner roles; between public relations roles and tasks; and between organizational structures and tasks.

A bivariate correlation expresses the way two variables are related, and it reveals how much influence one variable has over another (Stacks, 2002). According to Stacks & Hocking (1999), correlations below $\pm .30$ are “weak,” between $\pm .40$ and $\pm .70$ are “moderate,” between $\pm .70$ and $\pm .90$ are “high,” and above $\pm .90$ are “very high” (p. 349).

Organizational structures and public relations roles

Pearson correlation coefficients were computed among the factors that measured organizational structures and public relations practitioner roles. The results of the correlation analysis, shown in Table 7, reveal that of the four statistically significant correlations that emerged, three were significant at the .05 level and one at the .001 level. A statistically significant but weak relationship existed between multi-divisional structure and the role of problem-solving process facilitator ($r = .234, p \leq .05$); between network structure and the role of communication facilitator ($r = .217, p \leq .05$); and between virtual structure and the role of problem-solving process facilitator ($r = .221, p \leq .05$). A statistically significant and moderate relationship existed between matrix structure and the role of communication facilitator ($r = .422, p \leq .001$).

Table 7: Correlations Among Roles and Structures

	Problem-Solving Process Facilitator	Communication Facilitator
Multi-Divisional Structure	.234*	
Network Structure		.217*
Matrix Structure		.422**
Virtual Structure	.221*	

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

**Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed)

Public relations roles and tasks

An additional survey item listed 10 tasks commonly associated with the public relations roles identified in the literature review. The survey item asked the respondent to consider all public relations responsibilities in his or her job as 100%. Assuming this, the respondent was asked to assign part of that percentage to each task, leaving blank any task listed which he or she did not perform.

Table 8 shows the results for the item that measured public relations tasks.

Table 8: Public Relations Tasks

Task	N	M	SD
Writing/Editing	77	26.40	18.80
Media Relations Management	75	21.37	15.76
Event Organization	64	20.12	18.54
Counseling	61	11.41	9.85
Liaison with Publics	59	11.17	13.93
Production	63	10.53	9.18
Training	53	9.93	12.71
Research	49	8.68	18.67
Speaking	59	8.40	11.08
	47	4.95	4.70

A correlation analysis was then conducted to determine what relationships existed between the public relations practitioner roles and tasks.

The items that measured practitioner roles used a Likert-type scale of 1 to 7, where 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree to determine the extent to which respondents agreed that they performed the function described in each statement. The item that measured public relations tasks used whole numbers between 1 and 100 to determine how much time the respondent spent performing each task. Before the correlation could be conducted, the item scores from the two scales had to be transformed to z-scores so that they had comparable metrics (Green, Salkino & Akey, 1997).

The correlation analysis revealed many statistically significant but inverse relationships among public relations roles and tasks. Inverse relationships existed between expert prescriber and writing/editing ($r = -.367, p \leq .01$); between expert prescriber and training ($r = -.363, p \leq .05$); between communication facilitator and writing/editing ($r = -.433, p \leq .001$); between communication facilitator and speaking

($r = -.338$, $p \leq .05$); between communication facilitator and training ($r = -.378$, $p \leq .01$); between problem-solving process facilitator and writing/editing ($r = -.387$, $p \leq .01$); between problem-solving process facilitator and media relations ($r = -.240$, $p \leq .05$); between problem-solving process facilitator and research ($r = -.255$, $p \leq .05$); and between problem-solving process facilitator and production ($r = -.300$, $p \leq .05$). A statistically significant but weak relationship emerged between communication technician and production ($r = .308$, $p \leq .05$).

Table 9 shows the correlations among public relations roles and tasks.

Table 9: Correlations Among Roles and Tasks

	Expert prescriber	Comm. Facilitator	Problem-Solving	Comm. Technician
Writing/Editing	-.367**	-.433***	-.387**	
Media Relations			-.240*	
Research			-.255*	
Speaking		-.338*		
Production			-.300*	.308*
Training	-.363*	-.378**		

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level.

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level.

***Correlation is significant at the .001 level.

While computing the correlations among public relations roles and tasks, correlations were also discovered among the roles themselves. Four statistically significant relationships emerged among the roles that are worth mentioning for purposes of discovery. Expert prescriber shared a weak relationship with communication technician ($r = .337$, $p \leq .01$), a moderate relationship with communication facilitator ($r = .570$, $p \leq .001$), and a high relationship with problem-solving process facilitator ($r = .758$, $p \leq .001$). Communication facilitator and problem-solving process facilitator shared a moderate relationship ($r = .651$, $p \leq .001$).

Table 10 shows the correlations that emerged among public relations roles.

Table 10: Correlations Among Roles

	Comm. Facilitator	Problem-Solving	Comm. Technician
Expert Prescriber	.570***	.758***	.337**
Comm. Facilitator		.651***	

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level.

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level.

***Correlation is significant at the .001 level.

Organizational structures and public relations tasks

Finally, a correlation analysis was conducted to determine what relationships existed among organizational structures and tasks. The items used to measure organizational structure used the same seven point Likert-type scale as the items used to measure public relations roles. Z-scores were again computed for the items that measured organizational structures and the items that measured tasks so the two scales could be compared.

The analysis revealed statistically significant and inverse relationships between matrix structure and writing/editing ($r = -.276, p \leq .05$); between matrix structure and liaisons with publics ($r = -.273, p \leq .05$); between matrix structure and speaking ($r = -.489, p \leq .001$); between virtual structure and media relations ($r = -.317, p \leq .01$); and between multi-divisional structure and media relations ($r = -.245, p \leq .05$). A statistically significant but weak relationship existed between network structure and event organization ($r = .263, p \leq .05$).

Table 11 shows the results of the correlation analysis.

Table 11: Correlations Among Structures and Tasks

	Writing/Editing	Media Relations	Liaisons w/ Publics	Event Org.	Speaking
Matrix Structure	-.276*		-.273*		-.489***
Virtual Structure		-.317**			
Multi-Divisional Structure		-.245*			
Network Structure				.263*	

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level.

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level.

***Correlation is significant at the .001 level.

Analysis of Variance

Finally, a one-way ANOVA was conducted between structure and each of the demographic items, but the analysis did not yield any statistically significant results.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

This study attempted to further theory-driven public relations research by using quantitative analysis to examine the relationships between organizational structures and the role of the public relations practitioner. To do so, this study surveyed members of the Public Relations Society of America in order to determine both the organizational structure in which each respondent worked and the public relations role each assumed. The results of the survey were subjected to correlation analyses so that relationships between structures and roles could be determined. The results revealed relationships between some organizational structures and public relations roles.

The data collected in this study was also used to analyze relationships between public relations roles and tasks and relationships between organizational structures and tasks. The goals of these analyses were to determine if the practitioners surveyed here assumed the traditional public relations roles that have, to this point, been defined by certain tasks. Also, the data was able to shed light not only on the public relations roles that may be associated with certain structures, but the tasks as well.

The results of this study will be discussed as they relate to findings on organizational structures, then findings on public relations roles and tasks. These findings will be followed with discussion on the correlations between organizational

structures and public relations roles and correlations between organizational structures and tasks.

Organizational Structures

The researcher developed the items that were used to measure the organizational structures for the purposes of this research. The items that were used on the questionnaire were formed based on the literature review of each organizational structure. Each structure employed four items that were used to measure the existence of that structure in the respondents' workplaces, and each structural construct resulted in three reliable survey items.

During analysis, the data used to measure organizational structures was first subjected to a reliability test. An exploratory factor analysis revealed the existence of four factors that could be collapsed to form four single organizational structure constructs. Of the six organizational structures that were measured, the constructs that emerged were multi-divisional structure, matrix structure, network structure, and virtual structure. Two of these constructs had alphas below the generally acceptable level of ± 0.7 . The low alphas for items that measured organizational structure may be attributed to the low response rate of the study.

The multi-divisional structure is characterized mainly by company divisions and the existence of a headquarters that coordinates company performance and strategy (Hatch, 1997).

In the study, three survey items that asked about these characteristics emerged as reliable indicators of a multi-divisional structure ($\alpha = .66$). However, the two items that

asked whether the company had a headquarters that monitored overall performance resulted in higher factor loadings (.708, .751) than the item that stated “My organization is grouped into divisions according to products, customer type or geographical region” (.583). This could indicate that the existence of a headquarters, therefore, is more characteristic of the multi-divisional organization than the divisions themselves.

The matrix structure employs a flexible organizational design in order to complete special projects as they emerge. Members of a matrix organization are regularly assigned to project teams based on their abilities to complete the tasks of the project. While they report to a specific project manager, the employees in this structure are continually responsible for reporting to their functional, or department, manager as well (Hatch, 1997).

Survey items relating to the matrix structure asked about the extent to which the workplace was flexible and employees were assigned to special projects. Three of these survey items resulted in reliable indicators of the matrix structure ($\alpha = .73$). The item “My organization uses project teams consisting of employees from various departments to execute special projects” had the highest factor loading (.839).

As a fairly new organizational type, the network structure depends on partnerships among several organizations in order for businesses to collectively provide services or produce goods. Employees of the organizations that form a network must constantly work together for the network as a whole to be successful (Hatch, 1997).

Of the three survey items that were accepted as reliable indicators of network structure ($\alpha = .66$), two of them produced higher factor loadings than the other. The item that stated, “In my organization, task allocation is informal and based on mutual

agreement” (.547) did not load as high as the items that referred to partnerships with other organizations (.818, .781). Perhaps this is a sign that task allocation is not a good indicator of a network structure.

A virtual structure includes autonomous workers who are linked through technology and often do not share a physical workspace. Employees in this type of organization rely mainly on computers to produce a product and communicate with one another (Rahman & Bhattachryya, 2002; Davidow & Malone, 1992).

The three survey items which emerged as reliable indicators of virtual structure ($\alpha = .71$), asked about technology use, worker autonomy, and working off-site. The item with the highest factor loading of the three was “My organization has employees who work off-site and use technology to perform company tasks” (.822).

Public Relations Roles

The literature on public relations roles supports the existence of the four commonly recognized roles of expert prescriber, communication facilitator, problem-solving process facilitator, and communication technician (Center & Jackson, 1995; Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1985; Broom, 1982). As previously stated, the items that were used to measure public relations roles in this study were replicated from previous research (Dozier, 1992). Following are descriptions of each of the four roles that were used to formulate the items on public relations practitioner roles in this study.

The expert prescriber is viewed as a specialist in the field of public relations. This practitioner develops a public relations program, and then takes responsibility for the implementation and success of that program (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1985).

The communication facilitator uses two-way communication between the organization and its publics to act as a mediator. This practitioner identifies problems that may prohibit effective communication, then creates forums where the organization and its publics may communicate effectively (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1985).

The problem-solving process facilitator works with organizational managers in order to solve communication problems. This practitioner is a member of the management team whose responsibility it is to create a plan to solve public relations problems in the organization (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1985).

The writing, editing, and production of public relations materials, such as press releases or other publications, is the responsibility of the communication technician (Dozier, 1992). Communication technician was the only role that did not include all four survey items when collapsed into a single construct. The item "I edit any materials written by others in my organization or my client's organization" was deleted, and the alpha for this construct improved from .66 to .71. This could be an indication that editing is no longer a task assigned to the technician but to a practitioner in a more managerial position.

The data on public relations roles was subjected to reliability analysis. The Cronbach's alpha for each role proved to be acceptable; therefore each of the four roles of expert prescriber ($\alpha = .83$), communication facilitator ($\alpha = .78$), problem-solving process facilitator ($\alpha = .78$), and communication technician ($\alpha = .71$) was collapsed into a single construct.

Public Relations Tasks

This study replicated an item from a previous study conducted by Petersen, Holtzhausen, and Tindall (2002) where respondents were given a list of 10 tasks associated with public relations practice, and they were asked to assign a part of 100% to each task to indicate how much time was spent performing each task. Tasks that received no time from the practitioner were left blank.

The tasks, listed here by reported mean from highest to lowest, were writing/editing, media relations, management, event organization, counseling, liaison with publics, production, training, research, and speaking.

Correlations Among Public Relations Roles and Tasks

A correlation analysis was conducted to determine what relationships existed between public relations roles and tasks in the study. Results produced several statistically significant but inverse relationships.

The role of expert prescriber shared inverse relationships with both writing/editing and training. This practitioner typically spends more time implementing a public relations program than writing publication materials. However, it is interesting that this role would not share a positive relationship with training in that the expert prescriber is viewed as the company authority on public relations and would therefore be expected to train others in the department about the company's communication practices.

The communication facilitator role in this study correlated inversely with writing/editing, speaking, and training. The surprising finding here is that this role did not share any type of relationship with counseling or liaison with publics. This role

traditionally is that of a counselor or liaison who creates forums for the organization and its publics to effectively speak with one another. The definition of publics may have a hand in determining these findings, or it could be an indication that here this role may serve more as an administrative position that merely arranges meetings and events but doesn't have a communications role.

The problem-solving process facilitator shared inverse relationships with writing/editing, media relations, research, and production. Here again, the interesting result is one that did not occur. Traditionally described as a member of the management team whose responsibility it is to solve public relations problems, the problem-solving process facilitator in this study did not share any relationship, positive or negative, with the task of management. The results here reveal more about what this role did not do rather than what it did.

The role of communication technician shared a statistically significant and positive correlation with the task of production. This result supports previous research which states that the communication technician is responsible for the writing, editing, designing, and production of communication publications (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1985, 2002). However, the fact that this role did not share a relationship with the task of writing/editing could reveal that the communication technician is not exactly the role it used to be.

These findings indicate that there may be changes that have occurred to the commonly practiced public relations roles of expert prescriber, communication facilitator, problem-solving process facilitator, and communication technician. These roles may look different from one organization to the next, as practitioners must adapt to

fill the roles that are needed. It is also possible that these four roles are no longer what they used to be and have adapted over time in response to changes that have occurred to the way public relations is practiced. The low response rate of this study must be taken into consideration when examining the results of the survey, and further research with a much larger sample size is needed to determine whether or not public relations roles have undergone changes.

Correlations Among Organizational Structures and Public Relations Roles

A correlation analysis revealed relationships that involved all four organizational structures and only two public relations roles. Although several of the relationships that emerged were weak ones, these findings were not only statistically significant but also significant in terms of explaining and confirming the relationship between structures and roles.

Multi-divisional structure and the problem-solving process facilitator

A weak relationship was found between multi-divisional structure and the role of problem-solving process facilitator ($r = .234, p \leq .05$). As the literature review revealed, a multi-divisional structure is divided into functional departments that all report to a staff at corporate headquarters. Each department employs individuals who are grouped together by production processes or products, customer type, or geographical region where their business takes place. In a multi-divisional structure, each department is responsible for making daily decisions, while the headquarters staff monitors overall company performance and formulates strategy (Hatch, 1997).

The problem-solving process facilitator is a member of the management team who works with other organizational managers in an attempt to identify and rectify public relations problems. This practitioner often collaborates with lower- and mid-level managers to enact a public relations problem-solving strategy. This type of collaboration frequently leads upper level managers to understand and support the public relations function of the organization (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1985, 2000).

Due to the existence of several different departments, some of which may be geographically dispersed, the multi-divisional structure lends itself to the possibility of public relations problems. Communication between each department must be constantly monitored to ensure that a consistent message is being generated throughout the company. The problem-solving process facilitator naturally fits into the scheme of the multi-divisional organization, as this practitioner can work both proactively and reactively to assess public relations problems and develop a plan to rectify them.

Virtual structure and problem-solving process facilitator

A weak relationship was also found between virtual structure and the role of problem-solving process facilitator ($r = .221, p \leq .05$). In a virtual organization, all company tasks are outsourced (Hatch, 1997). Virtual organizations employ work teams, employee autonomy, and computer design and customization in order to instantly produce a product based on customer desires (Davidow & Malone, 1992).

A virtual organization may be one of two things: the organization either includes a temporary network of independent units that use technology to provide skills and accessibility to markets, or the virtual organization simply does not operate from a

physical building, instead using technology to coordinate activities (Rahman & Bhattachryya, 2002).

As the multi-divisional structure includes individual departments, the virtual structure employs individual workers who do not share a common workplace. These autonomous workers are linked only through technology, therefore increasing the need for effective public relations among workers. The problem-solving process facilitator can again work with managers in this structure to identify potential public relations problems that may occur due to communication lapses between employees.

One characteristic that is common to successful virtual organizations is the ability to provide a network that promotes sharing of knowledge, communication, and project work among workers who are dispersed locally (Rahman and Bhattachryya, 2002). The problem-solving process facilitator, by working with the organization's managers, can aid in the formation and maintenance of a network that provides effective communication to all workers.

Network structure and the communication facilitator

Network structure and the role of communication facilitator ($r = .217, p \leq .05$) also shared a weak relationship. The network structure replaces most vertical relationships in an organization with horizontal ones by forming partnerships among several organizations. The organizations coordinate activities in order to work together to produce goods or provide services (Hatch, 1997).

The communication facilitator uses two-way communication in order to act as a liaison, interpreter, and mediator between the organization and its key publics. Effective

interaction between an organization and its publics is the main goal of a communication facilitator (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1985, 2000).

The network structure can benefit greatly from having a communication facilitator in the public relations role because of the partnerships that form the network organization as a whole. In a network where several companies create partnerships for business purposes, the key publics of any one organization are the other companies in the network.

According to Walker (1997), the network structure must deal more often with relationship issues such as trust and commitment. The communication facilitator maintains open lines of communication between the organization and publics by summarizing the views of each party, developing agendas for discussion, and aiding in the identification and correction of problems that may prohibit effective communication (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1985, 2000). The network structure has a greater chance at success when it employs a public relations practitioner who can act as liaison, interpreter, and mediator between all components of the network.

Matrix structure and the communication facilitator

Of the correlations that emerged during data analysis, the strongest relationship existed between matrix structure and the role of communication facilitator. A moderate relationship emerged between matrix structure and the role of communication facilitator ($r = .422, p \leq .001$).

The matrix structure arguably benefits from having a communication facilitator in the public relations role more than any other structure. In a matrix organization, functional managers assign specialists to perform projects based on their abilities to

complete a given task, while project managers supervise completion of the project (Hatch, 1997).

The matrix organization is characterized by both solid and dotted lines of reporting, in that an employee may report directly to his or her department head while also reporting to the project manager of a specialized task he or she is working on. These dual lines of authority often lead to conflict and power struggles among managers (Peters, 1993).

The communication facilitator can be instrumental in preventing conflicts among managers in a matrix structure by again acting as a liaison and mediator. The identification of potential communication problems, between managers or between employees and their functional and project managers, is the first step towards maintaining effective communication in a matrix structure. In this structure, it is possible that public relations practitioners are included in the project teams with the purpose of facilitating internal communication.

Correlations Among Organizational Structures and Public Relations Tasks

Data from the items that measured organizational structure was correlated with data from the item that measured time spent performing each public relations task in order to determine what relationships, if any, existed between structure and tasks.

Just as a positive correlation explains how much one variable influences the other, a negative correlation reveals the extent to which one variable does not influence the other (Stacks, 2002). In the case of the negative relationships between matrix structure and writing/editing ($r = -.276$, $p \leq .05$), matrix structure and liaisons with

publics ($r = -.273$, $p \leq .05$), matrix structure and speaking ($r = -.489$, $p \leq .001$), virtual structure and media relations ($r = -.317$, $p \leq .01$), and multi-divisional structure and media relations ($r = -.245$, $p \leq .05$), the structure and the task in each relationship are related in such a way that the public relations practitioner in each structure does not perform that particular task.

Writing and editing are tasks associated most often with the role of communication technician, while liaisons with publics, speaking, and media relations are all tasks associated with the role of communication facilitator (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1985, 2000; Newsom, Turk & Kruckeberg, 1996, 2004; Center & Jackson, 1995).

The study revealed the strongest positive correlation between matrix structure and the role of communication facilitator. For this reason, it is interesting that the data analysis revealed a negative correlation between matrix structure and both liaisons with publics and speaking. These results could indicate that in a matrix structure, the communication facilitators surveyed here most often communicate with people in their organization through written forms, instead of speaking.

As for the relationship between matrix structure and liaisons with publics, there is no way to determine here why this correlation yielded a negative relationship. It was possible that survey respondents who worked in a matrix structure did not consider internal managers and employees as “publics” when responding to the tasks item.

Virtual structure and multi-divisional structure each shared a negative relationship with media relations, a task of the communication facilitator. Both of these structural types positively correlated with the role of problem-solving process facilitator, a role which does not traditionally engage in media relations. The problem solver mostly works

internally to identify and rectify public relations problems. The relationship between these structures and media relations could reveal that in these two structural types, internal communication is more important to daily organizational functions than communication with outside sources.

A statistically significant but weak relationship existed between network structure and event organization ($r = .263$, $p = \leq .05$). Network structure correlated positively with the role of communication facilitator, whose job is to ensure effective interaction between the organization and its publics. Whether it is through meetings, mixers, or other social and business gatherings, the parties in a network organization must get together frequently to discuss business matters and develop working relationships. These results indicate that the communication facilitator is often the individual tasked with organizing and informing all network members of opportunities to meet face to face.

Overall, these results indicate the existence of relationships between organizational structure and public relations practitioner roles. Whether the relationships were weak, moderate, or negative, there was still an indication of a relationship of some kind between matrix, network, virtual, and multi-divisional structures and the roles of communication facilitator and problem-solving process facilitator. It also appears that the impact of structure on public relations roles mostly relates to the internal communication function of the public relations practitioner and also increases the complexity of the public relations function, while having little effect on the more technician-oriented tasks practitioners traditionally perform. Further research is needed to determine the extent of these relationships and the reasons that some structures and

roles formed relationships while others did not, however this study serves as a good indication that relationships do exist.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS

This study has important implications for the development of theory surrounding the relationship between organizational structures and public relations practitioner roles. It was successful in establishing the existence of relationships and paving the way for further research in this area, which to date has been primarily unexplored.

Through quantitative research, this study determined that multi-divisional and virtual structures each shared a relationship with the role of problem-solving process facilitator, while network and matrix structures each correlated with the role of communication facilitator.

Multi-divisional and virtual structures, respectively, consist of departments and employees that are dispersed geographically. Due to the fact that employees in these organizational structures do not work in a shared environment that would allow for quick and easy communication, the problem-solving process facilitator works as a link in the communication chain who identifies communication problems before they have the chance to emerge.

The network structure and matrix structure both include groups that need to share effective communication in order to be successful. In the network structure, groups of businesses share ideas, whereas in the matrix structure employees are divided into groups based on their specialized skills. Both of these structures rely on a communication

facilitator to act as a liaison and mediator between groups of people whose communication is central to the goals of the organization.

The significance of this study lies in the fact that it supports the idea that relationships do exist between organizational structures and public relations practitioner roles. It is important for public relations practitioners to realize that by recognizing and understanding the organizational structures in which they work, they can better formulate effective public relations and communications practices that fit their work environments.

Practitioners must realize that the climate of business is constantly changing in today's fast-paced economy. If effective public relations practice is going to remain one of the primary tools needed for a business to be successful, then practitioners must be aware of organizational structures, the ways in which they change, and the ways in which they work together in order for the practice of public relations to maintain its value in the workplace.

Data analysis also revealed relationships that tasks associated with public relations practice shared with public relations roles and organizational structures. Results indicated that the traditional roles supported by previous research may be things of the past, and modern public relations roles may look different. Whereas roles previously primarily adhered to standard definitions, changes in the workplace and the business world in general have led public relations practitioners to adapt to fill the role that is needed.

This implications of these findings on tasks, roles, and structures only reiterate the fact that practitioners must first understand their organization and its social structure before they can determine the role that is most beneficial to the business.

Limitations

This study suffered from limitations due to the low number of responses. The response totals in the study may have affected the results, leading to the fact that the findings could be deemed unreliable.

By having to rely on PRSA chapter presidents to send email notifications to their members, the researcher lost a certain amount of control over the survey. Due to the fact that less than 10 PRSA chapter presidents responded to the invitation to participate in the survey, it was difficult to get past even the first step toward getting people to respond to the questionnaire. This study needs a much larger survey sample before the results can be generalized and theory can be formulated.

In addition, this study was limited by the fact that it contained only quantitative research in the form of a survey. Future studies would benefit from first performing qualitative research on structure to provide further insight into each organizational structure before formulating the questionnaire.

Implications for Public Relations Practice

This study was successful in its goal of establishing the fact that relationships do exist between organizational structures and public relations practitioner roles. The significance of this study lies with its ability to prompt further research into these relationships. Organizational structure exists as a channel through which communication relationships develop and individuals become connected throughout the organization (Johnson, 1993). By further examining the ways that organizational factors influence the

public relations practice of an organization, the development of theory surrounding structure and public relations becomes more of a reality.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
ROLES AND STRUCTURE QUESTIONNAIRE

This survey is being conducted by a student at the University of South Florida in order to complete the requirements for a Master’s degree in public relations. The research will aid in the development of theory regarding organizational structure and its relationship to the role of the public relations practitioner. If you could please take a few minutes to answer the following questionnaire, your responses will be greatly appreciated. All responses will remain confidential, and there will be no attempt made to contact you personally.

Questions 1-24 provide statements about several different types of organizational structures. After each statement, please indicate on a scale of 1 to 7 where 1=strongly disagree that the statement describes the organization in which you work and 7= strongly agree that the statement describes the organization in which you work.

1. The organization in which I work is divided into groups of people that share common tasks and goals.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	does not apply	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree

2. My organization is divided into divisions that are geographically dispersed but all report to a staff at corporate headquarters.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	does not apply	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree

3. My organization has employees who work off-site and use technology to perform company tasks.
(i.e., employees who perform technology-based tasks from home)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	does not apply	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree

4. The head of my department represents my department to the highest authority in the company.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	does not apply	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree

5. My organization has a headquarters that coordinates company-wide production and is responsible for financial control of all company divisions.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	does not apply	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree

6. My organization increases profits and productivity by grouping together people who perform specialized tasks.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	does not apply	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree

7. In my workplace, employees often report to their direct supervisor as well as a supervisor who is leading a special project for the company.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	does not apply	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree

8. My work environment is flexible and dynamic, so the tasks I perform often change according to what is needed.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	does not apply	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree

9. In my workplace, information is promptly exchanged with partner organizations so that we can quickly take advantage of business opportunities.
(i.e., a production company and a marketing firm join together to quickly launch a new product)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	does not apply	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree

10. My organization is grouped into divisions according to products, customer type or geographical region.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	does not apply	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree

11. My organization does not have a physical building from which it operates.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	does not apply	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree

12. In my workplace, organizational control is centralized to one person.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	does not apply	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree

13. My organization uses project teams consisting of employees from various departments to execute special projects.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	does not apply	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree

14. In my organization, the CEO, or top manager, has control over the managers of other business units.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	does not apply	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree

15. My organization uses independent workers who are linked through technology to provide skills and services.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	does not apply	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree

16. The top executive in my organization is responsible for the overall management of both organizational functions and special projects.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	does not apply	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree

17. My organization depends on partnerships with several other organizations to produce its product or perform its service.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	does not apply	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree

18. In my organization, task allocation is informal and based on mutual agreement.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	does not apply	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree

19. Each division in my organization is responsible for making daily decisions, while the headquarters staff monitors overall company performance and formulates strategy.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	does not apply	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree

20. My organization is part of an interdependent network that produces goods or provides services.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	does not apply	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree

21. The organization in which I work does not appear to have a formal organizational structure.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	does not apply	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree

22. Employees of my organization work autonomously in different locations using computer technology.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	does not apply	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree

23. Members of my organization are assigned to project teams based on their specialized abilities to complete the task at hand.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	does not apply	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree

24. Employees of my organization regularly work with employees of partner organizations in order to be innovative, solve problems and coordinate activities.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	does not apply	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree

The following statements relate to tasks you may perform in your position as a public relations practitioner. For each statement, please use a scale from 1 to 7 where 1=strongly disagree and 7=strongly agree to indicate the extent to which you agree that you perform each function.

25. I am viewed as a specialist in the field of public relations.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	does not apply	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree

26. I work closely with managers in my organization or my client's organization in order to identify public relations problems.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	does not apply	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree

27. I produce brochures, pamphlets, and other publications for my organization or my client's organization.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	does not apply	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree

28. The success or failure of my client's or my organization's public relations program is my responsibility.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	does not apply	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree

29. I act as a mediator between my organization/client and key publics in order to facilitate communication.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	does not apply	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree

30. I handle the technical aspects of producing public relations materials, such as designing and writing copy.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	does not apply	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree

31. I am a member of the management team of my organization.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	does not apply	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree

32. It is my responsibility to ensure that my organization/client and key publics have the necessary information to effectively interact with one another.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	does not apply	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree

33. Part of my responsibility is to develop a public relations program for my organization/client.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	does not apply	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree

34. Through collaboration with managers in my organization or my client's organization, we work to solve communication problems.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	does not apply	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree

35. I write public relations materials, including press releases and other publications, that present information on issues important to my organization or my client's organization.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	does not apply	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree

36. I create forums for discussion where my organization/client and key publics may communicate about relevant issues.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	does not apply	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree

37. Implementation of a public relations program for my organization/client is primarily my responsibility.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	does not apply	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree

38. I edit any materials written by others in my organization or my client's organization.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	does not apply	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree

39. It is my responsibility to identify problems that may prohibit effective communication between my organization/client and key publics.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	does not apply	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree

40. When there is a public relations problem in my organization or my client's organization, it is my responsibility to create a plan to solve it.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	does not apply	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree

Considering all public relations responsibilities in your job as 100%, please assign part of that amount to each of the following tasks. If you do not perform a particular task listed, please leave that item blank.

- 41. Writing/Editing _____
 - Management _____
 - Media Relations _____
 - Liaison with publics _____
 - Event organization _____
 - Research _____
 - Speaking _____
 - Counseling _____
 - Production _____
 - Training _____

Please verify that the percentages you listed above add up to 100%.

The following questions will be used for demographic research purposes only. Please select one answer for each question. Responses will not be reported in a way that will identify respondents.

42. Highest degree earned:

- High School _____ Associate _____
- Bachelor's _____ Master's _____
- Doctorate _____ No degree _____
- Certificate in Public Relations _____

43. Years of experience working in public relations:

- 1-10 _____ 11-20 _____
- 21-30 _____ 31-40 _____ over 40 _____

44. Current job title:

- Senior Management ____ Middle Management ____ Practitioner/Specialist ____

45. Gender:

- Female _____ Male _____

46. Annual Salary:

- Under \$20,000 _____
- \$20,000 - \$29,000 _____
- \$30,000 - \$39,000 _____
- \$40,000 - \$49,000 _____
- \$50,000 - \$59,000 _____
- \$60,000 - \$69,000 _____
- \$70,000 - \$79,000 _____
- \$80,000 - \$89,000 _____
- \$90,000 - \$99,000 _____
- \$100,000 - \$149,000 _____
- \$150,000 - \$200,000 _____
- \$200,000 or more _____
- No Answer _____

APPENDIX B
REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONTACT PRSA MEMBERS

Subject: Requesting permission for research study

Dear Chapter President X:

I am writing to you in your capacity as President of the XYZ PRSA chapter, requesting permission for my student, Allison Stokes, to send a survey to the members of your chapter.

Ms. Stokes is in the process of completing her Master's thesis on the impact of organizational structure on public relations practice. She would like to conduct a nationwide internet survey of PRSA members and used cluster sampling to randomly select one chapter in each of the 10 PRSA regions. Only chapters of 100 or more members were eligible. Your chapter is the one selected in your region.

We do understand that practitioners are very busy people and might not welcome this intrusion in their work. At the same time we cannot develop academic knowledge without the support of practitioners. The questionnaire was pretested, and it should only take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

We also do not expect you to do any work, except perhaps send out a notice to your members that such a survey will be forthcoming. Ms. Stokes will do the rest of the emailing herself and with your permission send the survey directly to your members.

I have copied Ms. Stokes on this email. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Derina Holtzhausen
Associate Professor
School of Mass Communications
University of South Florida

APPENDIX C
PRENOTIFICATION MESSAGE

Subject: Important research study

In the next few days, you will receive an email message requesting that you complete a brief online questionnaire for an important research project being conducted by a Master's level graduate student at the University of South Florida.

The questionnaire concerns the relationship between organizational structure and the role of the public relations practitioner. Specifically, it deals with tasks that you perform as a practitioner as well as the social structure of the organization in which you work.

I am writing in advance because many people like to know ahead of time that they will be contacted. The study is an important one that will help to further research on both roles theory in public relations and organizational theory. Through completion of the questionnaire, you will be contributing to the advancement of research in the field.

Thank you for your time and consideration. It's only with the help of generous people like you that this research can be successful.

Sincerely,

Allison Stokes
Candidate for a Master's degree in Mass Communications
University of South Florida

APPENDIX D
REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION MESSAGE

Subject: Important research study

As a Master's student at the University of South Florida, I am writing to ask for your help in research that investigates the relationship between organizational structure and the role of the public relations practitioner.

As a professional communicator, you have been asked to assist with this survey. This study is an important one that will help in the advancement of both roles theory in public relations and organizational theory. Through completion of the questionnaire, you will be contributing to the advancement of research in the field.

The questionnaire will take 10-15 minutes to complete, and your responses will remain completely confidential. Your name will never be connected to your responses in any way.

Please take a few minutes to contribute to the growth of your field by completing the questionnaire at Web address:

http://compass-metrics.custhelp.com/cgi-bin/compass_metrics.cfg/websurveys/ws?_133=12

Sincerely,
Allison Stokes
Candidate for a Master's degree in Mass Communications,
University of South Florida

APPENDIX E
REMINDER NOTICE 1

Subject: Please contribute to your profession

Recently, I asked you to participate in research about the relationship between organizational structure and the role of the public relations practitioner. As a professional communicator, you are an important source of information about tasks performed in public relations practice and ways those tasks may be related to the social structure of the organization.

The individual conducting this research is a graduate student in mass communications at the University of South Florida. I am performing this research under the direction and supervision of Dr. Derina Holtzhausen, Dr. Kelly Page Werder, and Dr. Randy Miller. I am trying to gain a better understanding of the ways organizational structure relates to the role of the public relations practitioner so that I may contribute to research in the field.

Please take a few minutes to contribute to the growth of your profession by completing the questionnaire at Web address:

http://compass-metrics.custhelp.com/cgi-bin/compass_metrics.cfg/websurveys/ws?_133=12

Many thanks to those of you who have already completed the questionnaire.

Sincerely,
Allison Stokes
Candidate for a Master's degree in Mass Communications
University of South Florida

APPENDIX F
REMINDER NOTICE 2

Subject: Please contribute to your profession

Recently, you were asked to participate in research about the relationship between organizational structure and the role of the public relations practitioner. As a professional communicator, you are an important source of information about tasks performed in public relations practice and ways those tasks may be related to the social structure of the organization.

The individual conducting this research is a graduate student in mass communications at the University of South Florida. I am performing this research under the direction and supervision of Dr. Derina Holtzhausen, Dr. Kelly Page Werder, and Dr. Randy Miller. I am trying to gain a better understanding of the ways organizational structure relates to the role of the public relations practitioner so that I may contribute to research in the field.

Please take a few minutes to contribute to the growth of your profession by completing the questionnaire at Web address:

http://compass-metrics.custhelp.com/cgi-bin/compass_metrics.cfg/websurveys/ws?_133=12

Many thanks to those of you who have already completed the questionnaire.

Sincerely,
Allison Stokes
Candidate for a Master's degree in Mass Communications
University of South Florida

APPENDIX G

THANK YOU MESSAGE

Subject: Thank you for your participation

Recently, you were asked to participate in research about the relationship between organizational structure and the role of the public relations practitioner. As a professional communicator, you are an important source of information about tasks performed in public relations practice and ways those tasks may be related to the social structure of the organization.

I want to take the time to thank you for participating in my important research study. Only through the consideration of professionals like you can this study be successful.

Thank you so much for taking the time out of your busy schedule to contribute to the advancement of your professional field.

Sincerely,
Allison Stokes
Candidate for a Master's degree in Mass Communications
University of South Florida